Discriminations and poverty among

Dalits and non-Dalits

A comparative and longitudinal study

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Synopsis

This longitudinal study was carried out from May 2017 to April 2019 in selected locations of Khulna division with four objectives: a) to determine relative poverty of dalit communities and its dynamics in relation to the poor of the 'mainstream' communities; b) to identify the traditional skills of the dalit communities and their relevance in the market; c) to identify the dynamics within families and communities as a result of internal and international migration and d) to propose specific areas of interventions to overcome the distinct deprivations and discriminations of the dalit community. The study found that the 'Dalits' – who in the study area are known by specific 'caste group' names – are generally moving away from their traditional occupations due to the stigma associated with these and/or the low demands for the associated skills. While both Dalits and the poor among non-Dalits tended to be associated with lower levels of education and limited access to public services and resources, the situation of the Dalits were often compounded by social stigma associated with their 'Dalit' status. In relation to migration, it was found that while young migrated women gradually excercised more economic as well as personal freedom, most of them still had dreams of returning to their villages. Based on the findings from the field, the study puts forward six complementary strategies to overcome the distinct deprivations and discriminations faced by the dalit communities.

Key words: Dalit, caste, discrimination, social exclusion, relative poverty, migrant women.

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Photo credit: Silvia Rovelli/Lauren Khana Chan
Graphic design, printing & binding: Visual Communication Ltd. (VISCOM)

Proof reading: Tanim Ahmed/VISCOM
Date of publication: May 2019

This study is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Proposed quote:
Naher A. & Mostafa S. (2019). *Discriminations and Poverty among Dalits and non-Dalits: A comparative and longitudinal study,* Terre des Hommes Italia, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

ISBN number: 978-984-34-6733-1

This study has been produced with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The contents of this study are the sole responsibility of the Research Team and Terre des Hommes Italia and do not necessarily represent the views of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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List of acronyms

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDRM	Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
DLAO	District Legal Aid Officer
FAIR	Friends Association for Integrated Revolution
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FWV	Family Welfare Visitor
HH	Household
IDSN	International Dalit Solidarity Network
JHM	*Jukta Hoye Mukta*
KII	Key Informant Interview
MSXL	Microsoft Excel
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RMG	Ready-Made Garments
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
TDH	Terre Des Hommes
TPA	Transaction Power Approach
UP	Union Parishad
UPZ	Upazila
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGF	Vulnerable Group Feeding
WFP	World Food Program
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
SSC	Secondary School Certificate

Foreword

Although the plight of the Dalits has received the attention of academics, activists and policy makers for a long time in the South Asian subcontinent in general, and in the context of India in particular, there are substantial knowledge gaps in relation to the Dalits of Bangladesh. In fact, in Bangladesh, there is little detailed historical documentation and analysis on the Dalits as well as a general lack of accurate statistical data on them.

This *vacuum* has been filled to a limited extent by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have been working with dalit communities. The existing, mostly qualitative, literature depicts dalit groups as communities where discrimination, gender-based violence, extreme poverty and poor access to resources are highly prevalent. However, there is very little concrete and detailed data that can give us an accurate picture of the degree and extent of all these trends. Moreover, while the Dalits are believed to experience many forms of deprivations, a part of the 'mainstream' Bengali community - the poor in particular - also faces discriminations. Thus, the need arose to carry out this study and establish a robust set of data to shed light on the poverty dynamics within dalit communities and the magnitude of their discrimination as well as to answer the question about the relative poverty, deprivation and discrimination of the Dalits in relation to the poor segment of the 'mainstream' community.

With regards to the legal framework to respect, protect and fulfil dalit rights, in Bangladesh no specific law has been yet formulated to address the needs and concerns of the Dalits, except for some generic clauses in the constitution that guarantees fundamental equality of all citizens, and prohibits all forms of discrimination. In order to empower the underprivileged sections of the society and put an end to all sorts of discrimination against them, the Law Commission has prepared the Anti-discrimination Bill, 2014, which is still under consideration of the Government.

In the Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted to the Human Rights Council in May 2018, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women reported high levels of violence, including rape and sexual assault, against women from religious and ethnic minority communities, with Dalits, Hindus and indigenous groups being most at risk. Most such violations remained unpunished.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is committed to leaving no one behind and hence interested in empowering marginalized communities from a social and economic perspective. In this context, it is hoped that the present study will contribute to 1) better understanding of the category 'Dalit' in the context of Bangladesh, including an indicative list of actual communities that constitute this category in the Southwest region of Bangladesh, 2) a comparative view of the dynamics of poverty and marginalization among the Dalits and mainstream poor in the study area, 3) the development of tailored strategies and programs, from the Government of Bangladesh and development actors, to help dalit communities overcome deeply rooted forms of marginalization, discrimination and abuse.

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Acknowledgements

We are highly indebted to all the persons belonging to both dalit and non-dalit communities who have come forward with information and views during interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD_s) sessions and surveys that were conducted during our research. The supervisors of the three cycles, Md. Firoz Ahmed, Sanaiyya Faheem Ansari, Provash Kumar Das, Mansura Akhter, Shahidul Islam; all the Enumerators, the Community Representative and Dalit Fixer, Swapon Kumar Das and Basonti Lata Das, and the other members of our research team, the Data Analyst, Prof. Mohd. Muzibur Rahman and the Data Entry Team Leader, A M Rasheduzzaman Khan, and organizations such as DALIT played vital roles in carrying out our research. We thank them all.

We are also very grateful to Terre Des Hommes (TDH) Italia, Bangladesh for having given us the privilege to conduct this research. We would like to specially thank Iole Valentina Lucchese, Benozir Shah Shovon, Razib Debnath, Atikur Rahman, Sukanta Paul, Gilbart Baroi and other TDH Italia officials who have engaged closely during the research process by providing comments, suggestions and various kinds of support. Finally, we must also thank the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) that funded our research through TDH Italia. A special thanks goes to Ms. Nazia Haider, Programme Manager – Safer Migration. We thank her for the smooth cooperation, her valuable recommendations and insights on the study.

The persons or organizations acknowledged above, however, bear no responsibility for any shortcomings of our research or this report.

Ainoon Naher
Sanaul Mostafa

28 April 2019

Executive summary

1. Introduction

The plight of the Dalits in the South Asian sub-continent has been a subject of research for a long time. However, while the discrimination and deprivation experienced by them in relation to higher Hindu castes have received much attention in research and development in India, the same cannot be said in the context of Bangladesh. Here the rudimentary research on them has been mainly confined to discriminations faced by them in social interactions and to the neglect of the state institutions in recognizing their plight and in devising strategies for their wellbeing as equal citizens. In this context, there exists an argument that many segments of the mainstream population are as poor as the Dalits, a view that may lead to questioning the need for a focused dalit-based strategy. Given this, there is no reliable knowledge base shedding light on relative discrimination and deprivation of Dalits in comparison to the poor of mainstream communities (i.e. 'non-Dalits' belonging to Muslim and Hindu communities) to challenge this argument and advocate for dalit-sensitive strategies. The present study – the objectives, findings, and conclusions of which are elaborated in the following sections – is expected to address the aforementioned knowledge gaps, and help establish a rationale for dalit-specific strategies and actions.

2. Objectives

The longitudinal research study on the dalit livelihood in Khulna division in comparison to the poor of the 'mainstream' communities in three cycles over two years had four objectives: a) to determine relative poverty of dalit communities and its dynamics in relation to the poor of the 'mainstream' community; b) to identify the traditional skills of the dalit communities and their relevance in the market; c) to identify the dynamics within families and communities as a result of internal migration by a dalit woman

(due to TDH Italia intervention) and international migration (if any), which may motivate the dalit youth, particularly the girls, to take up non-traditional professions in urban areas; and d) to propose specific areas of interventions to overcome the distinct deprivations and discriminations faced by the dalit community, particularly for skills acquisition, employment opportunities and related migration management.

3. Research design

The research design supportive to the achievement of research objectives used two models to gather relevant data: Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) and Transaction Power Approach (TPA). While the SLA provided the theoretical basis for the poverty of the Dalits and non-Dalits in view of six complementary capitals (human, social, physical, natural, financial and institutional), which a human being needs for livelihood, the TPA approach examined the nature of relative inequality, discriminations and deprivations following four types of transactions (social, economic, legal and political), which citizens are subject to.

4. Methodology

The research team has applied both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather data simultaneously and rather independently. While a questionnaire shaped the survey research, methods like FGDs, group interview, in-depth interview, observation, physical verifications, Key informant Interviews (KIIs), and case studies constituted qualitative methods. In three cycles over two years, the team undertook questionnaire survey among 2,600 respondents (Cycle 1: 403 Dalits vs 405 non-Dalits, Cycle 2: 451 Dalits vs 444 non-Dalits and Cycle 3: 458 Dalits vs 439 non-Dalits). The team undertook 18 FGDs, 90 in-depth interviews, 18 case studies as well as KIIs under qualitative approach.

5. Process and limitations

The research process broadly included pre-, during and post-data

collection sub-processes. The pre-data collection process consisted of a literature review, selection of suitable theoretical models for data collection, designing research, training of enumerators, field-testing of data collection, quality control, and review of the questionnaire. During the data collection phase, researchers used three different approaches (dalit and non-dalit Enumerators, mostly dalit Enumerators and mostly non-dalit Enumerators). The team gathered data in four upazilas (UPZs, Dumuria, Paikgacha, Tala, Keshobpur) of 3 districts (Khulna, Satkhira and Jessore) covering randomly selected thirty nine villages and twelve unions. While reaching out to the Dalits as respondents was much easier than expected in terms of trust and confidence, four types of limitations somewhat hindered a smooth data collection process. First, the wet weather conditions made the rural roads inaccessible and put enormous strain on the enumerators. Second, religious events and festivals (Hindu festival '*Diwali*' *(Kali Puja)*, fasting period and *Eid* holidays were behind limited availability of respondents in some cases. Third, since the research budget did not include compensation for the time of respondents (1.5 hours per respondent), spontaneous readiness to be available for interviews were at times not possible. Fourth, data collected during the third cycle occurred prior to parliamentary elections. The research team performed its task under an environment of tension and fear.

6. Findings and interpretation

6.1 Understanding of dalit identity

Dalits in Bangladesh generally do not call themselves 'Dalits'. Many of them in the field even asked, 'Who are Dalits?' Usually, the 'Dalits' covered by this study use specific 'caste group' names that are locally known and often associated with certain traditional occupations. In this context, the word 'Dalit' is used as an umbrella term for specific local communities as listed below.

Table 1: Local names of groups categorized as 'Dalit' in the study area

SN	Caste Name	Traditional Occupation(s)	Religion; other remarks
1	*Rishi*	Skinning animals, making bamboo baskets	Hindu; others tend to refer to them as '*Muchi*' (cobblers)
2	*Behara*	Palanquin bearers	Muslim; locally known as *'Sardar'*
3	*Malo*	Fishing	Hindu
4	*Jola*	Weaving	Muslim; locally known as *'Karigar'*
5	*Kawra*	Pig farming	Hindu; a sub-caste of the *Rishis*
6	*Sheel*	Cutting/shaving hair	Hindu; also known as *'Rajatdas'*
7	*Kolu*	Oil pressing	Muslim
8	*Nikari*	Fishing	Muslim
9	*Dhopa*	Washing clothes	Hindu
10	*Hazam*	Circumcision	Muslim
11	*Bazandar*	Playing of musical instruments (drums)	Hindu or Muslim; drums being made of hide may have been behind their 'untouchability'

6.2 Internal factors

Level of education: While discriminatory attitudes or practices towards dalit children in schools have been reported, this factor by itself does not seem to be a major reason behind low levels of schooling among dalit communities. The spontaneous response of the dalit youth that discrimination is rarely felt in the educational institutions they visit, indicates declining discrimination.

Skill level: The skills which the Dalits possess are becoming gradually less attractive (no market, limited income, less preferred fearing social exclusion, not a choice for the youth, merely an off-season or a supplementary activity, no religious compulsion). A huge skill gap exists amid declining demand for traditional skills. The youth has apathy against the traditional skills and has no access to new skills. The youth lacks connectivity with the skill providers. Such a situation will lead to oversupply of unskilled labor in the local agricultural sector which has limited absorption capacity. This may result in lower effective wages and further discrimination.

Meal frequency: The proportion of dalit households (HHs) having just two meals a day is significantly higher than those of the non-Dalits. This, together with the fact that the number of working members in the dalit families is higher and the debts are higher, culminates in higher poverty among dalit HHs.

Physical capital: Both Dalits and non-Dalits have limited physical capital. The limited number of Dalits, who are fishermen and possess nets and boats does not indicate resourcefulness since such families are highly indebted.

Debt situation: Dalits are more indebted to money lenders and NGOs with extremely high interest rates. High debts from multiple sources may challenge the possession of existing assets. They have nowhere to go in case of future emergencies.

Access to conflict resolution: Dalits are less capable to resolve conflicts and may end up losing assets and paying more. Loss of assets to money lenders, continuous payment to maintain access to natural resources and legal costs are possible outcomes.

Institutional capacity: Both Dalits and non-Dalits have limited institutional capacity. The fact that the Dalits are more connected to NGOs has not enhanced their institutional capacity, as the NGOs merely use them as recipients of microfinance services and seldom organize them to improve their institutional.

6.3 External factors

Social inequality: Discriminatory behavior among various sub-groups of Dalits (dominant in marriage, social interactions) is quite common. In other words, one dalit sub-group discriminates another, particularly in marriage related matters. Similar discrimination is a reality between Dalits and non-Dalits during social events (food-intake, invitations, ceremony, marriage, etc.). Such a discrimination is more likely between a Dalit and Hindu non-Dalit. Sexual harassment of girls are more likely and less reported, apprehending backlash from the girls' families and perpetrators.

The Dalits have less access to advisory and counseling services. In summary, discrimination is prominent in social transactions. In view of desired equality in the society, the area of social transaction provides a fertile ground for development activities.

Economic inequality: The Dalits are subject to discrimination as buyers and sellers of products and services. This discrimination is more likely when they face moneylenders and influential persons. When the Dalits leave their traditional professions and join the work force as day-laborer or van drivers, they face unequal conditions, as the Dalits are reportedly less preferred or less paid. As a buyer, they would have limited bargaining power and may not have the option not to buy if a Dalit has touched a product. During a crisis or emergency period, they would have less bargaining power if they sell advance labor or crop. Although such discrimination may occur at a place, where they are known as Dalits, or that such discrimination is reportedly declining, the situation deserves attention and provides rationale for advocacy strategies.

Legal inequality: The Dalits face comparatively more discrimination during a conflict resolution process. The potential for conflicts is high, as they are highly indebted and the debtor might challenge their homesteads. They extend unauthorized payment and in case of disagreement may face conflicts. Their behavior at par with the non-Dalits might invite conflicts as well. Sexual harassment of dalit girls may also generate conflicts. If the Dalits have comparatively less access to conflict resolution opportunities (formal and informal) and lose financially more than the non-Dalits, this becomes an advocacy issue.

Political inequality – access to public services : The Dalits' discrimination is evident through their inaccessibility to Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) - related distribution of food related to *Eid* festival holidays. In addition, they seldom benefit from the special allowances, which they are expected to receive from the government. This also justifies an advocacy agenda.

Access to public resources: A section of the Dalits (e.g. fishermen), who wants to pursue their traditional profession in the future, is dependent on sustainable access to natural resources like rivers, canals, forests, etc. Since they are constrained, reportedly due to informal payment to locally influential persons, their livelihood is at stake. They live in fear and financial distress, because they have to pay from their limited proceeds against virtually no service. This situation establishes a rationale for advocacy.

Voting behavior: The Dalits, although they enjoy freedom of expression like non-Dalits, are more vulnerable to physical attacks than others. Their voting behavior is more likely to make them victim during the post-election period. Therefore, protection of the Dalits after an electoral process remains an advocacy issue.

Gender inequality: Although gender discrimination is common both among the Dalits and non-Dalits (frequently obvious in intra-household food distribution and wage rate fixation), sexual harassment of dalit girls and young women is reported less than their occurrence, which is a source of concern and demands advocacy initiative. This is more needed at a time when women need to be economically more empowered to free the family from debt and take spending consumption decisions.

6.4 Traditional skills

In the context of having the Dalits leaving traditional professions and some others retaining them when the natural resources are not productive anymore, the Dalits are facing a livelihood crisis. This might be the principal reason that parents and dalit youth alike eye a different profession, which the non-dalit youth aspires for. However, the dalit youth, being comparatively less connected with the skill providing agencies, need more attention to be at par with the non-dalit youth. In the absence of social capital and insufficient orientation about the prospective professions, the community and the public agencies have a role to play to help the Dalits undergo professional transformation.

6.5 Migration of girls

Migration can bring a short-term remedy for young distressed women with children, seeking training and work. The total migration (leaving the village for a better life in an urban center) is not a preference for men and women, and the bondage with the village is desired in the future. Difficult and expensive accommodation and poor opportunity to take care of children are some reasons. The young migrant women gradually exercise more freedom in handling money, use of money and personal life, but still plan to return to their village after 5-10 years.

The relative discrimination faced by the Dalits as opposed to the non-Dalits is are expected to lead the Dalits to be relatively poorer in the long-run, if the community and the public institutions do not recognize them as development issues and undertake effective strategies.

7. Advocacy strategies

Being driven by the findings and interpretations outlined in the foregoing and following the fourth objective of the research initiative, the research team proposes six complementary strategies, supported by specific strategies under each, to overcome the distinct deprivations and discriminations faced by the dalit communities, particularly for skills acquisition, employment opportunities and related migration management.

Overall strategy 1: Overcome the skill gap encountered by the dalit youth and income-earner.
Specific strategy 1: Enrich traditional skills of the Dalits by building modern technology in old professions.
Specific strategy 2: Transfer local resource and market-based skills (fishery, dairy and agro-processing sector, regional industry).

Overall strategy 2: Establish the connectivity of the skilled dalit youth as a group with the urban market and growth centers.

Specific strategy 1: Facilitate the formation of sub-groups representing complementary skills to be provided. A group leader will combine the persons with related skills and offer their service to the market as a package.
Specific strategy 2: Develop entrepreneurial skills of the group leaders to participate in the market (communication with cell phone to make an offer, handle offers, accounting, management and basic business communication, group management).
Specific strategy 3: Form a network of trained dalit youth for peer learning and respond to diversified market needs (hub/call center).

Overall strategy 3: Introduce disruptive mechanisms to prove the opposite of the traditional belief and prejudice of the non-Dalits about the Dalits (e.g. cleanliness).
Specific strategy 1: Support modern service delivery points (e.g. a modern coffee shop as a contrast to the stylized prejudice about Dalits).
Specific strategy 2: Support the delivery point as a learning center for the poor (Dalits and non-Dalits).

Overall strategy 4: Provide debt and investment management advisory services to the dalit households.
Specific strategy 1: Provide case-sensitive debt management (reduction, balancing, and interest payment) services to the households, who are in a vicious cycle of poverty, in collaboration with the NGOs.
Specific strategy 2: Provide counseling to the dalit youth who save money from their urban work.

Overall strategy 5: Facilitate the access of the dalit households to affordable conflict resolution systems.
Specific strategy 1: Facilitate the formation of community-based dalit institutions based on rotational leadership with proper representation of the youth and women.
Specific strategy 2: Seek communication with the public legal aid from District Legal Aid Officer (DLAO) twice a year to explore litigation and mediation support from the district courts.

Specific strategy 3: Support individual Dalits in seeking enforcement of conflict resolution (neighbor, money lender, government and others with power (formal or informal).

Overall strategy 6: Facilitate the establishment of a communication system with the Government, local Government, local administration, civil society and media through their institutions.

Specific strategy 1: Facilitate capacity development of community-based dalit institutions, particularly the youth groups to undertake advocacy with the Government, local Government, local administration, civil society and media.

Specific strategy 2: Articulate the areas of inequalities related to the access to public resources (unauthorized payment) and public services (social safety net like, VGF during a festival, public-funded training) citing financial hardships related with discriminations.

Specific strategy 3: Raise gender issues, engaging the girls referring the real cases and seeking protection against harassment.

Specific strategy 4: Support a consortium of community-based dalit institutions, inclusive of youth groups, to portray the evidenced deprivations and discrimination against the Dalits, and seek a recognition of the Dalits as a group coupled with a national policy.

The strategies to address the relative discriminations and poverty of the Dalits, if implemented, would initially save the Dalits from persistent disparity in comparison with the non-Dalits. Therefore, for any measure that the government plans to undertake for the betterment of the poor, there is a need to add the above steps to equitably uplift dalit livelihood.



A

Background

Since February 2016 and until January 2019, TDH Italia implemented a project named *Jukta Hoye Mukta* (JHM) – 'United We Stand' – that sought to create safe patterns of geographical and socioeconomic mobility for marginalized adolescent girls/young women from south-western Bangladesh moving towards and living in the capital to work in the garments sector. As part of this project, 616 young women aged 18 or above had access to marketable vocational training skills to be then placed in compliant Ready-Made Garments (RMG) factories. Out of these program participants, 174 came from dalit[1] communities of 3 south-western districts of Bangladesh, namely Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira.

The project expected a positive change in the lives of migrant girls, thereby assuming that the migration of dalit girls would also bring about changes in the way of life of the dalit households they came from. Therefore, the project envisaged a study on possible changes among concerned dalit households over time.

During the first year of implementation of JHM, the implementing agency DALIT has encountered opinions from the local administration that there are many poor non-dalit households, and the girls from these families should also be considered for migration and training. TDH Italia felt the need for a study of the relative poverty between the Dalits and the 'mainstream' poor Bengali communities (hereunder 'non-Dalits') and its trend over a specific time period. SDC, which supports studies on the prospective traditional and future skills needs, found the project-related study worth sponsoring, and entrusted TDH Italia

[1]In accordance with established practice, we use the word 'Dalit' both as a noun (in which case it may be pluralized) and as an adjective.

to commission a research initiative in three cycles over a period of two years. TDH Italia believed that such a study should also provide guidance as to how the development interventions should look like for improved wellbeing of the Dalits. This report is the outcome of the study undertaken in four UPZs of three Districts (Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira) under Khulna Division and describes the objectives, methodology, process, and findings of the three cycles. This study is expected to yield reliable and valid data that will generate important knowledge to inform current and future interventions of TDH Italia and their partners.

The report has six sections. Section B provides a summary of the literature review to pull together the existing knowledge about the Dalits as available in South Asia. Section C lists the research objectives, and describes the research design for data collection and the process, and hints at limitations the research has encountered. Section D encapsulates the findings addressing the research objectives listed earlier. After an analysis of the patterns of Dalits available in the study area (Subsection D.1), the report analyzed the relative poverty between the Dalits and non-Dalits in the Subsection D.2. The findings related to traditional professions of Dalits and their relevance are captured under Subsection D.3. The subsequent Subsection D.4 accommodates the findings on the family dynamics as a result of planned migration of girls and young women to Dhaka for training and employment. Section E includes the overall interpretation of the findings elaborated as the basis for future interventions.

B

Literature review

As part of the study on the dalit livelihood in Khulna, a review of the literature was conducted with the aim of clarifying some theoretical and conceptual issues relating to the word 'Dalit' in the context of the South Asia, and to identify relevant observations, trends and issues gleaned from the existing literature on the Dalits of Bangladesh.

1. History of the term 'Dalit'

The term 'Dalit' or its cognate forms in various Indic languages like Hindi, Marathi and Bangla, comes from a Sanskrit word (Dalita) that is basically the past participle form of a verb (dal) that means 'to squash' or 'to crush'. Applied in the social context, the term could refer to the 'oppressed' or 'downtrodden' in general, but it has come to be associated with one particular category of the socially marginalized and excluded, namely the so-called 'untouchables', in the context of the South Asian caste system. Different accounts suggest that this usage of the term probably occurred first in Marathi, in the writings of Jyotirao Phule, a nineteenth century thinker-activist-writer based in Maharashtra (Mendelsohn and Vicziany 1998:4). By the 1930s, the word came to be used in some contexts as Hindi and Marathi translations of 'Depressed Classes', a term that the British used for marginalized social groups traditionally regarded as 'untouchables', a category for which Mahatma Gandhi popularized the euphemistic term '*Harijan*' (meaning 'people of God') in the 1930s, though later it would be known more commonly as 'Scheduled Castes' (Webster 1991:11), a term that became officially established in India (the concept and history of the social practice of 'untouchability', is discussed in greater detail in a separate section below).

It may be mentioned that along with 'scheduled castes', the category 'scheduled tribes' too is now part of the official language of India, with both categories having evolved under a system of administrative classification dating back to the period of British colonial rule, and eventually finding their way into the constitution and laws of postcolonial India. In this context, it is worth remembering that from the perspectives of historians and social scientists, the decision as to whether a group would be classified as a 'scheduled caste' or a 'scheduled tribe' was often based on the perceived influence of Hinduism on the group under consideration, with 'tribes' being seen as having remained relatively free from the notions of caste and other signs of Brahmanic influence (cf. Sachchidanada 1970, Tripura 1992).

Going back to the history of the word 'Dalit', it is learned that it was used by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar – a great historical personality of dalit origin who led the formulation of the constitution of postcolonial India – in his speeches in Marathi. In his English book *The Untouchables*, however, Ambedkar (1948) did not use the term 'Dalit' directly. Instead, he used the expression 'broken men', considered to be an English translation of the word 'Dalit', to refer to the ancestors of the untouchables. Later, in the 1970s, the term 'Dalit' was revived by the Dalit Panthers, a social movement (originally based in Maharashtra, but later expanded to some other states, particularly in South India) that used it as a political category of identification that included not only the scheduled castes, but also other social groups as 'scheduled tribes', landless peasants, etc. However, in practice, it is in the narrower caste-based sense of the term that it came to be used widely throughout India and beyond (Webster 1999:11).

In other words, with some exceptions, the term 'Dalit' is most commonly used to refer to communities historically seen as 'untouchables', corresponding to the category 'scheduled castes' as used in India officially, and to a limited extent in Pakistan and Bangladesh as well. Mahatma Gandhi had coined the term '*Harijan*', which may be translated as 'God's people', for the same

category of people. This term too is commonly used throughout South Asia, but it is 'Dalit' that has increasingly become a term of choice for self-identification by politically conscious segments of communities that have historically coped with extreme forms of social exclusion due to socially imposed notions of ritual impurity associated with their traditional occupations such as sweeping, leather working, butchering, cobbling (i.e. repairing shoes) etc.

In Bangladesh, the use of the term 'Dalit' in the sense indicated above is a relatively new phenomenon (mainly beginning in the 1990s)[2], and seems to have been originally confined mainly to a small circle of activists and academics working with communities to which this label can be applied. It may be mentioned that given the way the word 'Dalit' is written in Bangla, an average literate Bangladeshi would normally pronounce it as 'dolito'. However, those familiar with its contemporary usage as a caste-related term would be more likely to pronounce it as in Hindi or English (without a vowel sound at the end), though the spelling itself remains the same. Anyway, over the past decade or so, this novel use of the term 'Dalit' in Bangladesh has been gaining wider currency, including in the media, and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or their networks (e.g. Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement [BDRM], http://www.bderm.org/) representing or working with Dalits in the country now connect with international networks as well (e.g. International Dalit Solidarity Network [IDSN], http://idsn.org/countries/bangladesh/).

[2]Older mainstream Bangla dictionaries (originally produced in Kolkata, once the administrative and intellectual capital of the Bengal region) that are still used quite widely in Bangladesh include the word '*Dalita*' (equivalent to 'Dalit'), with its meanings provided being primarily related to caste (referring to former 'untouchables'). However, dictionaries produced by Bangla Academy (based in Dhaka) in the 1990s include the caste-related sense of the word as a secondary meaning. On the other hand, the word '*Harijan*', popularized by Gandhi as a euphemism for 'untouchables', and used in Bangla since the 1930s by literary greats such as Rabindranath Tagore, is found in both old and newly produced dictionaries used in Bangladesh.

2. Conceptualizing dalit identity and status

The term has even found its way to a concept paper prepared (possibly by unnamed consultants)[3] as of 2014 for the Law Commission of Bangladesh which has been working on an Anti-Discrimination Act that organizations advocating for the rights of Dalits have demanded for some time now. The commission under consideration acknowledges this on its website, which displays a list of four 'current activities', of which the fourth one is as follows:

"Protection of the Rights of the Marginalized and Disadvantaged Sections of the People, i.e. so Called Dalit in Bangladesh" (http://www.lawcommissionbangladesh.org/, accessed on 27 May 2017). While it is not clear why they refer to the term Dalit as 'so-called', it is worth noting that in India, there has been public opposition to the term 'Dalit' in some official circles, most notably at the level of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, which reportedly asked state governments of India to refrain from using the word 'Dalit' on the grounds that it is neither in the constitution, nor in any laws, in which the specific term used is 'scheduled caste' (Times of India 2008).

In the context of South Asia, what came to be known as the 'caste system' was usually understood as a hierarchically organized social order consisting of four categories or *Varnas* – namely Brahmin or priests, *Kshatriyas* or warriors and kings, *Vaishyas* or merchants and artisans (and in some cases landowning farmers), and *Shudras* or cultivators and workers. The 'untouchables' constituted a fifth category that lay outside of this order and were not always mentioned explicitly or elaborately in the ancient religious texts that mentioned the four *Varnas*. The fact that the Sanskrit word '*varna*' means 'color' in the past gave rise to speculative theories about how the caste system may have arisen due to light-skinned 'Aryans' coming to assert their supremacy

[3]As of 2014, there was considerable media coverage of activities involving demands voiced on behalf of Bangladeshi Dalits for an 'Anti-Discrimination Act' (see, for example, Chowdhury 2014 and Sakib 2014). It was in that context that a concept note on the proposed Anti-Discrimination Law, 2014 (in Bangla) as submitted to the Law Commission was available as a PDF file on the internet (and accordingly, a copy was downloaded by this researcher in June 2014).

over darker skinned 'non-Aryans' of the subcontinent (e.g. Majumdar 1961). However, many scholars (e.g. Ambedkar 1948, Ghurye 1969) reject such views in favor of theoretical explanations that give more prominence to political, economic and cultural factors.

Theoretical explanations of the origin of the caste system aside, the four *Varnas* that are ranked in terms of socio-religious status are further divided into local indigenous groups known as *Jatis*[4], which often have hereditary occupations or economic specializations and their own distinct cultural traditions (Srinivas 1962; Beteille 1996).

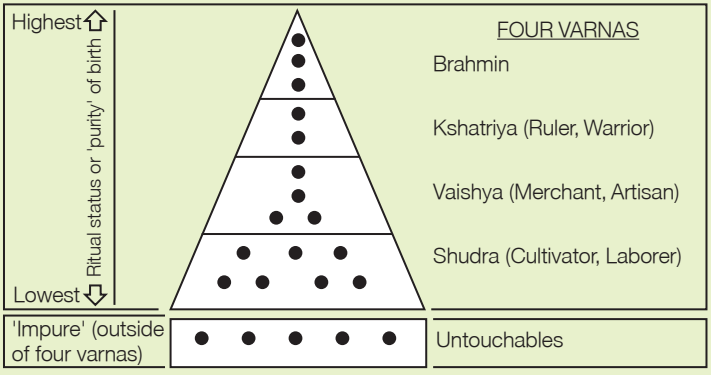
At the local level, such groups historically have had interdependent relations. However, some groups associated with certain occupations (such as sweeping and dealing with dead bodies) considered to be too degrading have been treated as 'untouchables' despite their indispensable role. It is such groups

[4]In Sanskrit, the word '*jati*' originally meant 'birth', but came to denote one's group identity based on birth, and is presently used (in Bangla and other related languages) in various senses ranging from 'local caste group' to 'nation'.

that were part of a larger social and economic system for all practical purposes, but were treated as outsiders in ritual contexts (e.g. they were not allowed to enter temples, were forbidden from taking part in many religious ceremonies) that were commonly known as 'untouchables.' The diagram below shows a schematic representation of the outline of the 'caste system' as it is commonly described in the literature (e.g. Srinivas 1962, Dumont 1970, Beteille 1996). It may be mentioned here that unlike the so-called 'untouchables' that came to be classified as 'scheduled castes' in India, groups that were supposed to have had relative autonomy and lived without close interaction with caste-organized villages or towns came to be categorized as 'tribes' (as opposed to 'castes') during British colonial period (and are now usually classified as 'scheduled tribes' in India).

Figure B.1

A schematic representation of the 'Hindu' caste system



- *Each dot represents a 'jati' or a local endogamous group that shares the same rituals, traditions and in many cases, its own distincit language / ethnic identity*

N.B: *In any given area, each 'varna' may contain multiple local 'jatis' that are ranked in terms of their relative status, though all may not agree on who is higher or lower on the purity scale*

While in theory the caste system is mainly associated with Hinduism, in practice the ideology involved, including notions of untouchability are found in varying degrees among other religious

communities of South Asia as well. Thus, there exists dalit or dalit like groups among Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs in different countries of South Asia, including those in which Hindus are a minority, i.e. Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Jodhka & Shah 2010; cf. Ali 2002). Given such realities, some view the caste system as less of a 'religious phenomenon' and more as a specific cultural expression of one form of social stratification. In line with this perspective, it has also been argued that social groups that are structurally comparable to the Dalits of South Asia are found in completely different geographical and historical contexts (Mehta 2013), ranging from the Burakumin of Japan to the Blacks in the United States (Berreman 1960).

Among scholars, there has been a considerable amount of theoretical debates on the nature of the South Asian caste system with its culturally specific notions of purity, pollution and untouchability. In this regard, one influential point of view is represented by Dumont (1970), who argues that the caste system is a hierarchical order in which political and economic life is subsumed under religious life organized around key notions like that of purity and pollution. From this perspective, the Indian form of social hierarchy stands in stark opposition to modern Western notions of social equality. However, their critics (Appadurai 1986, Marriott 1996) argue that Dumont's view reflects attitudes of the British colonial rulers. Anthropologists such as Cohn (1996) and Dirks (2001) also hold that the trend of interpreting the caste system as a religious system started during the colonial era, when such views were influenced by Brahmanic interpretations of Hindu texts, and were subsequently reinforced by the administrative surveys and accounts.

The emphasis on the Brahmanic models can be found in theoretical views of several prominent social scientists like as Srinivas (1952, 1962, and 1995). While he provides a useful clarification of the difference between the categories of '*varna*' and '*jati*', his view of upward social mobility still rests on the Brahmanic way of life being seen as a model. Ghurye (1969) and Moffatt

(1975) also suggest that lower castes accept the cultural constructs of the upper castes. Scholars such as Dobe (1955) do note that the untouchables do not like their position in society, but he suggests that they do not protest either. Against such views, there have, however, been scholars (e.g. Mencher 1974, Omvedt 1995) who reject the idea of cultural consensus and point out that lower castes do actually protest and that they often possess very different values and visions compared to the upper castes.

Regardless of the theoretical differences among social scientists regarding the nature of the South Asian caste system, numerous empirical observations indicate that the 'lower' castes generally, and the Dalits in particular, experience differential access to livelihood opportunities due to their social statuses. For example, as Borooah and Iyer (2005) argue, caste status is an important factor in determining access to education. Apart from cultural norms associated with religion and caste influencing school enrollment, historical influences stemming from similar considerations have shaped education policies as well. Collectively, such non-economic factors have exerted an important role in current decisions relating to sending children to school. Considering such factors, Bourdieu's (1986) notion of different forms of capital become relevant in understanding how dalit communities interact with and respond to forces of change introduced from outside by the state, market processes and other means.

3. The general situation of Dalits in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, there is as yet no well-developed body of knowledge on the history and present realities of the Dalits living in the country. In fact, as indicated already, the term 'Dalit' itself is relatively new, and regardless of the terminology involved, there has not been sufficient attention paid by the state to this category of people. In so far as Bangladesh has inherited various laws and official terminology introduced by the British, the country shares much in common with other countries of South Asia, particularly

India and Pakistan, in matters such as how the state approaches dealing with problems faced by dalit communities. In this regard, it may be mentioned that after the end of British rule, in India untouchability was formally abolished through specific provisions made in the constitution of the country. Moreover, there was more concrete legislation aimed at eradicating untouchability and its effects as well (Galanter 1963). Similar measures were taken in the constitution in Pakistan as well, but despite initial declarations, there was no legislation in the end relating to the Dalits (Aqeel 2014). A similar situation prevails in Bangladesh as well, where, except for some generic clauses in the constitution that guarantee fundamental equality of all citizens, and prohibits all forms of discrimination relating to, among other factors caste, there has been no specific law that addresses the needs and concerns of the Dalits.

It is known generally that there are dalit communities in different parts of the country, both in urban and rural areas, and in special zones such as the tea gardens of Sylhet. In the literature, they are often divided in two broad linguistic categories: Bengali and non-Bengali, the latter including many minority languages that remain to be properly surveyed or recognized by the state. Regardless of the languages spoken by Bangladeshi Dalits, most of them seem to be descendants of communities that had migrated into what used to be East Bengal under British rule from areas in and beyond West Bengal. While it is not clear whether there are Bangladeshi dalit communities that trace their roots solely to the localities in which they reside presently, the chances of such identification are relatively slim because of the historical realities involved.

As Eaton (1993) has argued quite convincingly in his book on the rise of Islam in eastern Bengal, Brahmanic culture and the caste system associated with it had not penetrated deeply in this part of South Asia when Muslim rulers arrived in the region. Therefore a conventional theory about ‘mass conversion’ to Islam in order to avoid the stigma of low caste status or untouchability cannot be

sustained in the context of what is Bangladesh today. In other words, at the time when Muslim rulers and religious pioneers arrived in this territory, there could not have been many local communities that had already become known as 'untouchables'. Thus, when communities that had become known as 'untouchables' in other parts of British India were brought into East Bengal, in theory they had the opportunity to escape the stigma of untouchability in a social milieu less burdened with the ideology of the caste system. However, insofar as many of these communities were brought in to be employed in occupations that they were traditionally associated with (e.g. as sweepers), or under very tough conditions (e.g. in tea gardens), the British administrative category 'depressed classes' or the subsequent label 'scheduled castes' simply helped to freeze the identity of the former 'untouchables' in a new context.

In the existing literature on the Dalits of Bangladesh, however, there is at present little in-depth analysis of the kinds of issues just mentioned above. Just as there is a paucity of detailed historical documentation and analysis, there is also a general lack of accurate statistical data on the Dalits of the country. The main reason for this situation has to do with the fact that censuses in Bangladesh are conducted without any effort made to identify the Dalits (or 'untouchables'). Thus, in terms of official statistics, there is hardly any data on the Dalits of the country. In this context, the vacuum continues to be filled to a limited extent by NGOs that have begun to work with dalit communities. In the absence of any accurate, official data, informal estimates of the total population of Dalits in Bangladesh range from as low as 3.5 million (Banglapedia [Biswas n.d.]) to as high as 6.5 million (Uddin 2015:6).

The general body of literature that has developed on the Dalits of Bangladesh with the involvement of NGOs is still largely qualitative, and depicts the plight of dalit communities, highlighting a range of problems that can be anticipated, such as social discrimination, gender-based violence, very limited access to resources and

basic services. Studies conducted in this vein (e.g. Chowdhury 2009, Islam 2011, Parvez and Islam 2013, 2014; FAIR 2015) depict different aspects of the conditions of the Dalits in the country, including factors such as religious and ethnic affiliations of the communities involved, their location, etc. According to some estimates, there are altogether 94 different dalit groups in the country (FAIR 2015). Depending on the community involved, they are mostly engaged in professions deemed to be 'polluting' (e.g. skinning of animals, shoe polishing, pig rearing, dealing with dead bodies, sweeping), and are usually known by specific caste names depending on the occupation involved (e.g. *Rishi, Kawra, Dom, Dhangor).*

In some sources (e.g. Chowdhury 2009), the existence of Dalits among Muslims is noted as well (of the dalit communities mentioned by Biswas [n.d.], *Kolus* or oil pressers are said to "belong to both Hindu and Muslim religions", and similarly, there are dalit hereditary fishing communities of both religions, with the Muslims known as *Nikari*). Regardless of the specific identities or locations of the Dalits, all communities are generally marked by their low social status that is socially inherited, various degrees of socioeconomic deprivation and political disempowerment. In many cases, dalit communities are doubly or triply oppressed by virtue of their belonging to ethnic/linguistic and religious minority statuses, not to mention their 'ritual impurity' and poor economic status. For women, of course, there is the additional dimension of gender-based violence and discrimination both within their own communities and in the wider society (cf. Islam 2011). However, there is very little concrete and detailed data that can give us an accurate picture of the degree and extent of all these trends.

Keeping in mind the specific focus areas of this study in Khulna (e.g. relative poverty, traditional skills, and family and community dynamics), some relevant trends that could be identified in the literature reviewed are presented in the following page:

- **Association with hereditary occupations:** According to the secondary literature reviewed, some of the dalit groups *(Jatis)* living in the study districts (Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira) includes the *Rishis, Kaiputro* and *Bhagobania*, each of which is associated with one kind of hereditary occupation. As described by Biswas (n.d.), the traditional occupation of the *Rishis* "relate to raw materials like leather, canes and bamboos", whereas the *Kaiputros*, also known as *Kaora* or *Kawra* (and regarded by some as a sub-caste of *Rishis*) raise pigs, and the *Bhagobania* (also known as *Bhagomene* or *Bhagobene*) "make traditional medicine".

- **Low levels of income and poor access to resources, particularly among women:** The traditional occupations can barely give economic security to dalit communities who typically have little or no access to land. In some cases, members of some dalit communities (e.g. sweeper castes) may have government jobs that give them some income, but the salaries involved are pretty meager (e.g. Islam [2011:23] reports an earning level of Taka 3,000-4,000 per month). In most cases, married women in dalit communities are also predominantly dependent on their husbands and do not have incomes of their own (Islam 2011:23). At present, however, there is no detailed data to shed light on the exact economic situation of the Dalits in relation to the poor of the 'mainstream' population of Bangladesh.

- **Poor access to basic services:** as indicated, for example, by very low rates of literacy, particularly among women. According to Islam (2011:7), approximately 96% of the dalit population of Bangladesh is illiterate. However, there is the absence of specific and detailed data relating to the dalit communities of the study area.

- **Linguistic and religious marginalization:** Though many dalit communities in Bangladesh were not Bengali-speakers originally, in many places they have not been able to hold onto their native languages. For example, Biswas (n.d.) reports that

for the *Rishis*, "their native language, '*Thar*', is more or less extinct by now." Similarly, since most of the dalit communities are commonly categorized as Hindu, they are often subjected to common patterns of communal violence and persecution of religious minorities in Bangladesh (e.g. there was a report of attacks on a dalit village in Abhoynagar, Jessore on January 7, 2014).[5]

- **Everyday acts of discrimination faced by Dalits as 'untouchables':** This is the most deeply rooted problem faced by Dalits all over South Asia. In the context of the study area under consideration, the following are two examples of the kinds of discrimination faced by Dalits (IDSN 2015):

  Case 1 (When Dalits are not supposed to apply for jobs outside of their hereditary occupations): [The] Chairman of Jalalabad Union Council, Kolaroa sub-district, Satkhira turned [down] a dalit applicant youth saying, "*You son of the cobbler, how dare [you] ask for the job!*".

  Case 2 (Dalit students barred from participating in a national day observation event): The head master, along with his colleagues of Bhojgati Government Primary School, at Monirampur sub-district of Jessore expelled 70 dalit students from the national liberation day observance event. He stated: "*You are from [low] impure community; you are [not] supposed to participate in such a big event.*"

- **Resistance and redress:** Everyday forms of discrimination do not necessarily go unchallenged at all times. While the literature reviewed mostly focus on victimization, there are some instances of resistance and redress as well. For example, in the context of the second case described above, it is learned that the parents of the dalit children barred from taking part in the event stopped sending their children to school, and also lodged an official complaint to the education officer at the UPZ level.

[5]https://dalitbangladesh.wordpress.com/tag/bangladesh/

C

Research objectives, design and limitations

1. Objectives

This longitudinal research study in three cycles over two years had four objectives as listed below:

- To determine relative poverty of dalit communities and its dynamics in relation to the non-Dalits. Here, poverty will be understood from multidimensional perspectives: income, expenditure, nutrition, access to resources, vulnerability, power relations and rights are some notable aspects of these.

- To identify the traditional skills of the dalit communities and their relevance in the market.

- To identify the dynamics within families and communities as a result of internal migration by dalit women (due to the TDH Italia intervention) and international migration (if any), which may motivate the dalit youth, particularly the girls, to take up non-traditional professions in urban areas.

- To propose specific areas of interventions to overcome the distinct deprivations and discriminations faced by the dalit community, particularly for skills acquisition, employment opportunities and related migration management.

While the first three objectives were focused on the creation of an analytical basis for future interventions, the fourth one expected suggestions from the research team for specific interventions necessary for the betterment of the Dalits. The research team has undergone the following process to achieve the objectives.

2. Research process

The research process followed to achieve the mentioned objectives entailed seven consecutive steps, namely a) Literature study, b) Research designing, c) Field-testing of the questionnaire and training of the enumerators, d) Data collection (quantitative and qualitative), e) Data processing and analysis, f) Report writing and g) Internal and external dissemination of findings and recommendations.

Literature study: The research team reviewed the relevant literature. The sources included published articles, research reports, project documents, and books written on the Dalits in general since 1948. The team prepared a summary of the review to identify the information needs against the research objectives.

Research designing: Based on the review findings, the research team identified the information needs against each research objective, defined the research questions, identified the possible sources of information, selected the methods of data collection and developed a questionnaire, checklist and guidelines to support quantitative and qualitative data collection respectively.

Field-testing: The research team conducted a field test of a draft questionnaire, which was subsequently finalized incorporating the lessons learned. A training of the Enumerators, both from dalit and non-dalit background, followed. The practical training led to further revision of the questionnaires, checklist and guidelines based on the experience of the selected enumerators.

Data collection: The research team undertook data collection in two stages focusing on quantitative data collection first, and qualitative data later. The research activities occurred in 4 UPZs (Dumuria, Keshabpur, Paikgacha and Tala) of three Districts (Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira) of Khulna Division.

Data processing and analysis: A team led by a senior statistician undertook data entry and analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel (MSXL) for presentation of the data in graphs.

Report writing: The members of the research team shared the writing of the report based on agreed area of responsibility and expertise.

Internal and external dissemination: The research team presented the preliminary findings to TDH Italia and SDC for interim feedback and guidance on how to disseminate the report subsequently. The team also held one Regional Workshop in Khulna and National Workshop in Dhaka to share the findings, interpretations and possible advocacy strategies for the betterment of dalit livelihood and invited critical observations. The core comments provided and discussed during the workshop have been reflected in the final report.

3. Research design

The research design, supportive to the achievement of research objectives, was expected to foresee collection of relevant data. The type of data collected, and their depth and width were expected to depend on the understanding of the research objectives. The research team reviewed some traditional poverty concepts and development approaches in view of their usefulness and used its own poverty model to define the spectrum of information needed to achieve the research objectives.

Relevance of traditional poverty concepts

The first research objective to identify relative poverty between the Dalits and non-Dalits demanded that poverty was defined first. The research design to support the data collection related to this objective was based on a comprehensive understanding of poverty. Traditionally, income, expenditure and nutrition-based indicators are used to measure poverty. For example, the

household expenditure survey, undertaken by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), provides UPZ-wise disaggregated data on income and expenditure to assess the poverty situation, given a certain threshold of income as an indicator of poverty. The World Food Program (WFP) considers nutritional (macronutrient and micronutrient) and vulnerability data to add the food and nutritional security dimension to poverty to ensure that the income and expenditure are enough to afford the right nutritional outcome. The income, expenditure and nutritional data may describe the poverty situation, but cannot sufficiently explain the poverty situation of the communities. It deserves mentioning that income and nutritional poverty are mostly used for inter-country comparisons without giving much attention to the reasons behind poverty. Three arguments may apply here not to use only income, expenditure and nutrition indicators as the basis for poverty. First, these indicators express an outcome situation and do not include the causes behind poverty. Therefore, supplementary studies are needed to explain poverty. Second, though food and nutrition are critical for survival, they cannot and should not be exhaustive factors, as human beings need more than only food for a worthy life. These indicators at best describe absolute poverty and provide insufficient information about relative poverty among communities. Third, the existing poverty indicators hardly refer to ethnicity and gender aspects.

Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA)

The comprehensive poverty concept incorporated into the research design goes beyond income, expenditure and nutrition, and explains the state of livelihood.

In order to capture both the outcome based indicators and explanatory poverty indicators, the study has used an extended SLA, which looks at six 'capitals' (human, social, financial, physical, natural and institutional capital), the state of which characterizes the situation of a community (see figure C.1). The revised model includes 'institutional capital', which goes beyond social capital. While the study accepts that the poverty situation of a community

can be expressed through the profile of the mentioned capitals, it does not explicitly capture power relations, ethnicity and gender. It does not significantly incorporate the issue of interrelationships among capitals and the degree of influence a community has over the profile of the capitals.

Figure C.1: Capital assets

Capital assets

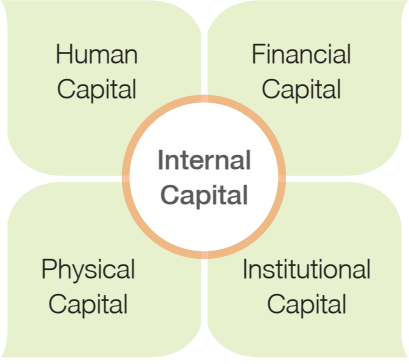
The sustainable livelihoods framework helps to organize the factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities and shows how they relate to one another. A central notion is that different households have different access to livelihood assets, which the SLA aims to expand. The livelihood assets, which the poor must often make trade-offs and choices about, comprise:

- Human capital, e.g., health, nutrition, education, knowledge and skills, capacity to work, capacity to adapt.
- Social capital, e.g., networks and connections (patronage, neighborhoods, kinship), relations of trust and mutual understanding and support, formal and informal groups, shared values and behaviors, common rules and sanctions, collective representation, mechanisms for participation in decision-making, leadership.

- Natural capital, e.g., land and produce, water and aquatic resources, trees and forest products, wildlife, wild foods and fibers, biodiversity, environmental services.
- Physical capital, e.g., infrastructure (transport, roads, vehicles, secure shelter and buildings, water supply and sanitation, energy, communications), tools and technology (tools and equipment for production, seed, fertilizer, pesticides, traditional technology)
- Financial capital, e.g., savings, credit and debt (formal, informal), remittances, pensions, wages.

Source: Oliver Serrat: The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, 2005

Figure C.2: Capital assets as internal factors



Transaction Power Approach (TPA) to poverty

In order that the poverty situation is not only identified but also explained the study used a heuristic model 'Transaction Power Approach to poverty'. This approach divides the factors which affect poverty into two groups: internal factors and external factors assuming that internal and external factors are in relation to each other. The internal factors are human, physical, financial and

institutional capital (see figure C.2). They are internal because household members can own/possess them and dispose over them. The external factors – social, economic, legal and political transaction together create a 'work space' within which the internal factors – separately or combined – are played out by an individual with an outcome, characterizing a certain degree of wellbeing. The space, where an individual with her/his specific profile of human, physical, financial and institutional capital is playing, is populated with other actors (individuals, communities and state, environment) as well. The wellbeing of an individual depends not only on the magnitude of her/his capitals in use, but also on the nature of relationships with other actors. Whether the individual can shape her/his relationships with others in the work space for improving personal wellbeing depends on her/his 'transaction power' with other actors. Here, transaction power is understood as the capacity of an individual to influence the relationships with other actors in personal interest. A person is more likely to be a transaction poor if others dominate in the relationship for their benefits, without considering the interest of the individual in question.

While an individual interacts with other actors (here 'transacts'), four types of interactions (here 'transactions') are differentiated: social, economic, legal and political. First, the person may have a **social transaction.** It captures the way other people greets, invites, addresses, entertains, and advises under varied context. Second, a person who faces discriminatory behavior in these cases is unlikely to improve her/his wellbeing. An **economic transaction** occurs, when an individual uses her/his capitals to sell a product or services or buy the same from other actors. A person who cannot sell or buy in an environment of equality in determining the prices and getting the right product is unlikely to improve her/his wellbeing. In civilized societies, people irrespective of their social or economic transactions may have diverse opinions and thus may be in conflict with each other. Unless a person experiences the actions towards resolution of the conflicts **(legal transaction)** free from discrimination, inequality and biasedness, s/he can seldom improve her/his wellbeing. Finally, in a

democratic society, an individual has an opinion in the political process both as a voter and candidate. **A political transaction** would allow the voice of the person is expressed freely or that s/he can fight for a cause and seek support from others. A person without these roles in a political transaction will unlikely get her/his interests represented, with the consequence of losing wellbeing. Even though not explicitly a part of the model as a separate category, the 'gender transaction has been added as a cross-cutting issue.

All the aforementioned transactions constitute a development space, in which an individual can seek her/his wellbeing to develop further. Transaction poverty occurs if an individual does not experience equality in this space. The transaction poverty approach identifies the nature of human relations (transactions), which determines the profile of the capitals and thus influence the relative poverty.

While determining the relative poverty, the research design used the traditional concepts, sustainable livelihood, and the transaction power approach together to gather a comprehensive set of data for comparison of the Dalits with the non-Dalits. The non-Dalits are used as a comparator. They were selected following two criteria: a) they lived in the same area; b) they possessed a single-room household with or without ownership of land where the house is situated. This model used the household expenditure survey, the political economy and power analysis, and the rights-based, ethnic and gender approaches (see figure C.3) to generate in-depth data and a deep understanding of the comparative poverty situation of the mentioned communities.

Figure C.3: Mix of approaches in research design

	Research framework	Household expenditure survey	Political, economical and power analysis	Right-based approach	Gender	Ethnicity
Extended SLA Approach	Human capital	Literacy, education, information and knowledge, skils (traditional versus contemporary), motivation, dreams and aspirations				
	Social capital	Relationship with others, accessibility, credibility				
	Institutional capital	The capacity to organize, motivate others, ownership, leadership skills				
	Physical capital	Land, water bodies, homestead, productive resources				
	Financial capital	Savings, debts, loans, access to financial resources				
	Natural capital	Access to public water bodies, forest, coastal fishery, riverine resources				

The methodology of the research included both quantitative and qualitative tools such as household survey (e.g. Food, nutrition and income related data for understanding human and financial capital), in-depth interviews, FGDs, KIIs, case studies and observations.

4. Longitudinal and comparative character of the research

The methodology and process of the second and third cycles were the same as the first cycle. The research, although conducted in three cycles and broadly in the same geographical areas did not deliberately reach the same respondents. The reason for this approach was that the longitudinal study did not have the purpose of identifying the trend of the achievement of a certain project, which had covered a group of beneficiaries. It also did not consider averaging the data, because many sub-groups fall under the Dalits, whose socioeconomic profile varies among others due to geographical variations. Instead, the study aimed to illustrate a general picture at different times. The core interest lied in the relative poverty and discriminations of Dalits against non-Dalits in three cycles separately and not in the changes of the relative poverty and discriminations the Dalits have been experiencing over three cycles. In the case of migrated girls and young women, however, a longitudinal study in conventional sense was conducted. The following table provides a cycle-wise distribution of respondents (gender, Dalits and non-Dalits).

Table C.4: Cycle-wise distribution of respondents

Cycle	Quantitative research				Qualitative research								
					Dalit migrated girls HHs			Dalit non-migrated girls HHs			Mainstream HHs		
	Dalit	Non-Dalit	Total	Migrated girls (HHs)	Unstructured interview	Case studies	FGD	Unstr. Interv.	Case studies	FGD	Unstr. Interv.	Case studies	FGD
1	403	405	808	36	10	M 1, F 1	6	10	M 1, F 1	6	10	M 1, F 1	6
2	451	444	895	36	10	M 1, F 1	6	10	M 1, F 1	6	10	M 1, F 1	6
3	458	439	897	36	10	M 1, F 1	6	10	M 1, F 1	6	10	M 1, F 1	6

5. Quantitative research

Sampling

The following target groups have been approached for survey: a) Dalit HHs (both from where the girls migrated for training and employment and from where they did not) and b) Non-dalit HHs.

a) **Dalit HHs:** So far, no literature mentions the actual size of the dalit population in Bangladesh. A multistage sampling methodology was used to select the sample units for the survey. First, two stage cluster sampling methods were used to select villages, the smallest geographical unit (clusters), randomly. Since there is no sampling frame, systematic random sampling method was used to select household units in each village (3rd stage). For this group, the sample size was determined using a standard formula, which can be used if the survey population is unknown (Creative Research System 2016). The estimated sample size was 384. Considering a non-response rate of 10%, the target sample size of this group was 424. The selected UPZs and villages were those where the Dalits live. At the household level, the 50% of the respondents was male and 50% females, who make important family decisions.

b) **Non-dalit HHs:** Samples from the non-Dalits were randomly selected from areas located nearby the previously identified dalit communities. The sample size of this group was the same size as the Dalits (424), for the sake of data's validity.

c) **Dalit migrated girls:** The survey was conducted among 50% of the households, from which girls migrated, from October 2016 to May 2017, for training and employment (36 girls[6]).

[6]In the original research design, dalit girls were supposed to be 40. However, only 36 dalit girls were available in three cycles and not 40. The number varied because some had moved due to marriage and external migration.

Based on the lesson learnt during the first cycle, the research team adopted a more efficient approach in targeting the respondents in the second and third cycles. In addition, improved climatic conditions and better accessibility allowed more respondents during the second and third cycle than it was the case during the first cycle, even though some other limitations existed.

In order to avoid potential Enumerators' influence during the data collection process, the team chose a mix of dalit and non-dalit Enumerators during the first cycle. During the second cycle, dalit Enumerators dominated in number (90%), whereas in the third cycle the opposite was the case.

6. Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews, FGDs, KIIs, case studies and physical observation were used in this study.

The specific individuals interviewed during the second and third cycles were not necessarily the same as in the first cycle. During the second and third cycle, members of other dalit communities – e.g. the *Malos* (traditionally fishermen), who did not appear during the first cycle fieldwork – were included as respondents for interviews, case studies and FGDs.

These interviews and case studies were continued in regular interval for the whole length of the study with selected informants from the respective households. Besides, FGDs were conducted periodically.

In the course of the study, as further information was collected – both from secondary sources and in terms of primary data gathered by means of different tools – special attention was paid to data that were helpful in better understanding the constraints and opportunities that young dalit women faced as they sought to improve their status through geographical and socioeconomic mobility.

7. Study period

The study was conducted within two years. The first cycle was held in the period from August to October 2017, the second one in the period from May to June 2018, and the third one in the period from December 2018 to February 2019.

8. Limitations

During the data collection process, the research team encountered few limitations. First, the wet weather conditions made the rural roads inaccessible and put enormous strain on the enumerators. Second, religious events and festivals (Hindu festival '*Diwali*' *(Kali Puja),* fasting period and *Eid* holidays were behind limited availability of respondents in some cases. Third, since the research budget did not include compensation for the time of respondents (1.5 hours per respondent), spontaneous readiness to be available for interviews were at times not possible. Fourth, data collected during the third cycle occurred prior to parliamentary elections. The research team performed its task under an environment of tension and fear.

D

Findings and interpretations

1. Understanding dalit identity in the study area

The people, categorized as 'Dalit' in the study area, mostly consist of social groups introduced as 'Hindu' but there are also some who are Muslims. The team has not encountered any Christian and Buddhist Dalit. The category 'Dalit' represents social groups that are traditionally viewed as '*Nichu Jat'* (low castes). However, the term 'Dalit' itself is not necessarily widely known to or used for self-identification by members of such groups in the study area. Among the people the research team spoke with, many indicated that they were not exactly sure of whom the label 'Dalit' referred to. Some of them, particularly Muslims targeted as 'Dalit' through different NGO interventions, have thrown the question back to these researchers by asking, "*Who are Dalits? Are they the Rishis, Sweepers or the Cobblers?"*

As noted in the literature review section, Dalits are divided into different '*jatis*' or named social groups that have distinct identities and tend to be endogamous and associated with some kinds of traditional occupation considered to be impure. In the study area, the groups that the research team came across included the ones shown in the Table D.1. (based primarily on findings from the field).

Table D.1: Local names of groups categorized as 'Dalit' in the study area

SN	Caste Name	Traditional Occupation(s)	Religion; other remarks
1	*Rishi*	Skinning animals, making bamboo baskets	Hindu; others tend to refer to themas *'Muchi'* (cobblers)
2	*Behara*	Palanquin bearers	Muslim; locally known as *'Sardar'*
3	*Malo*	Fishing	Hindu
4	*Jola*	Weaving	Muslim; locally known as *'Karigar'*
5	*Kawra*	Pig farming	Hindu
6	*Sheel*	Cutting/shaving hair	Hindu; also known as *'Rajatdas'*
7	*Kolu*	Oil pressing	Muslim
8	*Nikari*	Fishing	Muslim
9	*Dhopa*	Washing clothes	Hindu
10	*Hazam*	Circumcision	Muslim
11	*Bazandar*	Playing of musical instruments (drums)	Hindu or Muslim; drums being made of hide may have been behind their 'untouchability'

Regardless of the labels involved, it is clear that notions about the low caste status and acts of discrimination associated with it are mostly observed at the local level where people know one another. For communities who have been known to be of 'low' or 'impure' caste status for generations, it is not easy to escape the stigma associated with their identity as '*Rishi*', '*Muchi*' (cobbler), '*Kawra*' (pig rearer) etc. Even Muslims, who are known to have been '*Behara*' (palanquin bearers) in the past, but left their traditional occupation at least two generations ago, are still looked down upon by many of their neighbors. Among these former '*Beharas*', those who own land and are relatively powerful, the title '*Sardar*' ('chief') is used as an indication of high status. However, other local Muslims who claim higher status as *Sheikh*, *Saiyad*, *Gaji* and *Maulabhi* still look down upon them.

For people who are looked down upon for their 'low' caste, it is sometimes easier to avoid the stigma of their identity in other places where people do not know them. However, many respondents said that they did not experience or observe acts of caste discrimination in their own areas, but they heard of such

things taking place elsewhere. Among those who have faced indignities because of their caste, a few narrated their own experiences. For example, a woman said when she visited a nephew, she saw him carry a cup while going to the tea stall since "*that was the local rule*" (i.e. 'Untouchables' were not served tea from cups at the stall!). Other respondents also shared similar stories. While visiting relatives in other places, they faced no problem in taking tea or food by themselves, but when they were accompanied by local relatives, they were treated differently. Apart from everyday forms of indignities experienced locally where caste identities are known, some have faced discrimination in seeking jobs outside of their areas due to their surnames. A 'Rabidas' (altnernate name for the 'Rishis') said though he was deemed fit for a job that he was interested in, he was not hired because of his caste. He was told that regardless of how qualified he was, others would not want to work with the 'son of a cobbler'! More such accounts and related observations will be presented under different headings below.

2. Inequality analysis (deprivations and discriminations)[7]

The section D.2.1 documents the findings related to the comparative status of the human, financial, physical and institutional capital of three cycles. As described earlier, the attributes of these capitals constitute the 'internal factors', which directly influence the state of livelihood of both experimental groups and can be influenced by the groups.

The section D.2.2, on the contrary, documents the findings of the external relationships of the Dalits as opposed to the poor non-Dalits with the society as a whole. Four types of interactions with the society as a whole constitute the set of external relationships. As described earlier, the types of interactions include social transaction, economic transaction, legal transaction and political transaction. The findings related to the social transaction capture the way other sections of the society (non-Dalits and non-poor) treat the Dalits and poor non-Dalits socially (see D.2.2.1). The findings associated with the economic transaction describe the way the Dalits and poor non-Dalits are treated in the market when they participate as buyers and sellers (see D.2.2.2). It is assumed that people in public interactions may experience difference of opinions (conflict), which needs to be resolved in an objective way. The findings regarding how the Dalits and the poor non-Dalits are experiencing the conflict resolution process and system is discussed under legal transactions (see D.2.2.3). Finally, the findings related to whether the Dalits and the poor non-Dalits have equal access to public services, public resources and decision-making opportunities (voting rights, scope of providing opinions in the community) is discussed under political transactions (see D.2.2.4). The findings related to gender relation as a cross-cutting transaction is also discussed under section D.2.2.5. The nature of each transaction is characterized by

[7]In the statistical findings to follow, the decimal number is not considered for a double digit percentage number. If the decimal number is 0.5 and above, the percentage number is rounded up. Otherwise, the percentage number is rounded down.

the way the society and the state treat the Dalits as opposed to the poor non-Dalits. The core question is whether the society and the State treat the Dalits as well as the poor non-Dalits equally or they face deprivations and discrimination as opposed to the remaining section of the society. All these transactions are considered here external, because they are subject to external influence (state, non-poor section of the society).

The description of the findings related to each internal and external factor will be followed by brief corresponding interpretations, which together will be the basis for the advocacy strategies to be elaborated in Section E.

2.1 Internal factors in line with SLA approach

2.1.1 Human capital

a) Education

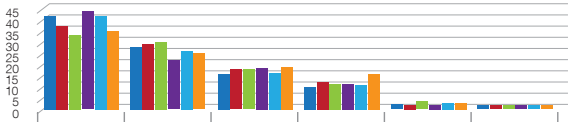
Research questions

The research question is about the level of education the Dalits possess as opposed to the non-Dalits. This not only expresses the state of human capital, but also their ability to develop their capacities.

Summary findings

42%, 34%, and 42% of the Dalits said never to had gone to schools compared to 38%, 44%, and 35% of the non-dalit poor during the consecutive cycles. Whereas 16%, 19%, and 17% of the Dalits has completed grade V, 18%, 18%, and 19% of the non-Dalits 42%, 34%, and 42% of the Dalits said never to have gone to schools compared to 38%, 44%, and 35% of the non-Dalits poor during the consecutive cycles. Whereas 16%, 19%, and 17% of the Dalits has completed grade V, 18%, 18%, and 19% of the non-Dalits completed the same grade. In case of the grade VIII, 10%, 12% and 11% Dalits said to have completed it, as opposed to 12%, 12% and 16% in case of non-Dalits. 2%, 4% and 3% of the Dalits and 2%, 2% and 3% of the non-Dalits have passed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations. At Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) level, 2%, 2% and 1% of the Dalits and 1%, 2% and 2% of the non-Dalits said to have completed it (see figure D.2.1).

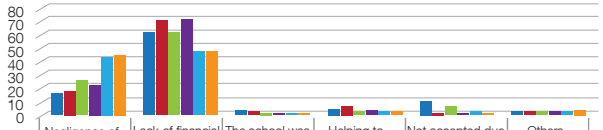
D.2.1: Level of education of the Dalits and non-Dalits



	They never went to school	They have not completed the grade V	They have completed the grade V	They have completed grade VIII	They have completed SSC	They have completed HSC and above
First Cycle Dalit	42	28	16	10	2	2
First Cycle Non-dalit	38	30	18	12	2	1
Second Cycle Dalit	34	31	19	12	4	2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	44	22	18	12	2	2
Third Cycle Dalit	42	26	17	11	3	1
Third Cycle Non-dalit	35	25	19	16	3	2

Asked about the reasons for low level of schooling, both the Dalits and non-Dalits mentioned 'financial constraints' and 'negligence of the guardians' almost equally. Some Dalits also mentioned that (11%, 7%, and 3% of the respondents, who cited the reasons), their 'social identity' was the reason for lower achievement (see figure D.2.2).

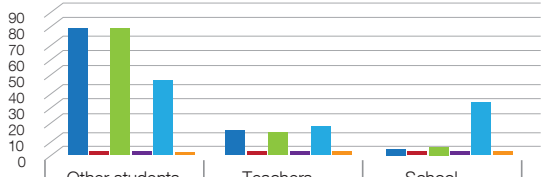
D.2.2: Reasons for not going to school and not completing grade V



	Negligence of the guardian	Lack of financial capacity	The school was located so far away	Helping to family work	Not accepted due to social identity	Others
First Cycle Dalit	17	63	2	5	11	3
First Cycle Non-dalit	19	71	1	7	0	2
Second Cycle Dalit	27	63	0	2	7	2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	23	72	0	3	0	1
Third Cycle Dalit	45	49	0	2	3	2
Third Cycle Non-dalit	46	49	0	2	0	4

When asked about who particularly the source of discriminations was, they mentioned the student 81%, 80% and 48%), followed by teachers (16%, 15% and 19%) and others (see figure D.2.3) in consecutive cycles.

D.2.3: Sources of insult



	Other students	Teachers	School committee/guardian
First Cycle Dalit	81	16	3
First Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	0
Second Cycle Dalit	80	15	5
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	0
Third Cycle Dalit	48	19	33
Third Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	0

Qualitative findings

The level of education was generally low among both dalit and non-dalit communities covered by this study. Among both categories, the proportion of individuals having completed secondary school certificates or higher levels of education was

quite low. For both dalit and non-dalit communities, poverty or lack of adequate financial resources and lack of awareness were often cited as the reasons why many people never went to school.

Interpretation

While discriminatory attitudes or practices towards dalit children in schools, particularly from children and teachers, have been reported, this factor by itself does not seem to be a major reason behind low levels of schooling among dalit communities. The spontaneous response of the dalit youth that discriminations is rarely felt in the educational institutions they visit, indicates a further declining trend of discrimination.

b) Skills

Research questions

The research question here was whether the Dalits in comparison to the non-Dalits have acquired skills in the area of their present occupation. If no formal skills were available, the study looked into the reasons behind them and also ascertained whether any discrepancy exists in the provision of formal skills to the Dalits in comparison to the non-Dalits.

Summary findings

Both Dalits and non-Dalits are mostly engaged as daily labourer (35%, 31% and 31% vs. 59%, 71% and 61%). However, Dalits, compared to non-Dalits, are skilled in bamboo and cane (16%, 12% and 13%), leather (7%, 10%, 5%) and fishing related works (9%, 16%, and 15%), whereas the non-Dalits are more engaged as van/rickshaw driver (15%, 19%, and 15% versus 13%, 17% and 17% of the Dalits).

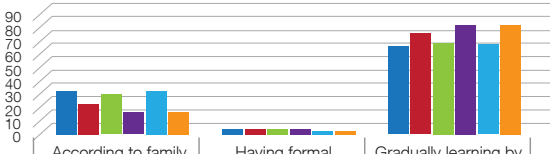
In small businesses, the degree of engagements is 5%, 10% and 8% of the Dalits and 9%, 10% and 9% of non-Dalits (see figure D.2.4).

D.2.4: Skills' profile of Dalits and non-Dalits

	Bamboo and cane related work	Leather related works	Fishermen	Day labour	Rickshaw and van puller	Small business	Others
First Cycle Dalit	16	7	9	35	13	5	14
First Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	0	59	15	9	17
Second Cycle Dalit	12	10	16	31	17	10	5
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	0	71	19	10	0
Third Cycle Dalit	13	5	15	31	17	8	11
Third Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	0	61	15	9	15

When asked about whether they have received any training for the type of work they do, the Dalits mentioned to have learned on the job (65%, 68%, 66%) as opposed to non-Dalits (74%, 82% and 81%) (see figure D.2.5).

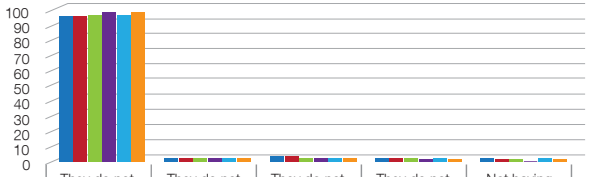
D.2.5: Involvement with the current profession



	According to family tradition	Having formal training	Gradually learning by doing
First Cycle Dalit	32	3	65
First Cycle Non-dalit	23	3	74
Second Cycle Dalit	29	3	68
Second Cycle Non-dalit	16	3	82
Third Cycle Dalit	32	2	66
Third Cycle Non-dalit	17	2	81

Formal training received by the Dalits is 3%, 2.7% and 2.2% versus 3.3%, 2.9% and 2.1%.The reason for not needing skills training by the Dalits was that it was part of the family traditions (96%, 96% and 97%) versus 95%-98% in the case of non-Dalits (see figure D.2.6).

D.2.6: Reasons for not having the training



	They do not have need for training	They do not have financial ability to pay for the training	They do not know about the training facilities	They do not access the training due to social identity	Not having education
First Cycle Dalit	96	1	3	0.4	1
First Cycle Non-dalit	95	2	3	0	0
Second Cycle Dalit	96	2	2	1	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	98	1	1	0	0
Third Cycle Dalit	97	1	2	0	0.2
Third Cycle Non-dalit	98	1	1	0	0

Qualitative findings

While dalit identities are supposed to be based on certain hereditary occupations, there were no clear patterns of associations between any specific occupations or related skills among different groups of Dalits. However, certain types of traditional skills in leatherwork, fishing and basket-weaving were more commonly noted among dalit than among non-dalit communities. In general, the proportion of people engaged as day-laborers seemed higher among non-Dalits than among Dalits.

Interpretation

The Dalits were engaged in traditional professions, but are gradually entering the professions of the non-Dalits like day-laborer and van/rickshaw driver. Nearly no formal training was received by either the Dalits or non-Dalits, because on-the-job training was enough. In the case of Dalits, the transfer of skills from senior to junior is a tradition.

The skills, which the Dalits possess, are becoming gradually less attractive because there is no market, they bring limited income, are less preferred fearing social exclusion and not a choice for the youth, generate merely an off-season or a supplementary activity

and do not emerge from religious compulsion. A huge skill gap of the Dalits exists in the mainstream arena amid declining demand for traditional skills. The youth have apathy about traditional skills and have no access to new skills. The youth lack connectivity with skill providers. Such a situation will lead to oversupply of unskilled labor in the local agricultural sector which has limited absorption capacity. This may result in lower effective wages and further discrimination.

c) Health and nutrition

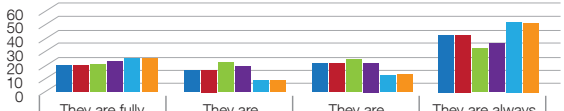
Research questions

Since the health and nutritional status of a person is crucial to have education and skills into play, the study looked at possible morbidity and basic nutritional habits of the dalit as opposed to non-dalit households. Specifically, the study inquired about whether any member of the household is suffering from diseases and whether they can afford three meals a day to meet the minimum physiological needs.

Summary findings

Health situation: As regards the health situation, in terms of 'no illness', 'occasionally sick', 'often sick' 'and chronically ill', the Dalits were not different from non-Dalits, except in the second cycle, in which the deviations are around 10-15%. The number of chronically and often sick persons was around 60%, which needs further attention (see figure D.2.7).

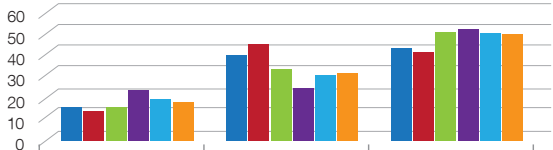
D.2.7: Prevalence of diseases



	They are fully healthy	They are sometimes sick	They are often sick	They are always sick
First Cycle Dalit	20	16	21	43
First Cycle Non-dalit	20	16	21	43
Second Cycle Dalit	21	22	24	32
Second Cycle Non-dalit	23	19	22	37
Third Cycle Dalit	26	9	13	53
Third Cycle Non-dalit	25	9	14	52

Type of treatment: When asked about the type of treatments they use, no specific discriminatory pattern was visible, except that during the second cycle, the non-Dalits (24%) sought no treatment as opposed to the Dalits (16%). In the case of 'under treatment', the second cycle shows a variation of nearly 10% (Dalits: 33% versus 24%). That 13%-18% of the non-Dalits and 16%-19% of the Dalits did not seek any treatment was indicative of economic hardship (see figure D.2.8).

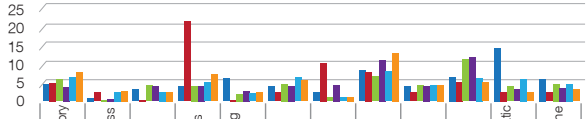
D.2.8: Type of treatment received



	They have not gone for any treatment	They are under treatment	Sometimes they seek treatment
First Cycle Dalit	16	40	44
First Cycle Non-dalit	13	45	41
Second Cycle Dalit	16	33	51
Second Cycle Non-dalit	24	24	52
Third Cycle Dalit	19	31	51
Third Cycle Non-dalit	18	32	50

Type of illness: The five most mentioned illnesses include heart disease, back pain, blood pressure, respiratory diseases, joint pain, diabetes, and headache (among 5% and above). No specific pattern in relative discrimination was visible (see figure D.2.9).

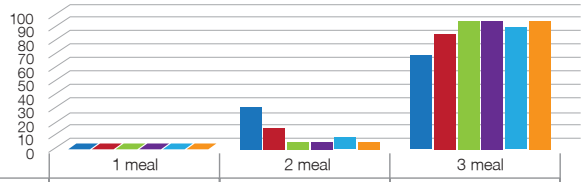
D.2.9: Type of diseases



	Respiratory	Old age weakness	Tumor	Diabetes	Hand/leg fracture	Blood pressure	Joint pain	Back pain	Ulcer/ Gastric	Heart problem	Rheumatic problem	Headache
First Cycle Dalit	5	1	4	4	6	4	3	8	4	7	14	6
First Cycle Non-dalit	5	3	0	22	0	3	11	8	3	5	3	3
Second Cycle Dalit	6	0	5	5	2	5	1	7	5	11	4	5
Second Cycle Non-dalit	4	0.3	4	4	3	4	5	12	4	12	3	4
Third Cycle Dalit	7	3	3	6	2	7	1	8	5	7	6	5
Third Cycle Non-dalit	8	3	3	8	3	6	2	13	5	6	3	3

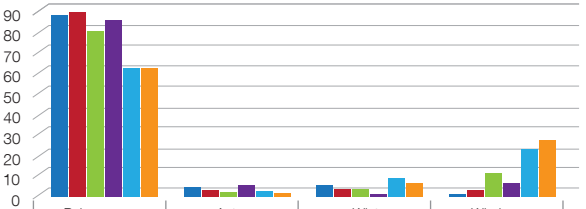
Meal frequency: Two meals a day was more common among the Dalits (31%, 6%, and 9%) than among non-Dalits (15%, 5% and 6%). 0.2% of the Dalits said to have one meal a day. The Dalits and non-Dalits said the number of meals decreased during the rainy season (see figure D.2.10-11).

D.2.10: Meal frequency



	1 meal	2 meal	3 meal
First Cycle Dalit	0	31	69
First Cycle Non-dalit	0	15	85
Second Cycle Dalit	0	6	95
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0	5	95
Third Cycle Dalit	0.2	9	91
Third Cycle Non-dalit	0	6	95

D.2.11: The season when they have to reduce number of meals per day



	Rainy season	Autumn	Winter	Whole year
First Cycle Dalit	88	5	6	1
First Cycle Non-dalit	90	3	4	3
Second Cycle Dalit	81	3	4	12
Second Cycle Non-dalit	86	6	1	7
Third Cycle Dalit	63	3	10	24
Third Cycle Non-dalit	63	2	7	28

Qualitative findings

There did not seem to be any notable difference in the health and nutritional status of the dalit and non-dalit communities covered by this study. Among both dalits and non-dalits, households generally ate two to three meals a day, with fish and poultry

included about once a week. Meat was not a regular part of their diet, though they would occasionally have meat on special occasions, particularly during Eid in case of Muslims. The team did not also learn about any significant difference in the types of diseases and health problems affecting these communities.

Interpretation

The proportion of dalit households having two meals a day is significantly higher than those of the non-dalit. This together with the fact that the number of working family members in the dalit families is higher and debts are higher as well, shows higher poverty among dalit households.

2.1.2 Physical capital

Research questions

In the absence of or in the case of insufficient human capital of a household, physical capital contributes to wellbeing. The research questions include whether the households possess any capital movable and immovable assets, which contributes to income or/and savings. Examples are arable land, homestead, livestock, vehicle and equipment/tools. A comparative picture of the Dalits compared to non-Dalits would provide information on the income earning potential of the family.

Summary findings

While more Dalits than non-Dalits (93%, 100% and 99% vs. 91%, 100% and 97%) possess a homestead land, the size of this land is slightly bigger for the non-Dalits (6, 7, 7 decimasl) than for non-Dalits (5, 6, 6 decimal). With regards to agricultural land, the opposite situation prevails with 11%, 18% and 12% of the Dalits possessing more decimal land (38, 31, 26) than 15%, 15% and 19% of the non-Dalits (27, 14, 35), except for the third cycle. Thus the valuation of Dalits' assets is higher than those of non-Dalits, except in the third cycle.

In the case of livestock, the asset value of the Dalits and non-Dalits does not show any pattern but they are close in terms of value.

However, in the case of tools and equipment, the Dalits (4%, 15%, 7% vs 0.5%, 0.9% and 2%) possess more boats and nets and less van/rickshaws (4%, 4% and 15% versus 17%, 17%, and 11%) than the non-Dalits, except for the third cycle. The value of a boat and net for the Dalits ranges from 37,392 to 134,318 BDT over 3 cycles while for the non-Dalits ranges from 6,000 to 13,956 BDT. In case of van/rickshaw the asset value for Dalits ranges from 15,618 to 25,993 BDT vs. 17,406 to 23551 BDT for the non-Dalits (see Table D.2.12).

Table D.2.12: Physical assets: type, quantity and value

	First cycle						Second cycle						Third cycle					
	Dalit			non-Dalit			Dalit			non-Dalit			Dalit			non-Dalit		
	%	Qnt	Value (Tk.)	%	Qnt	Value (Tk.)	%	Qnt	Value (Tk.)	%	Qnt	Value (Tk.)	%	Qnt	Value (Tk.)	%	Qnt	Value (Tk.)
Homestead land (dcml.)	93	5	154085	91	6	200771	100	6	185357	100	7	204846	99	6	198103	97	6.18	218362
Agriculture land (dcml.)	11	38	419233	15	27	411426	18	31	741838	15	14	321439	12	26	332135	19	35	486000
Pond	4	5	116308	6	3	54813	4	5	126053	0.9	4	98885	7	5	102038	8	3	87103
Goat/pig (number)	19	2	5770	27	2	8100	20	2	7642	26	2	6772	21	2	6039	30	2	8405
Cow/buffalo (number)	28	1	37272	37	2	43743	9	1	35016	34	1	35223	34	1	38568	36	2	43303
Boat/net	4	1	41000	0.5	1	6000	15	2	37392	0.9	2	17825	7	1	134318	2	1	13956
Van/ Rickshaw	4	1	15618	17	1	17406	4	1	20121	17	1	22045	15	1	25993	11	1	23551
Others	15	2	5058	25	3	9299	11	5	8342	14	5	3167	24	2	5711	28	3.28	10564

Qualitative findings

Most households in both dalit and non-dalit communities owned homestead lands, but there were not many households that owned other types of land. Among some Dalits, ownership of capital associated with traditional occupations (e.g. fishing boats among *Malos*, i.e. traditional dalit fishers) was reported.

Interpretation

Both Dalits and non-Dalits have limited physical capital. The limited number of Dalits, who are fishermen and possess nets and boats does not indicate resourcefulness since such families are highly indebted (see section 2.1.3).

2.1.3 Financial capital

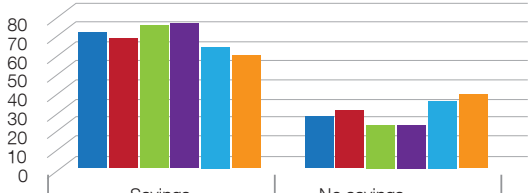
Research questions

The research question includes the identification of the Dalits and non-Dalits with savings and debts in order to ascertain the degree of their indebtedness.

Summary findings

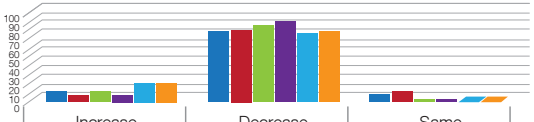
Savings: Both the Dalits (72%, 76%, and 64%) and non-Dalits (69%, 77%, and 60%) have savings (see figure D.2.13.a). Savings are decreasing among 80%, 86% and 77% of Dalits and 82%, 91% and 79% among non-Dalits. The savings are increasing among 12%, 12% and 22% of Dalits, and among 8%, 6% and 20% of the non-Dalits (see figure D.2.13.b).

D.2.13.a: Status of savings



	Savings	No savings
First Cycle Dalit	72	28
First Cycle Non-dalit	69	31
Second Cycle Dalit	76	24
Second Cycle Non-dalit	77	23
Third Cycle Dalit	64	36
Third Cycle Non-dalit	60	40

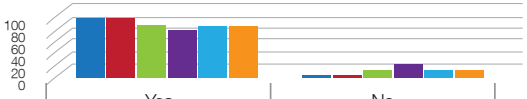
D.2.13.b: Trend of savings



	Increase	Decrease	Same
First Cycle Dalit	12	80	9
First Cycle Non-dalit	8	82	11
Second Cycle Dalit	12	86	3
Second Cycle Non-dalit	6	91	3
Third Cycle Dalit	22	77	1
Third Cycle Non-dalit	20	79	1

Debt situation: Both the Dalits (99%, 88% and 87%) and non-Dalits (99%, 77% and 87%) have debts and liabilities (see figure D.2.14.a).

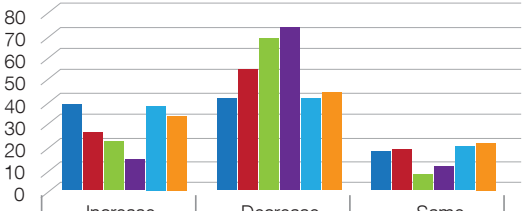
D.2.14.a: Status of debts and liabilities



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	99	1
First Cycle Non-dalit	99	1
Second Cycle Dalit	88	12
Second Cycle Non-dalit	77	23
Third Cycle Dalit	87	13
Third Cycle Non-dalit	87	13

40%, 23% and 39% of the Dalits said to have increased debts compared to 26%, 15% and 34% of the non-Dalits. When asked about decrease, 43%, 69% and 41% of the Dalits as opposed to 54%, 74% and 44% of non-Dalits responded positively. The debt situation of the Dalits is worse than that of the non-Dalits (see figure D.2.14.b).

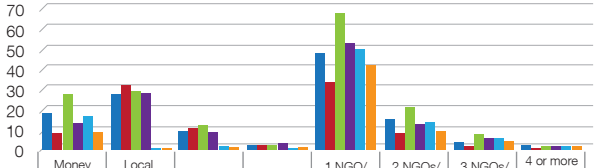
D.2.14.b: Trend of debts and liabilities



	Increase	Decrease	Same
First Cycle Dalit	40	43	18
First Cycle Non-dalit	26	54	19
Second Cycle Dalit	23	69	8
Second Cycle Non-dalit	15	74	12
Third Cycle Dalit	39	41	20
Third Cycle Non-dalit	34	44	22

Sources of debts: Both the Dalits and non-Dalits have approached NGOs, money lenders, local shops and friends for loans. The Dalits (18%, 28%, and 17%) are comparatively more indebted to the moneylenders than the non-Dalits (9%, 14% and 9%). They are almost equally indebted to local shops (29%, 30% and 1% versus 33%, 29% and 1%) and the Dalits (49%, 68% and 51%) are more dependent on NGOs than the non-Dalits (34%, 53%, and 42%). This becomes more evident when the number of NGOs they received loans from is calculated. For example, the Dalits (6%, 10% and 8%) have debts with three and more NGOs as opposed to 2%, 7% and 6% of non-Dalits (see figure D.2.15).

D.2.15: Sources of debts and liabilities



	Money lenders	Local shops	Relatives	Friends	1 NGO/ Group	2 NGOs/ Groups	3 NGOs/ Groups	4 or more NGOs/ Groups
First Cycle Dalit	18	29	10	2	49	16	4	2
First Cycle Non-dalit	9	33	11	2	34	9	2	0
Second Cycle Dalit	28	30	12	2	68	22	8	2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	14	29	9	4	53	13	5	2
Third Cycle Dalit	17	1	2	1	51	14	6	2
Third Cycle Non-dalit	9	1	1	1	42	9	5	1

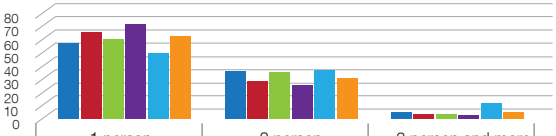
Interest rate: If one considers the debt with the moneylenders, the Dalits pay much more (154% vs 106%, 84% versus 68% and 68% versus 100% per annum), except the information on the third cycle, when the non-Dalits are paying more (see Table D.2.16).

Table D.2.16: Sources of debts and liabilities (multiple responses) and interest rates

	First cycle				Second cycle				Third cycle			
	Dalit		Non-Dalit		Dalit		Non-Dalit		Dalit		Non-Dalit	
	%	interest rate	%	interest rate	%	interest rate	%	interest rate	%	interest rate	%	interest rate
Money lender	18	154	9	106	28	84	14	68	17	68	9	100
Shops	29	-	33	17	30	0.1	29	0.3	1	23	1	49
Relatives	10	54	11	-	12	4	9	0.2	2	24	1	17
Friends	2	48	2	120	2	1	4	0	1	9	1	5
NGO/ Association-1	49	34	34	27	68	17	53	18	51	19	42	16
NGO/ Association -2	16	23	9	21	22	17	13	18	14	17	9	15
NGO/ Association -3	4	23	2	20	8	23	5	15	6	15	5	15
NGO/ Association -4 or more	2	25	0.2	-	2	15	2	14	2	27	1	15

Number of earning members: The number of earners is more in dalit families than in non-dalit ones. For example, one earning person exists among 58%, 61% and 50% Dalit families as opposed to 67%, 72%, and 63% among non-Dalit families. Two and more earning members are more common in Dalit families (42%, 39% and 50%) compared to 33%, 28% and 37% non-Dalit families (see figure D.2.17).

D.2.17: Number of earning members

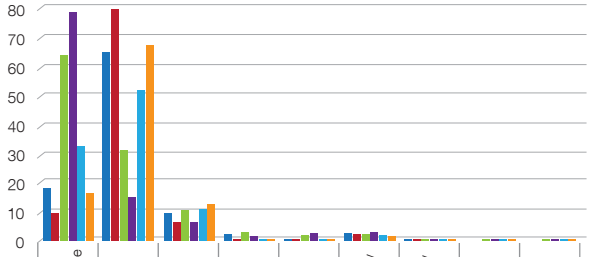


	1 person	2 person	3 person and more
First Cycle Dalit	58	36	6
First Cycle Non-dalit	67	29	4
Second Cycle Dalit	61	35	4
Second Cycle Non-dalit	72	26	2
Third Cycle Dalit	50	38	12
Third Cycle Non-dalit	63	31	6

Access to financial resources during an emergency: When income is used for daily living and debt servicing and savings with NGOs play the role of a reserve, both the Dalits and non-Dalits approach relatives, moneylenders and NGOs for help during emergencies. In the first and third cycles, both for Dalits and non-Dalits, the relatives are the most preferred source of financial

support during an emergency (65% and 52% Dalits vs. 80 and 68% non-Dalits). However, in the second cycle, both groups identified money lenders as the preferred option (64% vs. 79%) in spite of the high interest rate. Even though the Dalits and non-Dalits are already indebted to the NGOs, emergencies force them to approach the NGOs again for a fresh loans (10%, 10%, and 11% Dalits vs. 7%, 6% and 12% non-Dalits) (see figure D.2.18).

D.2.18: Sources of financial assistance during emergency



	From money lender with high interest rate	From their relatives	Loan from NGO/ association	Sell their labour in advance	Sell their crops in advance	They do not receive any support and stay without food	Don't go to anybody	Shop keeper	Collect from bazar
First Cycle Dalit	19	65	10	2	1	3	1		
First Cycle Non-dalit	10	80	7	1	0.2	2	1		
Second Cycle Dalit	64	31	10	3	2	2	0.2	0	0.2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	79	15	6	2	3	3	0.0	0.2	0
Third Cycle Dalit	33	52	11	1	0.4	2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Third Cycle Non-dalit	16	68	12	1	0.2	2	0	1	0

Qualitative findings

Generally, there seems to be a high degree of reliance on microcredit programs, and hence indebtedness, among the Dalits. For example, during the first cycle of the study, the team found one dalit woman who took microcredit from eight organizations, and she paid monthly installments totaling Tk. 17,000. The team found another woman, aged 45 (she has had no formal education, and her husband is a rickshaw van puller; she has a son who lives with them and is employed; presently she runs a small shop), who had an even higher degree of indebtedness with her outstanding loans

from eight organization totaling Tk. 300,000 and weekly repayments of Tk. 8,500 (or monthly rates of about 34,000). This level of indebtedness may be a sign of the level of poverty that is common among dalit households, many of who are landless except some of them owning some homestead land.

In Paikgacha, Khulna, at an FGD in a village during the first cycle, four out of twelve persons present said that they did not own homestead land of their own. They live as tenants. All the participants of the FGD, however, have one thing in common – indebtedness, from taking loans from various microcredit programs.

While there were considerable degrees of reliance on microcredit programs and related indebtedness among Dalits generally, the situation was found to be somewhat different for the very poor among them. In fact, as far as the extreme poor are concerned, both Dalits and non-Dalits were found to be less reliant on NGO microcredit programs. The two main reasons for this, as explained by some of the persons interviewed during the second cycle, are as follows: first, the extreme poor do not have the means to repay. Second, their previous experience of participating in microcredit programs is bad. They took loans but could not repay. Previous loans cannot be repaid even if they sell off their homestead land, yet loans are not written off.

Malos in particular do not want to take loans. They depend on fishing, and are not used to other forms of livelihood. Therefore they are reluctant to take loans that they cannot repay. Others have more diversity of income sources. Malos are more interested in getting financial support from government than changing their occupation.

Among both dalit and non-dalit communities, those who find themselves indebted, the dynamics and degree of their indebtedness seem similar. This is illustrated by the two accounts presented below from the third cycle of the study.

During a 3rd cycle FGD session with a group of dalit women in Ghurna, Satkhira, participants said that being in a disaster-prone area, they routinely experienced joblessness. During the rainy season in particular, for about six months, there is little work. People remain unemployed and have to make ends meet with the income from one season. During lean seasons, they have to rely on microcredit programs run by NGOs. However, because there is widespread unemployment or underemployment, those who borrow money from microcredit programs cannot repay their installments. Thus many end up joining other microcredit schemes just to pay up previous loans. Some even have to borrow money from traditional money lenders at very high interest rates. One woman said that she has to repay microcredit installments amounting to Tk. 3,000 a week, and owes Tk. 20,000 to a traditional money lender.

Similar experiences as described above were shared by members of a non-dalit community in Tala, Satkhira. They also talked about unemployment during the rainy season, when many usually took help from NGO-run microcredit programs. The tendency of joining one microcredit program in order to repay loans from another was also common. Similarly, the problem of high interest rates charged by traditional money lenders was also brought up. It was also mentioned that among the indebted, it was not uncommon for some families to flee their villages, and go into hiding even across the border to India.

Interpretation

Dalits are more indebted to money lenders and NGOs under extremely high interest rate, as they have comparatively less options to borrow from relatives. High debts from multiple sources may challenge the possession of existing assets. They have nowhere to go in case of potential emergencies.

Dalits are less capable to resolve the conflicts and may end up losing assets and paying more. The loss of assets to money lenders, continuous payment to maintain access to natural resources and incurring legal costs are possible consequences.

2.1.4 Institutional capital

Research questions

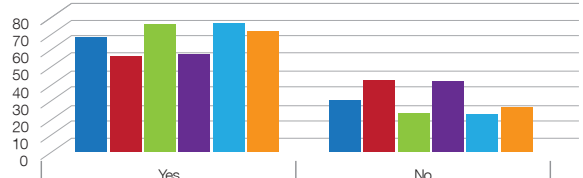
Dalits or non-Dalits may be organized or not. Many of them are organized by NGOs or formed into cooperatives or *samitees.* They are members or in some cases also office bearers. It is assumed that people so organized have better planning and advocacy skills and can thus better demand their rights. If not organized, they are more likely to be voiceless and thus less successful in realizing their rights. Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

- Whether they are part of an organization representing their interest.
- Whether their organization have undertaken any activity in their interest.
- Whether they have received any training on how to manage their organization.

Summary findings

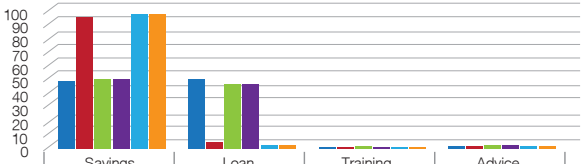
Both the Dalits and non-Dalits are affiliated with NGOs. But the Dalits' affiliation is higher than that of the non-Dalits (69%, 76% and 77% versus 57%, 58% and 72%) (see figure D.2.19.a). Both the Dalits and non-Dalits participate in savings program, and receive loans almost in a similar pattern (D:47-50% versus ND: 47-51%), except that the first cycle shows more interest of the non-Dalits in savings (95%) and less interest in loans (4%) (see figure D2.19.b).

D.2.19.a: Engagement with NGO/association?



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	69	31
First Cycle Non-dalit	57	43
Second Cycle Dalit	76	24
Second Cycle Non-dalit	58	42
Third Cycle Dalit	77	23
Third Cycle Non-dalit	72	28

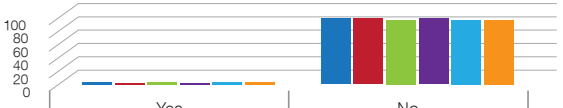
D.2.19.b: Type of services they received from NGO/association



	Savings	Loan	Training	Advice
First Cycle Dalit	49	51	0.2	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	95	5	0.2	0
Second Cycle Dalit	50	47	0.9	1.6
Second Cycle Non-dalit	51	48	0.2	1.4
Third Cycle Dalit	98	2	0.3	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	98	2	0	0

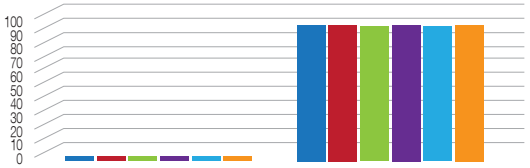
The Dalits, who have children 6-17 years old, are represented in the school committee (3%, 4% and 4%) as opposed to non-Dalits (0.8%, 0.9% and 3%) (see figure D.2.20). The representation in the local government committee is nearly non-existent for the non-Dalits (0.8%, 0.7% and 0.9%) compared to the Dalits (1.3%, 2.2% and 1.7%) (see figure D.2.21).

D.2.20: Involvement in school committee



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	3	98
First Cycle Non-dalit	0.8	99
Second Cycle Dalit	4	97
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0.9	99
Third Cycle Dalit	4	97
Third Cycle Non-dalit	3	97

D.2.21: Whether they are involved in any local government committee



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	1	99
First Cycle Non-dalit	0.8	99
Second Cycle Dalit	2	98
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0.7	99
Third Cycle Dalit	2	98
Third Cycle Non-dalit	0.9	99

Qualitative findings

Within the context of various interventions by NGOs, both dalit and non-dalit poors have been gaining some institutional capacity and voice at community level. In this regard, the Dalits of our study area seemed to have slightly greater experience compared to the 'mainstream poor'. However, this situation may be more the result of 'supply' (i.e. many NGOs reaching out to the Dalits under different donor-funded interventions) than that of 'demand' (i.e. bottom-up grassroots initiatives by the Dalits to empower themselves).

Insofar as some NGOs specifically target Dalits through their programs, the participants of such programs develop institutional capital to a limited degree, at least while the programs last. In situations where certain programs target Dalits more specifically than the mainstream poor, the former may be said to have a slightly higher level of institutional capital. During this study, it was found that the *samitees* (or community based organizations/cooperatives) that exist among the Dalits are almost always supported by NGOs. There was hardly any instance of such CBOs having been formed through local initiatives alone.

Interpretation: Both Dalits and non-Dalits have limited institutional capacity. The fact that the Dalits are more connected to NGOs has not enhanced their institutional capacity, as the NGOs merely use them as recipients of microfinance services and seldom organize them to improve their institutional capacity to be an institutional actor.

2.2 External factors

2.2.1 Social transactions

Research questions

Social transaction relates to how a dalit person is socially treated by others on certain occasions like

- Encountering a person for advice or guidance (Access to information and advice)
- Greetings (Addressing a Dalit)
- Social gatherings (Marriage ceremony, festivals) on invitations
- Participation in the markets as buyers and sellers

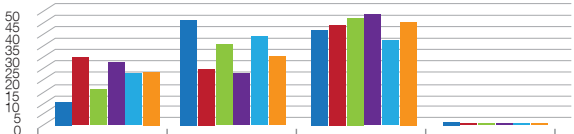
These social transactions are expected to provide the comparative social dignity the Dalits enjoy as opposed to the non-Dalits.

Summary findings

Participation in social events (invitations)

The Dalits are less invited by the neighbors than non-Dalits. While 10%, 16% and 23% (in three cycles) of the Dalits said to have been invited, the same is true for 30%, 28% and 24% respectively. 47%, 36% and 39% of the Dalits said that they were never invited as opposed to 25%, 23% and 31% of the non-Dalits. Occasional invitations were received by 42%, 48% and 38% compared to the non-Dalits (45%, 49% and 45%) (see figure D.2.22).

D.2.22: Invitation by the neighbors

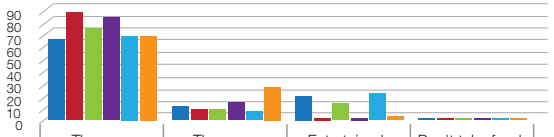


	They are always invited	They are never invited	They are invited sometimes	Sometimes invited but they don't go
First Cycle Dalit	10	47	42	0.7
First Cycle Non-dalit	30	25	45	0
Second Cycle Dalit	16	36	48	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	28	23	49	0.2
Third Cycle Dalit	23	39	38	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	24	31	45	0

Nature of entertainment by the neighbors after invitations

Even if invitations are extended the Dalits are subject to unequal treatment. For example, 67%, 76% and 70% of Dalits in three cycles said to be entertained equally like others, whereas the percentages of non-Dalits are higher in this regard (89%, 85% and 69%). That they are differently treated for being poor is mentioned by 12%, 9% and 8% as opposed to 9%, 15% and 28% respectively in three cycles. In addition, 21%, 15% and 23% of the Dalits (in three cycle) said to have experienced a different entertainment due to their social identity (see figure D.2.23).

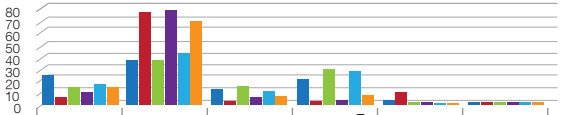
D.2.23: Nature of entertainment by the neighbors after invitation



	They are entertained	They are entertained differently as they are poor	Entertained differently due to their social identity	Don't take food in Dalit's residence
First Cycle Dalit	67	12	21	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	89	9	2	0
Second Cycle Dalit	76	9	15	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	85	15	0	0.3
Third Cycle Dalit	70	8	23	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	69	28	3	0

Neighbors' response to the invitation from the Dalits and non-Dalits: In response to the question whether the neighbors accept an invitation, 25%, 15%, and 17% of the Dalits and 6%, 10% and 15% of the non-Dalits answered negatively. On the contrary, 37%, 38%, and 43% of Dalits and 78%, 79% and 70% of the non-Dalits opined that their neighbors cordially accept the invitation and entertainments. 13%, 16%, and 12% of the Dalits and 3%, 6% and 7% of the non-Dalits reported that their neighbors would not accept any entertainment. Entertainment is only possible if separate arrangements are made, mentioned by 21%, 31% and 28% of the Dalits and 2%, 4% and 8% of non-Dalits (see figure D.2.24).

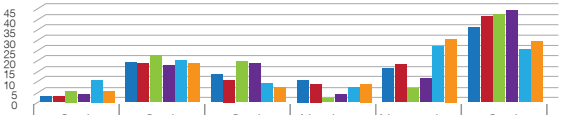
D.2.24: Nature of entertainment by the Dalits after invitation



	They do not accept the invitation	They visit their houses and cordially accept the entertainment	They visit their housesbut not allow them to entertain them	They only accept the entertainment if food is cooked separately for them	No ability to invite as they are poor	No invitationas no program arranged
First Cycle Dalit	25	37	13	21	4	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	6	78	3	2	11	0
Second Cycle Dalit	15	38	16	31	1	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	10	79	6	4	2	0
Third Cycle Dalit	17	43	12	28	0	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	15	70	7	8	0	0

Social interaction seeking advices: 19%, 23%, and 20% of the Dalits and 19%, 18%, 19% of non-Dalits seek advice from local Union Parishad (UP) members and chairman. Local knowledgeable people also extend advice to 14%, 20% and 10% of the Dalits and 11%, 19% and 7% of non-Dalits. Relatives are also sources of advice to 37%, 43% and 26% of the Dalits and 42%, 45% and 30% of non-Dalits. 2%, 5%, and 10% of the Dalits and 2%, 3% and 6% of non-Dalits seek advice from local powerful persons. There are Dalits (11%, 2%, and 7%) and non-Dalits (9%, 3% and 9%), who have no place to go for advice (see figure D.2.25).

D.2.25: Source of services

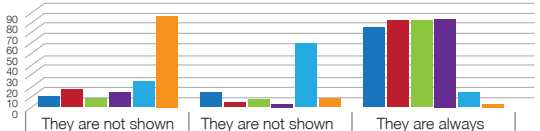


	Seek advice from local powerful person	Seek advice from UP member/ chairman	Seek advice from local wisdom person	Nowhere to go for seeking advice	No need to go for seeking advice	Seek advice from relatives
First Cycle Dalit	2	19	14	11	17	37
First Cycle Non-dalit	2	19	11	9	18	42
Second Cycle Dalit	5	23	20	2	7	43
Second Cycle Non-dalit	3	18	19	3	11	45
Third Cycle Dalit	10	20	10	7	27	26
Third Cycle Non-dalit	6	19	7	9	31	30

The attitude of the people providing advice

77%, 84% and 15% of the Dalits and 83%, 85% and 3% of the non-Dalits expressed to have been valued by the persons who extended advice. On the contrary, 11%, 9% and 25% of the Dalits and 17%, 15% and 88% of the non-Dalits have not been properly valued by the provider of advice. 13%, 8% and 61% of Dalit believe that they are not getting sufficient attention due to their social identity (see figure D.2.26).

D.2.26: Attitude of the people from whom they seek advice



	They are not shown importance as they are poor	They are not shown importance due to their social identity	They are always treated as expected by them
First Cycle Dalit	11	13	77
First Cycle Non-dalit	17	1	83
Second Cycle Dalit	9	8	84
Second Cycle Non-dalit	15	0	85
Third Cycle Dalit	25	61	15
Third Cycle Non-dalit	88	9	3

Qualitative findings

While the poor people in Bangladesh generally face various types of social discrimination because of their class position, the accounts shared by Dalits in the field indicate that they experience greater degrees of social discrimination than the 'mainstream' poor. However, even among the Dalits, some are seen as 'lowest among the lowly'. Such groups, especially those known locally as *Harijan* (sweepers) and *Kawra* (pig rearers), seem to face the highest degrees of social exclusion. In general, all Dalits, i.e. social groups that are perceived to be 'lowly' and 'unclean' or 'impure' in some sense, tend to be treated with different degrees of social avoidance and exclusion by both 'mainstream' Muslims (regardless of class) and 'upper caste' Hindus.

The stigma attached to the Dalits is reflected in trends such as very few of them being invited to social ceremonies (e.g. wedding feasts) of non-dalit communities. The Dalits, in turn, tend to be highly selective in inviting non-Dalits to their own ceremonies (they will not generally invite anyone who they know will consider them to be too 'impure' to take food from). On a more everyday basis, the stigma carried by the Dalits may lead some of them being denied access to restaurants or tea stalls, or having to carry their own cups and plates as others will not take food and drinks from utensils touched by them. For example, as mentioned already, a Dalit respondent told us that when she visited a nephew, she saw him carrying a cup with him to a local tea stall. A few others had similar stories to share as well. For example, some said that while visiting relatives in other places, they faced no problem in taking tea or food at restaurants of tea stalls, but when they were accompanied by local relatives that were known to be 'Dalit', they were treated differently.

Just as many non-Dalits refuse to take food from utensils that have come into contact with Dalits, they will not take food served by the latter either. However, such experiences are reportedly less common among Muslim Dalits compared to their Hindu counterparts. Generally, Muslim Dalits say that even though they

are treated as lowly, they are generally allowed to take food and drinks at local restaurants and tea stalls, where they are served in the same cups and plates used for other customers. Such is not necessarily the experience of some Hindu dalit groups that are considered to be too impure to have physical contacts with. Similar considerations are said to be shown quite strictly among Hindus when it comes to taking meals in social gatherings as well. As a *Rishi* put it during the first cycle: "*We can eat their food, but they will not even touch our food!*"

Notions of caste purity and impurity are so deeply rooted and pervasive that even though two groups may both be categorized as *Nichu Jat* or Dalit within larger society, one of them may think of the other to be too low to have physical contacts with or take food from. For example, during the first cycle of the study, a college-going young man who was employed as social worker and was involved with several organizations indicated that he had not been too keen to go to the hamlet of the Sweepers. He said: "*Frankly speaking, I went there for the sake of my job. When other members of my family found out about my visits to the place of the Sweepers, they were shocked and wanted to know if I took food there.*"

Members of Hindu dalit groups told us that generally they do not invite Muslims or 'higher caste' Hindus to social ceremonies such as wedding feasts. They avoid inviting such people since the latter are likely not to accept their invitations. According to some of our respondents, in this regard apparently the "*high-caste Hindus are worse*", i.e. they are likely to show greater degree of social exclusion based on notions of purity and impurity (e.g. by refusing to take food from Dalits). They said that their invitations across caste boundaries were accepted by those with whom they had friendships or other close ties, and that they also invited local political representatives. When Hindu Dalits invite non-Dalits to their social ceremonies, any or all of the following situations may prevail:

a) Non-dalit invitees may come, but will observe proceedings from a distance, and then leave.

b) Some of the non-dalit invitees may take 'dry' food procured from the market, but not food cooked by the Dalits.

c) When Muslims come, sometimes food is prepared separately for them. The invitees themselves may appoint cooks for them, and food will be prepared separately for them as well.

The situations described above have not been heard of in case of Muslim Dalits or the mainstream poor. The latter may not be able to invite their better-off neighbors to all social ceremonies due to poverty, but when they can, they do not face a situation in which their invitees refuse to take food from them.

Apart from restrictions relating to sharing food and drinks, marital relations constitute an area in which dalit identity becomes an important factor. Generally, non-Dalits will avoid marital relations with dalit groups, and this trend is reported by both Hindu and Muslim Dalits. According to accounts provided by *Sardars* or *Beharas,* a Muslim dalit group, Muslims who claim higher social status such as *Moulabhis* and *Gazis* will not enter into marital relations with them even if they are of the same economic status (i.e. both equally poor, or the former may even be poorer than the latter).

According to the accounts of our respondents, while 'inter-caste' marriages are generally not socially approved, some individuals do occasionally defy existing restrictions through elopement. In such cases, if a man of lower caste status happens to be educated and of good economic standing, his marriage to a higher caste woman may be tolerated in some cases. The opposite situation is unheard of. However, regardless of gender, it is rarely the case that a Dalit may think of marrying a non-Dalit without facing strong social opposition from some quarters. As the dalit male college students taking part at a FGD told us, they don't have the 'courage' to show romantic interest in any woman of higher caste as they know that marital relations with them are 'impossible'.

While dalit identity is still commonly associated with stigma, which has both obvious and subtle forms, among members of local communities interviewed individually or in groups, there is a general view that the degree of stigma/social exclusion is not the same as before. In particular, the young generation are quick to deny persistence of the problem. However, when probed in-depth, it is recognized that the problem is still there, though the magnitude varies from one place/context to another. As one example, we can mention views about inter-caste marriage mentioned by respondents. When asked about the matter, many respondents said that inter-caste marriage is a common practice nowadays. However, upon probing, it was revealed that there is not even a single case of inter-caste marriage having taken place with prior consent of the families of both sides. Usually, such marriages take place as a result of individual initiatives and decisions, and are rarely welcome warmly. However, over time people may come to accept or tolerate such unions, or at least attempts to ostracize inter-caste couples are not made strongly. It is in this sense that people say that inter-caste marriage is commonly accepted. Nonetheless, marriages between Dalits and non-Dalits are still rare.

The kinds of notions about impurity that is associated with Dalit identity or the related traditional occupations as indicated by the above example are still quite common, and were reflected in many accounts obtained during the fieldwork. The following are an indicative collection of accounts provided by different respondents in the field during different cycles of the study:

- Some respondents said that while inter-caste marriages initiated by individuals may be tolerated, when the unions go through rough periods, e.g. when there are quarrels, those taking side with the partner from the higher caste may insult the other partner for being of a lower caste (as '*Jola*', '*Behara*', or 'son/daughter of a *Karigor*', etc). During a second cycle FGD session with *Malo* women (at Haridhali Union, Paikgachha, Satkhira), one participant shared the

prevailing attitude towards inter-caste marriages in following terms: "*To put it bluntly, even marriages with Muslims may be tolerated, but marital relationships with Rishis are not acceptable. The same applies for the Pramaniks as well, since they go around clipping nails and cutting hairs (as itinerant barbers).*"

- In Sagordari Union (in Keshabpur, Jessore), a young *rishi* man who has completed the SSC was having tea at a stall. He wanted a biscuit so extended his hand to open the jar of biscuits himself, but upon seeing him try to do something that many other customers also do habitually, the shop owner threw hot water at him. The reason for this was obvious. The shop owner did not want his jar of biscuits to be touched by a person considered 'untouchable'!

- In Tala, Satkhira, *rishi* women said that while collecting water from common sources, they were often asked to move away, or looked down upon, by members of other communities – both Muslim and Hindu – who wanted to avoid touching them. In the same place (Tala), a *rishi* man explained that the expression '*Muchir jat*' (literally, the caste of cobblers/leather works) is still applied to them in a derogatory way. While mentioning this, he added: "*It is possible to go without food once in a while, but having to endure hatred is very painful. You (i.e. those of you who have not experienced caste hatred) will not understand this pain.*"

  The reason why the *Rishis* are seen as 'untouchable' is their traditional occupation, which is leather work. In this regard, one of them remarked: "*We do not deal with [animal] skins any longer. We gave up this occupation 60-70 years ago. Yet we are still looked down upon as Muchis (leather workers). If Muslims do the same work, they are not despised, in the same way that Muslim sweepers are not looked down upon (unlike the 'caste sweepers').*"

Other members of the same community described how they were treated by Brahmans in a neighboring area in the following terms: "*They invite us, but serve food on banana leaves. This is not done even to Muslims. The Brahmins in turn come to us, take dry food from us, but do not drink out water.*" Another person added: "*We are Rishis. We are oppressed and looked down upon by others. Moreover, we are poor. Therefore, there is little room for us to stand up with our heads high. Social interaction with us is seen as degrading. Thus, even if some (high caste) Hindus and Muslims come to dine with us, they do so in the darkness of night.*"

- One person was heard saying: "*A cobbler cannot hide his identity in the dark. Regardless of their physical features including the lightness of their skin, something in their appearance will suggest that they are Muchi ('cobbler' caste). They may have property, but you can tell their caste from their speech.*"

- One *Kawra* said that when they go to the houses of higher caste people, the latter would sprinkle holy water (from the 'Ganges') on the premises that they have been stepped upon. They have been given food at the funerals of Brahmins, but the Brahmins would not take food at a dalit household arranging a similar ceremony. In fact, it is not only the high caste Hindus, but even Muslims, including the poor among them, who often refuse to take food from the Dalits.

- In Dumuria, Khulna, we were told that caste discrimination is highest in Jessore, where the Dalits having surnames of 'Das' are treated as untouchables. There are separate glasses for them. They have to use different saloons. Once when two Hindu men – one Dalit and one from a higher caste – died there on the same day, the cremation of the former was arranged after that of the latter.

Socially, three types of people who are not Dalit themselves are invited in dalit social ceremonies: a) political leaders, b) very close friends and c) neighbors, with long social ties. Food is prepared separately for such invitees.

According to views expressed by some respondents, the degree of social interactions between Dalit Hindus and non-Dalits who are Muslims may be decreasing, though it is not clear which aspect of the former's identity – being Dalit or being Hindu – is the main factor behind this. For example, S. I. Sardar (full name not provided to protect the respondent's identity), a Muslim man in Keshobpur, Jessore, said during the second cycle of the study: "*In my childhood, we interacted closely with Hindus during various pujas. We did not know back then that Muslims are not supposed to attend those events. Now we pray, and apparently if the sweats of Hindus touch our clothes, our prayers will not be accepted.*" A similar view was echoed by M. Majumdar, a Hindu dalit man of the '*Pramanik*' caste in Tipna, Dumuria, in the following terms: "*If we invite others [non-Dalits], they leave after taking betel leafs and smoking tobacco [without taking food]. The question of us going to their places does not arise since they don't even invite us. The Muslim women do not come to our houses if invited. In the past, at least the children would come, but now they don't. Nowadays we hear that social interaction with us is not approved (by Islam).*"

Caste or religious identity per se, however, does not seem to be behind the kind of social avoidance and discriminatory attitudes/practices indicated by the above accounts. Class too is an important factor, thus Muslims who are very poor may also be treated like Dalits in some ways. For example, during a FGD conducted with a group of non-dalit Muslim women who were very poor (at Noakathi village), one participant said: "*Relatives invite us. But since we are poor, no one really treat us well. Those who attend feasts with gifts are treated well. Those of us who are poor are given poultry to eat, whereas others are treated to beef. We are made to sit on the floor, others are seated on chairs.*"

It is also worth noting that while groups categorized as Dalit may be generally looked down upon by non-dalit communities, different groups within the category Dalit may display similar discriminatory attitudes towards one another. For example, during the fieldwork among the *Malos*, it was learned that they have social interactions with Muslims, but not with *Rishis*, whom they consider to be lower than them!

Where and when they can, some Dalits may try to move around more freely than they are accustomed to by concealing their caste identity, but they are always faced with the prospect that someone will 'find out' about this sooner or later. There are different ways in which this can happen. For example, a young Dalit man, who used to teach a Muslim boy of eight or nine years as a private tutor, told us during the first cycle of the study that once his student wanted to know where he lived. When he told the boy that he lived across the street by pointing out the direction of his village, his student exclaimed: "*So you are from the hamlet of the cobblers!*" The young man told us that he assumed that the boy must have learned about the distinctiveness of the cobblers from his parents who probably talked about such matters.

Interpretation

Discriminatory behavior among various sub-groups of Dalits (dominant in marriage, social interactions) is quite common. In other words, one dalit-sub group discriminates another dalit sub-group particularly in marriage related matters. Similar discriminations are a reality between Dalits and non-Dalits during social events (food-intake, invitations, ceremony, and marriage). Such discrimination is more likely between a Dalit and Hindu non-Dalit. Sexual harassment of girls is likely to be underreported, apprehending backlash from the family and perpetrators. The Dalits have less access to advisory and counseling services. In summary, the discrimination is prominently visible in social transactions. In view of desired equality in the society, the area of social transaction provides a fertile ground for development activities.

2.2.2 Economic transactions

Research questions

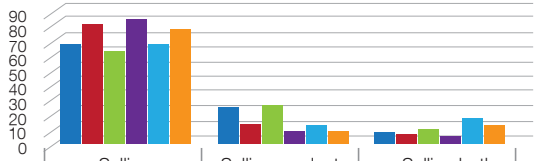
Research questions regarding economic transactions (buying or selling)

- An economic transaction of a dalit person looks at how he/she is treated in the market, when she/he is a buyer (product or services like having meals in public places - restaurant, tea shops) or seller of a product or services.
- The question is whether a non-dalit person has unwanted influence in setting the prices or other conditions of exchange (quality, time of payment, exclusion from certain conditions).
- A discrimination occurs if a dalit person experiences the following:
    - Lower prices in case of selling of services
    - Higher prices in the case of buying
    - Delay in payment to the Dalits
    - Prioritize sellers other than Dalit during the selling of services.

Summary findings

The nature of participation in the market: While 67%, 63% and 68% of Dalits and 81%, 86%, and 77% of non-Dalits sell labor and other services, 26%, 27%, 14% percent of Dalits and 13%, 10%, and 10% percent of the non-Dalits sell their products in the market. 8%, 10% and 18% of Dalits and 6%, 5% and 13% of non-Dalits sell both the labor/services and products in the market (see figure D.2.27.a).

D.2.27.a: The nature of participation in the market



	Selling labour/services	Selling products	Selling both labour/services and products
First Cycle Dalit	67	26	8
First Cycle Non-dalit	81	13	6
Second Cycle Dalit	63	27	10
Second Cycle Non-dalit	86	10	5
Third Cycle Dalit	68	14	18
Third Cycle Non-dalit	77	10	13

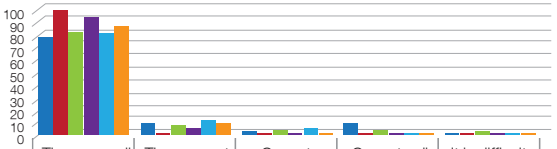
Equality in the determination of market prices as seller: 84%, 86% and 91% of the Dalits and 93%, 94%, and 94% of the non-Dalits said to be in a position to sell their labor/services at market prices. When facing buyers with whom they have debt, 3%, 1%, and 1% of the Dalits and 2%, 0.3% and 0.3% non-Dalits spoke of their inability to bargain for a price. 5%, 6% and 2% of Dalits said to accept a lower price than market prices due to their social identity. Moreover, 2%, 7% and 5% of Dalits and 1%, 4% and 4% of non-Dalits said not to bargain for a price with the powerful buyers (see figure D.2.27.b).

D.2.27 b: Situation of getting fair price by selling labor or services

	They can sell their labour/service in market price	Cannot bargain for price with the powerful buyers	Cannot bargain with the buyers they have debt	They have to accept lower price due to social identity	Others
First Cycle Dalit	84	2	3	5	6
First Cycle Non-dalit	93	1	2	0	5
Second Cycle Dalit	86	7	1	6	1
Second Cycle Non-dalit	94	4	0.3	0	2
Third Cycle Dalit	91	5	1	2	2
Third Cycle Non-dalit	94	4	0.3	0	2

Equality in determining price of products as seller: When asked about the question whether the respondents have equal rights in determining the market price of the products they sell, 79%, 83%, and 82% of Dalits and 100%, 94% and 88% of the non-Dalits have responded positively. In addition, while non-Dalits spoke of having problem of bargaining with the powerful buyers and moneylenders (0%, 5% and 10% and 0%, 2% and 2% respectively), this was opposite in the case of 10%, 8% and 12% on one side and 2%, 2% and 5% of the Dalits on the other. 9%, 7% and 2% of the Dalits said to have difficulty in selling their products in the market due to their social identity (see figure D.2.28).

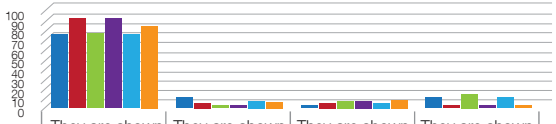
D.2.28: Situation of getting fair price by selling products



	They can sell their products in market price	They cannot bargain for price with the powerful buyers	Cannot bargain with the buyers they have debt	Cannot sell their product easily due to social identity	It is difficult for them to sell their products due to their social identity
First Cycle Dalit	79	10	2	9	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	100	0	0	0	0
Second Cycle Dalit	83	8	2	4	3
Second Cycle Non-dalit	94	5	2	0	0
Third Cycle Dalit	82	12	5	2	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	88	10	2	0	0

Equality in determining the product price as buyer: On the question whether the Dalits and non-Dalits have equal opportunity in the market in determining the price of the product, 76%, 78% and 76% of the Dalits and 92%, 92% and 85% of the non-Dalits reported to have equal opportunity as buyers while encountering the sellers. 11%, 1% and 8% of the Dalits and 4%, 1% and 7% of the non-Dalits experience somewhat equal behavior. 3%, 7% and 6% of the Dalits and 5%, 7% and 8% of non-Dalits believe to have less importance in the market because of being poor. In addition, 11%, 15% and 11% of the Dalits believe to have poor treatment in the market due to their social identity clearly showing the discrimination they face (see figure D.2.29).

D.2.29: Type of behavior the Dalit and non-Dalit face as a buyer



	They are shown equal behavior like others	They are shown somewhat equal behavior as buyer	They are shown less importance as they are poor	They are shown less importance due to social identity
First Cycle Dalit	76	11	3	11
First Cycle Non-dalit	92	4	5	0
Second Cycle Dalit	78	1	7	15
Second Cycle Non-dalit	92	1	7	0
Third Cycle Dalit	76	8	6	11
Third Cycle Non-dalit	85	7	8	0

Qualitative findings

In terms of everyday economic transactions (e.g. while buying or selling goods, or in setting prices for commodities or labor), no major forms of discrimination could be directly discerned from accounts we were given during fieldwork. However, prevailing forms of social discrimination often co-existed with economic activities with or without direct economic consequences. For example, a few dalit van pullers, who used rented rickshaw vans, told us during the first cycle of the study that they were made to wait by the owners of their vehicles in case non-dalit van pullers also showed up at the same time to fetch the vans. The rental charge for rickshaw vans, however, is the same for dalit and non-dalit pullers alike.

While the above example (dalit van-pullers being made to wait while fetching their vans) does not seem to have any direct economic implications, there are other instances of discrimination that have more material consequences. For example, some dalit respondents spoke of facing discrimination due to their surnames, which indicated their low caste, in seeking jobs outside of their areas. A *Rabidas ('Rishi')* told us that though he was deemed fit for a job, he was not hired because of his caste. He was told that regardless of how qualified he was, others would not want to work with the 'son of a cobbler'!

It may be worth noting that while changes in economic status may help one raise social status, it is not so easy to shake off the stigma of dalit identity. Thus, various forms of social discrimination that may crop up in the economic sphere may help perpetuate the caste ideology with or without direct economic discrimination between Dalits and non-Dalits. The cultural notions of purity and impurity are so strong that changes in economic status cannot by itself change prevailing attitude. As one dalit respondent explained the matter to us during the first cycle of the study: "*Shoes remain on your feet even if they are made of gold. Hence no matter how successful we become, we still are socially marginalized for because of our [caste] identity.*"

The main observation regarding economic transactions in all the study cycles has been that prevailing forms of social discrimination often co-exist with economic activities with or without direct economic consequences. Generally, the cultural notions of purity and impurity are too strong to be erased by changes in economic status alone. Thus, social discrimination and stigma related to Dalit identity tend to crop up in economic transactions between Dalits and non-Dalits. However, as we will see in the examples that follow, it is difficult to attribute many of the experiences of the Dalits to their caste identity alone.

The *Malos* of Haridhali Union, Paikgachha, Satkhira have fishing as their traditional occupation and are regarded as a community of Hindu Dalits. They go fishing in the sea for six months and for the rest of the year, they fish on rivers. To get access to fishing sites in areas such as the Sundarbans, they have to pay money to the police and forest officials. According to some of them, they have passes to fish as *Malos*, but they still have to pay money to all sorts of people. They have to pay politicians and their musclemen for 'protection'. As S. Bishwas, a *Malo* fisherman, put it during the second cycle: "*There is no one who does not take money from us. And yet we cannot fix the price of fish as we would like to.*" Regarding the rates of fish, in an FGD session, one participant provided the following explanation: "*The person who finances our*

fishing trips control the rates at which we sell our fish. We are indebted to him, so we have to sell our catches at the rates he fixes. The government has given fishing licenses and loans to such people, and so they control the business. For the shrimp that you buy @Tk. 700/800 [per KG], we don't even get Tk. 100."

Another *Malo* fisherman, M. Bishwas of Dumuria, Khulna, said during the second cycle: "*We have to pay money at every point. There are foresters, pirates and robbers in many areas. In other areas, without paying money to the local chairmen or their musclemen, we cannot cast our nets. If the government were to look into such problems, we would have lived comfortably off fishing. It is still fishing that helps us make a good living. We are not used to other occupations.*" Regarding the amount of extortion faced by the Malos, in one FGD session, the following information was provided: "*Without paying commission, no one can fish. From an earning of Tk. 10, Tk. 8 has to be paid as commission. This system of commission was there during our fathers' generation as well, but the rate has become too high in our time.*" In a FGD session with *Malo* housewives, one participant said: "*The Malos are passing through hard times. Those who cannot pay money have to see their boats or fishing nets being taken away, and they are even pushed around physically.*"

The *Nikaris*, a community of Muslim fishers (and regarded as Dalits), however, did not speak of facing extortions to the same degree as the *Malos*. During a FGD session with the *Nikaris* of Noakathi village in Haridhali union, some participants said the following: "*We don't have to pay extra money to others, and we are free to sell fish at prices that we ask for. It wasn't like this during our father's generation though. Now we can buy and sell things as well like.*"

In a 2nd cycle FGD session with non-dalit Muslim women who are very poor, one participant said: "*Since we have to buy things on credit, the shop owners do not value us as customers. They give more importance to those who pay cash. They avoid looking at us,*

as if they don't see us. You see, they are happier if they don't have to perform transactions with us."

The Dalits are occasionally subject to discriminations as buyers and sellers of products and services. The discrimination is more likely if they face moneylenders and influential persons. When the Dalits leave their traditional professions and join the work force as day-laborer or van drivers, they face unequal conditions, as the Dalits are reportedly less preferred or sometimes less paid (in case of a non-mechanized rickshaw or van). As a buyer, they would have limited bargaining power and may not have the option not to buy if a Dalit has touched a product. During a crisis or emergency period, they would have less bargaining power if they sell advanced labor or crop. Although such discriminations may occur at a place, where they are known as Dalits, or that such discrimination is reportedly declining, they deserve attention and provides rationale for advocacy strategies.

Interpretation

At the market place, the Dalits experience discrimination both as a buyer and seller. The discriminations are reflected in the context buying and selling by Dalits and in the price determination, particularly as a seller.

2.2.3 Legal transactions

Research questions

The legal transaction is based on the fact that in a democratic environment a person may have disputes with another person due to difference of opinion. The scope of resolution of a dispute is expected to affect the livelihood of a person positively. The other option causes huge sufferings (loss of assets due to legal costs). The question is how a Dalit experiences the legal transaction. The situation this research is looking into is as follows:

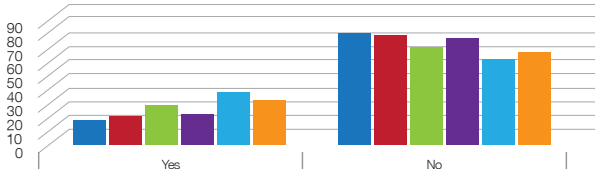
- Does a dalit person have access to dispute resolution like a non-Dalit does?
- Does a dalit person experience the same treatment like others?
- Have the Dalits access to an affordable conflict solution system like the non-Dalits?

Summary findings

Involvement with conflict

In response to the question whether the Dalits and non-Dalits are involved with any conflict, 19%, 29%, and 38% of the Dalits and 21%, 23% and 33% of the non-Dalits in respective cycles answered positively (see figure D.2.30).

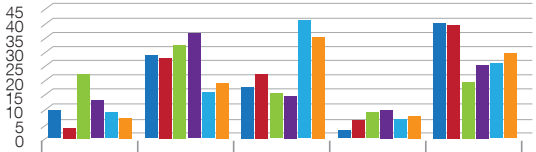
D.2.30: Involvement in conflicts



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	19	82
First Cycle Non-dalit	21	79
Second Cycle Dalit	29	71
Second Cycle Non-dalit	23	77
Third Cycle Dalit	38	62
Third Cycle Non-dalit	33	67

Resolution of conflict: When asked about the way they resolve their conflicts, 29%, 33% and 16% of the Dalits with the experience of conflicts said to have resolved it through the formal court system (District Court), followed by mediation (18%, 16%, and 41%), village court (10%, 23%, 9%), and surrendering (3%, 9% and 7%). About 40%, 20% and 27% of the Dalits with conflicts have still not resolved it. The non-Dalits, on the other hand, resolved the conflict through the District Court (28%, 37% ad 20%) followed by mediation (22%, 15%, and 36%), surrender (6%, 10%, and 8%), and Village Court (4%, 13% and 7%). 40%, 26% and 30% of the non-Dalits with conflicts have still not resolved the conflicts (see figure D.2.31).

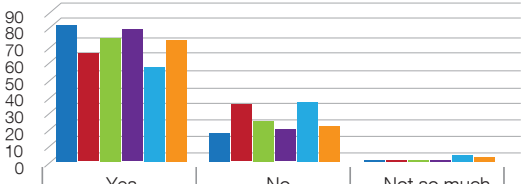
D.2.31: Resolution of conflicts



	Village court	District court	By mediation	By surrendering	It is still continuing
First Cycle Dalit	10	29	18	3	40
First Cycle Non-dalit	4	28	22	6	40
Second Cycle Dalit	23	33	16	9	20
Second Cycle Non-dalit	13	37	15	10	26
Third Cycle Dalit	9	16	41	7	27
Third Cycle Non-dalit	7	20	36	8	30

The financial effects of the conflicts: 82%, 75% and 58% of the Dalits as opposed to 65%, 80% and 74% of the non-Dalits, who were involved with conflicts, said to have suffered financial losses (see figure D.2.32).

D.2.32: Financial loss due to conflicts

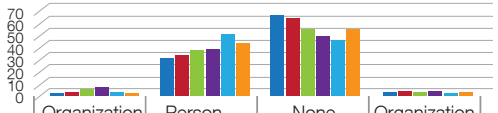


	Yes	No	Not so much
First Cycle Dalit	82	18	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	65	35	0
Second Cycle Dalit	75	25	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	80	20	0
Third Cycle Dalit	58	36	6
Third Cycle Non-dalit	74	23	3

Support from any person or organization during conflict situation: 67%, 56% and 47% of the Dalits mentioned not to have received assistance from any organization or person, followed by

some persons provided assistance (31%, 37% and 51%) and some organizations provided support (1%, 5% and 2%). In the case of non-Dalits, 65%, 51% and 55% had no support in the consecutive cycles. However, 33%, 40% and 43% received support from persons, and 1%, 8% and 1% from an organization (see figure D.2.33).

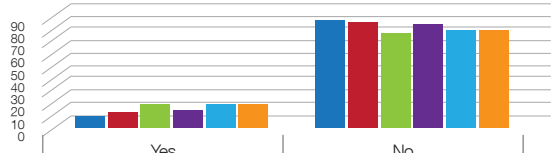
D.2.33: Support from any person or organization during conflict situation



	Organization	Person	None	Organization and person
First Cycle Dalit	1	31	67	1
First Cycle Non-dalit	1	33	65	1
Second Cycle Dalit	5	37	56	2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	8	40	51	2
Third Cycle Dalit	2	51	47	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	1	43	55	1

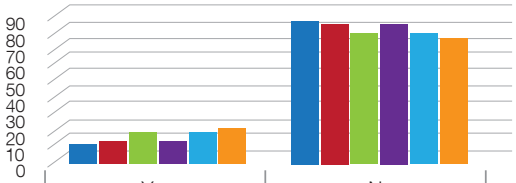
Conflict related to homestead: 10%, 21%, and 20% of the Dalits and 12%, 14%, 20% of the non-Dalits have conflicts related to their homesteads (see figure D.2.34.a). 12%, 20%, 20% of the Dalits and 14%, 14% and 22% of the non-Dalits said to be in the situation that someone in the locality is trying to grab their homestead (see figure D.2.34.b).

D.2.34.a Conflict related to homestead



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	10	90
First Cycle Non-dalit	12	88
Second Cycle Dalit	21	79
Second Cycle Non-dalit	14	86
Third Cycle Dalit	20	80
Third Cycle Non-dalit	20	80

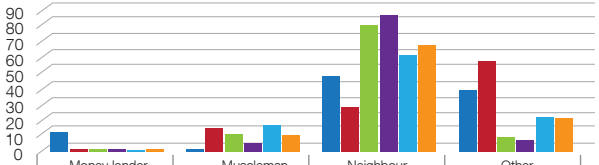
D.2.34.b: Anyone tried to grab their homestead/land



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	12	88
First Cycle Non-dalit	14	86
Second Cycle Dalit	20	80
Second Cycle Non-dalit	14	86
Third Cycle Dalit	20	80
Third Cycle Non-dalit	22	78

The identity of the persons trying to grab homestead: On the question of the identity of the person who is trying to grab the homestead, 48%, 80% and 61% of the Dalits said they were neighbors, followed by other musclemen of the locality (0%, 11%, 17%) and moneylenders (13%, 0% and 0%). In the case of non-Dalits, 28%, 87% and 67% are neighbors, 15%, 5% and 10% local musclemen of their localities, 57% 7%, 21%, and 21% others in the locality (see figure D.2.35).

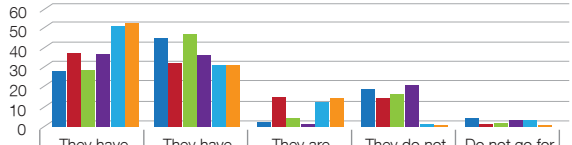
D.2.35: Persons who try to grab homestead/land



	Money lender	Muscleman	Neighbour	Other
First Cycle Dalit	13	0	48	39
First Cycle Non-dalit	0	15	28	57
Second Cycle Dalit	0	11	80	9
Second Cycle Non-dalit	2	5	87	7
Third Cycle Dalit	0	17	61	22
Third Cycle Non-dalit	1	10	67	21

Status of seeking legal assistance: 29%, 30%, and 52% of the Dalits have received legal aid, 45%, 47% and 32% of them in conflicts related to land have unsuccessfully sought legal assistance. 19%, 17% and 0% of them had no knowledge about the availability of assistance. 2%, 4%, and 13% of them are continuing with legal assistances. On the contrary, 38%, 37% and 53% of the non-Dalits with conflicts, received legal assistances followed by 33%, 37% and 32%, who unsuccessfully sought legal assistance, 15%, 22% and 0% did not have any knowledge of legal assistance and 15%, 2% and 15% said that they are continuing with legal assistances (see figure D.2.36).

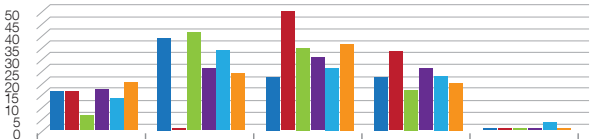
D.2.36: Status of seeking legal assistance



	They have received legal aid	They have sought, but not received	They are continuing with legal aid	They do not know about the facilities	Do not go for any legal action
First Cycle Dalit	29	45	2	19	5
First Cycle Non-dalit	38	33	15	15	0
Second Cycle Dalit	30	47	4	17	2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	37	37	2	22	3
Third Cycle Dalit	52	32	13	0	3
Third Cycle Non-dalit	53	32	15	0	0

Reasons for not accessing legal assistance: 17%, 7% and 13% of the Dalits, who were in need of legal assistance, did not pursue it because the transport costs to access legal aid were not affordable, while 39%, 41%, and 33% said to have experienced limited respect due to their social identity. 22%, 35% and 27% said to have lost their interest for legal assistance as the process is/was so long time-consuming; 22%, 17% and 23% did not pursue the legal assistance due to other reasons. On the contrary, 17%, 17% and 20% of the non-Dalits in need of legal aid could not afford the transport costs in seeking the legal aid, while 50%, 30% and 36% said to have lost their interest for legal assistance as the process is/was so time-consuming. A further 33%, 26% and 20% did not pursue the legal assistance due to other reasons (see figure D.2.37)

D.2.37: Reasons for not accessing legal assistance



	They were unable to manage travel cost	They were not considered important by the service provider due to their social identity	They had lost their interest as the process was time consuming	Others	Deprived due to foolishness of father-in-law
First Cycle Dalit	17	39	22	22	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	17	0	50	33	0
Second Cycle Dalit	7	41	35	17	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	17	26	30	26	0
Third Cycle Dalit	13	33	27	23	3
Third Cycle Non-dalit	20	24	36	20	0

Qualitative findings

Accounts given to us during the fieldwork indicate that if there are disputes within their own communities, they try to resolve such matters by themselves without going to the courts. To some extent, similar trends exist in case of the mainstream poor as well. However, it seems that the tendency to rely on community-based informal means dispute resolution may be higher among the Dalits. They seem particularly keen on avoiding legal disputes with their neighbors belonging to the mainstream communities. The reason for this is that in case of any legal dispute between a Dalit and a non-Dalit, they do not expect to get support from Muslims or upper caste Hindus. It seems that their experiences of everyday forms of social discrimination lead them to believe that the legal system will not work in their favor either. As some of them said during the first cycle of the study: "*We are not strong enough (to get involved in legal disputes)*". By 'not strong enough', they meant their relatively low standing in terms of both economic and political power.

In explaining their preference to avoid going to the courts, dalit respondents also explained that most legal disputes at the local level revolve around land, but this problem does not usually arise for them as most of them are landless. However, in rare cases in

which Dalits who own some land get into disputes with non-Dalits, the caste status of the former may serve as a factor that is in the back of the minds of all the parties involved. During our 1st cycle fieldwork, we came across a dispute over homestead boundaries between a dalit household, which was economically quite well off, and a neighboring family that was poor but belonged to the mainstream Muslim community. The dalit family had built a house that their neighbors claimed had encroached on their land. The former sought to settle the matter out of court by paying for the disputed piece of land. However, the head of the Muslim family was not interested in any negotiation on the matter. He said: "*Why should I negotiate with a low caste (dalit) person?*"

Many of the Dalits we spoke with said that they know of many cases in which members of the mainstream communities had purchased land from Dalits at very low prices, and then they got legal documents giving them ownership of larger areas than what they had paid for. This was a common phenomenon that the Dalits were aware of, and came to accept as reality as they did not feel prepared to seek legal redress. Even if a few took such matters to the court, there were not many known instances of the disputes being resolved quickly or in favor of the Dalits.

Just as the Dalits try to resolve most disputes by themselves without going to the courts, to some extent, the same is true for mainstream poor as well, though the trend seems to be more common among Dalits. Part of the reason why this is the case seems to be lack of financial resources as well as unfamiliarity with the legal system. During the second cycle fieldwork, we came across a case of a dalit household having land dispute with a neighboring Muslim household, members of which too were poor. This dispute had been going on for long, without a solution. According to a member of the dalit household under consideration, lack of money and being Dalit limited their ability to hire lawyers. They were also afraid of people of the larger community. They said, "*The justice system is not ours. We don't have advocates. Nor do we have barristers and judges (from*

among the Dalits)" G. Das, a *rishi* man at Bashbaria in Keshabpur, Jessore, who has a college graduate son who has not been able to get a job despite trying hard, said: "*There will be no justice for us in this life. My son has not been able to secure a job. Teachers are recruited in the local high school, but my son is passed over. He does not even get jobs as a sweeper or guard. If in the next life we are born into a higher caste family, then perhaps we will get the big jobs.*"

The following account, obtained through an FGD session with *rishi* women at Keshabpur, Jessore during the third cycle of the study, further illustrate the difficulties experienced by Dalits in terms of getting justice through formal channels:

> A dalit housewife was raped in her own house, at a slightly isolated place, by 3 non-dalit men a few months ago. Her husband was a van-driver. There was no one around at the time of rape. The victim and her husband filed a lawsuit against the rapists, two of whom were apprehended. However, they were threatened. Accomplices of the perpetrators tell them: "*You lowly Muchis. There will come a time when we will teach you a lesson.*" The *Rishis* say: "*They (the perpetrators) belong to the dominant group, regardless of their class. They always keep us under threat/pressure.*" Indeed, show of force and beatings by the majority is a routine occurrence. For example, around 2007/8, a Muslim itinerant hawker misbehaved very badly with some women. He used abusive words that were too vulgar to be repeated. At this, one young man slapped him. But after a while, the hawker returned with 20/30 men and beat up everyone in sight. The UP, instead of siding with the Dalits, fined them Tk. 5000! The police, after being informed, came some 2/3 hours later, but took no action.

Many mainstream poor communities also go through similar experiences (of not having the formal system work in their favor).

Interpretation

The Dalits face comparatively more discrimination during conflict resolution. The potential for conflicts is high, as they are highly indebted and the debtor might challenge their homesteads. They extend unauthorized payment and in cases of disagreement may face conflicts. Their behavior at par with the non-Dalits might invite conflicts as well. Sexual harassment of dalit girls may also generate conflicts. If the Dalits have comparatively less access to conflict resolution opportunities (formal and informal) and lose financially more than the non-Dalits, this becomes an advocacy issue.

2.2.4 Political transactions

Access to public services

Research questions

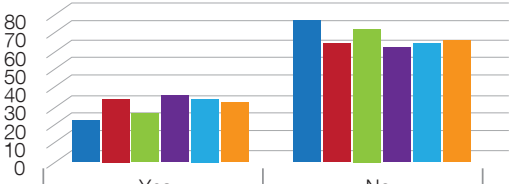
Access to public resources (e.g. *khas* land, river, water bodies, sea, and forest) is expected to be positively related to the wellbeing of certain communities in the south-west. The question is whether dalit families have equal access like the non-dalit ones do. The following dimensions play a role:

- Free or restricted physical access;
- Payment of (informal) fees against use;
- Fear of losing their home if living on public land.

Summary findings

Access to social safety net allowances: When asked about whether they receive any type of safety net allowance mentioned earlier, 22%, 27% and 35% of the Dalits compared to 35%, 37% and 33% of the non-Dalits said to have access (see figure D.2.38).

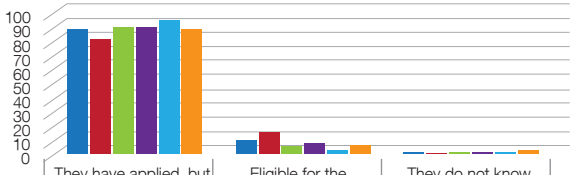
D.2.38: Access to social safety net allowances



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	22	78
First Cycle Non-dalit	35	65
Second Cycle Dalit	27	73
Second Cycle Non-dalit	37	64
Third Cycle Dalit	35	65
Third Cycle Non-dalit	33	67

Eligibility for safety net allowances: When asked about their eligibility, 89%, 91%, 96% of the Dalits said to have applied but did not receive any allowance. This is 82%, 91% and 90% in the case of the non-Dalits. 10%, 6%, and 3% of the Dalits did not apply even though they believe to be eligible, whereas 16%, 8% and 7% of the non-Dalits think in this way (see figure D.2.39).

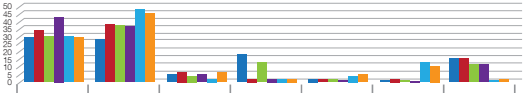
D.2.39: Eligibility for safety net allowances



	They have applied, but not received the allowances	Eligible for the allowances but did not apply	They do not know whether they are eligible
First Cycle Dalit	89	10	1
First Cycle Non-dalit	82	16	2
Second Cycle Dalit	91	6	2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	91	8	1
Third Cycle Dalit	96	3	1
Third Cycle Non-dalit	90	7	3

Reasons for not having safety net allowances: When asked about possible reasons for not getting the benefits, even though they believe themselves to be eligible, 30%, 30% and 31% of the Dalits believe that they were not a supporter of UP members (elected local government representatives), while 35%, 43% and 30% of the non-Dalits mentioned it. 28%, 38%, 48% of the Dalits said that most of the allowances go to the relatives of the UP members, as opposed to 39%, 38% and 46% of the non-Dalits. 6%, 5% and 2% of the Dalits said that the poorer people received the benefits while 8%, 6% and 7% of the non-Dalits said the same. However, 19%, 14% and 1% of the Dalits believe that they do not receive the benefits due to their social identity (see figure D.2.40).

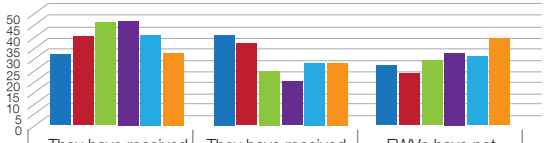
D.2.40: Reasons for not having safety net allowances



	They are not follower of the UP members	Allowances go to the relatives of the UP members	The people who are poorer get the allowances	They do not get the allowances due to social identity	They are not eligible for the allowances	Don't know	Others
First Cycle Dalit	30	28	6	19	2	1	16
First Cycle Non-dalit	35	39	8	0	1	2	17
Second Cycle Dalit	30	38	5	14	1	0	12
Second Cycle Non-dalit	43	38	6	1	0	0	12
Third Cycle Dalit	31	48	2	1	4	13	0
Third Cycle Non-dalit	30	46	7	0	6	11	0

Access to health and nutrition services: The visit of Family Welfare Visitor (FWV) to women in reproductive ages, particularly around pregnancy period is a standard activity of the health department. The respondents had three options to characterize the nature of service delivery (regularly, irregularly, and not at all) they have experienced. 32%, 46%, 41% of the Dalits mentioned 'regularly', 41%, 24%, 28% irregularly, and 27%, 30%, 32% 'not at all'. In the case of non-Dalits the figures are 40%, 47%, 33% for 'regularly', 36%, 20%, 28% for irregularly and 24%, 33% and 39% for 'not at all' (see figure D.2.41).

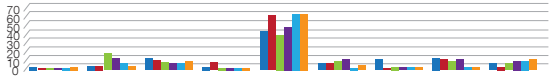
D.2.41: Access to health and nutrition services



	They have received services regularly	They have received services irregularly	FWVs have not visited the houses
First Cycle Dalit	32	41	27
First Cycle Non-dalit	40	36	24
Second Cycle Dalit	46	24	30
Second Cycle Non-dalit	47	20	33
Third Cycle Dalit	41	28	32
Third Cycle Non-dalit	33	28	39

Behavior at community clinic: Eight characteristics show the experience of the Dalits with the community clinics as opposed to the mainstream poor. 14%, 10%, and 0% of the Dalits never visited a community clinic versus 11%, 9% and 0% of the non-Dalits. Long waiting time if visited was true for 2%, 0.4% and 2% on one side and 1%, 1% and 3% respectively for non-Dalits. 13%, 9% and 7% of the Dalits believe not to have been treated as important clients compared to 10%, 8% and 9 % of the non-Dalits. While 44%, 41% and 66% of the Dalits said they were treated like others, this figure was 62%, 50% and 66% for the non-Dalits. About 10%, 3% and 3% of the Dalits feel that they are not equally treated due to their social identity. The Dalits (7%, 10%, and 3 %) and the non-Dalits (8%, 12% and 6%) believe that they are not encountering the same behavior because of being poor (see figure D.2.42).

D.2.42: Behaviour in the community clinics



	Asked to wait for a long time	Not treated as other clients	Not treated as important clients	Not asked to seat	Treated as like as other clients	Not treated equally like other clients due to poverty	Not treated equally like other clients due to social identity	Never visited for treatment	Others
First Cycle Dalit	2	4	13	1	44	7	10	14	6
First Cycle Non-dalit	1	4	10	5	62	8	0	11	0
Second Cycle Dalit	0.4	18	9	0.2	41	10	3	10	9
Second Cycle Non-dalit	1	12	8	0	50	12	0	9	9
Third Cycle Dalit	2	7	7	0.2	66	3	3	0	11
Third Cycle Non-dalit	3	4	9	0.2	66	6	0.0	0	11

Qualitative findings

Access to public services continues to remain uneven in Bangladesh, with various marginalized groups still without ready and equitable access to social safety net programs, public health and education services. However, to the extent that there has been gradual improvement in different areas in this regard, access to public services may be improving for both Dalits and the mainstream poor alike, though social discrimination faced by the former may still pose obstacles in their access. The Dalits are not prevented from entering institutions such as schools and hospitals. However, some forms of discrimination are still reported to be there, e.g. dalit children may be ridiculed by teachers, dalit patients may be left unattended in the hospital, as indicated through the incidents mentioned below.

Incidents of discrimination have occurred in schools, and in some cases there have been protests as well. However, most incidents take place without public knowledge. For example, if a dalit student performs well at school, teachers may pass condescending comments or express surprise to indicate that they do not generally expect dalit students to do well. Some teachers are also found to pass other types of derogatory

comments about dalit students. For example, while preparations were underway at a school for a celebration honouring Mother Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, some students reportedly did not pay donations. Upon hearing about this, a teacher was heard saying: "*Why would they pay! They are children of cobblers!*" This offended the dalit students of the school, most of whom had made donations. So they protested, and the said teacher had to apologize for his remark.

In schools attended by both dalit and non-dalit students, apart from teachers, there are also many non-dalit parents who may signal to their children to stay away from the dalit classmates. All such social tendencies may indirectly discourage dalit children from attending school, or looking at such institutions as a place where they do not have to worry about the stigma that they are born with.

The social stigma of being Dalit may hamper delivery of health services as well. During the first cycle of the study, one dalit man shared the experience of how his mother, whose head was bleeding from an injury, was not attended properly at a private pharmacy cum clinic where the service providers did not pay prompt attention to her after they found out that she was a dalit patient. Later, she has shifted to a nearby government hospital, but even in such facilities, which are not known for prompt or effective services anyway, being Dalit may mean having to wait a bit longer than others. The mainstream poor too are used to being neglected in such facilities, but for Dalits, the combination of poverty and low caste status may mean greater degrees of neglect.

With regard to access to social safety net programs (e.g. VGD cards), there may not be any sharp difference among the Dalits and the mainstream poor since both categories of people indicate that they do not receive services at the level expected, and many people who are entitled to these services are still excluded. This was a general trend according to opinions expressed during separate FGDs with both categories of respondents in Paikgacha,

Khulna. For example, a person from the mainstream poor category told us during the first cycle that some of the poorest were not able to buy subsidized rice @Tk. 10 per kg as intended, and that similarly, there are those, including disabled persons, who did not receive any benefits from existing safety net programs.

Regarding beneficiary selection for different safety net programs, representatives of the mainstream poor said that this is usually done by local community leaders and UP officials who may or may not include all in their lists, and are often seen as corrupt. The poor themselves do not always try to find out or can know about all the relevant information regarding such matters. Similar views were echoed during FGDs with Dalits in the same area. For them too, the level of service received seemed to be far below the need. For example, in a community of 130 dalit households, only four elderly persons and two disabled individuals received allowances, whereas only four or five households could procure rice at subsidized rates. They said that the local UP chairman informed them that the allocation for their area was not enough, so they had to make do with only a small list of beneficiaries.

During our study, we did not hear of cases in which Dalits were prevented from entering institutions such as schools and hospitals. However, while blatant and extreme forms of exclusion do not occur, some incidents do occur that may be the result of discriminatory attitudes towards Dalits. For example, some respondents during the 2nd cycle fieldwork said that in terms of their experience, in educational institutions, Dalits did not get stipends they deserved, even after achieving good results. They thought that this was because of their low caste. However, it was also suggested that the main reason for such exclusion might have been lack of sufficient resources or absence of effective relationships with the right people. It was also noted that while in relation to some social services, there was said to be provision for some special government allocation for Dalits, the amount was very little. Moreover, nomination for beneficiaries/recipients of government allocations was a highly politicized process. In this

regard, one dalit man said: "*Exclusion/inclusion depends on good ties with the UP chairman. Being Dalit or non-Dalit is not the main factor that influences such decisions.*"

Dalits covered by this study generally do not feel too excluded from UP services or health services. However, the *Harijans* (sweepers) still reportedly face exclusion. Sometimes Hindus (both dalit and non-dalit poors) feel that they are discriminated against in receiving various public services channeled through the UPs. In one place, a Hindu dalit woman remarked: "*Allocations for KaBiKha (government employment scheme roughly translating to 'money for work') have all been distributed to Muslim women. We are treated as close during elections, but after voting is over, we are nobody.*"

Some mainstream poor also report of being excluded from public services. For example, regarding inclusion in government training, a service not said to be allocated properly, a non-dalit man said: "*Our ears hear about them, but our eyes do not see them.*" (Basically, he is saying that they have not observed such opportunities being made accessible to them or people they know). Another non-dalit poor woman (Muslim) also commented during an FGD session: "*Those who are well-off are the ones who get the allowances. Those who are not that well-off, but in better situation than us, also get the allowances. It is us who are deprived.*" The following statement by B. Dashi, a Hindu dalit woman of Bashbaria in Keshabpur, Jessore, suggests that corruption – and not caste discrimination per se – may be behind some of the exclusion that they experience: "*Those who can offer bribes, are the ones who get various allocations. The better off people buy rice @ Tk. 10 per kg, and we then buy from them. The UP representatives say that they have won their seats by spending money (with the implication that this justifies their corruption).*"

Apart from corruption, electoral calculations are also mentioned as a factor in determining who gets public services channeled through the UPs. S. Pal, a non-dalit poor Hindu man in Chingra, Dumuria, Khulna said during the second cycle: "*When we go to the UP members and chairman for advice, they do not give us sufficient attention. My family does not have many voters (and this explains why I am ignored by the elected representatives).*" Another non-dalit poor woman at Noakathi village said sarcastically during an FGD session of the 2nd cycle: "*If we do not elect the (UP) members and chairman into office, how will they make a living? It is to help them make a living that we cast our votes. When we are in need of help, they don't even look at us. The blankets stay with them in their houses, and when we feel cold, we try to cover ourselves with our saris.*"

During the 3rd cycle also, more instances of irregularities in allocation of public resources were mentioned by respondents. For example, some representatives of the mainstream poor in Satkhira said that not everyone found out about the allowances and services that came through local government bodies into their area. One of them added: "*One needs to pay bribe to access these. We don't want services in this way. So we don't go to the offices. There is no point. Even if we go, we won't get what we need.*" In another FGD session with non-dalit women, respondents said that they did not get government help as they were supposed to. One added: "*For any card, Tk. 200-300 has to be paid. For houses, Tk. 15-20,000 is demanded.*"

The experiences of Dalits were also similar. In one 3rd cycle FGD session among the Dalits, the following account was noted: "*No one knows about the special government allowances for Dalits. The funds that come to the UP are seldom distributed to the Dalits. One needs to pay bribes to access these. One also needs to have party connections. Besides, when allowances come, everyone becomes Dalit.*"

Interpretation

The Dalits' discriminations is expressed through their inaccessibility to VGF-related distribution of food related to special occasions such as Eid holidays. In addition, they seldom benefit from the special allowances, which they are expected to receive from the government. This also justifies an advocacy agenda.

b) Access to public resources

Research questions

Access to public resources (e.g. *khas* land, river, water bodies, sea, and forest) is expected to be positively related to the wellbeing of certain communities in the South-West. The question is whether dalit families have equal access like the non-dalit do. The following dimensions play a role:

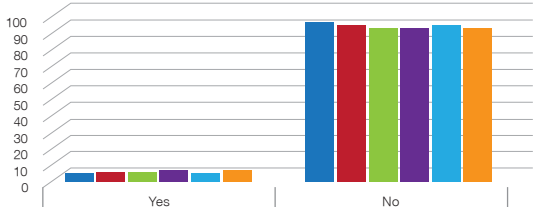
- Free or restricted physical access;
- Payment of fees (informal) against use;
- Fear of losing the home if living on public land.

Summary findings

Khas land

When asked about whether they have received any public land, 5%, 6% and 5% of the Dalits responded positively compared to 6%, 7% and 7% of the non-Dalits (see figure D.2.43) respectively in three cycles.

D.2.43: Acquisition of *khas* land

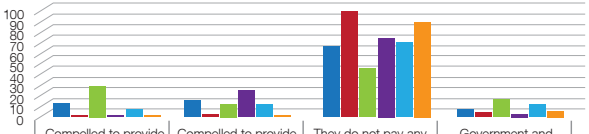


	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	5	95
First Cycle Non-dalit	6	94
Second Cycle Dalit	6	94
Second Cycle Non-dalit	7	93
Third Cycle Dalit	5	95
Third Cycle Non-dalit	7	93

Compulsion of paying subscription for the use of natural resources:

66%, 46% and 70% of the Dalits benefit from natural resources without paying anything to anyone. However, 16%, 13% and 11% of the Dalits, who have access to natural resources, have to pay subscription to musclemen, followed by 13%, 29% and 7% to the government. The Dalits pay both to the government and powerful persons as well (5%, 13% and 11%). Out of the non-Dalits with access to natural resources, nobody has to pay anything, except in cycle 2 and 3, when 25% and 2% mentioned paying off musclemen, while 0%, 0% and 7% non-Dalits pay both to government and influential people (see figure D.2.44) respectively.

D.2.44: Paying subscription for the use of natural resources

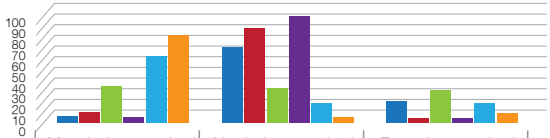


	Compelled to provide subscription to government	Compelled to provide subscription to musclemen	They do not pay any subscription to anyone	Government and influential person
First Cycle Dalit	13	16	66	5
First Cycle Non-dalit	0	0	100	0
Second Cycle Dalit	29	13	46	13
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0	25	75	0
Third Cycle Dalit	7	11	70	11
Third Cycle Non-dalit	0	2	91	7

Attack during the use of natural resources

When asked about whether the Dalits are attacked when making use of the natural resources, 8%, 35% and 63% of the Dalits who benefit from the resources said to have been subject of attacks often, compared to 10%, 0%, and 83% of the non-Dalits. In cycle 3, 19% Dalits said to have been subject to daily attacks compared to 10% of the non-Dalits (see figure D.2.45).

D.2.45: Vulnerability to attacks during the use of natural resources



	Often being attacked	Not being attacked at all	Everyday attacked
First Cycle Dalit	8	72	21
First Cycle Non-dalit	10	90	0
Second Cycle Dalit	35	33	31
Second Cycle Non-dalit	0	100	0
Third Cycle Dalit	63	19	19
Third Cycle Non-dalit	83	7	10

Qualitative findings

In terms of access to public resources, there does not appear to be any sharp differences between Dalits and the mainstream poor. Both categories of people do enjoy access to public resources in varying degrees within the confines of prevailing norms, which are not necessarily favorable to the poor and marginalized even though there are some positive legal provisions (e.g. related to distribution of *khas* land).

Within broad existing trends, however, it may be that in some cases Dalits may face more limitations in accessing public resources than the mainstream poor. For example, we did not hear of many Dalits being beneficiaries of *khas* (public) land settlement programs. One reason for this may be that many Dalits do own homestead lands; on the other hand, they are often associated with off-field traditional occupations; thus they may not be usually seen as potential beneficiaries in *khas* land distribution programs. However, it does not mean that the mainstream poor are enjoying equitable access to *khas* land by overcoming barriers posed by various vested interest groups.

We did not hear of any instances of Dalits being denied access to public water bodies like rivers, ponds because of their caste status. Where forests exist, Dalits and non-Dalits alike may have access to some resources. However, in some cases, while accessing public resources, both Dalits and non-Dalits may be subjected to extortions enforced by organized groups operating locally.

In so far as access to public resources is concerned, it is often controlled by various powerful vested interest groups, it is difficult to determine whether there are any sharp differences between Dalits and the mainstream poor in terms to access to public resources. Thus a *rishi* man said during the 2nd cycle: "*The water bodies have all been leased out (to the rich and powerful), so nothing is free. Only our lives are free.*"

During the 3rd cycle of the study, at an FGD session with mainstream (Muslim) poor in Satkhira, it was learned that the local public water body – a *khal* or canal – was accessible for all for fishing, but local political leaders wielded greater influence. Besides, those living next to the water body tended to fence off parts of the water body next to their homesteads. The minorities of the area, however, had somewhat diminished access as they lived in fear. One said: "*Those who have power make full use of the water body. Those who have fish ghers (demarcated water bodies used for cultivating fish), and have water pumping machines, control the water bodies. During the rains, many people fish in the khal using nets, fishing rods etc. But this happens on a limited scale. The water bodies are being usurped.*"

Interpretation

A section of the Dalits (e.g. fishermen), who wants to pursue their traditional profession also in the future, is dependent on sustainable access to natural resources like (river, canal, forest, etc). Since they are constrained, reportedly due to informal payment to locally influential persons, their livelihood is at stake. They live in fear and financial distress because they have to pay from their limited proceeds against virtually no service. This situation establishes a rationale for advocacy initiative.

c) Participation in decision-making

Research questions

The political transaction implies here the importance of Dalits' opinion in the society. The research particularly investigates whether the Dalits can do the following:

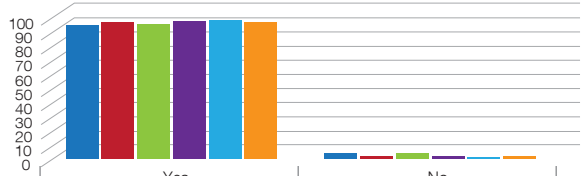
- Vote freely;
- Express their political opinion freely without experiencing any attack;
- Demand services as a community or organized group;
- Represent themselves in local committees (e.g. School Man agement Committees);
- Become a candidate in elections.

The situation of Dalits is here compared with that of the non-Dalits.

Summary findings

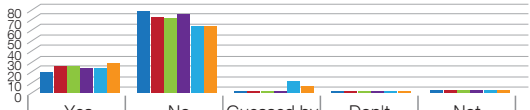
Freedom of expressing an opinion: With regard to voting rights, 95%, 96%, and 99% of the Dalits say to be in a position to exercise their voting rights, whereas 97%, 98%, and 98% of the non-Dalits (in consecutive cycles) maintained the same (see figure D.2.46.a) On the question whether they can express their political opinion publicly, 21%, 26%, and 24% of the Dalits responded positively compared to 27%, 24% and 29% of the non-Dalits in the consecutive cycles (see figure D.2.46.b).

D.2.46.a: Freedom to exercise voting rights



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	95	5
First Cycle Non-dalit	97	3
Second Cycle Dalit	96	4
Second Cycle Non-dalit	98	2
Third Cycle Dalit	99	1
Third Cycle Non-dalit	98	3

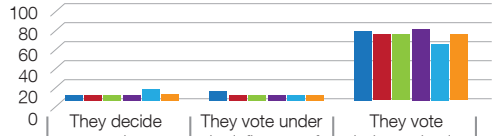
D.2.46.b: Freedom to disclose political opinion publicly



	Yes	No	Guessed by the others	Don't discuss	Not applicable
First Cycle Dalit	21	79	0	0	0
First Cycle Non-dalit	27	74	0	0	0
Second Cycle Dalit	26	74	0	0	0
Second Cycle Non-dalit	24	76	0	0	0
Third Cycle Dalit	24	64	11	0.2	1
Third Cycle Non-dalit	29	64	7	0	0

Voting behavior: With respect to their voting behavior, 92%, 94% and 80% of Dalits go voting independently, while 3%, 4% and 15% vote together as a group and 5%, 2% and 5% under the influence of musclemen. In the case of non-Dalits, 97%, 96% and 89% vote independently, 3%, 2% and 8% vote as a group, and 0.3%, 2% and 4% vote under the influence of musclemen (see figure D.2.47).

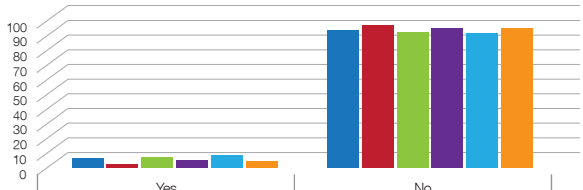
D.2.47: Voting behaviour



	They decide together	They vote under the influence of musclemen	They vote independently
First Cycle Dalit	3	5	92
First Cycle Non-dalit	3	0.3	97
Second Cycle Dalit	4	2	94
Second Cycle Non-dalit	2	2	96
Third Cycle Dalit	15	5	80
Third Cycle Non-dalit	8	4	89

Victim of political violence: On the question, whether they have been subject to violence because of their voting behavior, 7%, 7% and 9% of the Dalits answered positively compared to 2%, 4% and 5% of the non-Dalits (see figure D.2.48).

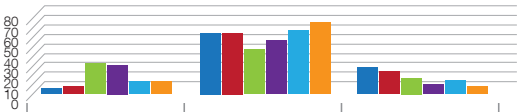
D.2.48: Victims of political violence



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	7	93
First Cycle Non-dalit	2	98
Second Cycle Dalit	7	93
Second Cycle Non-dalit	4	96
Third Cycle Dalit	9	91
Third Cycle Non-dalit	5	95

Importance of opinion on social activities and program: On the question whether the opinion of the Dalits matter, 65%, 48% and 68% responded negatively, followed by the answer that their opinions are not taken into account (27%, 19%, and 17%) and the opinion matters (7%, 34% ad 15%). In the case of non-Dalits, 66%, 57% and 76% say that their opinion does not matter, followed by the opinions taken into account (26%, 11% and 10%) and that their opinion matters 9%, 31% and 15% respectively (see figure D.2.49).

D.2.49: Importance of opinion on social activities and program



	Their opinion matters	Their opinion does not matter	Their opinions are not taken into account
First Cycle Dalit	7	65	27
First Cycle Non-dalit	9	66	26
Second Cycle Dalit	34	48	19
Second Cycle Non-dalit	31	57	11
Third Cycle Dalit	15	68	17
Third Cycle Non-dalit	15	76	10

Qualitative findings: On paper, there is space for various categories of marginal people to participate in decision-making processes of different types of local institutions ranging from community-based organizations, established by NGOs, to other

local bodies such as school committees and the UP and its various standing committees. However, in many cases, the participation in decision-making processes by both Dalits and mainstream poor tend to be mere eyewash. Nonetheless, where truly community-based organizations exist, there is some degree of democratic decision making at community level, and this may be a common trend for both dalit and non-dalit poor.

Participation in decision-making processes of various local institutions is limited for both dalit and mainstream poor, though the degree may be higher for the former. While in terms of political representation the poor are generally underrepresented in local government bodies such as UPs, the poor among non-Dalits still have considerably greater representation than is the case for dalit poor. The same is true in case of other institutions as well. For example, Dalits are still not generally included in school management committees or other such fora as community representatives. In a few platforms where they are included, it is found that these are places where the local inhabitants are predominantly Dalits.

Members of some dalit communities are keenly aware that they are deliberately excluded from decision making bodies and process. Thus G. Das, a *Rishi* from Bashbari, Keshabpur, Jessore remarked: "*No one from our Rishi community is ever included in any committee.*" Compared to the experience of the *Rishis*, the *Nikaris*, a Muslim dalit community of fishers, seem to fare better (they generally experience less discrimination or inequality, as observed in a different context already). Thus, during a FGD session with *Nikaris*, it was learned that one of them was included in a village police committee.

In general, to most non-Dalits, the very idea of seeing Dalits run for elections in local government bodies seems unthinkable. One non-Dalit man expressed his view in this regard in the following terms: "*Low caste cannot be in a high position. We do not lift shoes to the level of our heads.*"

There are, however, always exceptions to the general rule or trend. Thus, during our fieldwork, we came across a Muslim dalit woman who was elected as a UP councilor. Her experience in this role was mixed, as described briefly in the box below.

The experience of a dalit woman elected as a UP councilor

A. Begum, who completed her SSC, is a married woman aged 33 years and a member of the Sardar community (a Muslim dalit group). She has a son who has attended the HSC exam. In 2011, she contested the UP election from a reserved seat for women and won. It was a significant achievement since she was the first dalit woman councilor of her union (Islampur). However, when she ran for UP election again in 2016, she could not win. She says she became heavily indebted in participating in the election again (she spent Tk. 1,10,000). Now there are many people with money who can spend more than her. According to A. Begum, when elected the first time, she tried to do as much work as she could do in terms of VGF, VGD, roads, stipends etc. But the UP chairman reportedly did not cooperate with her. In fact, he avoided talking to her as much as possible, something that she thinks was due to her being both a *Behara* (Dalit) and a woman.

Dalits in the study area said they did not face any obstacles in casting their votes in local or national elections. None mentioned post-election violence, though some said that they heard about election-related violence in other places.

Generally, there were hardly any dalit representatives found in any layer of the local elected bodies such as union councils or the upazila councils. During the first cycle, we did learn of a dalit woman who contested in UP elections for one of the seats reserved for women, but was not elected. In the second cycle, we came across a woman UP councilor, as noted later in this study. Generally, compared to the 'mainstream' poor, Dalits have mentioned that they hardly ever think of trying to become local elected representatives. They say that they do not even entertain such aspirations not only because of their economic situation, but

also because of their caste identity. As one *rishi* respondent put it during the first cycle: "*Even if we wish to, we cannot become elected representatives. Who will vote for a cobbler?*"

While Dalits perceive 'communal' and caste bias among local elected representatives as well as the general mainstream population, they think that their chances of having a political voice at the local level is further weakened by their own lack of unity and effective organization. However, many respondents also added that despite caste-related prejudice that may occasionally come in the way, they do normally have good working relationship with the officials of local elected bodies, from which they can get the help if needed, and that is what matters most.

Regarding political violence and discrimination, it is possible that many of our respondents did not speak completely frankly. In general, marginalized people do not always speak their mind on sensitive matters. So when Dalits say things like: "*We have not faced election related violence in our area, but heard of some incidents elsewhere*", the possibility remains that this is their way of acknowledging a general trend without being too explicit about it. Some Hindu dalit respondents did share an important point: they (as Hindus) are seen as vote banks of certain political parties; thus they sometimes have to deal with fear of reprisal from other parties.

During an FGD session with non-dalit men in Tala, Satkhira, one respondent indicated the level of political freedom they enjoyed in the following terms: "*It is usually hard to express one's views openly, but during elections, one can cast one's vote as they like. There are, however, exceptions too. Some don't go to polling centers out of fear. Some are also kicked out (of polling booths).*" In a similar discussion session with dalit men, one said: "*We do not speak up out of fear. We vote as we like, but the parties that lose come to know if they did not get our votes. Those who lose blame us, and threaten us.*"

Interpretation

Although Dalits enjoy freedom of expression like the non-Dalits, they are more vulnerable to physical attacks than others. Their voting behavior is more likely to make them victims after elections. Therefore, protection of the Dalits after an electoral process remains an advocacy issue.

2.2.5 Gender as transaction

Research questions

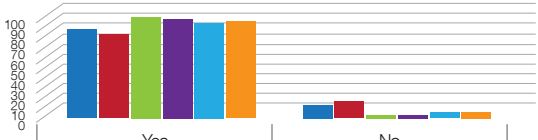
The research particularly looks at whether dalit and non-dalit girls or women are subject to the following:

- Sexual harassment on the way to work or school
- Frequency of child marriage
- Domestic violence

Summary findings

Women's movement outside the home: 87%, 99% and 94% of the Dalits compared to 83%, 97% and 95% of the non-Dalits reported (in consecutive cycles) to see women going outside home for various purposes (see figure D.2.50.a).

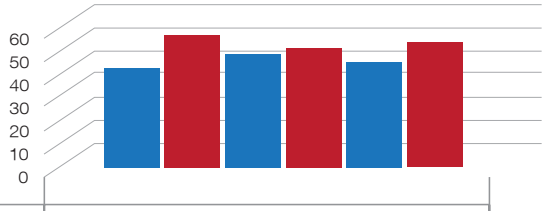
D.2.50.a: Women's movement outside the home



	Yes	No
First Cycle Dalit	87	13
First Cycle Non-dalit	83	17
Second Cycle Dalit	99	1
Second Cycle Non-dalit	97	3
Third Cycle Dalit	94	6
Third Cycle Non-dalit	95	5

Women's contribution to household income: 43%, 49%, and 46% of the Dalits confirmed that women have contributed to family income compared to 57%, 51% ad 55% of the non-Dalits (in consecutive cycles). The activities include homestead gardening, poultry, duck, goat, and cow rearing (see figure D.2.50.b).

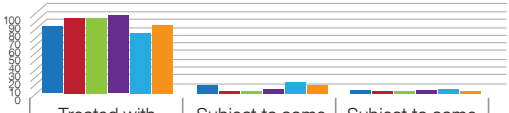
D.2.50.b: Women's contribution to family income



First Cycle Dalit	43
First Cycle Non-dalit	57
Second Cycle Dalit	49
Second Cycle Non-dalit	51
Third Cycle Dalit	46
Third Cycle Non-dalit	55

Behavior towards women outside home: 86%, 97%, and 78% of the dalit women compared to 96%, 99%, and 87% of the non-dalit mentioned that they are treated with respect as like other women of the society. On the contrary, 11% 3%, and 17% of the Dalits and 4%, 1%, and 12% of the non-Dalits reported to have experienced some verbal harassment. Dalits (4%, 0.2% and 5%) and non-Dalits (0%, 0%, 1%) have reported to have suffered physical harassment (see figure D.2.51).

D.2.51: Treatment of women outside home



	Treated with respect as other women	Subject to some verbal harrassment	Subject to some physical harassment
First Cycle Dalit	86	11	4
First Cycle Non-dalit	96	4	0
Second Cycle Dalit	97	3	0.2
Second Cycle Non-dalit	99	1	0
Third Cycle Dalit	78	17	5
Third Cycle Non-dalit	87	12	1

Qualitative findings

The findings of our study confirmed the general pattern of gender based discrimination, harassment and violence – accentuated further when combined with class, ethnic or religious marginalization

in Bangladesh. Similar trends exist among both Dalits and non-Dalits alike in the study area. For example, verbal sexual harassment, commonly referred to as 'eve teasing', is an everyday experience for Bangladeshi women everywhere. On this subject, our respondents in the field – particularly young women – said that it is very common for them. However, 'eve teasing' is rare in one's own community where people know one another. In such case, women are generally treated with respect, more like family members. However, the moment women step outside of their familiar territory, they tend to be harassed verbally, and in some cases even physically.

While both dalit and non-dalit females face sexual harassment of various kind, dalit girls and women are probably more vulnerable to such risks because the perpetrators may not expect any negative consequences for their actions. As one respondent put it: "*Regardless of whether we are talking about Muslims or Hindus, Dalits or non-Dalits, girls and women experience harassment all the time. However, there is a difference between Muslims and Hindus/Dalits when it comes to protesting incidents of harassment. The latter are often too weak to seek redress when incidents of harassment take place.*"

We were told that Hindu dalit families would not send an unmarried girl for garments training out of fear for their safety and security. Within the context of larger society, poor dalit women may be said to be 'triply' oppressed: as poor, as women and as Dalit. On all counts, they are likely to experience higher degrees of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence compared to their 'mainstream' counterparts.

Early marriage for girls is still practiced by both Dalits and non-Dalits, but it seems to be relatively more common among Dalits, at least by their own accounts. Generally, it is now widely known that the minimum legal age for marriage in Bangladesh is 18 for women. Given this, there is a tendency among both Dalits and non-Dalits to pass 16-17 year old girls as 18 as they are

married off. During discussion, dalit respondents tried to justify this practice by saying that unmarried girls face higher risks of sexual harassment and abuse, so the sooner they are married off, the better for all. One of them further explained that both economic insecurity and perceptions of social insecurity, including fear of young women marrying outside their caste, are behind many dalit families still opting for early marriage for girls (he estimated it to be about 20%). He also said that Dumuria has higher rates of early marriage compared to all adjacent UPZs. This year, there have been up to five such marriages in their UPZ, but they could not prevent these as on paper, all the girls are shown to be 18 or above. Moreover, there are also social pressures to allow such marriages to take place (e.g. notions that the girls will have to commit suicide if their marriages are nullified).

Triply oppressed: The case of a young dalit woman subjected to sexual violence

In Dumuria, during a 1st cycle FGD with the youth, we learned of a young dalit woman, aged about 18 or 19, who used to work for a home-based shoe manufacturing enterprise. A young Muslim man began to show sexual interest in her and pressed her for an affair. He used to harass her whenever he found an opportunity to get near her as she moved to and from her workplace. Then, one day, he kidnapped her and took her to Dhaka where she was forcibly kept at the house of the man's brother for over a week, all the while being subjected to sexual abuse and physical violence. Later, when she was sent back to her village, she could not stay there out of shame and fear. She took shelter with her maternal uncle at a different village and sought support of the local UP chairman and members in taking action against the perpetrator. However, these officials kept postponing the dates for a hearing, and the young woman's family members were not very keen either in seeking justice out of fear of reprisal from the perpetrator's family.

Among the mainstream poor, one reason stated as to why parents want to marry off their daughters at a relatively early age has to do

with dowry. Apparently, for older women, higher rates of dowry apply if they are to be married off.

The research team found gender-based wage discrimination in the study area for both dalit and non-dalit women alike. During the first cycle, we learned that against daily rates of Tk. 200 for male laborers, female laborers received only Tk. 120. Men also tended to eat more meals than women.

Different kinds of gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence that are observed for women in general came up again for both Dalits and non-Dalits of the study area during the second and third cycles of the study as well. For example, in terms of wage labor, men still earn at least Tk. 50 more than women, and in many places, the wage difference is as high as Tk. 70-80. As a justification for this wage discrimination, it is often said (by men) that men can perform more work than women within the same time. Women dispute this, and point out that men actually take more time off from work, spend time smoking etc., but women work harder. They believe that because they cannot work too far from their houses like men, they have to put up with the wage discrimination.

The research team have also learned that Hindu unmarried women do not usually work outside home. This is due to perceived insecurity, including the risk of being trafficked. Another consideration mentioned was to prevent young women from marrying Muslims.

Interpretation: Although gender discrimination is common both among the Dalits and non-Dalits (frequently obvious in intra-household food distribution and wage rate), the less reported than occurred sexual harassment of the dalit girls and young women is a source of concern and demands advocacy initiatives. This is more needed at a time when women need to be more economically empowered to free the family from debt burden and take household decisions.

3. The traditional skills of the dalit communities and their relevance in the market

Research questions

The Dalits, as mentioned earlier, are understood as a composite and broad community under which many sub-communities fall depending on the professions. The research questions are as follows:

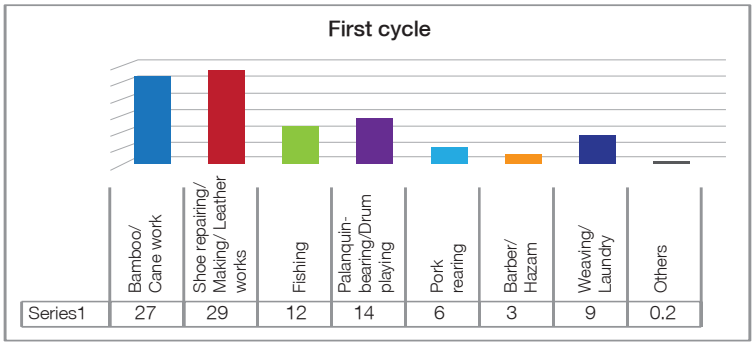
- What kind of professional orientation do the Dalits have, and how do they acquire the skills necessary to maintain their profession?
- How are the dynamics of the traditional professions (past, present and future)? How the professions in the past, are now and what is the future trend?
- If they want to maintain their profession, do they exercise it out of religious motive or just for livelihood sake? If they do not want to pursue their professions, what are the reasons? Are poor market conditions, the influence of non-Dalits, and self-imposed discontinuation leading to the disappearance of the traditional professions?
- If the profession is on the verge of extinction, is there any technological means through product and process innovation to sustain the traditional profession?

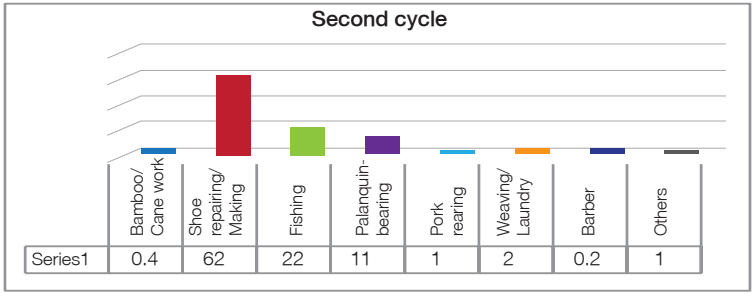
Both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection have addressed these questions.

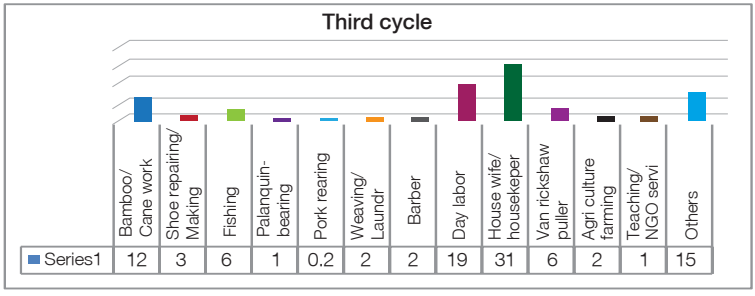
Summary findings

Inheritance of traditional professions: The dalit communities encountered during three cycles were found at different stages of transformation of their professions. In cycle 1, 29% of the respondents mentioned to have inherited shoe repairing/making and leather work, followed by 27% who have inherited bamboo/cane related work, 14% palanquin-bearing and drum playing, 12% fishing, 9% weaving and laundry, 6% pork rearing, 3% barber and *hazam*. In cycle 2, however, 62% said to have inherited shoe repairing/making, followed by fishing (22%), palanquin-bearing (11%), weaving and laundry (2%). In cycle 3, 12% mentioned to have inherited bamboo/cane related work, followed by 6% fishing, 3% shoe repairing/making and 2% weaving and laundry (see figure D.3.1)

D.3.1: What are the dalit family's traditional professions?



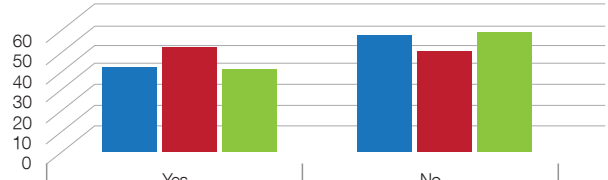




Transformation to new profession: The Dalits have changed their professions (42%, 51% and 41%) (see figure D.3.2). In each cycle the main reasons behind this change were: in the first cycle, 31% mentioned that their profession did not generate enough income for the family to survive, followed by 25% who reported

that society disliked it. In the second cycle, 37% said that their father changed the profession, followed by 30% who said that their grandfather changed it. In the third cycle, 26% responded the same and 25% stated that their profession did not generate enough income to survive (see figure D.3.3).

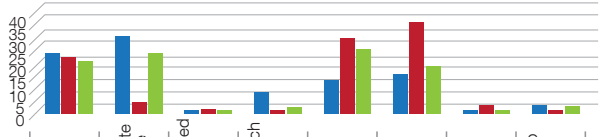
D.3.2: Continuity of family traditions in profession



	Yes	No
First Cycle	42	58
Second Cycle	51	49
Third Cycle	41	59

First Cycle Second Cycle Third Cycle

D.3.3: Reasons behind the change in the traditional professions

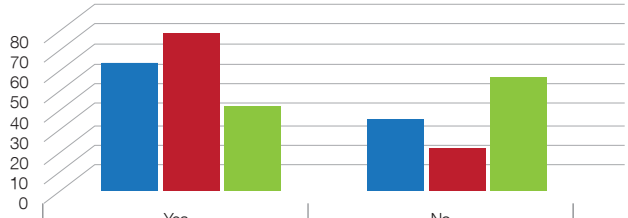


	Disliked by the society	The profession cannot contribute sufficiently to the income	Become educated and changed the profession	There is not much demand of that profession	Changed since grandfather's period	Changed since father's period	The community decided not to continue this profession	Changed due to her/his physical inability
First Cycle	25	31	2	9	14	16	1	3
Second Cycle	23	4	2	0.4	30	37	3	0.4
Third Cycle	21	25	1	3	26	20	1	3

Intention to change the existing traditional profession: The Dalitwho are still practicing traditional professions, are willing to change their professions (64%, 79%, and 43%) (see figure D.3.4). The most prominent arguments are that the 'traditional professions do not generate enough income for the family' (46%,

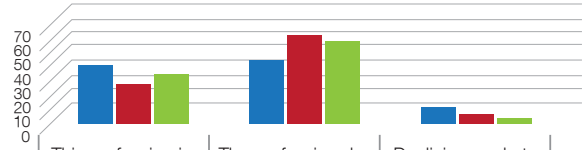
63% and 61%), followed by 'disliked by society' (42%, 29% and 37%) and 'declining market demand' (13%, 8% and 3%) (see figure D.3.5).

D.3.4: Intention to change the traditional profession



	Yes	No
First Cycle	64	36
Second Cycle	79	21
Third Cycle	43	57

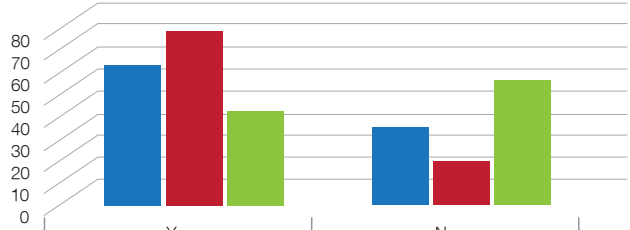
D.3.5: The reasons behind the intention to change the traditional profession



	This profession is disliked by the society	The profession do not generate enough income	Declining market demand
First Cycle	42	46	13
Second Cycle	29	63	8
Third Cycle	37	61	3

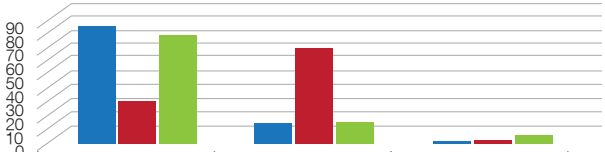
Intention not to change the traditional profession: A segment of the Dalits who are still practicing the traditional profession is inclined to maintain it (64%, 79% and 43%) (see figure D.3.6.a). They mentioned 'no other skills known' (85%, 31% and 79%, followed by 'committed to traditional profession' (15%, 69% and 16%) (see figure D.3.6.b).

D.3.6.a: Intention to maintain the traditional profession



	Yes	No
First Cycle	64	36
Second Cycle	79	21
Third Cycle	43	57

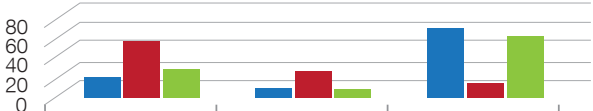
D.3.6.b: The reasons behind maintaining the traditional profession



	No other skills known	Committed to traditional profession	No opportunity
First Cycle	85	15	0
Second Cycle	31	69	0
Third Cycle	79	16	6

Prospect of the use of modern technology in traditional profession: The Dalits practicing traditional professions are not aware of the possibility of using modern technology in their professions (71%, 14% and 63%). Many of them are however positive about using modern technology (19%, 59% and 29%). A section of the Dalits is against such an initiative (10%, 27% and 8%) (see figure D.3.7).

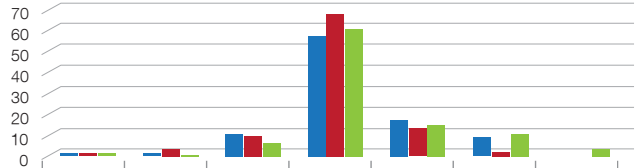
D.3.7: The usefulness of modern technology



	Yes	No	Don't know
First Cycle	19	10	71
Second Cycle	59	27	14
Third Cycle	29	8	63

Expectation about the profession of the children: While the Dalitfind themselves still in transformation to new professions, they aspire to a different future for their children. They prefer government jobs (58%, 68%, and 61%) to non-government jobs (11%, 10% and 7%). A section of the Dalits could not choose (9%, 2%, and 11%). A small segment of the Dalits hopes that the children will continue with the traditional profession of the family (2%, 2% and 2%) (see figure D.3.8).

D.3.8: Expectations about the professions of their children



	Traditional profession	Parents profession	Non-government profession	Government profession	Others	Don't know	Not applicable
First Cycle	2	2	11	58	18	9	
Second Cycle	2	4	10	68	14	2	
Third Cycle	2	1	7	61	15	11	3

Qualitative findings

There is a clear trend of decline or loss of traditional occupations among the Dalits, who have generally adopted occupations that are seen as less polluting or demeaning than the ones they were associated with historically. Below, we describe the general trends and patterns found among different categories of dalit groups in our study area.

The loss of traditional occupations is highest among Muslim Dalits. Among the *Beharas* or palanquin bearers (who use the surname Sardar), no one remembers their immediate predecessors (fathers or grandfathers) having been in the traditional occupation. At present, most of them are poor and work as day laborers. Some are also working as rickshaw van drivers, small shopkeepers etc. and none of the weavers (locally known as *Karigar*) are in their traditional occupation of weaving. Among t*he Baza*dars (from

Hazams or traditional circumcision specialists), none are known to be engaged in their traditional occupation today. Similarly, there are no *Jolas* (traditional weavers who are known as *Karigor* locally) engaged in their original occupation as the caste indicates.

Among the Hindu Dalits, in case of *Rishis*, who constitute the most numerous group in our study area, no one are engaged in skinning animals – one of their traditional occupation in the past. At present, though many are still engaged in trades such as cobbling and basket making, which they consider their traditional occupation. However, as is the general trends among other dalit groups, a large and growing number of *Rishis* have als changed to new occupation such as wage labor, selling vegetables, running tea stalls, rickshaw pulling etc. Many *rishi* women help their husbands make baskets, but they also work as day laborers.

Reasons for moving away from traditional occupation: Loss of market/low demand is a reason for the loss of traditional occupations. For palanquin bearers cannot find job as this mode of transport is obsolete. Similarly, the services of *Hazams* (traditional circumcision specialists) are rarely used nowadays as people turn to hospitals, clinics etc. for circumcision. Moreover, it is difficult to make a living by traditional means (e.g. as bamboo craftsmen) because of cheaper products (e.g. plastic) or because of the **stigma** associated with certain occupations (e.g. skinning of animals, pig rearing). Moreover, factors such as **new opportunities** and **education** have encouraged practitioners of traditional occupations to move to new occupations where feasible.

Many said that they did not receive training in taking up new occupations in a way that they can offer quality products or services. There have been attempts by some NGOs to get the Dalits produce goods for outside markets, but the products sent to Dhaka were not deemed to be of good quality and were returned, but could not be sold in the local market either.

As for giving up skinning of animals, *Rishis* say that it is a '*demeaning job*', one that is seen as degrading and looked down

upon equally by Muslims and Hindus alike. Although none are openly engaged in this job now, one or two still do it secretly, but the caste has taken a collective decision that anyone found to be doing it will be fined! One respondent told us that one such 'offender' was once fined Tk. 500.

Cobbling (i.e. repairing shoes) is still practiced by many *Rishis*, but most of them engage in this occupation in the towns away from their local communities. The young among them, particularly those who have received some education, are usually not interested in sticking to such traditional occupations. Such youth are usually not interested in non-traditional roles such as day labourers either. School - or college - going Dalits of both sexes that we interviewed generally showed interest in pursuing occupations that were considered to bring higher income as well as social status. In Tala, female students of colleges said in a group discussion that they wanted to become police or military officers, or nurses. Their male counterparts also expressed similar views. They are generally interested in non-traditional salaried jobs that are deemed to carry higher prestige. On the other hand, they are not generally interested to stay in traditional caste occupations that are considered to be demeaning. Those who could not continue their education are interested in receiving new skills training so that they can make a living by pursuing new economic activities.

That there is a clear trend of decline or loss or of traditional occupations among the Dalits came up on numerous occasions during all cycles of the study. It is learned that many Dalits have adopted occupations that are seen as less polluting or demeaning than the ones they were traditionally associated with.

As reported by respondents, organized efforts to change occupation took place quite extensively among *Rishis*, whose traditional occupation – leatherwork – was perceived as demeaning. N. C. Das, a *Rishi* who now works as a rickshaw-van puller, gave the following account as to why he changed occupation: "*I have given up my caste occupation as it is seen as*

lowly. Because of my (traditional) occupation, people addressed me as tumi [non-honorific 'you', i.e. second person pronoun applied to people of lower ranks]. When my children grow up, they will see that the parents of their friends all address me as tumi." It has been learned that the *Rishis* in fact made a community-wide decision for themselves quite some time ago. They introduced a rule for themselves that no *Rishi* would work with animal skins, and none would raise pigs either. Those who violated these rules would be fined heavily (Tk. 1000 in case of dealing with animal skin; and over Tk. 2000 taka along with excommunication in case of pig rearing). In Khanpur village in Tala, Satkhira, dealing with animal skins was reportedly stopped 60 years ago, with a Catholic priest by the name of Father Lewis reportedly going around door to door encouraging the *Rishis* to abandon their traditional occupation and to get education. He also talked about cleanliness, gave away clean clothes, without making any overt attempts to convert local people. Nonetheless, he was driven off out of fear that he were there to convert locals to Christianity.

As noted already, the two communities of dalit fisherfolk covered during the second cycle of this study are the *Malos* (Hindu) and *Nikaris* (Muslim). The *Malos* feel disadvantaged, as they say they do not receive the kind of government support. They have been given vans, but they feel awkward and embarrassed about being known as van-drivers. As one of them said: "*We are water folks. Fishing is what we know best. We cannot be seen driving vans.*" They would rather be fishing out in the sea or in the Sundarbans, but fishing trips to such places cost money, and they lack funds. They go in debt for going on fishing trips, since they have to make advance payments for the crew, and also leave money behind for their own families. In the face of such hardships, due to lack of other skills, most *Malos* are becoming wage laborers.

Interpretation

In the context of having Dalits leaving traditional professions and some others retaining traditional professions when the natural

resources are not productive anymore, the Dalits are facing a livelihood crisis. This might be the principal reason that the parents and the dalit youth alike eye a different profession, a profession which the non-dalit youth aspires for. However, the dalit youth, being comparatively less connected with the skill providing agencies, need more attention to be at par with the non-dalit youth. In the absence of social capital and insufficient orientation about the prospective professions, community and the public agencies have a role to play to help the Dalits undergo the professional transformation.

4. The dynamics within families and communities as a result of migration by dalit girls/young women

The research interviewed parents and guardians of 36 migrant girls and young women who have been trained and employed in garment factories six months before the first cycle of this study, with the support of JHM project implemented by TDH Italia through its partner NGOs and funded by the European Union.

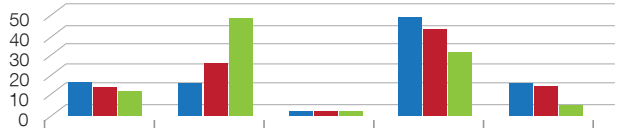
Research questions

The investigation was aimed to know the perception and attitude of the parents, guardians and society to the migrated girls and young women and also to explore the benefits of the project on the lives of those vulnerable families.

Summary findings

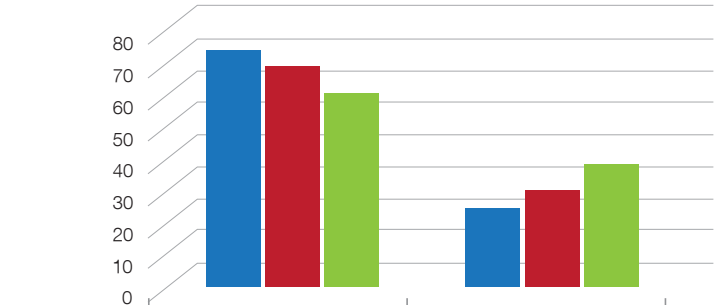
Family status of the girls and young women: 49%, 43%, 32% of the migrated girls and young women are divorced, followed by 16%, 26%, 49% married, 16%, 14% and 12% unmarried, 16%, 14%, 5% separated and 2%, 2%, 2% widow (see figure D.4.1.a). 75%, 69%, 61%of the married, widowed, divorced and separated women have children (see figure D.4.1.a). 75%, 69 and 61% migrated women have children (see figure D 4.1.b).

D.4.1.a: Marital status of the girls/young women



	Unmarried	Married	Widow	Divorced	Separated
First Cycle	16	16	2	49	16
Second Cycle	14	26	2	43	14
Third Cycle	12	49	2	32	5

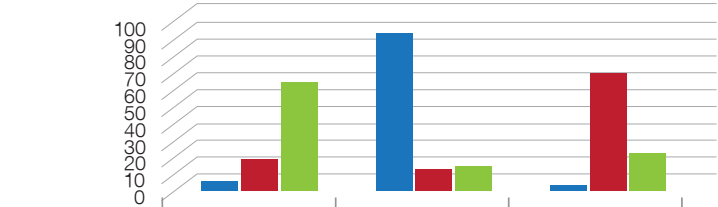
D.4.1.b: Children of the migrated girls/young women



	Yes	No
First Cycle	75	25
Second Cycle	69	31
Third Cycle	61	39

Decision on migration: The decision on migration was taken by joint decisions (girls or young women, and families), by the girls/young women themselves, and with their maternal aunts. The migration decision has gradually shifted mostly to the girls alone, as they decided in 63% of the cases in the cycle 3, while it was 5% and 19% in the cycle 1 and cycle 2 respectively. The role of the joint family decision declined (93%, 12%, and 15%), while the decisions together with maternal aunts increased (2%, 69% and 22%). (see figure D.4.2).

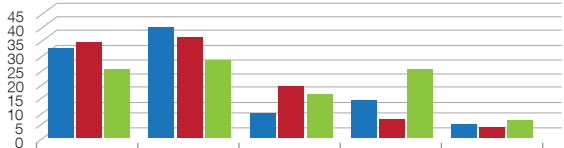
D.4.2: Decision on migration of the girls/young women



	Girls/women themselves	Girls/women and their parents	Others (e.g. maternal aunt)
First Cycle	5	93	2
Second Cycle	19	12	69
Third Cycle	63	15	22

The attitude of the family members towards the girls/young women: In each cycle, the families were found supportive towards the girls. They believed that the migration of the girls would reduce family poverty (32%, 35%, and 25%), make the girls self-sufficient (40%, 36%, and 28%), establish a better future for the children (9%, 19%, 16%), ensure social security of the girls (14%, 7%, 25%) and increase the social status of the family (5%, 4%, 6%) (see figure D.4.3).

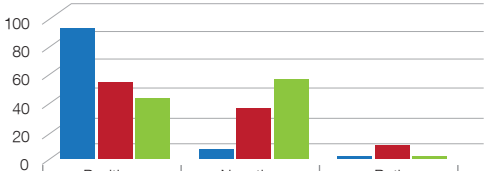
D.4.3: Reasons for supporting the training/work



	Contribute to elimination of family poverty	Help achieve the self-sufficiency of the girls and women	Help to build a better future of their children	Improve social security of the girls and women	Increase social status of the girls and women
First Cycle	32	40	9	14	5
Second Cycle	35	36	19	7	4
Third Cycle	25	28	16	25	6

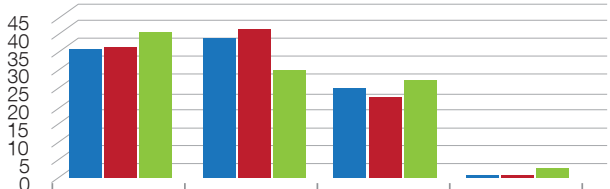
The attitude of the society: The attitude of the society was favorable (93%, 55%, and 44%). The remaining 7%, 36%, 56% who had a negative attitude argued that the girls and young women might violate their social values and principles (see figure D.4.4.a). The reasons for positive attitudes are that the migration would a) reduce social-economic vulnerability of the girls (39%, 41%, 30%), make the family economically more solvent (36%, 37%, 41%), and support the future of the children (25%, 22%, 27%) (see figure D.4.4.b).

D.4.4.a: Societal attitudes to the migrated girls/young women



	Positive	Negative	Both
First Cycle	93	7	0
Second Cycle	55	36	10
Third Cycle	44	56	0

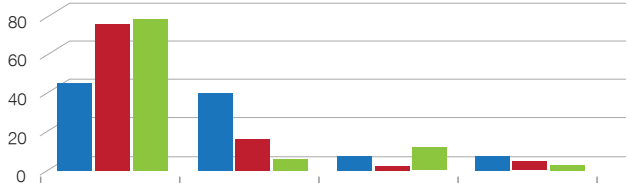
D.4.4.b: Reasons for positive attitude



	It will help the family to be economically solvent	It will reduce socioeconomic vulnerability	It will help to build a better future of their children	Others
First Cycle	36	39	25	0
Second Cycle	37	41	22	0
Third Cycle	41	30	27	3

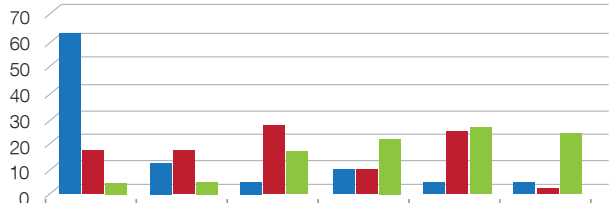
Contribution to the family: The contribution to the family has become a regular phenomenon (45%, 76%, and 79%) (see figure D.4.5.a). The amount of money sent to the family has increased as well. For example, more than Tk. 3000 per month was sent by 5%, 25% and 27% of the girls in cycle 1, 2 and 3 respectively (see figure D.4.5.b).

D.4.5.a: Migrated girls & young women's contribution to their families



	Contribute on a regular basis	Contribute sometimes	Contribute in case of emergency	Contribute on the occasion of special ceremony
First Cycle	45	41	7	7
Second Cycle	76	17	2	5
Third Cycle	79	6	12	3

D.4.5.b: Size of contribution



	Monthy up to Tk. 1,000	Monthly up to Tk. 1,500	Monthly up to Tk. 2,000	Monthly up to Tk. 3,000	Monthly more than Tk. 3,000	Don't know
First Cycle	63	13	5	10	5	5
Second Cycle	18	18	28	10	25	3
Third Cycle	5	5	17	22	27	24

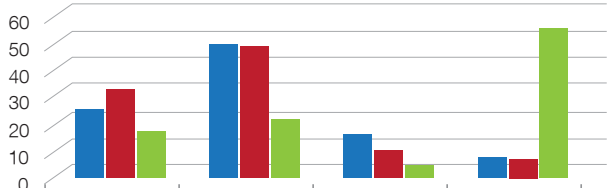
Use of contribution: The money received from the girls and young women are used to finance a) family expenses (26%, 31%, and 38%), b) the expenses for their child (23%, 20%, and 18%), c) investment (35%, 25%, and 29%) and special needs of the family (15%, 21%, and 9%) (see figure D.4.6).

D.4.6: Use of contribution

	Family expenses	Expenses for their children	Special needs of other family members	Savings/ Investment	Others
First Cycle	26	23	15	35	1
Second Cycle	31	20	21	25	3
Third Cycle	38	18	9	29	7

Type of investment: The nature of investment varied over the years. Deposit to *samitee* savings declined (50%, 49%, and 22%) and investment in poultry and cattle was mixed (26%, 33%, and 17%). Paying back of loans (16%, 10%, 5%) and other investments (e.g. to buy and lease the land) (8%, 8%, 56%) have gradually declined (see figure D.4.7).

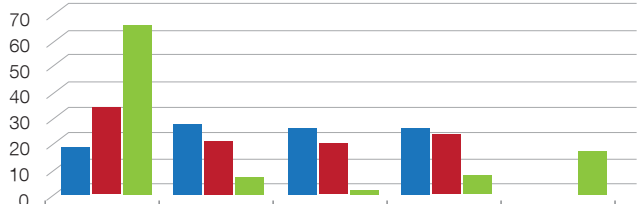
D.4.7: Type of investments and savings



	Investment in poultry and cattle rearing	Deposit to *Samitee*/Bank	To return loan	To buy/lease land/others
First Cycle	26	50	16	8
Second Cycle	33	49	10	8
Third Cycle	17	22	5	56

Attitude of the family towards girls seeking own marriage decision: The girls and young women with income now, in comparison to the time when they faced neglect at homes, have earned status that their parents would support the decision of her marriage a) because they are self-sufficient (19%, 35%, 66%), b) they can finance their marriage expenses (28%, 21%, 7%), c) have earned their rights of choice (27%, 20%, 2%), and d) deserve to be happier with own choice because the earlier marriage was troublesome (27%, 24% and 7%) (see figure D.4.8).

D.4.8: Reasons for positive attitude



	They are self-sufficient	They can finance their marriage	This is their choice	Earlier marriage was troublesome	Others
First Cycle	19	28	27	27	
Second Cycle	35	21	20	24	
Third Cycle	66	7	2	7	17

Qualitative findings

Women who have been working as garments workers after joining the JHM program and their family members are all of the opinion that their economic condition has changed as a result of the new employment. Previously, most of these women used to work either in crop fields, or as domestic workers. Otherwise they just stayed home. Now they earn. From what they earn, they can send money home, support their children and bear other household expenses. Apart from supporting family members, some of the women are also participating in savings schemes, or making small investments in livestock, poultry, etc.

Wages have increased, but most of the women garment workers do not tell their family members exactly how much they earn. This may be a strategy on their part so that they can save up a little or make small investments.

Among the JHM participants (about 40 women, working in Gazipur), some have left the project for various reasons: e.g. a few (about two/three) got married; two had to quit due to illness; one went abroad; and one had to leave to avoid sexual harassment by a locally influential person.

In case of some of the women who were already married, their husbands too came to Gazipur and started working as garment workers themselves.

In case of many JHM participants, both the women workers themselves and their family members are interested in seeing them return home only after they have achieved economic self-sufficiency. However, among them, those who left children behind worry a lot about the young ones, leading to anxiety and depression. They are unable to bring their children since they would have no one to look after them, but they are also worried that their children left behind are not being properly cared for.

Before joining the JHM program, many of the women had heard all kinds of negative stories about garment workers. Many people discouraged them. Even their parents told them stories. But now

that they started working, there is no such talk any more. Some women who are still in the village, particularly women who are divorced or have been abandoned by their husbands, come to them to find out about how to become garment workers.

Unmarried women, particularly among Hindu dalit communities, do not become garment workers. This is reportedly because their parents worry about their security, and are also concerned that their daughters could end up marrying Muslim men. Whatever the actual reasons may be, it is observed that dalit women participants of the TDH Italia supported project are mostly divorced or separated women. No unmarried women participants were found among Hindu Dalits, though a few were found among mainstream poor. In general, most of the participants have a better economic status and a greater sense of independence and dignity now. From a state of being dependent on others, involving low self-esteem and low social status, many are not only economically independent now, but are also contributing to their families.

Money sent home by the women working in garment factories are used for the benefit of their children, and various everyday needs of family members. Some also invest in income generating activities (e.g. cattle rearing, leasing land). Their family members believe that the women program participants have improved their situation for the better. During our fieldwork, some respondents spoke highly of them as the quotes below illustrate:

"They look brighter, cleaner, dress more nicely, and talk more smartly as well."

"Working in the garments factories means regular jobs. If they had stayed home, they would have worked in the field – doing demeaning work."

No family member wanted the women garment workers to return, and would like them to keep working a few more years. They also have no objection to the women workers getting married (again),

but they want to ensure the wellbeing of their children, and also want to make sure that they marry within their caste, or at least within the same religion.

Reluctance to send unmarried women to work away from home is based on concerns about their security, and fear of losing honor. Divorced women or those separated from their husbands, on the other hand, are seen as 'living dead' – so they are better off being sent away!

In what follows, we provide several case studies – stories of women who changed their status by participating in the JHM program – representing Hindu and Muslim dalit women as well as a few non-dalit women.

N. Bibi: A *behara* (Muslim dalit) woman who overcame various odds and is taken seriously now

Aged around or just below 30, N. Bibi is divorced and has a 10-year-old son who goes to school. She herself studied up to third grade, but stopped going to school when she started working as a domestic worker in Dhaka at only about eight years of age. There, she survived an attempt by traffickers to sell her off, but luckily she was rescued by a family that took her to Mymensingh, a district town adjacent to Dhaka.

N. Bibi returned home at the age of around 12, when her mother did not recognize her readily. It may be mentioned that her own father had died when she was quite young, leaving behind one son and one daughter. Later, her mother remarried. N. Bibi herselfwas married off by the age of 14 or 15 and she had two children, of which one, a daughter, died before turning one. Her husband left her eight years ago and she now lives with her mother, maternal grandmother, son and the second husband of her mother.

Both N. Bibi and her mother work as day laborers. Her grandmother and step-father do not work as they are not physically fit. She used to earn Tk. 120 a day as an agricultural laborer. Now she is employed as a garment worker and earns Tk. 7,000 a month including her regular wage and overtime payments. The one room house and an enclosure around it that her family members live in is in a poor shape.

N. Bibi started working at a garments factory in Dhaka as a participant of the TDH Italia program. Initially, during training, she could not send any money home, but now she sends Tk. 6000 a month. She was indebted before but now she has paid off her loans. She saves Tk. 40 a week through a local NGO. The cost of her son's education is also covered by the money she sends home. She has also pooled some of her own savings with that of her mother to lend mortgage loans in exchange for a piece of land as collateral.

N. Bibi's mother appreciates the economic contribution that her daughter is making to the family. She said: "*One who has no money is not taken seriously.*" Other family members also think that N. Bibi is '*doing well*'. They added:

"She has become fairer (i.e. light-skinned) and has put on some weight as well. There is good food in Dhaka. She earns her keep and supports her son. All these are reasons why she looks better now."

S. R. Das: A Hindu dalit woman who says she left home so that she could stand on her own feet

About 30 years of age, S. R. Das (SRD) studied up to the eighth grade. She was married off at the age of 17 or 18, but her husband left her soon after she became pregnant. In time, she gave birth to a boy who is now about 11 years old. She lives with her parents, both of whom are agricultural workers. There are times when they remain unemployed, as has been the case for the last two months. In times like this, they have to resort to loans. Right now they have a total debt of Tk. 4500, which they owe to three different lenders. In the past, their level of indebtedness was much higher.

Like her parents, SRD used to work in the field. Then at one point she went to Dhaka to work as a maid servant, earning Tk. 1500 a month. However, finding herself overworked all the time, she

returned home and went back to working as an agricultural laborer. Then, about a year ago, she took training from the NGO DALIT, and started working at a garment factory. On top of her monthly pay of Tk. 5000, she earned an additional Tk. 2000 from overtime. She came home once when she got a week off during the *Eid* holidays. However, during the Hindu festival of *Durga Puja*, when she got only three days off, she decided not to come home.

S. R. Das' son is a fourth grader now. She wanted to bring him with her, but realized it would be very expensive. She sends around Tk. 1500-2000 home every month. Her parents have started a ten-year insurance scheme, involving monthly payments of Tk. 200, in her name. The major portion of the money that she sends home is spent on her son.

SRD's parents and she herself think that much has changed for the better for them. Her mother said of her: "*Earlier, even though she worked as an agricultural laborer, often we had to cover her and her son's living expenses. Now, instead of becoming a financial burden, she can actually contribute to the family. We are also saving money in her name. She now dresses better, and looks better.*" SRD herself has greater self-esteem now and is confident of becoming fully self-sufficient. She wants to raise her son well. She misses him and her son misses her, but on the whole, she is happy about what she is doing now. She said to: "*I was blind before. Now I can see.*"

The story of Jui: A Muslim dalit woman, as told by her father who is proud of her achievements

Jui (not her real name), a member of the *behara* community (a Muslim dalit group), was abandoned by her husband some time ago. After being trained under the JHM program, she has been working at a garment factory in Gazipur for the past two years. Her father said Jui has improved her situation a lot. She now earns reasonably well, and is in good health as well. In fact, she now looks like an urban woman. She comes home twice a year, but they keep in touch over mobile phones. She sends them money regularly. Out of the money that Jui sends home regularly (usually Tk. 5-6,000 a month), a portion (Tk. 1000) is meant for her father's expenses, and a fixed portion (Tk. 3-4,000) is deposited in a savings account. She sends more money around *Eid*, when the extra money is meant for new clothes for her family members.

According Jui's father, if his daughter wants, she can marry anyone she likes. However, he thinks it would be better if she marries someone from within their own caste (i.e. *Behara/Sardar*). He is happy to see her continue working as long as she wants. He wishes her to become financially self-sufficient.

S. Das: A dalit woman whose husband returned to her after she started to earn an income

S. Das, a married dalit woman, returned to her parental home with a young son as she was not getting along with her husband. Her parents were very worried about her. In this situation, she started working in a garment factory in Dhaka about two and a half years ago. She used to earn Tk. 6,000 a month in the beginning, but now her monthly income is Tk. 8,500. S. Das' parents have bought and are raising three goats and some chickens in her name. They have also given out loans from her money in exchange for a piece of land mortgaged to them.

After S. Das started working, her husband came back to her, and he too is now working in Gazipur. They have decided that if their financial situation improves a bit, they will bring their son to live with them.



The story of Alma: A young unmarried woman who now supports her family

Alma (not her real name), from Kashimnagar, Paikgachha, is an unmarried (Muslim) woman who passed the SSC successfully but could not complete the HSC due to financial problems. Her father is a small farmer and mother is a homemaker. She has two sisters, both of whom are married, but one of them stays with them with her children.

After becoming a garment worker, Alma sends money to her parents regularly. She has been trying to save some money, but her savings are still not up to a level that would allow her to buy land. She earns and sends more money now than before.

Alma helps not only her parents but also her sisters. She wants to buy a cow for a sister. Her father cannot work much as he is old, so Alma has to shoulder a lot of family responsibilities.

There have been marriage proposals but Alma is not willing to get married before she becomes financially self-sufficient.

The story of Anuradha: A woman who was forced to return home despite excelling at work

Anuradha (not her real name) is a divorced woman with a child from Sarulia Union in Tala UPZ of Satkhira district. She was passing through hard times at her parents' because her eldest sister-in-law created problems. In such a situation, she came to know about the JHM project and decided to join. She managed to persuade her parents but the local community leaders opposed her going away to work. Nonetheless, she was not deterred and started working after completing her training successfully. After a while, she came to be known as a good worker at her company and was well liked by her fellow workers as well. Unfortunately, she had to quit her job and return.

Anuradha had a romantic relationship with a grocery store owner, who proposed to marry her, but she refused thinking about the future of her daughter. She wanted to ensure a secure future for her daughter before getting married again, but the man started misbehaving with her and created all kinds of problems. She told the manager of her company about this problem, who promised to help her resolve it.

However, since the grocery store owner was locally influential, she could not stop him from extorting money (Tk. 5000) from her by falsely accusing her of improper behavior. Even after she paid the money, he and his associates kept harassing her in all sorts of ways. Thus, even though her manager was keen on keeping her, she had to return.

Note: Anuradha was trained for two months and worked for four months. Her pay was Tk. 5,678 in the first month, and Tk. 6200 from the second month.

She does not want to return to Gazipur, where she had a bad experience, but would be open to working anywhere else in Dhaka.

'Runa' has come to understand the value of economic independence

Runa (not her real name), a Muslim dalit woman in her mid-twenties, was married and returned home with an infant boy as she could not cope with her abusive husband and in-laws. When her son turned 1.5 years, she came to Gazipur as a garment worker. It so happened that her husband too came to the same town, so they were reunited for a while, but later they had marital troubles again and became separated. Her son is now old enough to start going to school, and she sends money home regularly (at about Tk. 5000-6000 every 4-6 months). Runa does not exactly know how her father spends the money that she sends, but she says she also saves a little. Her in-laws now visit her son, keep in

touch with her and want her to return to them. However, Runa is understandably very cautious. She says: "*What will be my future? I will not return to the in-laws until I have a house of my own. I now earn more than before. And I have realized that people know you, value you if you have money.*"

Interpretation

Migration can bring short-term remedy to young distressed women with children, seeking training and work. The total migration (leaving the village for good and seek an urban life) is not a preference for the women, and bond with the village is desired in the future. Difficult and expensive accommodation and poor opportunity to take care of children are some reasons. The young migrant women gradually exercise more freedom in handling money, use of money and personal life, but still plans to return to their villages after 5-10 years.

Sending young women, who are divorced or separated, but have children and live in parental home, was appreciated by the society. But no one favored sending unmarried girls, apprehending affairs and romance. Since the share of the unmarried girls, who migrated for training and employment has been increasing, the negative attitude towards migration has been changing as well.

E

Advocacy strategies

The relative discriminations faced by the Dalits as opposed to the non-Dalits are expected to lead the Dalits to be relatively poorer in the long-run, should not community and the public institutions recognize them as development issues and undertake effective steps. Being driven by the findings and interpretation outlined in the foregoing and following the fourth objective of the research initiative, the research team proposes six complementary strategies, supported by specific strategies under each, to overcome the distinct deprivations and discriminations faced by the dalit communities, particularly for skills acquisition, employment opportunities and related migration management.

Overall strategy 1: Overcome the skill gap encountered by the dalit youth and earners.

- **Strategy 1:** Enrich traditional skills of the Dalits by building modern technology in old professions. This strategy is envisaged for the youth and seniors, who want to retain their traditional professions and are willing to learn some related supplementary skills, which will make the profession more demanding. For example, a traditional shoemaker can learn the use of modern tools to start supplying shoes to an urban shop.
- **Strategy 2:** Transfer local resource and market-based skills (fishery, dairy and agro-processing sector, regional industry). This strategy addresses both the youth and the seniors, who do not and cannot continue with the traditional profession. The strategy should target those families which have recently decided for the transformation.

Overall strategy 2: Establish connectivity of the skilled dalit youth as a group with the urban market and growth centers.

- **Strategy 1:** Facilitate the formation of sub-groups representing complementary skills to be provided. A group leader will combine persons with related skills and offer their service to as a package. For example, a group can specialize in plumbing and offer their service to urban apartments.
- **Strategy 2:** Develop entrepreneurial skills of the group leaders to participate in the market (communication with cell phone to make offer, handle offers, accounting, management and basic business communication, group management). This strategy is based on the assumption that a mere acquisition of technical skills and putting people together with complementary skills will not ensure access to the urban market. The group leaders will need entrepreneurial skills as well.
- **Strategy 3:** Form a network of trained dalit youth for peer learning and to respond to diversified market needs (hub/call center). This strategy addresses the need for an online platform (smart phone driven) to share their positive and negative experiences and to learn from each other. This can also be used for information dissemination for the youth on business, employment, training, gender and ethnic issues.

Overall strategy 3: Introduce disruptive mechanisms to prove the opposite of the traditional belief and prejudice of the non-Dalits about the Dalits (e.g. cleanliness).

- **Strategy 1:** Support modern service delivery points (e.g. a modern coffee shop as a contrast to stylized prejudice about Dalits). This strategy directly addresses the prejudice of the general non-Dalits that the Dalits are 'unclean'. The objective is to prove the opposite and support establishment of service

points by dalit youth, which are cleaner than any others (coffee shop, restaurant, bakery, etc.).

- **Strategy 2:** Support the delivery point as a learning center for the poor (Dalits and non-Dalits). This strategy complements strategy 1 and avoids that the proposed service points become a 'Dalit-exclusive' points. Instead, these service points should be open to the youth as a whole, who are not yet in training, education and employment (inclusive approach).

Overall strategy 4: Provide debt and investment management advisory services to the dalit households.

- **Strategy 1:** Provide case-sensitive debt management (reduction, balancing, and interest payment) services to the households, who are in a vicious cycle of poverty, in collaboration with the NGOs. This strategy takes into account the debt situation of the Dalits, who are indebted with various creditors. A proper counseling and consultation with the NGOs may help that the limited resources that Dalits have are not lost and conflicts do not arise.

- **Strategy 2:** Provide counseling to the dalit youth who save money from their urban work. This strategy responds to the needs of migrated workers (e.g. girls and young women), who regularly send money to their relatives with the hope that a fraction of it is properly invested. In some cases, the money sent for investment, may not be in the control of the girls and young women anymore, making their return to the village difficult when they become older and cannot endure the hard work (e.g. garment workers).

Overall strategy 5: Facilitate the access of the dalit households to affordable conflict resolution systems.

- **Strategy 1:** Facilitate the formation of community-based dalit institutions based on rotational leadership with proper representation of the youth and women. This strategy takes into account limited institutional capacity of the Dalits to represent their interest with the Government local Government, administration and society. Such an institution, if properly constituted and effectively represented, will emerge as an advocacy organ, and not as the recipient of public resources, which do not reach the poor Dalits.
- **Strategy 2:** Seek communication with the DLAO twice a year to explore litigation and mediation support from the district courts. This strategy is designed as a demand-side approach on the part of dalit institutions (to be established), who will invite the DLAO for awareness about how to seek Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), mediation and litigation and how to make the UPZ and Union-level Legal Aid Committees more useful for the Dalits.
- **Strategy 3:** Support individual Dalits in seeking enforcement of conflict resolution with neighbors, money lenders, government and others with power through formal and informal means. This strategy will require that the NGOs or the DLAO reaches out the Dalits more effectively establishing contact points and offer ADR/mediation, litigation services, and facilitate enforcement services.

Overall strategy 6: Facilitate the establishment of a communication system with the Government, local Government, administration, civil society and media through their institutions.

- **Strategy 1:** Facilitate capacity development of community-based dalit institutions, particularly the youth groups to undertake advocacy with the Government, local government, local administration, civil society and media. This strategy

addresses the needs for advocacy skills (issue raising, communication skills for varied audience, dalit institutions.

- **Strategy 2:** Articulate the areas of inequalities related to the access to public resources (unauthorized payment) and public services (social safety net, like access to VGF-related food allowance during festival time, public-funded training) citing financial hardships related with discriminations.
- **Strategy 3:** Raise gender issues engaging the girls, referring real cases and seeking protection against harassment. This strategy responds to sexual harassment of dalit girls, which are underreported. A sub-group of the dalit institutions may be formed to monitor such cases periodically and appraise the local administration through dalit institutions seeking remedies.
- **Strategy 4:** Support a consortium of community-based dalit institutions, inclusive of youth groups, to portray the evidenced deprivations and discrimination against the Dalits, and seek a recognition of the Dalits as a group coupled with a national policy. This strategy addresses the need for the recognition by the Government that the Dalits are subject to multifaceted deprivations and discriminations, and a budget-sensitive policy for the Dalits in general can be an effective tool.

The strategies to address the relative discriminations and poverty of the Dalits, if implemented, would initially save the Dalits from persistent disparity in comparison with the non-Dalits. Therefore, for any measure that the government plans to undertake for the betterment of the poor, there is need to add the above strategies in order to equitably lift up dalit livelihoods.

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Terre des hommes

Let's protect children together

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC