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Landlessness in Bangladesh: A Case Study in the Coastal Region of Bangladesh

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

Landlessness in the context of Bangladesh is almost synonymous with the assetless in the rural society, as land is the dominant productive asset of the rural people. The country, unfortunately, has per capita operated area of only 0.17 acre. Without land, rural people who are overwhelmingly illiterate remain unemployed and in such case their only asset is physical labour. The labour market is also not large enough to absorb all available labour. By selling labour alone, they cannot meet their basic needs and thus, they remain poverty stricken and chronically food-insecure. This is a matter of serious concern to all policy makers of the country. In spite of such awareness on the part of policy makers the growth in the number of landless people is rising faster than the population growth (Abdullah and Murshid 1986). According to Hossain (1986), the rate of growth of landless households was 3.1 per cent per annum, against the population growth of 2.5 per cent during 1960-82. Hossain (1986) also expressed concern by predicting that by the year 1989/90, landless households would rise to about 50 per cent and that of the functionally landless to about 59 per cent of total households in the country. The

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recently published Agricultural Census (1999) estimates the figure to be 53 per cent which is close to Hossain's estimate.

There are only a few studies which analysed the causes for landlessness in the country. Sometimes it is argued that with the population growth and the fragmentation of land holding due to the law of inheritance landlessness rises. Moreover, economic pressure also makes the land poor landless. Huq (1977) in his interview report, based on 50 landless participants, mentioned that three-fourths of them were landless by inheritance and the remaining became landless during their own lifetime. The main reason as put forward by them is the sale of land for the purpose of repayment of loan and/or to meet family expenses. Ahmad (1988) in his enquiry into the historical events tried to establish the landless as the supplier of productive force without having no control on the means of production. As such they have to depend on the landowners for their employment and income and concluded that production relation is inherently linked to landlessness. The macro-level study by Abdullah and Murshid (1986) indicated that landlessness was accentuated by the recently introduced Seed-Fertilizer Irrigation Technology in Bangladesh. They did not identify any other specific factors contributing towards increased landlessness. The present study attempts to identify the factors affecting landlessness especially in the coastal belt of Bangladesh.

Two concepts of landless are frequently used in Bangladesh. One is the completely landless who do not have any land, not even the homestead. They comprise 10.2 per cent of rural households (BBS 1999). The second concept refers to the functionally landless owning land upto 0.50 acre inclusive of both cultivable and homestead land amounting to 53 per cent of households (BBS 1999). Both these groups of landless households survive largely on labour sales and to some extent on petty trading. In case of either natural or man-made disasters they immediately fall back upon mortgaging/sales of immovable assets like homestead trees and/or land, if they have any. They also seek informal loan against the advance sales of their labour. In the long-run most of them become landless as they could rarely repay such loan as they have little surplus income. In the present paper an indepth analysis has

been made with respect to landlessness. The paper has two main objectives which are: (a) estimate the number of landless households in a village and how many years they took to become landless and (b) identify the factors contributing to landlessness in Bangladesh particularly in the coastal region.

The paper has been organized as follows. It has five sections. The following section describes the survey methodology and the land distribution in the study area. The third section presents survey findings and analyses the factors affecting landlessness with particular emphasis on land deteriorating households i.e., those who lost land over time and the unaffected households. It also examines the factors contributing to an increase in the land ownership size of the land poor. The fourth section discusses some regression results and the paper ends with concluding remarks in section five.

II. SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND THE LAND DISTRIBUTION

II.1 Selection of Samples

For the present study, we use survey findings of our earlier study conducted in the year 1996 entitled 'Socio-economic Changes in the Coastal Belt due to Shrimp Culture'. The previous study carried out community survey in randomly selected 33 villages spread over in seven coastal districts. From the list of 33 villages only six villages were selected for indepth household survey keeping in view their intensity of soil salinity. Of these six villages, three are high saline, two are medium saline and one is low saline. The locations of the villages are shown in Table I. In each of the selected villages there was a complete census of maximum of 200 households in contiguous paras in the case of big village and otherwise it covered all the village households. From the census household list, 20 households were selected in each village proportionately following the landownership size as small, medium and large. In total, 120 households were interviewed in six villages. The main limitation of the study is that it represents the coastal belt and the findings may not be representative of the country. However, the factors identified for contributing to landlessness appear to be broadly applicable to the country's present situation.

TABLE I
LOCATIONS OF THE VILLAGES SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

Selected Village	Level of Salinity	Thana	District
Baraidanga	High saline	Bagerhat	Bagerhat
Bangshipur	High saline	Shayamnagar	Satkhira
Sharishamut	High saline	Koyra	Khulna
Bhara-Shimla	Medium saline	Kaliganj	Satkhira
Laupara	Medium saline	Taltali	Barguna
Bakulbaria	Low saline	Galachipa	Patuakhali

TABLE II
NUMBER OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS AND THEIR AVERAGE SIZE BY
LAND OWNERSHIP SIZE

(Area in Acres)

Village	Small		Medium		Large		All Owners	
	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area	No.	Area
Baraidanga	17	0.27	2	4.24	1	15.60	20	1.43
Bangshipur	18	0.39	1	4.95	1	14.81	20	1.34
Sharishamut	14	0.62	4	3.76	2	6.81	20	1.87
Bhara-Shimla	13	0.47	5	3.50	2	8.52	20	2.08
Laupara	16	0.68	2	2.97	2	12.62	20	2.11
Bakulbari	16	0.70	3	3.95	1	9.90	20	1.65
All Villages	94	0.52	17	3.75	9	10.69	120	1.74
(Per cent)	78	—	14	—	8	—	100	—

Note : Small = upto 2.5 acres, Medium = 2.51 to 5.0 acres and Large = 5.01 acres and above.
Source : Field survey (1996).

II.2 Land Ownership Size and Farm Holdings

The land ownership distribution of the sample households as shown in Table II indicates that small landowners are predominant (78 per cent) with an average size of 0.52 acre only. Large landowners are only eight per cent owning 46 per cent of total land. The average land ownership is low (1.74 acre) which is close to the national average. In two of the high saline villages, the average size is much lower than the national average. It is of interest to note that in the coastal belt, the ownership size of large owners is much higher (above 10 acres). The completely landless households in the study areas were eight i.e., 7 per cent when they established their households and in the year of field survey, their number increased to nine. The number of functionally landless households comprised half of the sample households and it rose to 54 per cent in the survey year over a period of 10 years.

The average size of farm holding is just 2.0 acres with a range of 1.23 to 3.70 acres. The area rented-in accounts for 0.56 acre i.e., about 28 per cent which is much higher than the national figure. The much higher size of holding at Bharashimla is due to leased-in land used for shrimp culture.

III. SURVEY FINDINGS

III.1 Distribution of Sample Households by Changes in Ownership Size

The household survey finds three categories of rural households in the area following the pattern of changes in the ownership size of land. *First*, there are households which could increase their ownership size since the establishment of their households. They are called successful households. *Second*, there is a category which experienced deterioration in their ownership size, termed as deteriorating households. The *third* category, which could maintain their size unchanged, is termed here as the unaffected. Of the total interviewed households, 55 per cent could maintain their ownership size at the same level. The other two groups have an equal share of 22.5 per cent each numbering to 27 households (Table III).

TABLE III
**NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE OF CHANGES IN THE
 LAND OWNERSHIP STATUS**

Village	Successful	Deteriorating	Unaffected	Total
Baraidanga	5	3	12	20
Bangshipur	5	4	11	20
Sharishamut	5	4	11	20
Bhara-Shimla	4	5	11	20
Laupara	3	6	11	20
Bakulbari	5	5	10	20
All Villages	27	27	66	120
(Percentage)	(22.5)	(22.5)	(55.0)	(100)

Land size deteriorating or unsuccessful households are a bit higher in medium saline village especially at Laupara of Barguna. All other villages have almost similar patterns. The immediate question that arises now are all these three categories of households of equal age? Actually the old households are expected to undergo more changes over time than the recently established ones. There again, initial land ownership size i.e., land size at the start of households also matters. The small landowners may undergo faster changes under similar socio-economic environment.

III.2 Distribution of Households by Age of Households and Their Size of Land

The distribution of sample households by age of the establishment shows that older households are more in number with the deteriorating categories. One-third started their establishments before 1975 i.e., 20 years back from the year of field survey (1996) and another two-fifths or 40 per cent had established their households between 1975-85. On the other hand, only 22 per cent of the successful households established themselves before 1975 (Table IV). In case of unaffected households the majority (54 per cent) have the record of recent establishment i.e., during 1986-95. As far as the age of

household establishment is concerned, deteriorating cases are older and thus, are at a disadvantage. Again, older households are observed to be more in Laupara. Although age of the household appears to be important, initial size of land endowment is observed to be more significant.

TABLE IV
DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS BY THE PERIOD OF ESTABLISHMENT AND THE HOUSEHOLD CATEGORIES

Category of Households	Households (%)			Average Ownership Size at the Time of Establishment (Acres)			Total Ownership Size (Acres)
	Upto 1975	1975-85	1986-95	Upto 1975	1975-85	1986-95	
Successful	22	33	44	2.00	6.60	1.76	3.42
Deteriorating	33	41	26	2.45	0.57	0.65	1.22
Unaffected	20	28	54	1.34	0.49	0.84	0.84
All Households	23	31	46	1.84	2.00	1.02	1.51

III.3 Factors Contributing to Landlessness

It is worth noting that the successful households had higher land ownership size of 3.42 acres which is particularly due to high land ownership size of the households established during 1975-85. The average ownership size of the deteriorating households is only 1.22 acre which is even lower in case of unaffected households (0.84 acre). The lower ownership size may be considered as one of the factors contributing towards landlessness. It may, however, be mentioned here that the unaffected households had much lower size suggesting that there are non-land factors which could keep them unaffected. These non-land factors seem to be the degree of economic dependency of the households, occupational distribution of workers, access of the village to infrastructure facilities etc. A comparative exercise in this regard has been carried out between the two groups of households (a) deteriorating and (b) the unaffected on consideration that their initial land ownership sizes were rather equal.

The occupational distribution of the household heads show that among the deteriorating group members, wage labourers comprised about 50 per cent compared to only 27 per cent from the unaffected group. The number of farming households is also much lower in the deteriorating category (one-fourth of the unaffected households (Table V)). The dominance of wage workers is particularly pronounced among those old households, established before 1985. The wage work being poorly remunerative and irregular appear to cause faster deterioration in land ownership size.

TABLE V

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE HOUSEHOLD HEADS FROM THE TWO GROUPS

Household Category	All Households				Households Established before 1985				Household Established after 1985			
	Farming	Wage Labourers	Service	Non-agriculture	Farming	Wage Labourers	Service	Non-agriculture	Farming	Wage Labourers	Service	Non-agriculture
Deteriorating	7.4	44.4	—	48.1	5.0	50.0	—	45.0	14.0	28.0	—	57.0
Unaffected	27.3	27.3	3.0	42.4	13.3	33.3	3.4	50.0	38.9	22.2	2.8	36.1
Both the Groups	21.5	32.2	2.1	44.1	10.0	40.0	2.0	48.0	34.9	23.2	2.5	39.5

Source : Field Survey, 1996.

To make the comparison more meaningful, the land ownership size of the household should have been controlled (say, below 1.50 acre) and the old households, established before 1985 should have been taken into account allowing adequate time for socio-economic impact to be captured. Such controlled cases in the unaffected group number 26 and their average area is estimated to be only 0.40 acre i.e., much below the deteriorating group. Again, 25 per cent of them owned less than one-tenth of an acre. The question is how could they, with much lower size of land (0.40), keep their land size unchanged where the similar old households numbering 17 from the deteriorating group lost significant proportion of their land despite owning higher average area of 0.62 acre. The difference between these two groups is distinct with respect to

occupations. In the unaffected group about half of the households have farms of different sizes; while in the deteriorating group farms are available with less than one-fourth of the households (Table VI). Similarly, the successful households numbering to three-fourths had also farm holdings. The survey findings indicate that occupations of the household heads appear to be major factor contributing to landlessness. In the unaffected group, some of them had farm holding with leased-in land. Several households were also involved in carpentry, trading etc. which are more productive. More remunerative occupations seem to have contributed towards maintenance of the ownership size by the unaffected group. Lack of necessary skills and capital often prevent farmers from pursuing such occupations.

TABLE VI
**DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE OF CULTIVATING
 HOLDING AND THE LAND OWNERSHIP STATUS**

Ownership Status	Total Households (%)	Household with			Average Size of Farm Holding (Acre)
		No Cultivable Land (%)	Cultivable Land upto 1.0 Acre (%)	Cultivable Land of 1.01 Acre and Above (%)	
Successful	27 (100)	6 (22)	3 (11)	18 (66)	5.50
Deteriorating	27 (100)	21 (78)	4 (15)	2 (7)	0.71
Unaffected	66 (100)	35 (53)	12 (18)	19 (29)	1.17
All Owners	120 (100)	62 (52)	19 (16)	39 (32)	2.04

Source : Field Survey, 1996.

Among other factors such as the size of family and the number of workers in a family which have been observed to be higher in the deteriorating group of households (average size is 4.4 and the number of workers in a family is 1.63). In the unaffected group, family size is 3.4 and the number of working members in the household is 1.3. Economic dependency in both these groups was, thus, the same (2.7 dependents per worker). The above analysis leads us to conclude that occupational

patterns considered to be major factor contributing towards landlessness. Also their levels of productivity appear to have contributed towards this.

Productivity of an occupation being largely determined by the level of education of the worker, further investigation has been made with respect to educational status of the household head. It has been rightly observed that the majority of the household heads from the deteriorating group are illiterate and those who are literate did not go beyond class V, meaning that they are functionally illiterate. On the other hand, the illiterate households in the unaffected group was lower by 13 per cent. Also, more years of schooling by the literate heads was observed in this group. One-fourth of them had above five years of schooling. The analysis confirms that the lack of education is an important factor contributing to the landlessness in rural Bangladesh.

Investigation into capital assets (inclusive of agricultural equipment, trading tools etc.) owned by a household shows that both the deteriorating and the unaffected households have equal capital assets of only Tk. 3000.00 (excluding land and houses) suggesting that non-land asset may not be a major determinant of landlessness.

III.4 Factors Contributing to an Increase in the Ownership Size of the Land-Poor

The land poor here is considered to be those owning land below 1.5 acre based on the maximum land ceiling size by the deteriorating households. There are ten such land-poor from the successful group who were able to increase their size. Six of them were engaged in two occupations simultaneously. Two-thirds of them are literate. Both family size and dependency in these two groups (successful and deteriorating) are found to be almost on the same level. One of the land-poor has however, larger capital assets, engaged in shrimp culture. He is basically a primary school teacher. Multiple occupations by the land-poor household seem to have contributed favourably to an increase in the ownership size of land.

III.5 Factors Causing Landlessness: An Analysis of the Deteriorating Households

The investigation carried out above has tried to identify the factors causing the deterioration in land ownership size comparing mainly the deteriorating and the unaffected households. In the present sub-section, detailed analysis has been carried out exclusively with the twenty seven deteriorating households grouping them into three categories— (a) completely landless—those who became completely landless over time irrespective of their initial ownership size; (b) functionally landless those who had land initially upto 0.50 acre but not completely landless at present and (c) the others who had initially above 0.5 acre. Their numbers are 4, 12 and 11 respectively. At the time of establishment of their households, they had on average 0.44, 0.30 and 2.51 acres respectively, the average for the entire sample being 1.22 acre (Table VII).

TABLE VII
**DISTRIBUTION OF DETERIORATING HOUSEHOLDS BY
 LAND OWNERSHIP STATUS**

(Area in Acre)

Ownership Status	Number of Households	Land Ownership Size at		Land Lost	Number of Years Elapsed
		The Start	Present		
Completely Landless (at Present)	4	0.44	0	0.44	15.0
Functionally Landless (at the Start)	12	0.30	0.12	0.18	12.5
Other Owners	11	2.51	1.64	0.87	17.3
All Households	27	1.22	0.72	0.50	14.8

They, on average, lost half an acre of land over a period of about 15 years (Table VII). The findings furthermore show that four households who became completely landless had an average area of 0.44 acre at the start of their households and they struggled for 15 years to reach the status of landless. There were 12 households who owned only 0.30 acre, but lost only 0.18 acre in 12 years indicating that they performed better. This has been possible mainly through more remunerative occupations. Half of the households were engaged in trading. Only four were wage labourers working in both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. In the case of landless, two did begging

and were compelled to sell their land because of financial crisis. These discussions also indicate that the type of occupation pursued is the primary factor contributing to landlessness.

The opinions of those who sold their land show that the principal cause of land sales is financial crisis, followed by expenditures on marriage of their daughters and also due to sickness. River erosion and seeking foreign jobs are observed to be less important in the study areas; although elsewhere in Bangladesh they are reportedly quite important.¹

IV. CHANGES IN THE SIZE OF LAND OWNERSHIP: REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The earlier analysis indicates that low land ownership size at the start of the household might affect the land size over time. The period elapsed between the establishment of household and the year of survey might also be an important factor. More importantly, the occupation—wage work by a household head was observed to be a dominant cause in the deterioration of land ownership size. Illiteracy and/or low level of schooling also seem to be important. To confirm the above observations, a regression analysis has been carried out for two groups of households—(a) deteriorating households and (b) the successful households, where the dependent variable was taken to be the amount of land lost and gained by the deteriorating and successful households respectively as applicable during the period (Table VIII). The independent variables included in the analysis are—(a) Age of the household head, (b) Years of schooling of the household head, (c) Principal occupation of the household head, (d) Family size, (e) Economic dependency, (f) Household capital assets, (g) Size of the cultivated holding, (h) Size of land owned at the beginning of household, (i) Period elapsed since the establishment of the household, (j) Agricultural wage rate in the village, (k) Adoption of modern rice technology in the village and (l) Change in the land productivity in the village. Among these selected variables, there are inter-relationships leading to multicollinearity. In fact, the empirical exercise showed that it was highly significant between the land ownership size and the size of cultivated holding and also between the period elapsed and the age of the household head. In the regression analysis, therefore, we dropped two variables such as age of the household head and the size of cultivated holding.

¹ BIDS on-going study by Rita Afsar, 2000.

TABLE VIII

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHANGES IN THE LAND OWNERSHIP
SIZE IN TWO GROUPS OF HOUSEHOLDS : REGRESSION RESULTS**

Variables Included	Deteriorating Households		Successful Households	
	Co-efficient	'T' Value	Co-efficient	'T' Value
Agricultural Wage Rate in the Village (Tk.)	4.8817	0.574	(-) 14.1228	(-) 0.702
Principal Occupation of the Household Head	(-) 2.7555	(-) 0.69	(-) 8.4476	(-) 0.062
Family Size (Number)	3.8031	0.221	26.4724	1.024
Land Owned at the Start of Household (Decimals)	0.1205	0.795	(-) 0.0801	(-) 0.672
Value of Capital Assets (Tk.)	(-) 0.0028	(-) 1.270	0.0007*	2.390*
Dependency Ratio (%)	0.0224	0.095	(-) 0.3794	(-) 1.201
Period Elapsed Since the Start of Households (Years)	5.8949*	2.178*	1.6016	0.325
Adoption of Modern Rice Technology in the Village	(-) 29.7383	(-) 0.695	(-) 110.7553	(-) 1.188
Years of Schooling (Number)	(-) 3.1360	(-) 0.305	19.6972	1.698
Productivity Stability in the Farm	22.9847	0.752	(-) 14.8102	(-) 0.189
'R' Square	0.496	—	R ² = 0.527	—

Note: Dummy variables have been used for occupation. Wage work is taken to be '0', otherwise is '1'. In case of modern technology, if there is adoption we use '1', otherwise 0. For productivity, Deterioration has the value = '1', Stable = '2' and Increased = '3'.

The regression analysis relating to amount of land lost by the 'deteriorating households' (twenty seven) shows that only one variable is significantly positive - the period elapsed since the household was established implying that the longer the period elapsed, the larger the amount of land lost. For every year passed about six decimals of land is lost.

The prominent among other variables having positive impact on landlessness in case of deteriorating households are—(a) land ownership size at the start of household and (b) productivity stability in the farm, which are not contrary to our expectation. All rural households always try to keep their land but at the time of crisis when they need to sell land to meet cash needs, they do it generally by disposing of small proportion of land which is expected to be more valuable i.e., more productive. Again, among the land owning ‘deteriorating households’, it is usual that those who have more land will be disposing of greater amount of land to meet their emergency cash requirements. In the other regression for 27 ‘successful’ households, statistically significant positive impact is observed in case of capital assets only, where capital assets of Tk. 10,000.00 helps to accrue seven decimals of land by a household. Among other factors, years of schooling by the household head and family size are found to have positive effect as expected. Both these factors enable higher earnings by the household. Dependency ratio has also the expected sign. Modern technology appears to have negative effect which is not surprising in the coastal belt as simple adoption in a village cannot have significant effect until its coverage is substantial.

In order to specifically identify the factors affecting the land ownership size of the ‘deteriorating households’, a comparative exercise has been carried out with the similar group of the unaffected households. To make the groups adequately comparable, households from the unaffected group in the land ownership size in the range of $\mu \pm 2\sigma$ i.e., (50 to 194 decimals) estimated on the basis of the deteriorating households were selected. The number of such households was only 16 out of 66 in the group. In the present regression covering these sixteen households, the dependent variable is taken to be land area owned by the ‘unaffected households’. The exercise unfortunately does not find any variable statistically significant, either positive or negative (Table IX). The regression co-efficients are also not always of expected sign. The analysis needs larger number of samples to arrive at more definite conclusion. In the regression analyses carried out, the most contradictory results are observed to be the adoption of modern technology of rice in the village, which in case of ‘deteriorating households’, decelerated the growth of landlessness; while for the success cases it has resulted in declining land ownership size (Table VIII). It seems that the village dummy variable used for the modern technology is not appropriate. It should perhaps include the area covered by modern rice by the households.

TABLE IX

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE LAND OWNERSHIP SIZE IN THE COMPARABLE GROUP
FROM THE UNAFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS: REGRESSION RESULTS**

Variables Included	Co-efficient	'T' Value
Agriculture Wage Rate in the Village (Tk.)	3.067	0.7373
Adoption of Modern Technology	38.783	0.3905
Family Size (Number)	(-) 24.682	0.3987
Productivity Stability in the Farm	(-) 16.804	0.6313
Period Elapsed (Years)	(-) 0.044	0.9895
Value of Capital Assets (Tk.)	0.002	0.5768
Principal Occupation of the Household Head	(-) 9.316	0.8514
Size of Cultivated Holding (Decimals)	0.35	0.7677
Dependency Ratio (%)	0.062	0.6327
Years of Schooling (Number)	(-) 3.840	0.6227
Age of the Household Head	0.023	0.9937
R^2	0.4640	—

Note : Explanations of the variables may be seen in Table VIII.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Land in rural Bangladesh is the main productive asset and without it, people remain under-employed and live on wage labour. Most of them are poverty stricken as wage works are poorly remunerative and they remain under-employed. Landlessness is, thus, a matter of serious concern of the nation. Different estimates show that landless people are about half of the country's population. The current study estimates this to be 54 per cent in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Completely landless is estimated to be about 8 per cent. There are actually very few studies on the landlessness in Bangladesh. These studies being based mainly on secondary information suggest that demographic factors and the existing land size and the credit market are the principal factors contributing to landlessness. There are hardly any published data on the process of landlessness. The present study is expected to fill that gap particularly in the context of the coastal regions of the country. It attempts to identify the households which have

experienced deterioration in the land ownership size and the factors contributing to such deterioration. The field survey for the study which was carried out in six villages of different salinity levels covering 120 households, indicate that since the establishment of households, different households behave differently. There are cases of both improvement and deterioration in land ownership size.

Grouping of the sample households enable us to identify three categories—(a) ‘successful households’ who could increase their ownership size, (b) ‘deteriorating households’ who lost part or full of their land and (c) ‘unaffected households’ those who could keep their ownership size unchanged. They represent 22.5, 22.5 and 55 per cent of the total samples, respectively. The ‘successful households’ had larger ownership size of 3.42 acres compared to 1.22 and 0.84 acre owned by the deteriorating and the unaffected households, respectively. The successful households increased their size by 43 per cent (amounting to 1.48 acre) while the amount of land lost by the deteriorating group is estimated to be about 0.50 acre or by 40 per cent over their initial land size. It took 15 years to loose such area. In the survey year, completely landless households estimated to be 8 per cent and the functionally landless households comprised 54 per cent which is close to the national average.

Landlessness in rural Bangladesh may be caused by several factors. The main factors identified in the present study are the occupational patterns, their productivity and the literacy level of the household heads. Wage works are observed to be predominant among the deteriorating households in the survey areas. They are also overwhelmingly illiterate and have small capital assets (Tk. 3,000.00). For land accruing households, the analysis indicates that capital asset is the only statistically significant factor contributing towards the increase in land ownership size. Multiple occupations of the household head also helped maintain the initial land size. The findings of the study suggest that the growth in landlessness can be checked through provision of remunerative employment, and enhancing literacy level which can assist in handling of financial crisis, and other socio-economic constraints faced by a household in rural Bangladesh. Landlessness is actually a complex dynamic process involving different socio-economic factors. It needs more indepth study to understand this process adequately and also to undertake appropriate remedial measures to combat it in rural Bangladesh.

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