

LIFE HISTORY OF TAZLIMA BEGUM (31)

Shiree Q2 Research on Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh					
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Interviewee name	Tazlima Begum	Sex	Female	Age	31
Union, Upazilla and Zilla	Dharmapasha Sadar, Dharmapasha, Sunamganj				
Dates of Interview	18 th March 2012				
Livelihood before the intervention	Housewife and seasonal labourer				
Well-being Status	Working Extreme Poor				
Marital status and household composition	Married with three children (one daughter and two sons).				
Keywords	Natural disasters, health shocks, selling labour in advance, asset erosion,				

INTRODUCTION

Tazlima Begum was born into a moderate poor household that was brought down to working extreme poor by a series of natural disasters and a severe health shock. Her father was forced to arrange her marriage to a domestic service worker and she was able to lead a happy life with him until her husband's brother's illness. Her husband sold his land and it has since been difficult to improve their situation, particularly with three children.

QUALITATIVE MONITORING OF SHIREE INTERVENTIONS: CMS5 (S) LIFE HISTORIES

WELL-BEING JUST BEFORE THE SHIREE INTERVENTION

Prior to involvement with the shiree programme the household's wellbeing was as followed:

Indicator	Just before the intervention
Well-being category	Working Extreme poor (2)
Diets	Usually two meals per day but only one meal per day in lean season and sometimes no food at all.
Livelihoods now) in terms of contribution to that years' income For other principal adult member	Seasonal labourer Domestic service worker
Productive assets now rank them in terms of value (e.g. land, livestock, rickshaws),	n/a
House and homestead: ownership, condition of tenure, condition of house.	No homestead land. Lives in a small house (10 feet long and 5.5 feet wide) on rented land

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH (1981-1998)

Tazlima Begum was born on 22th June, 1981 in Kandapara village of Dharmopasha Sadar union under Dharmopasha Upazilla of Sunamganj District. She was the youngest of four sisters and lived happily in her parent's house. Her father was a small scale farmer with three acres of cultivable land, where he was able to harvest 100 mounds of paddy in the paddy season, and 17 dcm of homestead land.

Health shocks and natural disasters lead to asset erosion

When Tajima was young she grew up without scarcity and her household were able to eat fish, meat and eggs. A series of shocks occurred between 1987 and 1989, including her father's illness, drought and flood, which left them in a desperate situation. Previously she had attended school, but after this period her studies were stopped and she instead started helping her mother with household chores, and felt very sad that she could no longer study.

This was unavoidable as her father was forced to sell his land for his medical treatment and family maintenance.

Box 1: Incidences of disaster (1987-1989)

Devastating and regular droughts caused by a lack or a late/early arrival of rainfall are common in many parts of Bangladesh, and badly affect agriculture. The impacts of drought, associated with late, early or nonexistent monsoon rains, are experienced much more widely geographically than any other natural disasters. Bangladesh experienced major droughts in 1973, 1978-79, 1981-82, 1989, 1992 and 1994-95 and the food grain production lost in the 1978-79 drought was probably 50 to 100% more than was lost in the great flood of 1974.

The catastrophic floods of 1987 occurred throughout July and August and affected 57,300 km² of land, (about 40% of the country) and were estimated as a once in 30-70 year event. The seriously affected regions were on the western side of the Brahmaputra, the area below the confluence of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, sizeable areas north of Khulna and large north eastern region of Bangladesh.

The flood of 1988, which was also of catastrophic consequence, occurred throughout August and September. The waters inundated about 82,000 km² of land, (about 60% of the country) and its return period was estimated at 50–100 years. Rainfall together with synchronization of very high flows of all the three major rivers of the country in only three days aggravated the flood. Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, was severely affected and the flood lasted 15 to 20 days.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE AND EARLY ADULthood (1999-2004)

In 1999, at the age of 18, Tazlima got married to Esrak Miah, who was a 30 year old domestic service worker (Muni/Gomstha). He earned around 1500-2000 taka per month and had two decimals of homestead land. Though the resources and income were small Esrak Mia was able to maintain their family.

Health shock again leads to asset erosion

Shortly following her marriage her husband's elder brother became severely ill. Her husband wanted to help his brother and so sold his homestead land to help pay for his medical treatment. The costs were expensive, and Esrak and Tazlima became landless. They were forced to take shelter on rented land, building a tiny hut and paying 500 taka per month.

In 2001 their daughter was born. Despite their situation they were able to eat two and sometimes three meals a day.

MID-ADULTHOOD (2005-2012)

Tazlima gave birth to two sons in 2005 and 2009. Her elder daughter, aged ten, reads in class four and is a good student. Their elder son is seven and their younger son is two. All five members live in a small house of 10 feet long and 5.5 feet wide on another person's land. They continually experience high scarcity of food, medicine and other basic items. With three children they are unable to manage two meals a day. Most of the time Esrak Miah remains outside from the house working and so Tazlima does all the tasks related to family affairs.

Fortunately Esrak's earning have raised over time, and now he is earning 2500-3000 taka as his current occupation is Muni/Gomosta, although he sells his labour in advance. However this income is still insufficient for his family maintenance as the economy has experienced inflation in the same period.

Last year, Tazlima Begum also earned 9000 taka from doing two months work of EFLS from Muslim Aid. With this money she repaired their home, though they still have no furniture except a small bed and they use other people's latrine and tube well. Their home is so small they had to send their elder daughter to sleep at their neighbours.

CONCLUSION

The key process that occurs twice in Tazlima's life is a form of shock (health, natural disaster) leading to asset erosion, less opportunity and hardship. The drought, flood, and her father's illness experienced in her childhood led her household to sell their major productive assets to pay for medical costs. As a result she was unable to study.

After improving her situation through marriage her brother in law's illness led to her husband selling his homestead land, worsening their situation, forcing her husband to sell his labour in advance and threatening their ability to provide for their children. Despite this, her eldest daughter is able to attend school and the household generally eat two meals a day.

QUALITATIVE MONITORING OF SHIREE INTERVENTIONS: CMS5 (S) LIFE HISTORIES

SEASONAL LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITY MAP

	JAN	FEB	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Tazlima's Husband's domestic service work (Muni /Gomostha)	High	High	High	Lean		Lean				Moderate	high	
Fishing	Lean			low		low			Lean			
Monthly payment from domestic work	3000 taka			50 taka		50 taka			2500 taka			
Domestics Service work				30		40						
Total	3000 taka			1500 taka		2000 taka			1050 tk	0		

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LIFE HISTORY MAP

Dates	Well-being movement	Reasons
1981-1986	3	Born into a moderate poor household, father owns three acres of land
1987-1989	Move down to 2	Heavy flood, draught and her father sickness, lead to selling of cultivable land
1990-1998	Remains at 2	Household remains stable, Tazlima is unable to work
1999-2000	Moves to high 2	Marries a domestic service worker and situation is improved
2001-2009	Moves to lower 2	Homestead land sold to her help pay for husband's brother's treatments and children born
2010	Moves higher within 2	Husband's income increases, although is selling labour in advance
2011	High 2	Tazlima gets two months work through Muslim Aid

Life history map of Tazlima (31)

