

# Migration, Immobility and Climate change: Gender dimensions of poverty in coastal Bangladesh

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Theme: Climate Change and Migration

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# Migration situation

Bangladesh is **one of the most vulnerable** countries to the impacts of climate change

The frequency of tropical **cyclones and floods** have increased in the coastal region

**Storm surges** accompanied by heavy rainfall and high tides make the coastal belt susceptible to both floods and coastal erosion

**Coastal Communities dependency** on the environment coupled with **extreme climate events and their social and livelihood impacts** have led to a rise in the number of **environmental migrants**.

**Slow onset changes** such as sea level rise, salinization of agricultural land and desertification also influences the communities' decision to migrate

**Sea level rise** is one of the most dramatic manifestations of climate change and will be a major driver of forced migration in the medium to long term

## Global Trends



Migration will increase - due to demography, economic disparities, climate change, conflict and poor governance

Migration has become more complex – blurred distinction between legal-illegal and forced-voluntary

Migration is more temporary and circular than before

South-south migration is increasing

Migration is increasingly an urban phenomenon

More stakeholders involved in discussing migration at various forums

But also: Increased negative public mood towards migration

# Background of the study

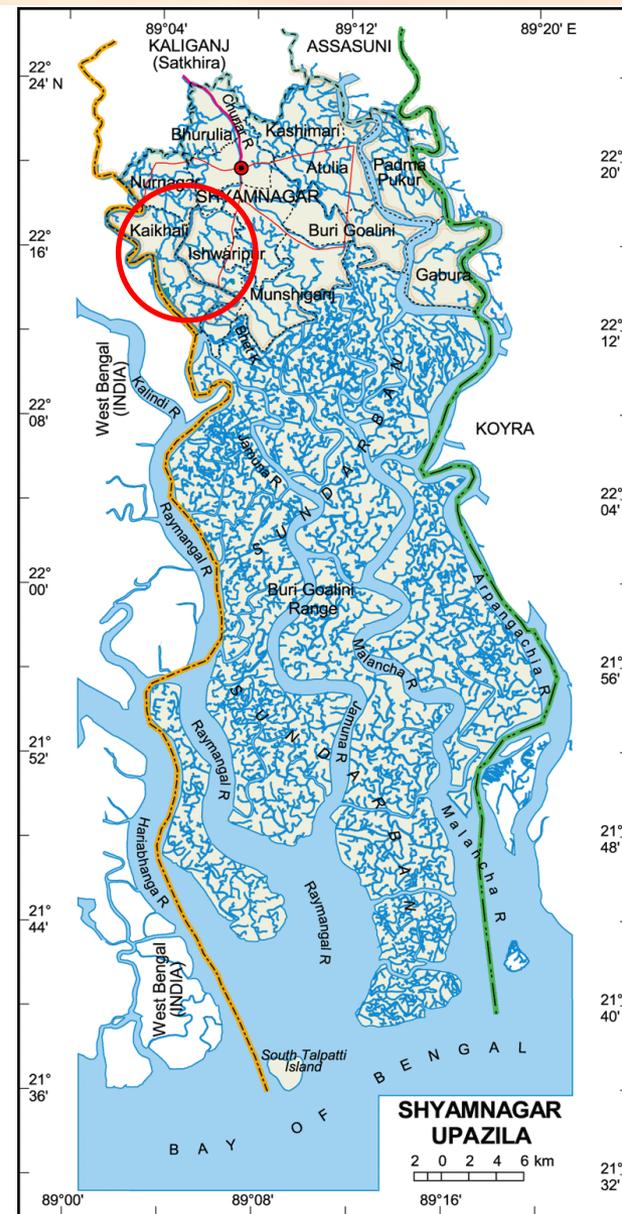
**Focus of the paper:** Climate-induced migration and immobility of the ‘trapped population’.

**Area of study:** South West Bangladesh, Khulna division, Satkhira district

**Villages:** Bongshipur village (Ishwaripur union) and Jayakhali village (Kaikhali union)

## Why trapped population? Who are these people?

This ‘trapped population’ in the context of this study refers to the women who are not able to migrate, while the husbands or male members migrate. Women and young girls fall within the ‘poorest of the poor’ or most vulnerable category, but their experiences in this environment vary according to inequalities such as age, class, religion, etc. These experiences of women and their lack of capability of movement from the place of origin have been analyzed in this paper.



# Immobility

- Less than 1% of all the people interviewed (210 households) had women migrating. Although the conditions in these areas have been deteriorating since the increase of natural calamities and disasters, women have stayed back in the houses taking care of children and the household.
- Migration in this area has been primarily to bigger towns and cities such as Khulna, Jessore and Dhaka, women have not been able to move as easily during hazards when compared to men.
- The 'trapped populations', in this case women, must be based on the distinction between ability, desire and need to move. Trapped populations are those people who not only aspire but also need to move for their own protection but who nevertheless lack the ability. The women interviewed showed their desire to migrate but lacked ability to move.
- Those who are denied access to mobility entirely, whether through lack of various kinds of capital and/or through other constraints such as climatic disasters or lack of policies, are likely to have a distinct set of vulnerabilities that are rarely acknowledged and hardly ever addressed. These vulnerabilities were highlighted during the interviews.

## Access to market

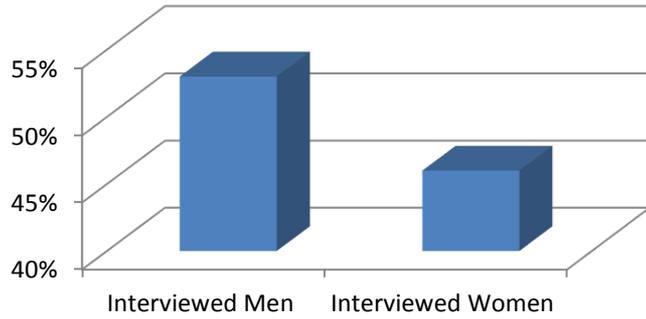
"Why would I ever go to the market? My husband works in Dhaka city and there is no male member at home at the moment. My relatives live close by. I ask the men to buy me the vegetables and other grocery. The market is a place for men, why would women want to go there? How can I go there on my own? Last I visited the market was during Eid." (Interviewee, Jayakhali village, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016)

## Resources

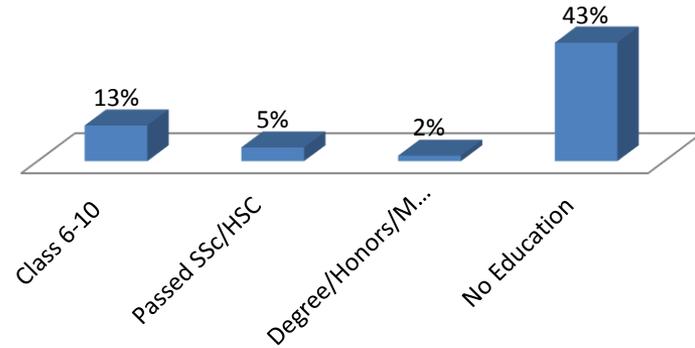
In the situation of environmental change, where migration can be seen as a form of adaptation to environmental change, **low levels of capital indicate both high vulnerability to crises and low ability to move away**. Different forms of capital may have a more direct influence on ability to move, such as financial capital or access to land, or a less direct influence, such as involvement in social networks beyond the area immediately affected by the crisis.



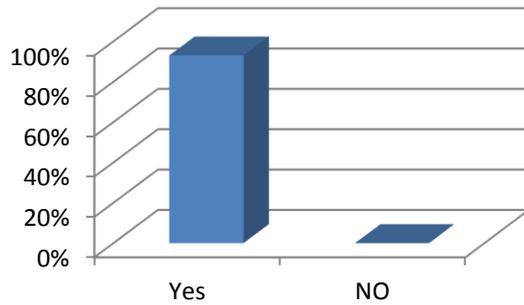
## Survey and Interview



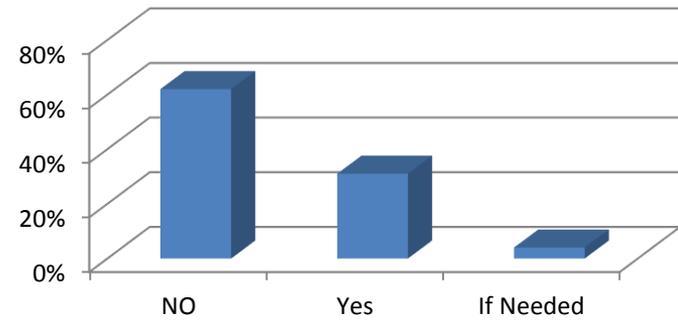
## Migrant's Education



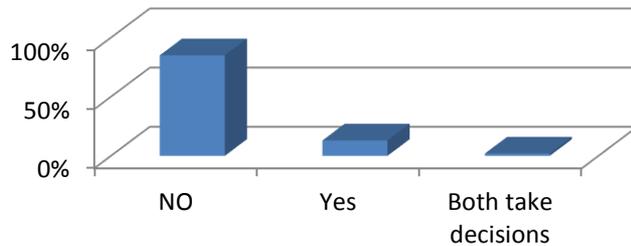
## Remittance



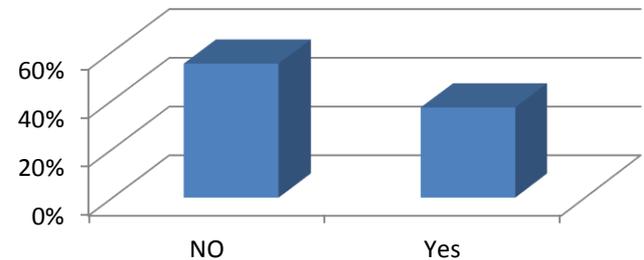
## Access of Women in Market



## Contribution of Women in Decision making



## Women Empowered after Husband leaves



## Gender dimensions of poverty: Climate Change

- Poor and marginalized, least capacity or opportunity to adapt to climate change (Black, 2014) .

Climate change reinforces existing gender inequalities for coping with climate-related change

Lack of access and control over resources (material, financial and human)

- Women and girls could be considered to be non-poor in a household as a result of unequal intra-household distribution of power and resources, such as food and property (Kabeer 2008).

Women's contribution in decision making process is minimal

Gendered impacts: Restrictions on female mobility

- Evidence from the study suggests lack of participation of women in decisions concerning income usage, land and livelihoods.

- Women were affected the most as they did not leave their homes during floods due to cultural constraints and lack of ability to swim

# Key Findings

- Immobility may both reduce the adaptive capacity of people in the region and put an end to customary livelihoods (evidence suggests some women could not work in the farms due to lack of human support and financial capacity).
- There is currently more focus on climate migration, while the attention needs to shift to involuntary immobility in the face of climate change.
- Knowledge about local adaptation strategies, especially changing of cropping patterns during floods or washing the land after saline intrusion, seems to be passed down through male members in the households and also influenced by the work done by NGOs in the area. Although women lacked knowledge about crop diversification and agricultural practices.
- Intersecting inequalities produce differing experiences of power and powerlessness between and among diverse groups of women and men, and these, in turn, enable or deny them certain choices—for example, determining whether migration in the face of environmental degradation is a viable option. (For the elderly or very young, those with limited resources as a result of economic marginalization or entrenched gender ideologies, or those facing cultural or religious restrictions on their mobility, such an option may not be feasible.)

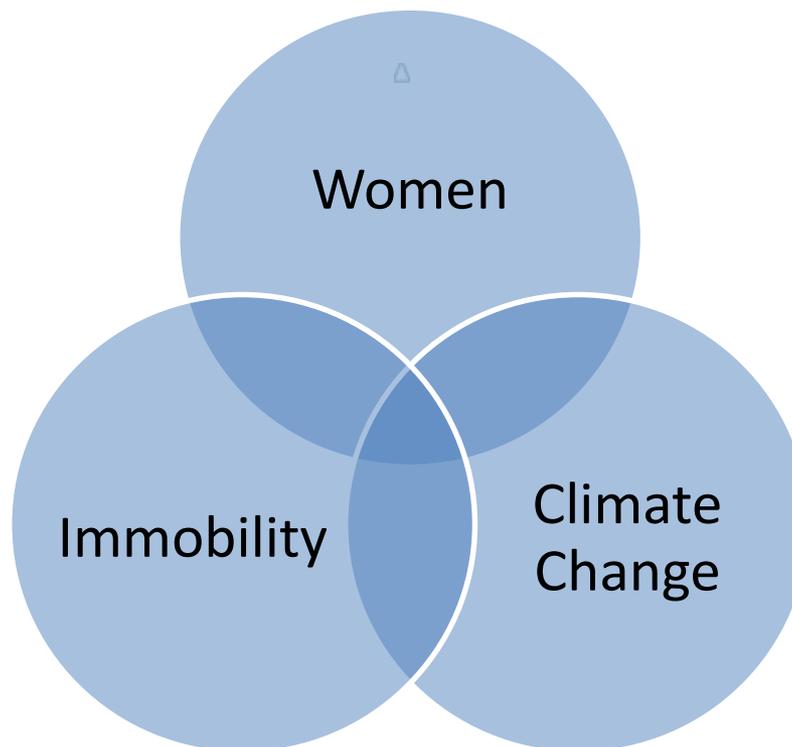
# Conclusion

- Climate change will affect the coastal population, especially the immobile population
- Climate-linked social protection policies such as crop insurance, microfinance can help ease the situation
- Lack of research in climate change linking it to gender and immobility. Need for longitudinal studies on the consequences of immobility and women.
- A significant number of women in Bangladesh and similar climate vulnerable contexts are and will likely become immobile. Policy-makers will then need to find solutions that reduce the vulnerabilities associated with this—both through adaptation plans and strategies that recognize the need to move, and move safely.
- More skill building and participatory research is needed into the adaptation strategies of women and men at the household and community levels in the face of existing climate change impacts on agricultural productivity and food security.

# Climate-resilient Bangladesh

The nexus between immobility, climate change and gender directly relates to making Bangladesh climate resilient

To improve climate preparedness and reduce risks related to climate change, focus needs to be on the vulnerable who lack the capacity to adapt.



Providing women with opportunities (mitigation management and adaptation at household level and communities), shift in policies and building gender equitable disaster resilience

# Thank you for your attention



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