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### **Dimensions of Seasonal Poverty in Greater Rangpur: Learning from the Ground**

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# Dimensions of Seasonal Poverty in Greater Rangpur: Learning from the Ground<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Amidst reasonable progress in poverty situation, eliminating seasonal poverty during late September to mid November in ecologically vulnerable parts of northern district in Bangladesh is identified as a key component in the poverty reduction strategy paper. Besides inter year fluctuation of poverty ratio, intra year fluctuation in head count ratio between peak and slack season is also an important aspect of poverty monitoring. The rural head count which was found maximum during second quarter (October –December) and lowest in fourth quarter (April-June) coincided with the periods of *boro* (crop season) harvest. Process related to this decline in purchasing power of the vulnerable segment of people. Seasonal variations in poverty between peak and slack season do matter and especially in the crisis prone years with strong implications for public action and risk insurance (Sen, 1995). Traditionally two major periods of seasonal deficits were identified one starting in late September and extending up to early November and the other starting in late March and upto early May. The incidence of early summer lean season has declined significantly due to expansion of winter planting of rice but the autumn lean season affects widely ( Rahman, 1995).

Bangladesh is predominately a rural based country where nearly 85 percent people live in rural areas and three fifths of rural labour force live on agriculture directly or indirectly. So, decent employment as well as decent income opportunity depends mainly on the nature of agricultural development. Seasonal scarcity of employment due to cropping cycle as well as deflating purchasing power due to price hike affect the poorest of the poor adversely. Agricultural labourers are the main victims of the seasonal poverty, as most of the labourers lack other skills for survival. Other occupational groups who live from hand to mouth also suffered badly due to lack of employment opportunity, which resulted from seasonal poverty. It is observed that during the *monga*<sup>3</sup> period, the near poor have to face the problem as they lack cash so they try to manage their livelihood by cutting extra expenditures. As a result, other professional groups who rely on the non-poor for their employment generation become victims.

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<sup>1</sup> The opinions in the article are authors own, hence it do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any other organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> Seasonal poverty in late September to Mid November

**Matrix 01: Cropping Cycle of Major Crop**

	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
<b>Paddy</b>												
Aus	••••				■■■■							
B. Aman	••••								■■■■			
Trans Aman					••••	••••				■■■■		
Local Boro		■■■■							••••	••••	•	
HYV Boro		■■■■								•	••••	••••
Tobacco	■■■■	■■■■						••••	••••			
Sowing	••••											
Harvesting					■■■■							

From the above matrix, it is clear that scope of employment opportunity for the agricultural labourers is almost nil during late September to mid November. Because of the standing *amon* crop, there is almost no scope for agricultural works and employment during that period. Although there is a scope for sowing *tobacco* in that period, but it is quite impossible to employ huge number of unemployed poor in tobacco production; as the land under cultivation of tobacco is decreasing day by day. On the other hand, huge supply of labour also decreases the wage rate.

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) experimented an action research project, namely Local Level Poverty Monitoring System (LLPMS) to develop a community based poverty-monitoring system with the help of functionaries of local government and local people during 2003-2005 under the auspices of CBMS Network, Philippines and IDRC Canada. A database was also developed under LLPMS through using Natural Resource Database (NRDB)-a computer software. A tri party Memorandum of understanding was signed among Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), CBMS Network and Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) for developing database at some poverty stricken areas in northern part of Bangladesh. PPRC collected and processed data and BARD provided support for developing database at the poverty stricken areas. In the mean time, four databases of Kurigram, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Nilphamamri districts have been developed by using NRDB. The main feature of this database is identification of vulnerable villages and vulnerable households. As a process, first of all, vulnerable villages were identified through Upazila and Union Vulnerability

mapping. Finally, households of several vulnerable villages were interviewed for getting clear ideas about their sufferings. Under HH survey, 21,332 households of 107 villages were surveyed. The article is based on the experiences gained from the process.

## 2. Objectives

The general objective of the article is to discuss the various dimensions of seasonal poverty and identify the actions required for solving the problem. The specific objectives of the article are as follows:

1. To investigate the cause of seasonal poverty;
2. To analyze the socio economic profile of the poor who are affected by the seasonal poverty;
3. To investigate coping strategy of rural poor under seasonal poverty;
4. To identify actions required for solving the problems.

## 3. Methodology

The article was written on the basis of primary and secondary information. Secondary information was collected from the relevant books, journals and periodicals while primary data was collected from the individual HH. Household information of six villages of Kurigram district was analyzed from the database of PPRC. The names of the six villages are mentioned below:

Table 01: Names of the Surveyed Villages

Village	Union
Bamandanga	Fulmari
Datbhanga	Char Dhantola
Judurchar	Jadurchar Purbapara
Ramna	Masterpara
Bhurungamari	Char Kamat Angaria(Bashnipara)
Andarijhar	Heldanga

Feedback of elected representatives and officials of greater Rangpur district in a workshop on preparedness of seasonal poverty under the initiative of Local Government Division, M/O LGRD&C, district administration of Rangpur and Power and Participation Research Centre held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2006 in the Town Hall, Rangpur is also articulated in the article.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Causes of Seasonal Poverty**

Scarcity of employment and food in a specific time is not a new thing to the people of this area. The people of greater Rangpur district are very much conversant with the problem of food scarcity during the time of late September to mid November. People know it very well that during this period there would be less work in the field and hence their purchasing power would be lessened. Eventually, their suffering will be increased due to scarcity of food. Now the question is : why the problem exists? To single out one cause would be a difficult task. There are several dimensions of the causes. Although poverty is an individual phenomenon related to the capacity of a person, it has also geographical implication. River erosion, flood , poor communication network have implication on the vulnerability of the people. Lot of people become landless by losing their own lands every year. The sandy soil in some areas is also a problem for maximizing the potential use of agricultural land in this area. The social dimension of the problem is that good portions of people are labourers and land distribution is highly skewed towards the rich. Due to abundant supply against low demand of laborer and absence of industry, wage rate remains lower at that time. The wage rate of the agricultural labourer in Kurigram district as a whole varies from Tk 49 to 64. During seasonal poverty period (October – November), the average wage rate for agricultural labourer is Tk. 49 (inclusive meal) which is registered Tk. 58 and 64 in pre and post crisis period. That implies wage rate drops at the rate of 15 percent during seasonal poverty period and recovery at 30.6 percent in the post seasonal crisis period. The small size of labour market, the causal nature of employment and large seasonal fluctuation in employment and the wage rate make the large number of landless labourers weak in the bargaining power. Very little benefit thus trickles down for the poor through agricultural labour market (Hye 1996). *The individual dimension* of poverty is that people are lacking in

diversified skill and farsightedness. Ignorance, illiteracy, sickness and idleness also aggravate the situation. *The governance dimension* is that there is lack of coordination among the activities of Government, Non Government and private organisations. Leakage in resource transfer, mistargetting, and the relief orientation in the development programme make it difficult to serve the needy people. So, the root causes of the problem are deeply rooted in the socio-economic conditions as well as in the individual habit. Rahman (2007) identified four facets of vulnerabilities in this area i.e. seasonal drop of agricultural wage rate affect the primarily agricultural dependent households; pocket of ecological vulnerability on account of river erosion, flood prone and sandy soil; an unpredictable variation in year to year severity by timing and scaling of flooding and high landlessness and low diversity of livelihoods.

## 4.2 Socio Economic Dimension of Seasonal Poverty

### 4.2.1 Poverty Status

As poverty is multidimensional in nature, it is very difficult to capture the poverty by using one indicator. Self-perception method was used for assessing poverty situation in the study areas. Household heads assessed their condition on the basis of their capacity to meet food requirements. Households, which face the problem of food supply persistently and occasionally according to their need were ranked as ‘deficit round the year’ and ‘sometimes deficit households’ respectively. On the other hand households, which manage food according to their needs are considered as ‘non-poor households’. Two distinct types of non-poor households are identified; some of those are breakeven and some of those are surplus. For analysis, chronic and occasional deficit households are considered as very poor and poor respectively while breakeven and surplus households are considered as non-poor.

Table 02: Poverty situation in the surveyed village

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Very Poor	179	11.9
Poor	590	39.4
Non Poor	582	48.7
Total	1,499	100.0

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

It was found that 12 percent households considered them as very poor and 40 percent households as poor. The non-poor households constitute 48 percent of the households. Characteristics of poor and very poor households reveal that 13 percent households face the

problems of inadequate number of meals round the year and more than one quarter of households face inadequate meal some months in a year.

Table 03: Experience of Poverty by Poor and Very Poor Households

	Very Poor	Poor	All
Inadequate meal round the year	37.43	5.42	12.87
Inadequate meal some months in a year	22.35	29.66	27.96
Protein deficiency	1.12	8.81	7.02

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

Theoretically, households that face problem to take food according to their needs some months of a year are considered as seasonal poor. But programme purpose the need of the households, which face food scarcity, round the year should be considered for solving the problem of seasonal poverty. Experience in inadequate meal some months is found higher among the poor households as 30 percent poor households compared to 23 percent of very poor households face the problem. Inadequate number of meals round the year is higher among the very poor households and this constituted 38 percent.

#### 4.2.2 Livelihood of the poor households

##### a. Housing

One of the basic needs of the people is housing. Normally, a roof material of housing is considered as indicator for poverty study. Due to geographical vulnerability of the areas, ownership of homestead land was considered as indicator for the study. Due to river erosion, some of the households lost their homestead land and were forced to live in other areas.

Table 04: Housing Status of the Households

Land Ownership	Very Poor	Poor	Non Poor	All
Own	65.92	73.56	87.12	79.25
On Others Land	22.35	14.41	6.85	11.67
On Khas (government) land	1.12	2.37	0.82	1.47
Squatting on embankment	10.61	9.66	5.21	7.61
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

More than one thirds of very poor and one fourth of the poor do not have own homestead land. These households live on others' land, government land or roadside and embankment.

Some households (13%) who lost their homestead land by river erosion were forced to live on embankment or others' land. They can manage food as per their requirements and they identified them as non-poor household. Experience shows that the household having higher number of earners is comparatively in a better-off position in spite of lacking homestead land.

b. Ownership in cultivated land

In an agrarian society like Bangladesh ownership of reasonable portion of cultivable land provides food security. So, indicator for assessing the ownership of cultivable land among the households is essential. Two types of vulnerabilities related to cultivated land were found in the area: one is lack of cultivable land and another is inability to cultivate due to sandy soil.

Table 05: Distribution of the households according to their ownership of cultivable land

	Type of HH (self assessment)			All
	Very Poor	Poor	Non Poor	
Landless ( 0)	94.41	81.86	45.89	65.84
Functionally Landless (<=.5)	3.91	12.88	17.12	13.88
Marginal (.5-1)	1.12	2.88	15.62	8.87
Small Farmer (1-2.5)	0.56	2.20	12.88	7.20
Medium (2.5-5)	0.00	0.17	4.25	2.13
Large 500 dec	0.00	0.00	4.25	2.07
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

More than two thirds of the households don't have cultivable land. Disaggregate information suggests that 94 percent of very poor and 82 percent of poor households do not have any cultivable land. Possession of increased portion of cultivable land lowered the possibility of being poor.

c.. Profession of the Household Head

Profession of the household head is commonly used for assessing the welfare of the households. Flow of income and stability of source of income of the household can be envisaged from the profession of the household head. It is observed that poor households rely on risky and non-remunerative profession that limits their opportunity to earn reasonable income according to their needs. In most cases it is also observed that irregularity in flow of income compels them to develop survival strategy by losing assets.

Table 06: Profession of the Household Heads

	Very Poor (N=179)	Poor (N=590)	Non Poor (N=730)	All
Agriculture	1.68	9.66	38.22	22.62
Agri. labour	47.49	45.93	20.27	33.62
Non-agri. labour	18.99	13.73	10.27	12.68
Rickshaw puller	9.50	12.20	5.48	8.61
Small trader	1.12	7.12	9.18	7.40
Large trader	0.00	0.51	0.82	0.60
Self employed	3.91	3.90	3.70	3.80
Service	1.68	3.56	11.10	7.00
Others (old, disable, begging, house wife etc)	15.64	3.39	0.96	3.67
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

Considering the main occupation of HH head, it is found that incidence of poverty is higher among the households who are dependent on selling physical labour in agriculture, non agriculture and rickshaw pulling. Among the very poor and poor households, more than three fourths and two thirds of household heads respectively are dependent on selling physical labour. It is also observed that dependency on selling physical labour for survival is higher than other areas of Bangladesh.

#### d. Education

Knowledge gained through education helps to unfold inherent capacity of a person. Deprivation in knowledge inhibits a person to explore his or her own potentiality; hence s/he fails to take advantage of the market.

Table 07 : Educational Qualification of the household Head

	Very Poor (N=179)	Poor (N=590)	Non Poor (730)	Total (N=1499)
Illiterate	88.27	80.17	66.03	74.25
Can read-write	0.56	0.68	1.10	0.87
Primary education	8.94	11.69	13.56	12.27
Secondary education	1.68	4.92	8.08	6.07
SSC & above	0.56	2.54	11.23	6.54
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

Nearly three fourths of the household heads are illiterate which suggests that the deprivation of knowledge among the household heads in this region is higher compared to

national level. More than four fifths of the very poor and poor household heads are illiterate. As a result, transforming huge manpower to human resources is the most important challenge in this area.

### 4.2.3 Opportunity

Disadvantaged section of people are usually lacking in access to various support services especially financial resources. The poor networking and little interpersonal relationship with the power structure impede taking opportunity of the different support services. Experience in migration, involvement in NGO activities and access to loan from the moneylender were considered for assessing the opportunity of households.

Table 08 : Opportunity of the households on the basis of selected indicators

	Very Poor (N=179)	Poor (N=590)	Non Poor (730)	Total (N=1499)
Percentage of HH are member of NGO	27.93	34.41	32.88	32.89
Recourse to loan from Moneylender	12.85	21.53	9.83	13.88
Recourse to Migration	38.55	51.69	38.49	43.70

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

It is observed that one third of the households are members of Non Government Organizations and mostly they got micro credit for fulfilling their capital requirements. Nearly one fourth of the very poor households and one third of the poor and non poor households are members of Non Government Organizations. So, very poor have less access to micro credit. Both demand and supply factors are responsible for poor access to NGO activities. As demand factor, very poor households said that it is very difficult to continue weekly installment from the irregular flow of their household income. On the other hand, absence of homestead land or small portion of homestead land inhibits them from taking home based income generating activities. In supply side, the NGO officials face problem to enroll the squatter population due to lack of their permanent address. In spite of huge flow of money for micro credit in the rural area a good portion of households in this area are indebted to moneylenders for fulfilling their emergency needs. More than one fifth of poor households and 13 percent of very poor households are indebted to moneylenders. Dependency on moneylenders of the non-poor households is lower than other segment of households. Major heads of utilization of loan from moneylenders are household expenditure, migration cost, house repair cost and dowry demand. Poor and very poor households utilized their loan amount in food consumption and repairing house while non

poor households use this amount for migration. Capacity to migrate to other areas creates opportunity to enjoy better livelihood if the migration is rewarding. Tendency to migration is found higher among the poor households and more than one half of poor households migrated to other areas compared to more than one third of very poor and non poor households. Nature of migration by different socio economic groups is not identical.

Table 09 : Nature of Migration Among the Migrant Households

	Very Poor (N=179)	Poor (N=590)	Non Poor (730)	Total (N=1499)
One/more member migrated during October - November	39.13	20.98	7.47	17.10
One/more members migrated to relatives house during crisis	0.00	1.64	2.14	1.68
Full family migrated during Crisis	1.45	0.66	0.00	0.46
Migrated for some months in a year	39.13	44.26	38.08	41.07
Migrated at regular intervals round the year	20.29	32.46	52.31	39.69

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

Among the migrated household members, one-third migrate to other areas as regular intervals or for some months of a year and this type of migration was followed by seasonal migration during crisis period. Temporary migration is found higher during *monga* among the very poor and poor households while regular migration is found higher among the non poor households. Some problems related to physical inability, aging, financial constraints, lack of information and poor networking discouraged the household to migrate. On the other hand, lack of opportunity to get involved in respectable profession in the own community encourages comparatively better off household to migrate.

### 4.3 . Coping with Seasonal Poverty

*“Earning member of HH travel from one place to another by truck and in ceiling of a bus. This is shameful. We want to stop this humiliation” - A Chairman*

*“An ant also preserves some foods for winter, so improving our habit of saving is essential”  
-A Chairman*

Coping with seasonal poverty was found to differ from one area to another. Broadly, two types of coping mechanisms are observed in the affected areas. One is by utilizing own capacity and another is with the help of society and state. Own mechanism includes selling of labor or crops in advance, selling productive assets, reducing number of meals, switching over to inferior

food, utilizing saving and migrating to other places of the country, taking loan from informal source etc. Coping mechanism with the help of society or state includes depending on relief, joining the relief-oriented programmes of the government or NGOs, begging, etc. Coping strategies further can be divided into two groups on the basis of the impact of strategies. Some strategies are followed to cope with the seasonal crisis without any threat for losing well-being in future while some of the strategies have threat for further well-being due to increased indebtedness or losing property . It is observed that some households adopted more than one strategy for coping with seasonal poverty.

Table 10: Coping strategy Seasonal Poverty in 2006 by Poor and Very Poor Households

Nature of Strategy	Very Poor	Poor	All
<b>A. Possibility for further financial liability</b>			
Loan from NGO	16.76	21.19	20.16
Loan from money lender	7.82	14.24	12.74
Selling temporary asset	3.91	6.44	5.85
Mortgage	2.23	0.85	1.17
Selling fixed asset	2.68	0.51	0.95
Selling labour in advance	0.00	0.17	0.13
Selling domestic utensil	1.12	0.68	0.78
<b>B. Less possibility for further financial liability</b>			
Taking inferior quality of food	31.28	28.31	29.00
Taking less number of meal	33.52	24.92	26.92
Migration	18.99	28.47	26.27
Government help	26.26	25.76	25.88
Relatives house	3.35	1.02	1.56
Personal help	15.64	5.76	8.06
Help from NGO	0.56	0.51	0.52

Source: PPRC Monga HH Survey 2007

It is observed that taking inferior quality of food or less number of meal are most popular strategies for coping with the seasonal poverty and 29 and 27 percent households adopted it respectively. Migration to other places in the country is observed as the next popular strategy for coping with the problems and receiving government relief. Migration and relying on government relief as a strategy for coping with the problem was adopted by more than one-quarter households in each case. Other strategies related to without further liabilities are taking help from NGO, relatives and community people. Very poor people have more access to personal help and government help than the poor households. Strategies by changing food habit through

adopting inferior quality of food and curtailing number of meals is found higher among the very poor than the poor households.

Strategies that have chance for increasing further financial liability includes taking loan , selling assets, mortgaging land, selling labour in advance etc. Twenty percent households took loan from NGOs and thirteen percent from the moneylenders. More poor households than the very poor households used these coping strategies for solving the problem of seasonal poverty. Six percent households sold their household assets for solving the problem. So it is portrayed in the above analysis that government support, household's own mechanism and community initiative created opportunity to cope with the seasonal poverty in a relatively more positive way.

#### 4.4 Participation in Safety Net Programme

Transfer of resources through various programmes for protecting the status of vulnerable section of people is called safety net programme. There are several safety net programmes of the government in Bangladesh although few programmes having significant coverage. Twenty-nine programmes under government were noted in the monga affected areas . These programmes can be broadly divided into three groups i.e cash transfer, kind transfer and conditional cash transfer programme. The major safety net programmes are Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP), Female Secondary Stipend Programme (FSSP), Old Age Allowance, Widow Allowance etc. Under VGF, victims of disaster get food support for a specific period of time while the distressed women get food support along with opportunity to have skill training for a longer cycle under VGD programme.

**Table 11: Participation in Safety Net Programmes under Government Initiative**

	Very Poor (N=179)	Poor (N=590)	Non Poor (730)	Total (N=1499)
Vulnerable Group Feeding	43.58	39.15	23.01	31.82
Allowance for aged people	7.26	3.22	1.51	2.87
Rice through Open Market Sales	6.15	2.88	1.23	2.47
Vulnerable Group Development	2.79	2.54	2.05	2.33
Allowance for widow	2.79	1.53	0.55	1.20
School feeding	6.15	6.10	16.58	11.21
Primary Education Stipend Program	7.82	12.88	10.55	11.14
Sanitation: Partial ring-slab support	7.82	17.12	6.58	10.87
Sanitation: Full ring-slab support	1.68	5.25	2.88	3.67
Female Secondary Stipend Programme	3.35	3.56	3.56	3.54

Among the government safety net programmes coverage of vulnerable group feeding (VGF) is recorded highest as nearly one third of the households participated in the programme. This programme was followed by school feeding (11%) and stipend programme of primary education , sanitation assistance (14 %). It is observed that the participation of the very poor group and poor in the food based safety net programme is higher than the non-poor group while in education and health programme the participation of poor and non-poor is higher than the very poor households. Considering that the non-poor have some households, which are near poor the household selection of food based safety net programme is moderately fair. As the functionaries of local government are involved in the process of selection, targeting efficiency can be further increased by developing a system at the Union Parishad. Considering the coverage of NGO programme it is found that, the prominent programme of NGO sector is micro credit. It was opined by the people of local areas that there is very small opportunity to be benefited from the micro credit operation during seasonal poverty. People who have invested money earlier in productive income generating activities can be benefited from the micro credit during seasonal poverty. Food support is crucial for meeting the emergency need of seasonal poverty.

#### **4.5 Consequence of Seasonal Poverty**

The consequence of seasonal poverty in economic arena is well known to all. From the economic perspective of a household, lower food consumption , frequent diseases due to low quality food consumption during crisis and low capacity development are regarded as the results of seasonal poverty. But food scarcity has adverse effect on the mental health also. People are embarrassed during the crisis for their vulnerability and helplessness, which lowered their self-respect. As social implication, the extent of child marriage, violence against women increased and sometimes resulted in divorce or separation. The squatter people usually live on the embankment where the social norms and customs are missing. Due to lack of social norms and customs one kind of cultural poverty exists and people are brought up in a very weak bondage. Eventually polygamy and polyandry are regarded as common things to the people.

#### 4.6. Preparatory Action Required for Solving the Problem

*We have to be proactive rather than reactive - A Upazila Nirbahi Officer*

Short, medium and long-term action plans are required for solving the problem. Short-term plan is required mainly for coping with the upcoming crisis efficiently while mid and long term plans are required for avoiding the bad experiences of seasonal poverty and suffering of the people on a sustained basis.

**4.6.1. The duration of short term plan is one year. Under short term plan following programme can be undertaken.**

- 1. Preparing a Database at the Union Level:** Coordination of Government and Non Government activities especially during crisis situation should be strengthened. Experience shows that GOs, NGOs and Private Organisations channelise huge resources. But uncoordinated efforts make it difficult to ensure optimum use of these resources. A database at the Union level incorporating the information of ultra poor, labourers and other vulnerable sections of people is essential for serving the disadvantaged during crisis period. *Union Parishad* can be given the responsibility of coordination at the grassroots level under the supervision of Upazila administration for avoiding overlapping and duplication of resource transfer.
- 2. Assessing the Actual Need:** The Upazila and Union Disaster Management Committee should have pre assessment of the problem, resource requirement for solving the problem and its budgetary implication considering the geographical and household risk.
- 3. Encouraging Crop Diversification:** Motivating farmers for crop diversification specially introducing maize in the affected area along with ensuring proper marketing facility should get priority. Kitchen Gardening (pumpkin, gourd, bean and some other spices) can also be given proper emphasis for the poor people. Some trees especially Indian olive tree in the affected areas can be planted. As olive can be harvested in the *monga* period, the household would be benefited by earning cash during monga period. Short duration rice can be introduced in the area for harvesting in the Monga period.
- 4. Promotion of Areas Specific Skill:** Technical and financial support can be provided to the traditional professional groups for promotion of area specific skill. *Satranji (a kind of mat)* in Rangpur , jute bag , weaving and silk related enterprises in other areas can be promoted with developing adequate marketing infrastructure. Existing skill of making

handicrafts can be utilised by giving advanced training, credit support along by developing marketing linkage with the business center.

5. **Influencing Policy:** Some people can be sent abroad for job under government arrangement by applying quota for the people specially disadvantaged in this area. For migrating to other places within the country, some supports can be provided in the form of micro credit for protecting them from the moneylenders. Distributing rice at a lower price at open market during crisis is another way of reducing their vulnerability.

#### 4.6.2 Medium Term (for Three Years)

1. **Reducing Infrastructure Barrier for Industry:** Infrastructure barriers for industrial development in this area can be removed by taking some policy measures i.e. increasing electricity coverage, supplying gas, announcing tax holiday for setting up industry, reducing toll of bridge for carrying industrial goods etc.
2. **Strengthening Governance:** Leakage and targeting problem of public programmes can be minimized by ensuring good governance. For maximum utilization of resources, all resources should be transferred in the form of **Block Grant** to the *Union Parishad*. This initiative would help to undertake need-based project and reduce political influence in implementing programme. The Union Parishad has less freedom on use of resources under special allocation, as they are not consulted during project preparation and implementation.
3. **Transforming Nature of Safety Net Programmes:** The relief-oriented nature of some safety net programme makes people relief dependent. So, inclusion of some works rather than only relief will solve problem of targeting as well as removing relief mentality. If works are made mandatory the non-poor will be de-motivated. The safety net programme for the disabled and disadvantaged group (old, chronically ill etc.) should be introduced or continued as unconditional resource transfer.
4. **Community Based Organsiation:** Developing saving habit for meeting the problem is essential. On the other hand, awareness of the people about the benefit of networking should be developed. Developing Community Based Organisation (CBO) can help to develop saving habit as well as awareness. Ward wise cooperative or other form of

community organizations may be encouraged to this end. Development programme related to the changing mental getup to be self-sufficient could be introduced.

5. **Capacity Building:** Entrepreneurs development in the field of business, cottage and small-scale industry for boosting rural economy in the areas is essential. For developing entrepreneur in this area, a package programme including training, credit and market information can be undertaken. There is huge potentiality of entrepreneurship development in the sector of poultry, livestock, fishery and food processing in this area.

#### 4.6.3. Long Term Plan (More than Three Years)

1. **Structure Building:** Excavation or re-excavation of rivers or canals and making dam or other structure for controlling the current of river are the ways for reducing the problem of river erosion. The local people and the elected representatives of the grassroots level should be consulted in preparing the structure. Agril. based and labourer intensive industry specially banana processing, bamboo and cane industry can be set up in the area. Private investors can be rewarded for taking this kind of initiative. Developing storing facility to save perishable agricultural products is essential. Barrier of physical infrastructure can be removed by increasing networks of rural roads.
2. **Development of Livestock and Poultry Sector:** People in this area rear local variety poultry birds and there is huge potentiality of cow rearing in the char areas. Providing technical and financial support for rearing poultry birds commercially and developing linkage with milk processing unit like Milk Vitae has huge potentiality in this area.
3. **Development of Fishery Sector:** Some areas have tremendous potentiality for *lobster* especially in Rnagpur. Provision of full support to the private entrepreneurs can help exploitation of full potentiality of production in fishery sector. The fishermen can be provided with nets and boats on credit at a very low rate of interest with a view to sustain their status.

#### 4.7. Employment Generation Programme During Monga

*Relief-oriented programme should be replaced by some sorts of work – A UNO*

Conventional type of earthwork under safety net programme becomes difficult during crisis period due to lack of scope for earth digging as standing crop remains in the field. So, finding alternative works during seasonal poverty remains a challenge. Some income generating activities along with the public works programme mentioned below can be undertaken during the Monga period:

##### **A. Income Generating Activities:**

1. Encouraging goat rearing can be an effective weapon for fighting against the problem of Monga. According to a Chairman of UP, a household having at least three goats can be able to meet the crisis situation without help from others. In the *char* area, there is a potentiality of goat rearing.
2. Existing Handicrafts Enterprises can be promoted by ensuring marketing facility. Entrepreneurs can take the opportunity of low wage rate of this area. Imparting advanced training and providing other supports can develop existing skill of people on handicrafts making.
3. Early bean cultivation on the road sides may be encouraged;
4. Apiculture in many areas that have no scarcity of water in the ponds may be patronized.
5. Napier cultivation for fodder along with beef fattening can be encouraged specially in the char areas;

##### **B. Works Programme**

1. Works programme can be implemented for brick **soling**, maintenance of *pucca* road, development of *hat bazar*, social forestry, maintenance of educational and religious institutions etc during Monga Period.
2. NGO can also support the works programme during Monga period in consultation with the functionaries of Union Parishad. On the other hand, every NGO in the area may develop a reserve fund by retaining a percentage of its income for serving its beneficiaries during Monga Period. NGOs are relaxing the repayment schedule during crisis which should be continued.

## **Conclusion**

Seasonal Poverty in greater Rangpur district has connection with geographical and socio economic condition and individual habit. Comprehensive outlook about the problem and a holistic plan is required for solving the problem. Although the problem is seasonal (Late September to Mid November) but the problem should be viewed considering the livelihood patterns round the year of different professional groups and socio economic context of every area. On the other hand, development of the poor along with the non-poor should be given due priority as economic capacity of the non-poor is also a determinant factor for reducing the vulnerability of the poor by creating employment opportunity. The local government at the grassroots level i.e. Union Parishad should be strengthened for taking need based development programmes. A database for every union incorporating the information of household and community vulnerability at village level is a prerequisite for taking need based development programme. The Union Parishad must ensure coordination of all activities by different organisations. Finally, some area specific income generating activities can be promoted along with undertaking some public works programme for employment generation for reducing their vulnerability. For reducing geographical vulnerability, river control and development of agro based industry can be given due priority. In the mean time, the government has taken 100 days employment programme with special emphasis on the poverty stricken areas of Bangladesh. A new variety of rice has been developed which can be harvested in late October. NGOs are providing flexible micro credit for undertaking small enterprises. In that way the issue of seasonal poverty is focused in different policies that would help to develop a long-term policy to address the issue.

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# PROBLEM TREE OF SEASONAL POVERTY

