LIFE HISTORY OF KHALIL HOWLADER

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**INTRODUCTION**

Khalil Hawlader is a van puller and day labourer. He can read a book and passed class three. Khalil’s wife Rafeza is a housewife and Khalil does not like to let her work in others home as domestic maid because he thinks that this gives him social status despite their extreme poverty. His wife is only 25. He has two daughters. One of their daughters studies in class four in a government primary school and is receiving an
educational stipend (TK 100.00 per month). The younger daughter reads in a pre-primary school run by NGO.

Khalil is skilled in different type of businesses e.g. gol leaves, iron, bamboo and fish. He has also mechanical work skill as parts-fitter of the machine/trawler.

He lives next to bazaar (local market) and riverside. So it is convenient to run his business. However, physical illness (chest and waist pain) which he has suffered since youth) is major challenge to him, because sometimes he cannot work. However he is the only income earner in this family with 3 dependents.

Several natural disasters like cyclone SIDR and Cyclone AILA damaged their livelihood assets and this has forced them into a more severe condition of poverty. Consequently, he is trapped in debt to different people.

### WELL-BEING JUST BEFORE THE SHIRREE INTERVENTION

Khalil Hawlader became involved with SHIRREE on 11 January 2011

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<th>Indicator</th>
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<td><strong>Well-being category</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Diet</strong></td>
<td>2 meals (small portions) a day with one vegetable curry and occasional fish curry (usually once or twice a week depending on income).</td>
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| **Livelihoods now) in terms of contribution to that years' income** | Khalil Hawlader  
1. Van pulling (round the year except monsoon season)  
2. Day labour (round the year)  
3. Catching fish fry/ larvae from natural in the local river and sold to input sellers (February to May)  

| For other principal adult member | Rafeza (wife of Khalil Hawlader):  
1. Housewife |
| **Productive assets now rank them in terms of value (e.g. land, livestock, our rickshaws)** | No productive asset (he hires a rickshaw van) |
| **House and homestead: ownership, condition of tenure, condition of house.** | Lives on government khas land (2 decimal)  
A house (Bamboo made wall and roof material is Goal leaf : Not strong house) |
Khalil Hawlader was born in 1979 in Laudub. His father worked as a fitter/ a mechanic of a trawler. Sometimes his father also worked as day labour. His father is still alive and works as wood cutter. His mother was a housewife. His father migrated from Pirojpur (another district) to here. From the beginning his uncle Gani Sarder gave shelter to his father to live in his house at Laudop.

In 1984 one of the rich Hindu neighbour s and another nayeb (worked in land office) of Laudop helped and permitted his father to occupy and build a homestead on a khash land of two decimals.

Since then Khalil's father resettled home there with his family and started a new journey of life. He had two brothers (Khalil and Ruhul) and two sisters (Ranu and Jarina) including himself. His eldest sister (36 years old) got married and lives in the same location. Her husband is involved with dry fish business.

His younger brother also got married and lives in the same homestead. His younger brother is working in a cement factory as day labour. His father lives with his younger brother. Khalil's youngest sister used to play drama (jatra) and got married to the manager of this drama group. He has no communication with her youngest sister, because they do not like this type of work.

Engaged as child labour in 1988-1998

His father was the only income earner in their family. They had always food shortage in their family. Therefore Khalil migrated to Mongla port in 1988 (before the 1988 flood) without asking permission from his parents when he was only 8 years old and resettled himself in a slum as a child labor. At that period many ships used to come in Mongla port. So it was easy to get work. He went to the jetty (5 kilometers away from his home) in the morning and managed to find work (such as unloading cargo from the ship) in the afternoon. This way he - with some unknown person - went to Mongla port and started work under an agent who used to supply food, vegetables, water, green coconut, chicken, and banana exchanging wood, oil, cloths, and iron with the crew of ships of the port.

Usually one agent had business connection with many ships. Khalil's agent had business connection with 5 ships. They had good relations with the employee of the ship and they helped them (the agent) to get a contract to supply goods. Doing this, Khalil used to get three meals a day (for breakfast: chapatti and vegetables, for lunch and dinner: rice, lentils and fish). The employer provided three meals a day during the first six months and then 200-300 taka per month pay after that.

“In my childhood sometimes I had to starve all day long and had to wait for food, and then only at night we would have some chapattis.” So it was good I had at least three meals in my workplace. His job was to carry goods by boat from the port to the ship. He sometimes used to visit his mother and gave her between 500 and 1000 taka.
Flood 1988

During the 1988 flood his family suffered a lot. Flood water entered in their house (the wall made of wood and roof material was goal leaf) and his family members had to take shelter in government primary school building. At that time only Christian Service Society (CSS: an NGO) provided some food items: 2 kgs of rice, 250 gram salt (At that time the price of salt was very high, so they provided only 250 gm salt) and 250 gram dal (lentils).

Relationship with employer

Khalil became a very reliable and trustworthy worker for his agent within a very short period of time. In 1997 his agent introduced Khalil to the crew of the ship and gave all responsibilities to him to supply goods. At that time his agent went away for seven days. The agent gave Khalil, 30,000 taka to buy goods for the ship and asked him to add 10,000 taka from his own savings.

Jealous of his good fortune and theft in 1997

Seeing the good relationship and favor from his agent, the other 4 workers of the agent became jealous and angry. When Khalil was carrying goods to the ship they sent some robbers who seized all of his goods. Consequently, he lost his savings and also had to compensate the agent by doing hard work for the next two years. He had to take care of his agent’s business of iron and bamboo from 1997-98 where the agent gave the capital and Khalil provided labour. He could not repay all the money he lost but the agent forgave him the last 4-5 thousand taka.

Back to home with hardship in 1999

He went back home in 1999 empty handed. At that time he was totally helpless and lost all what he had. His mother gave him 900 (nine hundred) taka to initiate an iron business. He continued this business for six months. But due to lack of money (25,000.00) to get proper license he could not continue his business. Therefore he started working as a day labor in a cement factory.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE AND EARLY ADULTHOOD

Arranged Marriage

Khalil came back to his home in 1999 (in February) and his mother arranged his marriage in her (mother) natal village. He got married to Hafija Begum in 1999. His wife was a neighbor of his mother’s relatives but was not introduced to him before the marriage. His wife has one brother and sister. His father-in-law works as a day labour in a brick field and mother-in-law works by boiling rice in villagers’ home. His sister-in-law already got married. His brother-in-law works as day labour in brick field.

During his marriage he did not make any dowry demand. Three days later he came back from his in-laws house with his wife and stayed in his mother’s house for 4 months.
Live in a rented house

Four months later they lived separately and rented a house where he had to pay 350 taka per month. The decision to live apart was based mainly on the fact that relations with the younger brother’s wife were not good.

Ganja addiction and debt trap

His wife shared that Khalil is addicted to ganja and he used to spend a lot of money to feed his addiction. Sometimes her husband also used to bite her. Ganja addiction also spoiled his life and trapped him in more debt.

Support from UP member - loan to buy van

However he enjoyed a good relationship with the union parishad member. The UP member purchased a rickshaw van (after his marriage) which was worth 3500 taka and gave it to Khalil on the condition that within a year he had to pay back the money. Once the load was repaid Khalil would be the owner of the van.

He paid back about TK 100 to 500 per month to the UP member depending on his income and within the year had fully paid back the loan. At that time on average he used to earn 50-60 taka per day.

Birth of first child in 2001

Her first daughter was born in 2001 (August) in his wife’s natal home. Her birth was normal with the help of a traditional birth attendant. His wife stayed three months in her natal home and at that time Khalil did not need to spend any money for his wife and daughter.

Reunion with mother in-law

After returning from her natal home, the family did not stay in a rented house. Khalil’s mother proposed that they stay with her. They stayed with his mother for five months.

Distress sale of van to bear child’s health treatment cost in December 2001

When his first daughter was four months, she suffered from fever and diarrhea. At that time he had to sell his van for 1700 taka.

Livelihood at that period

After selling his rickshaw van, he had no specific job, so he used to work as a day labour in the cement factory, unloaded goods from boats and sometimes he used to pull a rented van for which he paid 25 taka per day as rental.

Engaged with co-operative society in 2001

Khalil became involved with a co-operative society initiated by the shop owners of the local market in 2001 and he ran it for one year. He bought 5 shares at 10 taka per
share and deposited 50 taka every week. He took a loan worth 1000 taka with interest at 5% from the society to help deal with hardships at the middle of the year. At the end of the year he got 1850 taka for the rest of the money. He did not continue his account there because he could not pay weekly installments.

**Chronic illness**

He left the cement factory in 2003 on doctor’s advice (he was no longer capable of taking on hard work because of ongoing chest pains). Actually he is suffering from this pain since 2001. He spends 500/600 taka on medicine.

**Extreme Hardships (2002-2004) and support from mother and younger brother:**

He was totally unemployed for the two years from 2002 to 2004 because of extreme chest pain. To him, these two years brought severe hardship and crisis. His mother and younger brother helped him to run his family at that time and provided support to cope with the situation.

His mother was financially autonomous. She had some money from her brothers in lieu of her father’s land where she had a share. His mother then gave a portion of that money to one of his uncles who went to Sundarban to extract fuel wood illegally. With this he ran a small business in the local market. She also got a portion of the profit from that business. Moreover, she was also involved in the local co-operative society. She bought shares at 9.5% interest from the co-operative society.

According to Khalil, “When my mother was alive, she always took care of my children, but during her sickness she had to spend big amounts of money which made her family weaker in economic terms”

**Separation from joint family - hardest time of his life**

In 2005 his mother separated him from the joint family constituted with his brother’s family and his parents. According to Khalil that was the hardest time in his life. His brother’s wife could not bear the burden of a large family and at the same time Khalil could not contribute to the family in any way because of his unemployment. This created tension with his brother’s wife.

It was rainy season when Khalil left his parents’ house. He collected a poly paper from a neighbor named Mannan Sheikh and a mat of bamboo from the neighbors. He set up a tent to live in. At that time his wife was carrying their second child. He expressed his sorrow,

“I could not provide my wife even with an egg. My child weighed only 1.9 Kg. Nobody expect the baby would survive. Because of my extreme economic crisis, I could not afford to give my wife anything good….I just embraced the legs of the members of the union parishad and begged them to help me.”
Purchased housing material on credit from UP member

Khalil had a good relationship with the UP member. The UP member had a business of housing materials e.g. bamboo, goal leaf etc. Khalil purchased bamboo and goal leaf on credit from the UP member worth taka 16,570.00 to construct a house. He had to repay the loan within three years by pulling rickshaw van and taking on work as a wage labour.

Mother's died

His mother suffered from cancer for a year and died in March 2006. The entire family except Khalil provided financial support for his mothers' treatment.

About 100,000 (one hundred thousand) taka was spent on his mother's treatment.

His mother received 33 decimals of agricultural land as inheritance from her parents. She sold it to her brother to pay for her treatment.

At that time, Khalil's younger brother and his two sisters helped his mother. As he had no extra money, he could not support his mother financially.

His mother had 6 cows and some poultry. So his younger brother took these assets after his mother died.

Birth of 2nd child (daughter)

His second daughter was born in July 2006 (after the death of his mother). The first child was also a daughter, so he was angry with his wife after giving birth to a second daughter.

Purchased food on credit from Shopkeeper

After separating from his parents he started work as day labour. He had no specific job at that time and did whatever he was offered. As a result he had to purchase goods and food items on credit from a shop nearby. He has been purchasing food on credit for the past 5 years and owes 5000 taka to the shop keeper. The shopkeeper charges 1 (one) taka more per kg on every item e.g. rice, lentils, oil, salt, onion, and garlic.

Cyclone Sidr

In 2007, Khalil's family was faced with another disaster with the Sidr cyclone. The roofs of his house flew away, the house became aslant and was almost uprooted, and water rose above the embankment of the river and submerged the basement of the house. They took shelter in a center of CSS (Christian social services) half kilometer away from the village. After the cyclone, his family received 1 kg potato, half kg lentil, 10 packets of oral saline and medicine from CSS. He also received 10 kgs of rice for three months under Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme. He had to borrow 1000 taka again from one of his friends to reconstruct his house.
Unfriendly relationship with UP member

During the cyclone SIDR aftermath some housing grant/relief material came from different government and non-government organizations. Khalil was enlisted to get a house, but the UP member did not allocate anything to him. The member knew about Khalil’s predicament but decided not to offer support.

Cyclone Aila

Another cyclone attacked in 2009. At that time his house, domestic materials like pitcher, plate, cloths were taken by the river. As the cyclone did not stay for a long time, they took shelter on the embankment beside the house. At that time his mother-in-law provided plates, pitcher and blanket to them. His mother-in-law received these as relief from different organizations (his in-law family had also been affected by cyclone AILA in Barisal and had received help from many organizations.)

Livelihood at that time

All of the ghers (Shrimp hatcheries) were also flooded during Aila after this calamity people in the entire locality were jobless for one month. At that time lots of fishes were brought by businessmen to the river jetty. Khalil used to carry the boxes of fish as a day labor and received 100 to 120 taka per day. Most of the time he had to purchase grocery items on credit, because his income was not sufficient.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Due to family economic crisis, Khalil could not continue his education and was forced to engage in work in the port as child labour.

His physical illness (pain in chest and waist) added to his vulnerability and weakened his working capacity in the cement factory. This was almost regular work and losing it was a serious threat to his livelihood.

Repeated natural disasters (cyclone SIDR and AILA) damaged his assets and put him more into poverty.

Ganja (narcotic) addiction also spoiled his life and increased his debt.
Life history map of Khalil Howlader (32)

- Stopped education due to poverty
- Flood 1988 and child labour
- Distress sale (van)
- Got married (1999) Support from UP member (rickshaw van)
- Illness and unemployment
- Divided from joint family (support decreased)
- Cyclone SIDR
- Cyclone AILA
- Support from shopkeeper and UP member
- Mother died and support decreased
- Pulling hired Rickshaw van
- Robbery

Timeline:
- 1979
- 1988
- 1990
- 1997
- 1999
- 2001
- 2003
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011