

LIFE HISTORY OF MONZU BEGUM (35)

Shree Q2 Research on Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh					
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Household ID					
Interviewee name	Monzu Begum	Sex	F	Age	35
Livelihood before the intervention	Housemaid				
Well- being Status before the intervention	Working Extreme Poor (2)				
Marital status, children and other household members	Married Lives with three kids (age 16 years, 11years & 8 years) and her husband				
Village, union, upazilla and Zilla	Buri Khali village, Chalita Bari Union, Nazirpur Upazila				
Dates of Interview	29 March,23 May,8 August,12				
Keywords	Death of brother, abandonment, Physically disabled, health shocks				

INTRODUCTION

Monzu Begum is 35 years old and lives in Dighir Jan Village, Chalita Bari Union under Nazirpur Upazila, Pirojpur. She lives with her husband Hossain Bepari and their three children who are aged eighteen, ten and eight years. Their household can afford only one or two meals per day and a tiny portion of khas land on which they have their homestead and a small grocery shop. Her husband is physically disabled and

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cannot move easily to other places. The family have no productive assets or land apart from the small tea shop.

HOUSEHOLD'S WELL-BEING BEFORE THE SHREE INTERVENTION

Before the household became involved with the shree programme, their well-being was as follows:

Indicator	Just before the intervention
Well-being category	Working extreme poor
Diets	<p>2 Meals per day - but in lean period (especially during rainy season, May to August) they only have 1 meal per day</p> <p>Rice and low cost vegetables each day.</p> <p>Dal/pulses once per month</p> <p>Potato and a tiny portion of fish once a week</p> <p>Egg once every 2-3 months</p> <p>Meat once a year especially in religious festivals</p>
Livelihoods now -in terms of contribution to that years' income	Monzu - helper (cleaning work, service tea etc) in lieu of 20 Kg wheat as a monthly payment from Union Parisad.
For other principal adult member	Husband runs tiny shop selling bread and tea which gives a regular income of 50-60 taka.
Productive assets now rank them in terms of value (e.g. land, livestock, rickshaws),	One tiny tea stall
House and homestead: ownership, condition of tenure, condition of house.	<p>Rented</p> <p>Her husband is physically impaired and her tiny house is</p>

	attached to a small shop which is on Khas land.
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LIFE HISTORY NARRATIVE

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH (1977-1991)

Monzu Begum was born in 1977 in Dighir Jan Village, Chalita Bari Union under Nazirpur Upazila, Pirojpur. When she was young she lived with her parents and five brothers. Her father was a boatman and her mother was a housemaid. Her father had been the eldest child in his family and he had to look after his five younger brothers and two sisters, who were all below the age of twenty. after the early death of his parents. He was from then on, the main income earner of the joint household and was responsible for maintaining family expenditures after his parents' death.

Monzu's family owned only 2.5 decimals of homestead land which was purchased by her father but they had no agricultural land. Although her father used to be involved in a share cropping system, he decided that this was not profitable enough for him to feed the members of his household. None of the children could be enrolled at school because the household could not bear the related expenses or the opportunity costs of losing potential help around the house. Her father was the only income earner and they received no support from neighbours and relatives. Although her mother used to work in some households as a domestic worker (usually in rice processing) this generated no significant income.

Death of brother

In 1983 her elder brother died suddenly from diarrheal disease as the household lacked the financial resources and access to appropriate medical care to afford the treatment. Her parents suffered severe mental torment and grief and were not able to focus enough on earning an income. As a result, they stopped working and had no income for two to three months after their son's death. The household's income reduced tremendously. Her father's daily income of 20-25 taka from boating was not regular or sufficient enough to support the seven member family. They became increasingly vulnerable and it became difficult to manage even one or two meals per day.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE AND EARLY ADULthood (1992-2006)

First marriage - 1992

In 1992 at the age of 16/17 years, Monzu got married for the first time. It was a family arranged marriage without required dowry and for which the ceremony celebration and marriage expenses reached 2,000. After the marriage she went to live with her husband and fell suddenly sick three to four months later. Due to her illness her husband left her, as a result she became more vulnerable and moved back with her parents. To pay for the medical treatment she sold her jewellery for 115 taka which she was given when she got married. She recovered after 2 months of treatment in Nazirpur Upazila as she also benefitted from relatives and friends' support.

Second marriage - 1994

It was difficult for her to find another husband to marry and to be able to afford a dowry and the wedding costs. In 1994 she got married to a 35 year old disabled man, named Hossain Bapari from the same village. He had lost his leg due to gangrene when he was about 15 years old and was unable to move independently since.

After the wedding, Monzu went to live with her husband's family. There were a total of five members in the family as they lived with her husband's mother, sister, and sister's husband. Her in-laws only had a tiny portion of land (about 2 decimal) for homestead. Up until 1996 he managed to catch fish from a boat which he sold and made 25 to 30 taka daily. For the next two to three years, he ran a small business (selling bracelet, cosmetic, items etc) using the same boat for which he earned 25 to 30 taka to maintain his household.

They lived in his parents' home for five or six years. In 1996, two years after their marriage, she gave birth to her first son, named Monir. In 2000 she and her husband separated from her in laws and moved to live in front of Chalita Bari union Parishad where her husband started a small tea and bread shop, earning 30 to 40 taka per day, which he has been running since. A year later, in 2001, their second son was born, followed by a third in 2005. From 2004, she started working in UP as cleaner and helper in exchange for 8 to 10 kg wheat or rice per month.

Although they were very poor, they managed to enrol their first son Monir in school with the help of one of their neighbours. However, because of the unreliability of their income Monir had to drop out in class 5 because they could not bear the costs of education and the opportunity cost of losing a potential helper or income earner.

Monir then 16 helped his father running his business whilst his two younger brothers were still studying in classes five and two.

MID-ADULTHOOD (2007-2012)

Cyclone

In 2007 during Cyclone Sidr, Monzu received some help from a local NGOs in the form of 16 kilo of rice and other non-food in-kinds for cooking. However, this was not sufficient to face the disaster and the household often went hungry. Now she is working in UP as cleaner and helper and manages her family's expenses. Although her husband is able to contribute to the household's income with the earnings generated from the tea and bread shop, Monzu remains the main income earner in the household.

Monzu's operation

In 2009, Monzu was treated in the upazila govt. hospital for appendices complications which cost 1,300 taka which were collected within the community and during religious festivals. In spite of this treatment she still sometimes feels pain.

CONCLUSION

Monzu Begum always experienced destitution, but from her childhood to her second marriage, she evolved from destitution to working poor. She is now the main income earner of her five member household as her husband is physically disabled and does not manage to generate a sufficient income from fish selling or the tea shop to cover his household's needs. They can barely survive on this income and are unable to withstand shocks. Disasters such as Cyclone Sidr threaten to push them down into destitution for some time.

After 2007, Monzu started working regularly as a cleaner in Union Porishod and is able to give support to her husband and son in the tea shop. When Monzu faced a threatening health shock, when she needed an appendicitis operation, she managed to rely on support from her community to raise the money to pay for her treatment without which she probably could not have afforded the operation, maintained her income earning activity, her household's income, her children and husband's well-being or even survived the operation.

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LIFE HISTORY MAP

Dates	Well-being movement	Reasons
1977 - 1980	Moved between 1 and 2	Her father was the only income earner – had 1 or 2 meals per day
1983	Moved down to 1	Brothers death due to diarrhoea
1980-1990	Slightly upwards within 1	Family Income and other things are not changed significantly, no health shocks or events.
1991	Moved down to 1	In 1991 got married and after two months her husband left her due to her sickness
1993	Moved slightly up to 2	She got married for second time.
2000	Continued up	Separated from in-laws family and moved to another union.
2007	Fell back to 1	In 2007 faced cyclone SIDR which affected their well-being and their health, Monzu started working as a cleaner at UP.
2009	Slightly higher at 1	Monzu got treatment for appendicitis
2011	Slightly upwards from 1 to 2	Monzu, her husband and sons are all working

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Life history map of Monzu (35)

Middle elite

Lower earning non-poor

Moderate poor

Working extreme poor

Destitute

