# LIFE HISTORY OF MARIUM BEGUM

<table>
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<th>Shiree Q2 Research on Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh</th>
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<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Institution</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interviewee name</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Livelihood</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Well-being Status before Intervention</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
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| **union, upazilla and Zilla** | **Current Address**: Jannatbag, Kamrangirchar, Dhaka  
**Permanent Address**:  
Father’s house of Marium: upazila: Naria, zilla: Sariatpur, Division: Dhaka  
Father-in-law’s house of Marium: Union: Potishar upazila: Kanaipur (Myachkanda), zilla: Faridpur, Division: Dhaka |
| **Dates of Interview** | 26/11/2010, 05/12/2010, 23/12/2010 for baseline data |
| **Keywords** | Destitution, poor health, accident of breadwinner, defrauded, big families (number of children), illiteracy, lack of planning, poor social connections |
INTRODUCTION

Extreme poor families, without assets, are entirely dependent on quality and quantity of labour at their disposal (relative to dependents) and on sources of support. Slum families are particularly sensitive to alterations in their labour power, as the sources of support tend to be thinner than in rural areas and there are fewer sources of common property where they can forage (vegetables, fish) in times of stress. Moreover, high rents and higher food costs must be paid in order to survive. And so, when there is an accident of a worker, without social support, such families can fall sharply into destitution, as happened for Marium and her family.

Marium is 29 years old, and has been living at Kamrangirchar for last twelve years. She has a 7 members family including her husband and 5 young children among them the eldest one is only 9 years old and the youngest one is 6 months only. Both the husband and wife have no education.

Within 10 years of their marriage Marium has delivered 5 children. In 2006, Badal faced a road accident and had a serious injury in his leg. Since that accident, he is not able to work hard, but he had to manage taka 150 to 200 per day (around five days of a week) by pulling rickshaw to meet up the seven members’ family’s food and accommodation. According to Marium, “Before the accident we used to take meals with fish, but after the accident we took only rice with some vegetables.” The portions of meals were also reduced. Despite seeking support from parents and parents in law their relationships in the village were not any longer supportive ones. They lost their key relatives/contacts in the slum through a disagreement and accusation of black magic, and as such Marium’s needy family had exhausted the few local connections on which they could rely.

WELL-BEING AT THE TIME JUST BEFORE THE SHIREE INTERVENTION

Just before shiree intervention, the household was in between the middle of destitute and working extreme poor. Her husband Badal is a rental rickshaw puller and he is the only earner for the 7 members’ family. He can’t earn much due to her physical problem. In 2006 he faced a road accident and he had a serious injury in his leg. Although he was cured after the treatment of 3 and half months, he isn’t able to hard work. He can’t pull the rickshaw regularly. So they are struggling to maintain their 7 members’ family from the income of his rental rickshaw pulling only.

Marium has never taken on paid employment and this has contributed to the overall welfare of the household. She could not work because she had little support to look after her 5 children (ranging from 9 years to 6 months of age). Also, she was physically weak partly because of her size and also her childbearing. Finally her husband came from a solvent family and did not feel that his wife should work and definitely not work outside of the home.
**QUALITATIVE MONITORING OF SHIREE INTERVENTIONS: CMS5 (S) LIFE HISTORY AND INTERVENTION TRACKING**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Often unable to manage three full meals per day.</th>
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<td>Urban living-Rental capacity</td>
<td>Taka 1,200 including electricity and water supply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihoods</td>
<td>Marium is a housewife and her husband Badal is the only income earner as a rented rickshaw puller for their 7 members’ family. But Badal isn’t able to work hard due to poor physical fitness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>They had no productive assets except physical labour. But they are not very fit for working hard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour capacity per dependent</td>
<td>1 of 7 (Husband of Marium, Badal is the only income earner out of 7 members’ family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>In between the destitute and working extreme poor. But much closer to destitute.</td>
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**LIFE HISTORY NARRATIVE**

**CHILDHOOD**

Marium was born at Noria upazila of Sariatpur district in 1982. Noria is one of the low lying and flood affected areas close to the Southern part of Bangladesh. With 3 brothers and 4 sisters, she is the second child. Her father was a labourer in a rice mill for a long time and currently he is pulling rickshaw at their locality. Marium has no institutional education.

**EARLY MARRIAGE LIFE OF MARIUM**

Among the relatives of Marium, two uncles and two aunties live at Kamrangirchar. Sometimes she also visited their houses at Kamrangirchar. During her third visit at Kamrangirchar, at the age of 16 years, Marium came for a short visit. She met with Badal, who was also a tenant under the same house owner. After 15 days of her third visit, she came back at Kamrangirchar with her father- as Badal sent a proposal through her aunty to marry her. Within 3-4 days Marium got married with Badal.

Whilst Badal was an assistant mason but after some days of marriage he started working as a rented rickshaw puller to earn more and that was the best time for their family according to their perception. Within few months Badal was able to purchase a rickshaw from his earnings and savings.
**Husband’s Sickness- Black Magic by her Aunty?**

Within one and half years of their marriage, Marium delivered their first son. But some days later Badal become seriously sick for 2 months. The family faced a great trouble due to the sickness of only earning member of the family. According to the symptoms of the disease, that might be the attacking of jaundice. Although Marium and her husband think that the cause of that illness was a practice of black magic by Marium’s aunty and cousin. Just after their marriage a misunderstanding occurred among Badal and Marium’s relatives, especially with her aunty and a cousin who were also the tenants within same house owner. The house owner forced Marium’s aunty and cousin to leave their house showing the silly cause that it will not good to live in same house with other close relatives. Since that time, they have no relationship with them. This loss of the key relatives in the slum proved to be fateful – as when they hit hard and needy times later, they had no relatives to rely on.

During her husband’s illness, Marium was bound to give rice gruel to her new born baby instead of milk. She received some financial and food supports from her parents. After the recovery from the illness, Badal started to pull the rickshaw again.

**Road accident**

In 2006, Badal faced a road accident with a motorbike and had a serious injury to his leg. He had to spend 22 days at Dhaka Orthopaedic Hospital at Agargaon and 3 and half months was required to be cured. To meet the expenditure of his treatment, he had to sold his rickshaw, a gold made locket of Marium’s and the savings of taka 7,000.

At the same time, a brother of Marium also fell in another accident and took shelter in her home. Her brother’s economic condition was comparatively better and at this crisis moment, she received some financial and food support from her brother’s family. This was her only obvious support. In the mean time, Marium delivered her 2nd and 3rd child in 2003 and 2006 respectively.

**Poor relationship with parents**

Two years later of recovering from the accident, Badal’s parents came to their house for the first time; it was also the first time for Marium and her children to meet with her parent-in-laws. There was always tension between Badal and his father. He had been brought up not by his father but his grandparents, and later with his maternal uncle in Dhaka. He worked for his maternal uncle in his shop and hoped that in exchange his uncle would help send him abroad. However his uncle never paid him and kept the money. In this context, there was a family disruption and since then relations between Badal and his father have not been good. This was tested once when Badal asked his father for some money but his father refused. His mother gave him 20 kgs of rice and with this he returned to the slum.
After staying of couple of days, Badal’s parents went back to the village with the eldest son of Marium. One month later Badal’s father visited again to take them with him. After selling most of the household belongings, Badal went back to home with his father after a long time. But after some misunderstanding with his father, Badal came back to Kamrangirchar again with his six member family and merely a bag of clothes – nothing else.

After returning at Kamrangirchar, Marium delivered another son. That was the beginning of most challenging period of their lives. Since the accident Badal was not able to work hard in pulling rickshaw, but he had to manage taka 150-200 per day (around five days of a week) to meet up the foods and accommodation cost for the seven member’s family. According to Marium, “Before the accident we used to take meals with fish, but after the accident we take only rice with some vegetables.”

**Life history of Badal- the husband of Marium**

Badal’s home district is in Faridpur of Dhaka division but he was born at Sylhet at his grandfather’s home and also brought up there up to his 12 years of age. Then Badal came back to his parents and lived with them for four year at Faridpur.

At the age of 16, Badal came to Dhaka at Kawran Bazar to his maternal uncle and started working at his grocery shop as a helper of taka 120 per day. Besides the shop, he was also responsible to take care of his uncle’s cows along with some other workers. Within three years of working, Badal saved taka 80,000 and all the money he provided to his maternal uncle to collect a visa to migrate in other countries for better income opportunities. But Badal’s uncle betrayed with him and didn’t give him the money.

Badal returned to his parents again and asked for some money from his father in order to participate in a training course on mason but he didn’t get any support from his father. Only 20 Kilograms of rice was provided by his mother without his father’s concerns. With that rice, Badal came back to Dhaka, took a shelter at Kamrangirchar at one of his cousins and started to work as an assistant mason. At that time Badal married Marium.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The seven member’s family including three under five children, Badal is the only earning member who has neither any productive assets nor any cash savings. Moreover, he is physically weak. He had an accident and recovered from a serious injury in his leg. But with this weakness he still has to earn for 150-200 taka a day to
feed a 7 member’s family by pulling a rental rickshaw. Moreover they are socially somewhat isolated. These contexts indicate the intensity of destitution of the family.

To sum up, the major causes of their destitution are:

1. **Theft of savings** - being defrauded by his maternal uncle—Badal was defrauded and lost his savings of taka 80,000 by his maternal uncle and that also ruined his dream of migration to other country for better income opportunities.

2. **Road accident and loss of physical fitness**- Badal’s road accident made the family vulnerable. He was in bed for 3 and half months without any income. They spent their savings of taka 7,000 and bound to sell their own rickshaw and a gold-made locket for the treatment and regular family expenditures. Moreover, Badal lost the physical fitness to work hard.

3. **Loss of social connections**- Two times Badal (one time Badal alone and then with his whole family) went back to his parents to stay with them at their village but he was not able to make any agreement with his parents. Second time the family returned to village after selling all the household belongings in Dhaka, but they came back at Kamrangirchar with only a bag of clothes. He lost his only relatives in the slum through a dispute and accusations of black magic.

4. **Superstition**- still, the Badal and Marium believe that the major cause of Badal’s illness was a practice of black magic by Marium’s aunty and cousin. Due to that assumption and beliefs, they lost their important social connections with their two close relatives within the slum.

5. **Lack of awareness and planning**- During his bachelor life, Badal earned a significant amount of money but he wasn’t able to use the money properly and defrauded by his maternal uncle. Badal has not enough income but he is the father of 5 small kids as they have not considered any family planning.
Life history map of Marium (29 years old)

- 1982: Marium was born at Sariatpur district
- 1998: Married with Badal, an assistant of a mason
- 2000: Husband was seriously sick due to jaundice for 2 months
- 2001: To cope the situation, they used all of their savings and bound to give rice gruels to her new born baby instead of milk
- 2003: 2nd child was born
- 2006: Husband faced a serious road accident and he was in bed for 3 & half months
- 2007: Returned to parent-in-laws at Faridpur
- 2008: Returned in Dhaka with only a bag of clothes
- 2010 (July): Enlisted by DSK-Shiree project

Timeline:
- 1982
- 1998
- 2000
- 2003
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010 (July)