

**A critical review of democracy and governance challenges in
Bangladesh with special reference to a human rights-based
approach for the development of the marginalized Indigenous
women and children**

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Declaration of Originality

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or a diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Date: April 30 2014

Candidate

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my departed parents. They could not have read this thesis because they did not know how to read and write in their life-time

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Abstract

This thesis contributes to understanding the complex process of the marginalization of the two most disadvantaged Indigenous communities, namely the *Santal* and *Oraon* of North-Bengal, Bangladesh. The thesis demonstrates that as a result of the fragile democracy and governance system in Bangladesh, the human rights of the most vulnerable and marginalised Indigenous people have increasingly become a cause for concern.

This research applies a Critical Systemic Approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research relevant to research questions to understand the life chances of the most marginalized people through narratives of their lived experiences. It has revealed that the non-recognition of the Indigenous people in the national constitution and their exclusion from participatory democracy, governance and from mainstream development intervention have undermined their life chances in the country, which in turn, has resulted in land dispossession, a low level of literacy, and systemic exclusion from access to health care and other social services.

This thesis finds that the future of the Indigenous people in this study cannot be assured until their equal citizenship rights are achieved. The thesis makes a case for their recognition in the national constitution in terms of human rights legislation to address a protective land tenure policy, provision of primary education in their mother languages, and equitable access to primary health care and social services, all of which are vital for the existence of the diverse Indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

Finally, this research argues that the state has a responsibility to emancipate the Indigenous people in the mainstream policy domain and sustain equal opportunities and human rights for everybody irrespective of religion and ethnicity under the existing laws in Bangladesh.

Thus, the voices and the life chances of the culturally diverse Indigenous communities would be protected in the emerging democratic state of Bangladesh.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AC (Land)	Assistant Commissioner (Land)
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AITPN	Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network
ALA	Australian Leadership Award
ANC	Ante Natal Care
AR	Action Research
ASA	Association for Social Advancement
ASK	Ain O Salish Kendra
Aus-AID	Australian Agency for International Development
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BC	Before Christ
BCS	Bangladesh Civil Service
BDS	Bachelor of Dental Surgery
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BPSC	Bangladesh Public Service Commission

BRAC	Building Resources Across Communities
BSB	Bangladesh Statistical Book
BSS	Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CARE	Co-operation of American Relief Everywhere
CC	Community Clinics
CCDB	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
CDA	Community Development Agency
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms Discrimination against Women
CHCP	Community Health Care Provider
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CRC	Conventions on the Rights of Children
CS	Cadastral Survey
CW	Cash for Work
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DGHS	Directorate General of Health Services

DMCs	Developing Member Countries
DoPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DoPE	Directorate of Primary Education
EBSATA	East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950
ECDO	Ethnic Community Development Organization
EFA	Education For All
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FD	Forest Department
FFW	Food for Work
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIPPM	Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management
FSP	Female Secondary School Stipend Project
FWV	Family Welfare Visitor
GBK	Gram Bikash Kendra
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GSRDC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IBS	Institute of Bangladesh Studies

ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Influential person
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
ISSU	International Student Services Unit
LDT	Land Development Tax
LGRD	Local Government and Rural Development
LOS	Land Occupancy Survey
LRB	Land Reforms Board
MBBS	Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of Surgery
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MLJPA	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
MoCHTA	Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoL	Ministry of Land
MPA	Masters of Policy and Administration
MPaME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MTBMLE	Mother Tongue Based Multi Lingual Education

NCTB	National Curriculum and Text Books
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NGOAB	NGO Affairs Bureau
NHP	National Health Policy
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh
NT	Northern Territory
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PCJSS	Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samity
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PESP	Primary Education Stipend Project
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy
PKSF	Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
RDRS	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service
RHDPD	Research Higher Degree Professional Development Program
RoR	Record of Rights

SB	Shanti Bahini
SF	Social Forestry
SF	Social Forestry
SGN	Strategic Gender Needs
SLC	Student Learning Centre
SSNP	Social Safety Net Programs
SUPRO	Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat
TIB	Transparency International Bangladesh
TNO	Thana Nirbahi Officer
TR	Test Relief
TVH	Traditional Village Healers
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UHC	Upazila Health Complex
UHFWC	Union Health and Family Welfare Centres
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund
UNO	Upazilla Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VD	Village Doctor (<i>palli chikitsok</i>)
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGF	Vulnerable Group Feeding
VSO	Voluntary Service Organization
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization
WVB	World Vision Bangladesh

Glossary

<i>Adivasi / Adivashi</i>	Original settlers of the land, from Sanskrit <i>Adi</i> =original and <i>vasi</i> =inhabitants. Used in line with the international notion of the Indigenous identity
<i>Aman</i>	Aman (wet season) rice harvesting period during November- December months of the year
Bangalee	The majority population of Bangladesh, nationality
Bangla/Bengali	The official language of Bangladesh
<i>Bar</i>	The number 2 in Santali
<i>Bar(o)</i>	The number 12 in Bangla
<i>Barga</i>	A pattern of share cropping during British period: two-third share of crops goes to Jotedars and one-third to cultivators
<i>Benami</i>	Land property purchased and recorded in name of person whois not the true owner
Bhramanical	Associated with the supremacy of the higher caste in the social hierarchy in India
<i>Bidroha</i>	Uprising, revolt
<i>Bigha(s)</i>	A measurement for land; somewhere 0.33 acres of land equals to one Bigha and somewhere 0.50 acres of land

	constitutes one Bigha
<i>Bongas/bongus</i>	Spirit or gods the Indigenous <i>Santals</i> believe control human destiny and diseases (good and bad bongas)
<i>Boro</i>	Dry seasonal rice crop harvesting period during the months of May – June of the year.
Chairman	Elected head of the grass roots local government unit (Union Parishad)
<i>Dalilnama</i>	Title or ownership of a property and land records
<i>Dighori</i>	The traditional social institutions of <i>Oraon</i> Communities in Bangladesh
<i>Dikku / Dikus</i>	Non- tribal people refers to oppressors in Santali
East India Company	British Company that became ruler of colonized India (1757-1858)
Enemy Property / Vested Property:	Term for the property of Hindus and ethnic minorities who left Pakistan for India under the Enemy Property act of 1965. After liberation, enemy property became vested property
<i>Gor Lagi</i>	Greetings in <i>Oraon</i> language
<i>Handi</i>	Locally brewed liquor
<i>Hor disom</i>	Santal country or land

<i>Hor hopon</i>	Sons of mankind /true man
<i>Johar</i>	Greetings in Santali
<i>Jol, Jammin / Jangle</i>	Water, land, and nature
<i>Jotedars</i>	An intermediary who used to distribute lands and collect taxes from the peasants on behalf of Zeminder under the Permanent settlement Act 1793.
<i>Khajna</i>	Property tax
<i>Khas</i>	Land owned by the government
Lord Macaulay	During 1800-1859, Lord Macaulay promoted European literature and science among the natives of India through the establishment of English language use in Indian educational institutions.
<i>Manjhi haram</i>	Head of the Santal village for both material and spiritual engagements
<i>Matbars</i>	Influential people in the village
<i>Monga</i>	A local Bengali term which describes Monga (seasonal hunger and poverty during the year of September to November) in North-Bengal, and routine crisis in the everyday life of struggle
Mutation	Mutation means substitution of the name of a person by the name of another in relation to property in the record

showing right or title to the property. Through mutation of land, a person is able to acquire the rights of the land.

Maoists/Naxalites
Movement

This movement was originated primarily from austere poverty, wide disparity and discontent among the common people who aim at overthrowing the Indian State through the agrarian armed revolution and capturing the political power. This movement appears to be a severe internal security threat/challenge of the governments at the centre and the states in India.

NacholBidroha (Uprising)

A Peasant movement in the 1950s in the area of Nachole, Rajshahi associated with Tebhaga Movement with an objective of "Sat Ari Jin o Fasaler Tebhaga" (for husking seven Ara and three shares for cultivation).

Parabs

Both in the *Santal* and *Oraon* languages *Parabs* are meant to social and cultural festivals in the Indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

Peace-Accord

An agreement between Indigenous groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Bangladesh Government held on 2 December 1997 to end violent insurgency and military repression.

Permanent Settlement

Also known as the Cornwallis Code (1793) that brought land under the control of the East India Company for revenue collection. The Permanent Settlement Act 1793

is a land mark of dispossession of peasantry of their hereditary claim to the soil and conferred upon the Zemindars.

Recorder	Officer in charge of land records
Sanskritization	Form of cultural assimilation found in India
<i>Santali</i>	The Language of the <i>Santals</i>
<i>Sarna</i>	The ancient religion of the <i>Santals</i> and <i>Oraons</i>
Sepoy Mutiny	Mutiny of the soldiers (sepoys) of the British East India Company that started the Indian Rebellion of 1857
Settlement	Major survey and establishment of land ownership
<i>Shalishi</i>	Localized unofficial judiciary comprised of the local elites
<i>Tauts</i>	Dishonest persons/intermediaries
<i>Tebhaga</i>	Sharecrop system where one third of proceeds go to the land owner and two-thirds to the cultivator to cover labour and material inputs.
<i>Tebhaga Andolon</i>	Tebhaga movement was known as Peasant movement for a tenancy system of three shares during 1949s. it was to ensure cultivating peasants should get two-third of yielded crops and one-third to the owner of the land.

<i>Tehsil</i>	Lowest union-level revenue unit comprising several mouza
<i>Tehsildar</i>	Local revenue collector
<i>Thakur Jiu</i>	The supreme personality of God for the <i>Santals</i>
<i>Thana</i>	Police Station
<i>Union Parishad</i>	Local government
<i>Upazila</i>	The Sub-district. Term used for a new administrative unit that contains the same territory of the Thana, but acts as a district and local administrative centre
<i>Zamindar / Zamindari</i>	Large land owners in Bengal with revenue collection and tax extraction rights instituted during the Mughal dynasty and modified during the British rule. Position modified under colonial Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, <i>Zamindari</i> is the entitlement for the land.

Chapter One: Background, Statement of Problem and Rationale

1. Introduction

This thesis addresses the complex process of the marginalization of the two most disadvantaged Indigenous communities, namely the *Santal* and *Oraon* of North-Bengal, Bangladesh. The thesis makes an attempt to what extent the life chances of women and children who are the most vulnerable and marginalized Indigenous people have increasingly become a cause for concern under a fragile democracy and governance system in Bangladesh. This research has also attempted to address to what extent, the key institutions such as, the state, market, community and household play a critical role in creating and reproducing structural inequalities in these two ethnic communities. To address the concerning issues, I will begin articulating my academic life journey and personal experiences in this thesis.

I have been in my host country, Australia, for the completion of a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in the School of Social and Policy Studies at Flinders University for four years. In my country of origin, I belong to the *Santal* ethnic community which is situated in North-Bengal, Bangladesh. Whilst growing up in the Indigenous community, I have seen and experienced the difficulties and challenges of being part of an ethnic minority in the broader society of Bangladesh. Personally, I was born and brought up in the remote *Santal* Indigenous community of the northern district of Rangpur. From my life experiences during my past studies and my employment experiences in Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) with Caritas and *Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan (SUPRO)* in Bangladesh, I have attempted to address the life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous women and children in the country, namely the *Santal* and the *Oraon* in North-Bengal, who are under the

democratic governance system of Bangladesh. During my course of study, I have been influenced by a wide range of research pertaining to marginalized groups in the area of democracy and governance for social and environmental justice, critical systemic approaches (Ulrich, 1983, P. 244; McIntyre-Mills, 2003, 2006), public policy, and social justice issues across multiple disciplines. I have been motivated to contribute to community development, social justice, and social policy with regards to Indigenous people in Bangladesh. My approach to addressing the marginalized groups in Bangladesh has been initiated by some of the research on marginalized Indigenous Australians detailed in the sources that cover critical systemic approaches (for example, McIntyre-Mills, 2003, 2006). The research on the life chances of Aboriginal Australians living in the Northern Territory inspired me to look at the life chances of the two afore-mentioned ethnic communities living in remote marginal areas of Bangladesh. The methodology used in this research consists of ‘thick description’(Geertz, 1973) using critical systemic praxis to address poverty, to improve governance, and to enhance participatory democracy through improved understanding of the ways in which values, definitions, concepts, and issues impact on the life chances of the Aboriginal people in Alice Springs, Northern Territory (NT), Australia. This encouraged me to examine the pertinent issues relating to the Indigenous people of Bangladesh. I think that the Indigenous people of Bangladesh and the Aboriginal people of Australia share a common strategic need to combat widespread deprivation, disparity in life expectancy and health care services, discrimination, and non-recognition in the constitution. In terms of Australia’s wealth and opportunities, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people are still relatively disadvantaged in the area of life expectancy, health, education and employment compared to non-Indigenous Australians (Steinberg, 2007, p. 11). Thus,

the recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian constitution as the nation's Indigenous people would be a significant step towards recognising the distinct and unique cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their prior ownership of the land (You Me Unity, 2011, p. 10). Personally, I assume that the ongoing reconciliation movement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia for constitutional recognition is quite similar to the struggle of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh to be recognised in their national constitution.

Australia is a wealthy and stable democratic country. The Aboriginal people in Australia were counted in the census and received citizenship status and voting rights following the referendum of 1967 (Australian Government, 2014, p. 1). Seen in this light, there are significant differences between the Indigenous people of Bangladesh and of Australia. To the best of my knowledge, the Australian Government has endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007 and reaffirms the entitlement of Australia's Indigenous peoples to all human rights and fundamental freedoms (The Australian Government, 2010, p. 59). I appreciate former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's historical "Sorry Speech" to Parliament on 13 February, 2008 where he apologised for the laws and policies of successive governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering, and loss on Indigenous Australians, and which emphasized righting the wrongs of the past and moving forward with confidence into the future (The Australian Government, 2010, p. 55). The apology was followed by a significant commitment of the Australian Government to invest in housing, health, early childhood development, education, and remote service delivery to advance the fundamental social and economic rights of Indigenous peoples. This notion of recognition and acceptance is a landmark for

equal participation, representation, and constitutional recognition of Aboriginal people in Australia.

Unlike Australia, the Indigenous people of Bangladesh are undergoing ongoing suffering due to non-recognition in the constitution, continuous oppression, and exclusion from participatory democracy and the governance process. The systemic discrimination, human rights violations, dispossession from lands, and multiple forms of structural marginalization are a grave concern for the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. Personally I, as part of the *Santal* Indigenous community to whom I proudly belong, have also experienced and encountered discrimination and exclusion by the broader society throughout my life. My working experiences in NGOs, my previous study of a Masters in Public Administration in 2005, and my current PhD studies at Flinders University represent the expression of my inner feelings and responsibilities beyond the solidarity I feel towards my Indigenous people's continual struggle for the right to land, education, healthcare services, and access to basic social services. I regard my current research as an effort towards the promotion of human rights, equity, and social justice through the lens of the human rights-based framework for the Indigenous people of Bangladesh.

1.2. Democracy and Governance issues in Bangladesh

This thesis addresses the following concern: to what extent can the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to development work in the democratic governance system of Bangladesh? Can it contribute to the full entitlement of citizenship rights, quality of life and life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities namely; the *Santal* and *Oraon* ethnic communities living in the remote marginal rural areas in the Dinajpur district of Northern Bangladesh? The citizenship rights of the most marginalised women and children in the researched locations are not addressed

as per national constitutional rights. The empirical research demonstrates to what extent their life chances have been undermined and depleted in a ‘democratic’ Bangladesh. Thus, being a small ethnic minority population, to what extent has the dominant policy of systemic discrimination and marginalization had an impact on their citizenship rights, human rights, and life chances? This is the focus of the research.

This study makes the case that a participatory democracy is vital because it ensures the public view through elections and elected representatives provide for the public good on their behalf (Keane, 2009, p. 3). But, since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced unstable democracy and weak governance under the leadership of different political parties due to ‘military cum politically pervasive corruption’¹, weak governance, and the absence of strong monitoring institutions in the country (Alam, 2005, p. 1). In the last 38 years, non-democratic governments have run the affairs of Bangladesh for almost 16.5 consecutive years². During this time, the institutions of governance have been eroded and corrupt administration has become a prominent part of the country. Despite making substantial progress over the years in some areas of economic and social development, such as growth in exports and in remittances, increases in enrolment in primary education, improvements in female education, reduction of infant and maternal mortality, Bangladesh’s prospects for development have been frustrated due to ‘immature democracy and bad governance’³ (Alam, 2005, p. 1). It has also been noticed over the last few decades how and to what extent ‘bad governance’ has resulted in a huge

¹ Bangladesh experienced two decades of military rule instead of a democratic government during 1975-91

² Between 1975-91 two Major Generals (General Ziaur Rahman during 1975-81 and Lt.Gen.H.M.Ershad during 1981-91) ruled the country

³ After 39 years of independence Bangladesh could not achieve stable democracy yet and three times in a row became the most corrupted country in the world during 2003-2005.

loss of 'economic growth, waste of natural resources and increased social insecurity'(Alam, 2005, p. 1). The poorest and the most marginalized communities of people have been subject to the most suffering. It is quite important to note that after independence, the Bangladeshi Government has taken several development policies to address the common needs and problems of the poor, marginalized ethnic communities, including women and children, to build better living standards and quality of life through social safety net programs for vulnerable groups of people. Due to massive 'corruption and mismanagement' (Azam and Imai, 2009, p. 6) of these programs, they did not bring any blessings to the vulnerable or marginalized Indigenous groups of people throughout the country because of the fragile democracy and governance systems in the country.

Furthermore, the minority and the Indigenous people were also affected in the aftermath of democratic elections. In a democratic country, elections are a step towards developing transparent, responsive and accountable governance (The New Age, 9 January, 2009). But recently on January 5, 2014 in Bangladesh the 10th Parliamentary Election was held in the name of 'constitutional compulsion' (The Jakarta Post, 9 January, 2014) that lays the foundation for a return to democratic government. The major opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its allies boycotted the poll, alleging that there would not be a free and fair election under the ruling party (The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 January, 2014). But, the credibility and legitimacy of this election is much debated because 52 percent of voters were denied the right to express their independent views (see The Jakarta Post, 9 January, 2014). The relevance of these events is that political violence impacted particularly on the minority and the marginalised Indigenous groups of people. Like all other general elections in the past such as in 2001, 2005, and 2009, the January 5,

2014 election was equally marked by widespread violence, destruction and communal attacks on the minority communities, like Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and the Indigenous people of Bangladesh (International Foundation for Electoral System, 2009). The minority communities are easy prey to grievous attack because those ‘who voted would be targeted by the opposition and those who did not vote would be victims of the wrath of the ruling party’ (The Jakarta Post, 9 January, 2014). The post-election violence and attacks on minority communities all across Bangladesh have threatened secular and participatory democracy. It has also had disastrous consequences for the entire nation (The Sydney Morning Herald, 9 January, 2014). In the aftermath of election violence in 2014, the human rights situation of the vulnerable minority community has been deteriorating and minority people have been living with fear and insecurity. This has been a significant threat against inclusive democracy in Bangladesh (Mahr, 2014).

Despite this, Bangladesh has made measurable progress in the area of social development. Even so, poverty, inequality and widening disparity are still persistent in the country due to weak governance, political instability and rampant corruption. To address widespread inequality, social and political exclusion, and unfair, coercive hierarchical political directives, scholars have increasingly suggested that participatory democracy and good governance could be key elements for equal opportunity, inclusion, poverty reduction, and pro-poor governance in order to promote and sustain development (Afsar, 2010, p. 188) in Bangladesh. In order to ensure the marginalized and disadvantaged people’s participation and inclusiveness in democracy and the governance system of Bangladesh, this thesis invokes the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) for establishing an equal, just and fair society. The HRBA may enable the vulnerable and marginalized people to realise

their rights to participate in the democratic decision-making process, and it would enhance an inclusive society, where equality, non-discrimination and human rights are ensured by the states and duty bearers (Afsar, 2010, p. 191). This thesis particularly focuses on to what extent the HRBA can make an impact on the life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities of North-Bengal under the existing democratic governance systems in Bangladesh.

1.3. Background of the *Santal* and *Oraon* Communities in Bangladesh

Historically, the plight and suffering of the Indigenous people in the northern part of Bangladesh has become a growing concern due to constitutional non-recognition, exclusion from participatory democracy and governance processes, systemic discrimination, human rights violations, dispossession from lands, and multiple forms of structural marginalization. There are more than 45 different Indigenous groups in Bangladesh (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 27). But it has appeared as a contested issue in the challenging political and economic landscapes of Bangladesh. Addressing the issues of Indigenous affairs such as recognition in the national constitution has been neglected in the current dismal social and political situation in Bangladesh. Standing up to speak for, protecting and defending rights of the marginalized Indigenous people is a challenging task as the government of Bangladesh repeatedly denies the existence of Indigenous people in both national and international forums. The monolithic, nationalistic approach and dominant policy of the state has contributed to multiple vulnerabilities and the limited life chances of Indigenous people, and their existence in this country is at stake (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 18). As a result, the Indigenous people of Bangladesh lack political representation and participation. This is a case of economic marginalization and poverty, and a lack of access to social services in every sphere of society. This thesis attempted to

address a pro-poor inclusive governance approach that creates an active relationship with state statutory organisations and different levels of government institutions through representation and participation to increase potential opportunities for the marginalized population. Inclusive governance may address the long disputed issues amongst the *Santal* and *Oraon*, such as the re-classification of *Khas*⁴ land; vested property⁵; and the occupation of Indigenous land by social forestry projects and powerful influential local persons, through forgery of documents in particular that caused their limited life chances in Bangladesh.

1.3.1. The *Santal* Community in Bangladesh

The *Santal* Tribe is one of the largest tribes in the Indian sub-continent, with a distinct language, culture, religious beliefs and practices, as well as with unique characteristic of solidarity and homogeneity. They prefer to identify themselves as *Hor Hopon* meaning "human being or person" with qualities of intellect, knowledge, and wisdom (Marandy, 2007). It is not known exactly when the *Santal* Indigenous community arrived in the present territory of Bangladesh. From history, it is thought that the Kherwars⁶ (Kherwar) entered to the land of Bengal immediately after the first conflict with invading Aryan tribes around 2500 B.C. (Marandy, 2006). It is presumed that the *Santals* are the descendants of the Austric-speaking people⁷ who were the earliest settlers in the Indian-sub continent (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 243). In

⁴ State land under administration of Ministry of Land (MOL) arising either from new formation or seizures in excess of 20 acres ceiling under land reform legislation; usually known as public land or Khas land (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 175).

⁵ The vested property was known in Pakistan as 'enemy property' after the 1965 Indo-Pak war. On 6 September 1965, Pakistan proclaimed a state of emergency under the Defence of Pakistan Ordinance at the outbreak of war with India. In exercise of the powers conferred by the Ordinance, the Central Government of Pakistan promulgated on the same day the Defence of Pakistan Rules. Under the rules, the Governor of East Pakistan passed an Order on 3 December 1965 regarding enemy property by which the property of the minorities was declared "Enemy Property". After liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, the enemy property became vested property (Trivedi, 2007, p. 1).

⁶ The earlier name of the Santal Community before they have been officially recognized as the *Santals* (Marandy, 2006, p. 3).

⁷ "Austro-Asiatic" and "Austro-Nesian" are the two sub-families of the Austric Language Family. The languages of Santal, Munda and Paharis are called Austric languages. (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 243).

Bengal, they have scattered throughout the country during the Muslim invasion of the 12th Century or at the beginning of the 13th Century (Marandy, 2006, p. 2). In the Indian-subcontinent they have been heavily concentrated in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam and Orissa before the historic *Santal* Revolution⁸ (1855) when around 30,000 *Santals* are believed to have been killed (Marandy, 2006, p. 2). After the revolution, many *Santals* have been dispersed to the east of the river Ganges and Bangladesh (Marandy, 2006, p. 2). Many scholars argue that *Santals* started to live in the North Bengal in search of job opportunities and livelihood during the British period while railway tracks were under construction in the second half of the 19th Century (Marandy, 2006, p. 2). The census of 1881 shows that there were *Santal* settlements in the districts of Pabna, Jessore, Khulna and even in the district of Chittagong, and the survey conducted in 1941 records that there were 829,025 *Santal* in Bangladesh. According to the census in 1991, the *Santal* population was over 200,000 (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 244). Presently, the existence of the *Santals* are found mostly in the districts of Rajshahi and Rangpur division of Bangladesh and many are also found in the districts of Sylhet division, who have migrated there from the various districts to work in the tea gardens as labourers (Marandy, 2006, p. 3).

In terms of literacy, an extremely low level of literacy prevails in the *Santal* Indigenous community. According to the 1991 Census, only 14.1% were found to be literate in both the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities. The female literacy rate among these two Indigenous communities is only 7.41%, while male literacy is 20.5% (UNESCO, 2005, p. 141). It has been widely stated that poverty and

⁸The Santal Revolution in 1855 was the armed insurrection of the *Santals* against the British colonial rulers, *zamindars*, moneylenders, police and colonial rulers against their tyranny, injustice upon the *Santals* (Bahadur, 2013, p. 1).

unaffordability of education materials, discrimination in the schools and social exclusion by the broader community, language barriers in relation to the medium of instruction, non-availability of text books in their respective mother languages and the lack of representation in the curriculum design, as well as the lack of recruitment of teachers from Indigenous communities are causes for lower levels of education among the *Santal* community in Bangladesh. Recently, the Government of Bangladesh has taken the initiative to provide pre-primary education for Indigenous children in their mother tongues, primarily in the six languages from 2014. But the *Santals* could not be incorporated in this scheme, as they could not reach a decision on which font, Bengali or Roman Script, should be used in pre-primary education in the *Santali* language (The Daily Star, 22 December, 2013).

The *Santal* community is a patriarchal society and they have unique traditional administrative institutions and customs⁹. In every *Santal* village, the presence of *Manjhi* (village head man) is observed as a ‘well-defined political and administrative unit’ (Murmu, 2004) that controls and rules the village and also determines its relationship with the outer world. The *Manjhi* council is a full village council consisting of seven officials: the *Manjhi* (a headman), the *Paranik* (a deputy headman), the *Jog Manjhi* (an overseer of village morals), his assistant the *Jog Paranik*, *Godet* (a messenger), the *Naeke* (a village priest) and his assistant the *Kudam Naeke*. Those officials have specific roles and responsibilities to perform their functions in accordance with *Santal* traditions, customs, religious beliefs and practices. In the broader scale, they have a *Pargana* or *Parganait* council. The

⁹ The *Santal* community is governed by a traditional *Panchayet System* where the village headman is respected by all in the society. The traditional customs and culture is followed years after years. The women are not included in the traditional social structures as it has been customarily practice over the centuries (Murmu, 2004). The women’s concern is addressed in the thesis in the chapter five sections 5.6.

Pargana or *Parganait* council is a formal council comprising the headmen of usually 10 to 20 villages. The *Pargana* is the head of the council and is nominated or selected by the *Manjhis* who preside over the council meeting to settle cases which arise out of disputes among the members of two or more villages or disputes among the headmen. According to the *Santal* tradition and customary practices, the authority and power of the *Pargana* council can be compared with the “High Court” in the Civil Law system (Murmu, 2004) of the existing judiciary. During the course of the time, those social institutions have not been functioning well. The absence of a traditional administrative system has also weakened their community strength and solidarity.

Even though, they have rich traditional social administrative systems, all of those officials of the traditional social institutions are male, which reflects the male dominated nature of *Santal* society. Women have hardly any opportunities to participate in the traditional social structures. Besides this, the traditional customary practices of the *Santals* do not recognize women’s property inheritance rights (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 246). The father’s property is generally transferred to sons, and daughters have no rights¹⁰ to inherit anything. A wife has no ownership rights over the property of her husband. The *Santals* are an agricultural-based community and mostly engaged in the farm-based activities (farming and farm labourers). The women’s contribution to the family is considerable. Men and women work together in both the home and the farmlands. Even though women work along with their male counterparts, they experience a wider inequality in wages. Women are paid far less

¹⁰ In the *Santal* community daughters do not inherit father’s property but inherit mother’s property. In case there is no son of a father, then a daughter will inherit the father’s property. If there is no child from a couple, the property goes to the sons of his brother (s) (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 246).

(Bangladeshi Taka 200) than male (Bangladeshi Taka 250) wage-labourers¹¹ per day (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 249).

In terms of poverty, the *Santal* Indigenous community experience multiple layered of poverty in terms of food consumption and meeting the need of basic necessities against the national scenario of Bangladesh¹². The literature indicates that 25.9 percent of the *Santal* population are the poorest of the poor¹³ which is also higher than the national ratio of rural Bangladesh (17.9 percent). Due to higher level of poverty, the quality of life among the *Santal* community is much lower than the national average. In a study conducted by Barkat et al (2009, p. 253) it was found that 30 percent of *Santal* households do not have beds or cots to sleep on, and 52 percent of households do not have any hygienic latrines. In terms of conscientization status on rights issues, it has also been found that the *Santal* community scores 59 points out of 100, which signifies that there is still a wide gap that needs to be filled (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 253).

Apart from socio-economic conditions, the human rights of the *Santals* and of other Indigenous people in Bangladesh are largely ignored and receive less attention in mainstream human rights protection policy discourses (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 253). Without having coherent and integrative policy implementation, the *Santals* are nullified in the face of current rapid changing situations and are gradually becoming more and more marginalized. They have found themselves increasingly struggling

¹¹ The *Santals* women are paid less than the men even though they perform similar type of work.

¹² According to the statistical pocket Book of Bangladesh 2007 people having less than or equal to 2,122 kilogram calorie per person in a day counted as absolute poor as mentioned in Barkat et al, 2009, p. 250

¹³ According to the statistical pocket Book of Bangladesh 2007 people having less than or equal to 1805 kilogram calorie per person in a day counted as hard-core poor as mentioned in Barkat et al, 2009, p. 250

for mere survival without any proper direction to move forward or improve their life situation (Marandy, 2007. P. 21).

History notes the presence of Christianity among the Indigenous people of North Bengal for the first time in 1902 (Murmu, 2004, p. 12). The *Santals* have started to embrace Christianity in Bangladesh since 1906. Presently, the Christian Santal population in North-Bengal is 27, 769 against a total population of approximately 225,000. Usually, questions arise as to why the *Santals* have abandoned their traditional ancestors' religion and converted to Christianity. Murmu (2004, p. 29) unveiled the reasons behind the conversion of *Santals* to Christianity as follows; “the most influential among these are educational and philanthropic activities, medical care, a feeling of security in the midst of oppression and massive injustice, social and economic welfare, political security, fraternal love and care, good will, respect, etc.”

Unfortunately, the history of the *Santals* can be described as a history of exploitation and oppression. Throughout their lives, the *Santals* have experienced continuous harassment, oppression and exploitation by different stakeholders.. Thus, one of the fundamental reasons behind the conversion of the *Santals* is the desire to gain freedom from oppression and harassment. Murmu (2004, p. 34) further argues that many push factors, like isolation from the mainstream society, marginalization by dominant groups, a deep sense of social insecurity, perennial sufferings caused by the exploitation and oppression by their neighbours, and humanitarian relief programs during great famine in 1942-43 motivated the *Santals* to embrace Christianity as a tentative shelter. Marandy (2005, p. 36) also notes that evangelization among the *Santals* is not just multiplying the Christian population, but also ‘to make the *Santal* society a progressive community without cutting them off

from their tribal roots’ and ‘to create a society in which human dignity is respected and where the voice of the poor and the marginalized is heard.’ Even though, this evangelical ideology of transforming the *Santals* into a progressive community is borne out from Catholic dogma, which requires a concerted effort to promote human dignity and protect the most vulnerable and marginalized Indigenous people from the clutches of injustice in Bangladesh.

1.3.2. The *Oraon* Community in Bangladesh

The *Oraon* is one of the Indigenous communities living in the Rangpur, Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions of the country. It has been known that the *Oraons* are the original inhabitants of the Chota Nagpur Plateau of the east-central states of India, like Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal (Ekka, 2008, p. 4). It is not clearly known when the *Oraon* Indigenous populations have migrated to Bangladesh. It is assumed that the *Oraons* have migrated to Bangladesh in the early period of British Indian government, looking for railway work and livelihood. Since then, the *Oraons* have settled in Bangladesh for various menial jobs in the tea gardens in the greater Sylhet districts and the other sixteen districts of North-West Bangladesh (Barkat et al. 2009, p.165). On the plains of the Northwest, the *Oraon* community is the second largest Indigenous group sparsely inhabiting different districts of the Rangpur and Rajshahi division of Bangladesh. There are about 90,000 *Oraon* living in the Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon and Shylhet areas in Bangladesh (Ekka, 2008, pp. 5-6).

Amongst the *Oraon* community, the *Sadri*¹⁴ and the *Kurukh*¹⁵ languages are widely spoken in Bangladesh. There are a total of 14 clans in the *Oraon* Indigenous

¹⁴ The *Sadri* language which is mix of Bengali and Hindi words is widely spoken among the *Oraon* community (Ekka, 2008, p. 5).

community. Religious and social festivals are closely associated with their life-style, their struggle for existence, and the social well-being of the whole community. The *Sarhul*¹⁶ and *Karma*¹⁷ are their two important social festivals (Ekka, 2008, p. 5) celebrated with religious fervor and enthusiasm. Through worshipping nature, trees, flowers and fruits, they seek spiritual assistance for the fertility of land, increased crop production, and the well-being of the entire community. The *Oraons* are the followers of the 'Sarna' religion which is very similar to Hinduism. The *Sarna* religion is based on nature worship, where benevolent nature, the sun and moon are their deities and gods. But, during the British colonial period, a large number of *Oraons* have been converted to Christianity mainly due to the hoarding malpractices of British traders and the local money lenders (Ekka, 2008, p. 13). At that time, traders and money lenders used to charge exorbitant rates of interest and exploited them on their poverty and illiteracy. The Christian missionaries found the *Oraon* community depressed and without food. Due to their missionary activities, many of them turned to Christianity and many have achieved a level of social and economic development due to the education brought to them by missionaries both in India and Bangladesh.

The *Oraon* have a rich traditional administrative system in the community to deal with any emergent social problems. They used to practice the age-old *panchayet* system in their local social administration. The authority of the *parha* (village *panchāyet*) and the *māhāto* (secular head) administer the *Oraon* village community

¹⁵ The ancient form of *Oraon* language which is still spoken in Rangpur and Dinajpur districts in Bangladesh (Ekka, 2008, p. 6).

¹⁶ *Sarhul* festival is associated with praying for the fertility of land and a good paddy harvest (Ekka, 2008, p. 5).

¹⁷ *Karam* festival is a worship of trees performed symbolically with the *kadam* (anthocephalus chinensis) tree or its branches (Ekka, 2008, p. 5).

(Rahaman, 2008, p. 1). During the course of time, the *Oraons* do not maintain strong inter-village administrative bodies as they maintained them in the early Twentieth Century and earlier. Now, people usually go to the courts, local administrative bodies, and police stations instead of their inter-village authority or Union *Parishad* (council) for any kind of social mediation and resolution. Even though, the *Oraon* has rich traditional social administrative systems, all of the officials of the traditional social institutions are males. The patriarchal society of the *Oraon* means that women have hardly any opportunities in participating in the traditional social structures. Even though women work along with male counterparts, they experience inequality in wages, as *Oraon* women are paid less (Taka 80) than male (Taka 110) wage-labourers (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 170). Like the Santal community, the traditional customary practices of the *Oraon* do not recognize women's property inheritance rights (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 167). The father's property is generally transferred to sons, and daughters have no inheritance rights,¹⁸ as is the case with the *Santals*.

More than in any other Indigenous communities of Bangladesh, an extremely low rate and level of education prevail in the *Oraon* community. According to the 1991 census, only 14.1 percent of the population is literate among the *Oraon*. The women's literacy rate is only 7.41 percent, compared to the 20.5 percent male literacy rate in the *Oraon* community (Ekka, 2008, p. 6). Poverty, a lack of awareness, the absence of schools within reasonable distances, a lack of provision of education in mother tongues, a lack of scholarships and education materials, and a lack of teachers from the *Oraon* community have contributed to the low level of literacy amongst the *Oraons* (Barkat et al. 2009, p.169). There has been a recent

¹⁸ Like the Santals, among the *Oraon* community daughters do not inherit father's property but inherit mother's property. In case there is no son of a father, then a daughter will inherit the father's property. If there is no child from a couple, the property goes to the sons of his brother (s) (Barkat et al, 2009, p. 170).

praiseworthy intervention for promoting children's education in the *Oraon* community. In October 2002, UNESCO initiated the development of mother tongue - based primary education among the *Oraon* community through NGOs like BRAC and Oxfam to combat high dropout rates and non-completion of primary education (Ekka, 2008, p. 7). Recently, the government of Bangladesh has taken the initiative to provide pre-primary education for *Oraon* children in the *Sadri* language from 2014 (The Daily Star, 22 December, 2013).

The *Oraon* community are engaged in agriculture-related occupations (farming and farm labourers). Rahaman (2008, p. 1) noted that the *Oraons'* expectation of an ideal life is to possess a certain area of land and crops, cattle and progeny of healthy children, and a care free jollity in life which is the most important and essential part of their social life. But in the current time, their life and livelihood and human rights situation is under threat due to land dispossession. They have undergone a critical time during the British and Pakistani colonial periods, which has largely led to their land dispossession, as people took advantage of their simplicity and illiteracy. Even after independence, they were still victims of large scale land dispossession due to forcible land grabbing by the local influential Bengali people using forged documents, government acquisition in the name of social forestry projects, and government's re-classification of Khas land and vested property (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 179). A low level of literacy, lack of voice in the local government, and inter-generational cycle of poverty have resulted into a vulnerable and marginalized position in the country.

1.3.3. Representation in the national context

The *Santals* and *Oraons* have distinctive cultures, languages, traditional customs, religions and life styles compared to the majority Bengali population of Bangladesh.

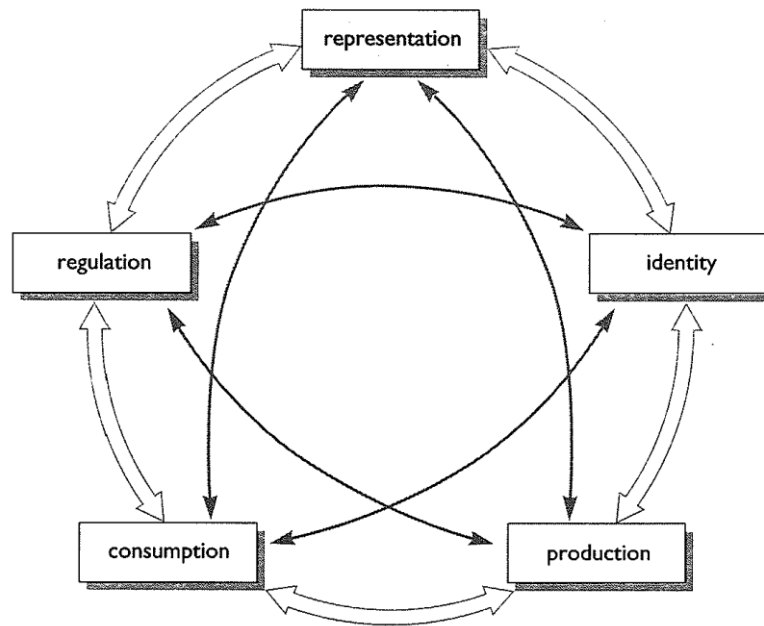
They have an unsegregated and inborn deep relationship with forests, rivers, hills and valleys, land, and nature in their daily lives. In the course of time, they have persistently been confronting existential problems that are due to non-recognition in the constitution, lack of representation in the democratic and governance systems, forcible land grabbing by influential local powers, and suppression, injustice, and subjugation by state institutions. The rich and diverse culture, languages, traditional heritage, social values and spirituality, and the way of life of the two researched ethnic communities construct their identity and belongingness through a ‘systems of representation’ (Hall, 1997, p. 4). In terms of culturally meaningful representation of people, Stuart Hall (1997, p. 3) has stressed that:

“We give meaning by how we represent them-the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them”.

Through this approach, Hall has pointed out that by culturally representing people we produce, and consume meanings in our everyday rituals and practices of daily life. Meanings also regulate our social life through rules, norms, and conventions (Hall, 1997, p. 4). Thus, meaning is related to construction of identity and marking of difference, in production and consumption, as well as in the regulation of social conduct.

The two researched Indigenous populations share similar cultural characteristics and practices which make them think and feel part of the ethnic communities in Bangladesh. The languages and culture construct representation, national identity, and national belongingness (Hall, 1997, p. 5) of particular groups of people.

Figure 1: Systems of Representation



Source: Hall, 1997, p. 1.

The representation of the *Santal* and *Oraon* ethnic communities in the national politics, democracy and governance system in Bangladesh is nominal in comparison with the ethnic communities of the Chittagong Hill tracts (CHT) and other parts of the country. A Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA) in the Bangladeshi government was established on 15 July 1998 after a peace accord (Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord) was signed between the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs and the *Parbatya Chattagram Jana-Samhati Samiti* on the 2nd December 1997 (GoB, 2014). This ministry is carrying out development activities for the advancement of the tribal people and the Hill Tract areas comprising the Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban districts of Bangladesh. Bir Bahadur U Shei Ching, who belongs to ethnic community of Chittagong Hill tracts, is the current state minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA). Advocate

Promod Mankin is the present State Minister for the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Government of Bangladesh. He belongs to the *Garo* ethnic community of Myemensingh (GoB, 2014). In addition, in terms of employment more people are involved in the public sectors who are from other ethnic communities than from the *Santal* and *Oraon* communities.

The relevance of marking this difference is that there are Members of Parliament (MPs), Ministers, and elected representatives in local government such as Upazilla Parishad and Union Parishad (UP) who are from other ethnic communities but there is insufficient participation from the two researched communities in the national politics, democracy and governance systems in Bangladesh. It is known that Sagram Majhi who comes from *Santal* community was elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in 1954 from the United Front of East Bengal during the Pakistani colonial period in the Rajshahi district (Soren, 2010, p. 2). Since then, not a single person was able to represent the two researched Indigenous communities at the national level.

1.4. Statement of the problem

The following table is produced to have a sense of difference and disparity that exists in terms of life expectancy, health care services, poverty, land owing status, education and literacy rate, and access to water and sanitation facilities amongst the researched two Indigenous people in Bangladesh. The wide disparity between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people exists not only in Bangladesh but also globally. I can relate an example from Australia. The life expectancy at birth of non-Indigenous Australians is 79.7 years for males and 84.2 years for females, while for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders it is 69.1 years for men and 73.7 years for women (ABS, 2013).

Table 1: A Benchmark of comparison to national average against the Indigenous people

Indicator	National Benchmark	Indigenous people in Bangladesh
Life Expectancy	<p>The average life expectancy in Bangladesh is 67.9 for men and 70.3 for women.</p> <p>The infant mortality rate is 35 per thousand live births and the child death rate is 2.4 per 1000 mid-year population of same age group in 2011.</p> <p>The maternal mortality ratio has decreased to 2.09 per 1000 live births (BBS, 2011, p. 3).</p>	<p>There is a shortage of statistical literature amongst the <i>Santal</i> and <i>Oraon</i> Indigenous people in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality, and use of public health care facilities.</p> <p>A few studies indicate that Indigenous women get less health care (Hossen and Westhues, 2010, p. 1196), limited antenatal and post natal care (Islam and Odland, 2011, p. 4), lack of maternal care (Chakraborty et al. 2003, p. 333) and less awareness on contraceptive methods (Kamal, 2009, p. 6).</p>
Poverty and Land holding status	<p>About 31.5 percent of population in Bangladesh is still living below poverty line and in the rural areas; the incidence of poverty is 35.2 percent (BBS, 2010). The Agriculture Census 2008 revealed that 15.62 per cent populations in Bangladesh are absolutely landless (BBS, 2010).</p>	<p>About 68 percent of <i>Santals</i> are absolute poor (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 251) in Bangladesh. Around 67 percent of <i>Oraon</i> population are absolute poor ((Barkat et al. 2009, p. 171). Around 71 percent <i>Santal</i> households (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 254) and 58 percent <i>Oraon</i> households (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 175) possess land within the range between 0 to 49 decimals- which are functionally landless.</p>
Education and Literacy	<p>The national literacy rate of population aged 7 years and over is slightly higher, 57.53% are literate at the national level, and the corresponding rates for males and females are 60.15% and 54.84% respectively (BBS, 2011, p. 10).</p> <p>The national enrolment rate of children aged 6 to 10 years is 99.47 percent (The Prothom Alo, 22 September, 2011).</p> <p>The national dropout rate in primary schools is 21 percent (The Daily Star, 23 September, 2011).</p>	<p>According to the 1991 Census, only 14.1% were found to be literate among the <i>Santal</i> and <i>Oraon</i> Indigenous communities. The female literacy rate among these two Indigenous communities is only 7.41% in compared to 20.5% male literacy (UNESCO, 2005, p. 141).</p> <p>It is estimated that only 44.5 percent of Indigenous children aged 6-10 years in Bangladesh are enrolled in primary schools (Durnnian, 2007, p. 14).</p> <p>The majority of these dropout children (21 percent of national average) are either living in isolated rural communities, homeless, or from the marginalized Indigenous communities (Ardt et al. 2005, p. 4).</p>
Water and Sanitation	<p>The national coverage of access to safe drinking water reached 97 per cent in the early 1990s, but the discovery of arsenic contamination in tube wells reduced this figure to about 74 per cent (Unicef, 2008, p. 3).</p> <p>The national sanitation coverage, according to basic sanitation (2009)</p>	<p>The 39 percent <i>Santal</i> households (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 251) and 44 percent <i>Oraon</i> households (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 172) use hand tube well which is untested for presence of arsenic in rural areas.</p> <p>There exists a poor sanitation facility particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts</p>

	is 80.4 percent and in rural areas is 78.9 percent (Saroar and Rahman, 2013, p. 5).	(CHT) and other remote areas of many of Bangladesh's ethnic minorities (UNESCO, 2008, p. 2).
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Source: Compiled by Besra from the following sources: BBS, 2010, BBS, 2011, p. 3, The Prothom Alo, 22 September, 2011, The Daily Star, 23 September, 2011, Unicef, 2008, p. 3, Saroar and Rahman, 2013, p. 5, Hossen and Westhues, 2010, p. 1196, Islam and Odland, 2011, p. 4, Barkat et al. 2009, p. 251, UNESCO, 2005, p. 141, Durnnian, 2007, p. 14, Ardt et al. 2005, p. 4, UNESCO, 2008, p. 2.

Globally, about 370 million people belong to the world's Indigenous groups, and they constitute 15 percent of the world's poor. Furthermore, Indigenous peoples suffer higher rates of poverty, landlessness, malnutrition and internal displacement than other members of society, and they have lower levels of literacy and less access to health services (UNPO, 2014, p. 1). The rights to land and Indigenous people are pronounced simultaneously as Indigenous people have become vulnerable victims of land dispossession, displacement and evacuation from their ancestral and traditional lands not only in Bangladesh but also around the globe. Even in developed democratic nations such as the United States, Canada and Australia, the aboriginal and first nations are still struggling over the land rights against its colonisers (McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 301). As a part of the global ethnic community, the Indigenous people in Bangladesh are disadvantaged, vulnerable, and marginalized in terms of life chances when compared with the majority population of the country.

The *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities living in the plains of North-Bengal in Bangladesh are politically and marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 21). Under the present democratic governance system, they are underrepresented and excluded from the mainstream development interventions. The process of marginalization started from the dispossession of their ancestral lands that heavily impacted on their livelihood and life chances (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 12). The dispossession of Indigenous people from their lands originated

from the British colonial period and it accelerated during the Pakistani colonial period. Even after independence in 1971, the dispossession of Indigenous people from their lands has been continuing through fraudulent land tenure policies in Bangladesh (Bleie, 2005, p.219). The systemic discrimination and deprivation in every step of life has made their existence increasingly tenuous in the country. It is easy to say that the life of the Indigenous people is associated with marginalization, minoritization and discrimination in the areas of accessing rights to land, education, health care and other basic social services (Kamal et al. 2001, p. 17). The ownership to land is a major determinant for livelihood and quality of life in the rural areas of Bangladesh (Rahman and Manpraset, 2006, p. 54). But, due to manipulation of existing land administration system, the land laws, policy, acts and regulations are increasingly reproducing life-long impacts on the livelihoods and life chances of the two researched ethnic communities of Bangladesh. In the area of education, there exists a systemic discrimination and exclusion of Indigenous children from primary education (Rahman, 2010, p. 3). The lack of provision of primary education in mother tongues has contributed to high dropout rates and non-completion of primary education amongst the two researched ethnic communities in Bangladesh. In the health care, there also prevails structural discrimination against underprivileged Indigenous women in accessing antenatal and postnatal care, delivery at births, and other life-threatening morbidities that signify their poor health, low life expectancy and poorer quality of life (Rahman, 2006, p. 6). In the same way, the Indigenous people in the researched locations are systemically excluded from any benefits from the social safety net programs of the country due to their different ethnic identity and lack of representation in the local government power structures (Rahman, 2006, p. 10). Thus, it is anticipated that being a part of a minority community who are living

with the dominant majority people, they live with fear, insecurity and unforeseen uncertainties as their human rights are denied and fair justice is obstructed at all spheres of the society (Rahman, 2002, p. 11).

Under this critical situation, the abuses of power and politics have de-stressed the constitutional provision of special protection and equity for the underprivileged ethnic groups in Bangladesh (Samad, 1998, p. 2).

1.4.1. Identity crisis and marginalization in the national context

The non-recognition of the Indigenous people in the national constitution has transformed them in to marginalized second class citizens due to the unclear definition and acknowledgement of Indigenous people in Bangladesh (Das, 2011, p. 37). As a result, the Indigenous people of Bangladesh are living with limited citizenship rights and little entitlement in terms of social and political rights. This undermines their life chances and quality of life. Very often, the Indigenous people are victims of ‘racial intolerance and prejudice’ (Amin, 2013, p. 1) under a culturally-sanctioned group-privilege system where Indigenous people are perceived as second class citizens of the country. The constitution of Bangladesh does not refer to the existence of the cultural and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh as the so-called ‘democracy’ is a prerogative of the dominant majority only (Samad, 1998, p. 3). After an amendment (8th, 1985) to the constitution and declaring Islam as the state religion, the foundation pillar of secularism has been shattered, as there is no room for accommodating the minorities within this new state discourse (Mohsin, 2011, p. 160). Consequently, the 45 distinctive ethnic communities in Bangladesh who prefer to be identified as 'Indigenous' or '*Adivasi*' in Bengali have been considered under many different pejorative terms such as, ‘Tribal’, ‘*Khudra Jatiswatta*’ (small ethnic

communities), '*Upazati*' (Sub-nation), '*Pahari*' (Hilly people), and '*Nritattik Jatigosthi*' (Anthropological races) (The Financial Express, 29 April, 2013) in different national policy domains that have created and reproduced a uniform identity crisis, social alienation, and underprivileged conditions amongst the Indigenous communities in Bangladesh. The grass roots demand (The Daily Star, August 10, 2011) of constitutional recognition since independence in 1971 of more than 20 million Indigenous people, comprising 45 different ethnic communities raised by Indigenous community-based advocacy organizations on the grounds of injustice, oppression and discrimination as experienced by Indigenous people across the country is being concurrently denied by the Bangladesh Government. The mono-linguistic dominant policy (Rahman, 2010, p. 23) of the state has largely ignored the existence and well-being of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh at national and international forums. In a briefing to foreign diplomats and United Nations (UN) agencies in Dhaka on July 26, 2011, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh said that there is no definition of Indigenous people and they should be termed as 'ethnic minorities' or as 'Tribal' people because they have been residing in this country as "asylum seekers and economic migrants" (The Daily Star, July 27, 2011). A higher level government official has also stated at the United Nations on May 27, 2011, in ignoring the existence of Indigenous people, that "Bangladesh does not have any Indigenous populations" (The Daily Star, May, 28, 2011). In contrast to the above statements, '*the Small Ethnic-Groups Cultural Institutions Act, 2010*' clearly identifies the ethnic minorities as Indigenous people in Bangladesh (Roy et al. 2010, p. 552).

The constitution of Bangladesh upholds that the State shall maintain ‘respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United Nations Charter¹⁹’ (Article 25, 1). Non-compliance of international laws and conventions regarding the rights of Indigenous people is ‘against the principles of the constitution²⁰’ of the country. The main focus of the United Nations’ International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples in 2013 is; "Indigenous peoples building alliances: Honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements²¹." Despite the UN’s promotion of Indigenous people’s rights, the Government of Bangladesh tends to discard the provision of Indigenous people epitomized in UN treaties and conventions. The International Labour Organization (ILO)’s *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1957 (No. 107)* which has been ratified by the Bangladesh Government on 22 June in 1972 clearly states that:

“Peoples are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions” (UN, 2008, p. 7).

The World Bank (WB) has also espoused a functional approach in defining Indigenous people based on their vulnerability and disadvantaged status;

“Indigenous peoples are as groups with a social and cultural identity distinct from the dominant society that makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process” (Cited in Kingsbury, 1998, p. 420).

¹⁹ The Constitution of Bangladesh, 4 November, 1972, Article 25, (1).

²⁰ The Chairman of National Human Rights Commission stated in a public meeting in Dhaka, on 31 July 20013, Available at <http://www.prothom-alo.com/national/article>, Accessed on 1 August 2013.

²¹ The theme aims to highlight the importance of honouring arrangements between States, their citizens and indigenous peoples that were designed to recognize indigenous peoples' rights to their lands and establish a framework for living in proximity and entering into economic relationships, Available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/indigenousday>, Accessed 1 August 2013.

Similarly, the UN Working Paper on the Concept of “Indigenous People” (Erica-Irene, 1996) also argues that Indigenous people experience subjugation, marginalization and discrimination. In addition the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, 2007 has implicitly used the terms of Indigenous people as both defining elements of historical continuity or pre-colonial context, and their distinct social and cultural identity from the dominant society (Faruque, 2011). The UN speciously refers to the ‘description of Indigenous peoples found in the study by Special Rapporteur José Martínez Cobo (UN, 2007, p. 11) which is mostly cited because it provides a summary of the Indigenous people;

“Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems”(UN, 2008, p. 7).

The above-mentioned characteristics and relevant features of Indigenous people articulate that they are in a marginalized position in terms of ‘poor political representation and participation, lack of access to social services, and exclusion from decision-making processes on matters badly affecting them directly or indirectly’ (UN, 2008, pp. 8-9). The dearth of recognition in the constitution has plunged Indigenous people into multiple vulnerabilities such as, low levels of literacy and numeracy, inaccessibility to health and social services that result in a poor quality of life. This leads to further erosion in their life chances.

Constitutional recognition can pave the way for emancipation of the diverse Indigenous populations in the mainstream society of the country with citizenship

rights and entitlement of social and political rights in a Bengali dominant society.

Faruque (2011) argued that:

“Constitutional recognition is considered as a valuable tool of promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous people and is an essential element of democratic and plural society, not an exception”.

Even in the political landscape, the rights and recognition of the Indigenous people is like “window dressing”. The Election Manifesto of the Bangladesh Awami League in 2008 (Knanak Barman, 2008, p. 18), the current ruling political party, stated that:

“All laws and other arrangements discriminatory to minorities, Indigenous people and ethnic groups will be repealed. Special privileges will be made available in educational institutions for religious minorities and Indigenous people”.

The bottom line is that there is a gap between promise and implementation, and policy and practices with reference to constitutional provision in addressing the well-being and quality of life by virtue of being citizens in a so called democratic country in Bangladesh. The constitution of Bangladesh serves the rights of people affirming that:

“All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law and the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth”²².

The constitution of Bangladesh provides the fundamental principles of state policy with a view to securing rights for its citizens in terms of food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, and social security (CPD, 2000). In my view, despite the constitutional provision, the rights of the most disadvantaged Indigenous people including women and children have not been addressed properly. The issue is that the rhetoric of citizenship rights does not lead to providing a decent standard of

²² The Constitution of Bangladesh: Article 27, 28 (1).

living for those who are marginalised by a corrupt governance process. Under the fragile democratic and governance system, the social contract does not protect adequately indigenous women and children. Hence, I have attempted to look at current life chances of the two marginalized Indigenous communities in Northern part of Bangladesh through the lenses of human rights legislation, because citizenship rights are not adequately extended to the ethnic minority groups.

1.4.2. Lower social status resulting from land dispossession

Over the decades, the Indigenous people of North Bengal have been characterized as the poorest of the poor, underprivileged, disadvantaged, backward and underdeveloped in terms of socio-economic status, level of education, and participation in the democracy and governance power-structure in Bangladesh (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 34, Bleie, 2005, p. 284 and Kamal et al. 2003, p. 12) . Recently, the forcible land grabbing, displacement and eviction of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands have become a grave concern for their living, surviving and existence (Das, 2011, p. 3). The two most marginalized Indigenous people living in the marginal and remote rural areas of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh have been found vulnerably poor and landless with lower socio-economic status resulting from land dispossession due to forcible land grabbing by the local powerful and influential people who have political linkages, and by occupation by the Forest Department (FD) of the Bangladesh Government (Barkat et al. 2009, pp. 30-31 and Kamal et al. 2003, pp. 18-19). The gradual land dispossession has had a direct negative effect on socio-economic indicators such as, household food security, housing, water and sanitation facilities, employment, and access to education, health and social services under the existing governance system in Bangladesh. Socio-economic status is also embedded with the ownership of land that has been perceived as a major determinant

of ‘economic solvency, social power and hierarchy’ (Rahman and Manprasert, 2006, p. 54) of an individual in the rural society of Bangladesh. It is estimated that around 88.4 percent (FAO, 2012, p. 5) of all households living in rural areas of Bangladesh, primarily depend on land and agricultural-based livelihoods. A large proportion of people are found landless in rural areas. The Land Occupancy Survey (LOS) of 1977 and 1978 and the national survey on Land Occupancy carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with USAID identified (Chowdhury, 2008, p. 233) that:

“Ten percent of rural households own over half the country’s cultivatable land; another fifty percent of the cultivable land is shared between sixty percent of the rural households; and a third of the rural households own no land at all”.

The landlessness is both ‘the cause and the manifestation of poverty, insecurity, indebtedness and powerlessness’ (Rahman and Manprasert, 2006, p. 54) of most households in rural society in Bangladesh, including the Indigenous population. Landlessness leads to marginalization and vulnerability in the rural society of Bangladesh. A study conducted by Barkat et al. (2009, p. 256) indicates that the major reason for ‘marginalization and pauperization’ of the Indigenous people is their land dispossession. The instances of rapid and gradual land dispossession by land grabbing and forcible occupation are a widespread and growing concern due to corrupt and unfavourable land administration towards the Indigenous people of North-Bengal.

1.4.3. Indigenous children facing challenges in primary education

Bangladesh is predominantly a rural country and poverty in rural areas is highly concentrated. Combating rural poverty through enabling children to attend schools is a challenging issue for the Bangladesh Government and especially among the

marginalized and disadvantaged tribal minorities living in the northern part of the country. Primary education for Indigenous children is crucially important as it is considered to be the most essential part of the education of a nation like ‘a foundation of a building’ and a ‘pre-condition for human resources, economic and social development’ (Hossain, 2011, p. 1). Only 44.5 percent of Indigenous children aged 6-10 years in Bangladesh are enrolled in primary schools (Durnnian, 2007, p. 14). The reason behind the low enrolment is that an extremely low level of literacy prevails in the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities. A large percentage of Indigenous children never enrol due to a lack of availability of schools within appropriate walking distance (2 km). The national enrolment rate of children aged 6 to 10 years is 99.47 percent (The Prothom Alo, 22 September, 2011) and the dropout rate in primary schools is 21 percent (The Daily Star, 23 September, 2011). The majority of these dropout children are either living in isolated rural communities, are homeless, or are from marginalized Indigenous communities (Ardt et al. 2005, p. 6). The Constitution of Bangladesh (1972) provisioned that Primary Education will be the responsibility of the State. Article 17 of the Constitution states that:

“The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of (a) establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law²³”.

In line with universalizing primary education, the *Compulsory Primary Education Act* was enacted in 1990 in order to implement the constitutional provision for free, universal and compulsory education, surprisingly after more than two decades of independence, which made the five-year primary education program free (Ardt et al. 2005, p. 4) in all government schools in Bangladesh. Furthermore, in considering

²³ The National Constitution of Bangladesh 1972, Article 17.

poverty and economic hardships of the rural masses, the government has introduced demand side intervention policies such as a food for education program in 1993 which was replaced by a cash-supported conditional stipend program for regular attendance in primary education (Rabbi, 2005) to compensate the opportunity cost of poor parents for sending their children to school (Shekh, 2005, p. 3). Legally primary education is free in Bangladesh, but not in practice, as students from poor families, mostly indigenous children, do not get stipends due to nepotism and corruption (Shekh, 2005, p. 3). Moreover, poor families from the marginalized Indigenous communities are unable to meet the basic requirements, such as the cost of uniforms or private tutoring, (BRAC, 2004, p. 24) additional fees and educational materials (Chowdury et al. 2000, p. 8) such as notebooks, pen and pencils etc. A study by CAMPE found that private expenditure per student in government primary schools to average BDT 2,554 per student per year and sending a child to school represents a real and often significant loss of income or labour to the family (GoB, 2011, p. 36). In addition, all the government schools have fixed hours of operation all the year round irrespective of planting and harvesting periods in rural areas. The children are withdrawn from schools to be engaged in helping parents in those periods, which results in absence from school. On the other hand, BRAC run schools are flexible and accommodating as it considers children's engagement in planting and harvesting crops in certain parts of the year (Ardt et al. 2005, p. 15). The lack of attention towards addressing the needs and problems of Indigenous children has become a grave concern in the country.

1.5. Rationale for the Research

The area of concern is to address the human rights of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh, in particular the *Santal* and *Oraon*. The issue is that the rhetoric of

citizenship rights does not lead to providing a decent standard of living for those who are marginalized by an unequal system of government. The social contract does not protect the women and children of Indigenous communities of North-Bengal. I have attempted to look at their current life chances through the lenses of human rights legislation because the Indigenous people in Bangladesh experience multiple forms of discrimination, violence and marginalization. In Bangladesh, there has not been conducted adequate research and study on the marginalization or social exclusion in relation to the Indigenous people who are ‘variably excluded from social, political, and economic arenas’ as they experience ‘lack of recognition, fear and insecurity, loss of cultural identity, and social oppression’ (GSRDC, 2008, p. 1). According to GSRDC (2008, p. 2), the common manifestations of the marginalization of Indigenous people are related to ‘unequal access to employment opportunities and education, unequal access to formal services such as health and water and sanitation; and landlessness’. Those adverse situations are reproduced due to the ‘impact of colonization’, existing ‘discriminatory beliefs and stigma,’ ‘dominant cultural values,’ ‘political exclusion and unequal access to resources’ and ‘prejudice by the Bengali majority’ (Shafie and Kilby, 2003, p. 7). Moreover, the Indigenous people are marginalized as they are ‘powerless, poor, vulnerable’ and often ‘displaced from their land’ and also their ‘resources are exploited by neighbouring majority population’ (Rural Poverty Portal, 2010, p. 1).

To address the wider inequality, stringent discrimination, exploitation and detrimental effect of marginalization, the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to development is one of the appropriate methods to address the marginalized, disadvantaged, and excluded groups on the basis of ‘equality, non-discrimination,

participation and inclusion'²⁴ of all individuals where human rights and fundamental freedoms can be attained. The Bangladesh Government is expected to 'respect fundamental human rights, including those of Indigenous peoples' as it has ratified 'major international human rights treaties and conventions' (Roy et al. 2007, pp. 13-14) along with the constitution of Bangladesh that guarantees 'equal rights and opportunities' for all (Roy et al, 2007, pp. 13-14). The rights-based approach to development has a linkage with the UN declaration in 1986 (UN, 1986) where it has been proclaimed a right to development. I have found that the human rights approach is coherent, consistent, logical, and systematic as its framework is embedded with more transparency and order than any other framework, because it upholds universality and interdependence (Archer, 2006, p. 22). Recently, rights oriented activities are increasingly linked to NGO objectives addressing the needs of those facing exploitation, exclusion and dispossession to support participation and people centred development, even though there is increasing criticism against NGOs on their legitimacy, integrity and credibility (Archer, 2006, p.5). In Bangladesh, the struggle against exploitation and the fight for land and cultural rights of the Indigenous people of Chittagang Hill Tracts (CHT) locally known as *Jummas*²⁵, and also the struggle and movement of *Garos*²⁶ for management rights over their ancestral forests and against the government's plan to establish eco-park are known internationally (Homerick, 2010, p. 9) . But the struggle of Indigenous people in north-west Bangladesh to retain rights over their ancestral lands and natural

²⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission, 'Partnerships between Indigenous Peoples, governments and civil society', United Nations Workshop on Engaging the Marginalized, 2005, International Conference on Engaging Communities, Brisbane, Australia, 15 August 2005, Available at http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/conference/engaging_communities/index.html, Accessed on 26 August 2010

²⁵ The indigenous people of Chittagang Hill Tracts (CHT) known as *Jummas* for cultivating crops in the hills

²⁶ The Indigenous people of greater Myemensingh areas are locally known as *Mandi* which means human beings (Homerick, 2010, p. 2).

resources or against enforced eviction from their agricultural lands and homesteads have never hit the international headlines, nor has it been reported on by leading human rights organizations and networks (Bleie, 2005, p. 59). This study attempts to scale up the grass roots voice of the two marginalized Indigenous people in North-Bengal.

1.6. Aims and Objectives of the Research

The issue of marginalization and exclusion of the two researched ethnic communities is the main concern in the present socio-economic context of Bangladesh. The Indigenous poor women are the most marginalized in Bangladesh as they are deprived of all kinds of social services, which keep them excluded from mainstream society. In fact, in Bangladesh the marginalisation of poor Indigenous women is a significant problem. This research project explores the interconnected issues between democracy, governance, social services and development of marginalized communities in Bangladesh. The true notion of democracy and governance usually includes the vulnerable communities and protects them under the social safety net programs of the government. The continual failure of governance and ineffective social services has made the lives of marginalized communities vulnerable. The women from the marginalised communities and their children especially suffer the worst form of systemic marginalization. The Indigenous people belong to a different socio-cultural background as they have their distinctive life styles. They are severely excluded from government run social services and development interventions. Under this circumstance, this research project has envisaged to find out how to address the poor Indigenous women and the marginalized communities in Bangladesh, so they may enjoy their entitlements to rights with dignity and respect and comprehensive human development with special reference to secure sustainable livelihoods.

The research project will focus on the most marginalized Indigenous poor women and their children in Bangladesh. The area of my concern is human rights and social justice. The research project aims to:

- i. Explore the extent to which the North-Bengal Indigenous communities are being marginalized and deprived of their rights.
- ii. Critically investigate the key factors that contribute to marginalization of the north-west Indigenous communities in the present socio-economic context of Bangladesh.
- iii. Explore to develop and contribute to the Human Rights- Based policies that will enhance the livelihood and rights entitlements of the north-west Indigenous and marginalized communities in Bangladesh.
- iv. Compare and contrast the Human Rights- Based Approaches in other developing countries and in Australia that could be applicable /replicable lessons for marginalized communities in Bangladesh.

The research project aims to meet the following objectives;

- Understand the problems affecting the human rights and livelihoods of the north-west Indigenous people
- Derive lessons from the development of other marginalised groups with specific reference to needs of women and their children
- Explore the governance system and rights- based policies that could be improved including the poor, Indigenous and marginalized communities in Bangladesh

- Explore the roles and responsibilities of the community people for accessing their rights and empowerment of women.

The significance of the research is that the Indigenous people in Bangladesh have had their human rights violated, ignored, and downtrodden as they have no capacity to raise their voice in an organized way against violence and discrimination. They are gradually plunging into the cyclical scourge of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, lack of water sanitation facilities, and high rate of unemployment due to lack of skills and education. Indigenous people are often evicted from their ancestral lands and are victims of abuse, neglect, oppression, injustice and maltreatment by the majority people. Moreover, the absence of basic government facilities and services to Indigenous people and the lack of provision for education in mother languages have accelerated the worst form of marginalization in terms of religion, ethnicity and minority. In considering the existing situation of marginalized community and Indigenous people in Bangladesh, the research questions have been designed to find out relevant mechanisms to contain marginalized Indigenous people including women and children in the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) to development in order to influence the policy makers towards reformulation of power structures, distribution of resources, and prevention of tyranny and injustices in the country.

In addition, this study has intended to search out an effective paradigm to strengthen traditional social institutions/community-based organizations of Indigenous people and link them with development organizations. This is in order to formulate strategies for advocacy and social mobilization through organizing the grass roots to raise the voice of marginalized people. This could lead to effective negotiation and bargaining with duty bearers as well as local administrative bodies. This study will also aim to promote leadership of marginalized and Indigenous people so that they

can come forward in planning and implementing, monitoring and participating in the evaluation of development activities in terms of their own needs and demands in almost every sphere in Bangladesh as a whole.

1.7. Research Questions

The following questions were raised in order to guide the research:

- i. How can the livelihood and life chances of the most disadvantaged group of people, particularly its women and children be improved in Bangladesh?
- ii. What lessons and best practices can be learned from elsewhere that could be of benefit for Bangladesh?
- iii. What initiatives can be taken to empower the marginalized people?

1.8. Organization of the thesis

Chapter One: This thesis is constructed in seven chapters. Chapter one is the general background of the research which includes the historical and geographical background of the two researched Indigenous communities with reference to democracy and governance issues of Bangladesh. It also presents an overview of the statement of the problem, rationale, aims and objectives, and research questions on which the thesis is grounded.

Chapter Two: Chapter two elaborates the area of concern and contains the literature review with reference to the historical context of the study. It especially deals with the extent to which the two researched Indigenous communities have experienced multiple layers of discrimination exploitation and marginalization from historical perspectives. This includes a detailed discussion from the British and Pakistani colonial periods to the present situation of Bangladesh in terms of land tenure policy;

land dispossession and land grabbing by local, powerful and influential people, and the social forestry projects; implications of the enemy property and vested property act; the impact of communal riots and the Liberation War of 1971 that have largely affected the livelihood and marginalization of the two researched Indigenous communities. A description has been provided on the challenges and contextual problems of the primary education of Indigenous children in Bangladesh. The chapter also elaborates on the background information, difficulties and challenges in accessing health care services and basic social services of the researched population in the Bangladesh context.

Chapter Three: Chapter three is the extension of chapter two, which elaborates key concepts and analytical frameworks employed in the research. The key concepts used in the research such as well-being, life chances; marginalization, systemic discrimination, and social exclusion of the two researched Indigenous communities have been defined and explained from the available literature. The analytical frameworks used in this study such as post-colonial perspectives, social contract and citizenship rights, gender frameworks, and institutional dynamics on human well-being and gender justice have been analysed. These key concepts and analytical frameworks construct the content of the study relevant to the two researched Indigenous communities.

Chapter Four: Chapter four explains how the research has been conducted in the rural and marginal areas of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh. The research employed a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative instruments such as case studies, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews to conduct a study amongst the two marginalized Indigenous communities. This chapter also presents a critical auto-ethnography and my role as a researcher, my gaining

access to the research sites, and challenges encountered during my field research. A detailed discussion on the steps, processes, and strategies undertaken to conduct the research has also been included in this chapter.

Chapter Five: Chapter five is the core of the thesis, which is based on empirical research findings. The findings sections have been organized under the five axial themes such as, access to land rights, rights to primary education, access to health care services, Indigenous women and land rights, and access to social services of the two researched marginalized Indigenous communities. The findings of each section have also been supported with demography, statistics, case studies, and lived narratives of the research respondents.

Chapter Six: Chapter six deals with discussion and analysis based on the empirical findings. For the analytical approach, a typology has been constructed on the socio-economic conditions and land owning status of the research participants with their lived experiences. To assess their marginalization, social exclusion and disadvantaged positions in the society, the conceptual framework of power dynamics and role of key institutions have been employed to analyse their life chances in Bangladeshi society.

Chapter Seven: Chapter seven is the concluding part of the thesis based on chapters five and six. It draws a summary on the previous chapters and suggests policy recommendations to overcome socio-economic and political barriers that underpin the life chances of the two researched Indigenous communities of the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. It also provides a bottom up approach to find a way forward with the institutional analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Two: Situating the Area of Concern

2.1. Introduction

A wide range of literature has been reviewed to conceptualise the multiple layers of discrimination and injustice experienced by the two researched Indigenous people of North-Bengal. To conceptualise the exploitation and marginalization experienced by the two researched Indigenous communities, details from the British colonial period to the present Bangladesh situation have been explored. To what extent the *Santal* and *Oraon* ethnic communities have been victims of multiple layers of discrimination, oppression and marginalization in the history of Bangladesh has been narrated in the following section of the thesis.

2.2. Indigenous people under the exploitation of the British colonial period

British rule in India has historically begun in 1757 when the East India Company won the *Battle of Plassey*²⁷ (Hodkinson, 2009, p. 32). The British East India Company received the *Diwani*²⁸ (right to collect taxes) of Bengal and developed their administrative network to rule and control throughout India (Banerjee, 2008, p. 4). From the very beginning of colonial rule, land has been a prime source of revenue collection and a means of political control as well as to secure a steady source of state finance for the British Empire (Washbrook, 1981, p. 652). To strengthen a stable source of revenue and tax collection, British colonial rulers promulgated the

²⁷On June 23, 1757 at the Battle of Plassey, a small village and mango grove between Calcutta and Murshidabad, the forces of the East India Company under Robert Clive defeated the army of Siraj-ud-daulah, the last Nawab of Bengal (Hodkinson, 2009, p. 32).

²⁸ The rights to collect taxes and revenues in Bengal. The East India Company won *Diwani* or the right to rule and collect revenue of the Bengal following the victory in Battle of Buxar in 1764 (Banerjee, 2008, p. 4).

historical *Permanent Settlement Act of 1793*²⁹ which uprooted peasants, including Indigenous people from their traditional ownership over land, water and natural resources (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 22). The current landlessness and land dispossession among these two researched Indigenous people is colonial in nature and has a colonial history that is embedded with the rise of private property and *Zemindari*³⁰ system through the enactment of British *Permanent Settlement Act of 1793*. The *Permanent Settlement Act* is a land mark of dispossession of peasantry of their hereditary including Indigenous people's claim to the soil and their ties with land been severely disrupted (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 23 and Roy et al. 2010, p. 41). Permanently, the ownership and control over lands have been conferred upon the *Zemindars*. It was a protected legal system based on "bourgeois concepts of property" (Bansal, 2014, p. 3) and a hallmark of oppression and exploitation that has had ruinous effects on peasants, including Indigenous people, in Bangladesh. Therefore, peasants have been uprooted from their traditional ownership of land.

The British colonial rulers designed to maintain political control over India with their operatives and *Zemindars* through fixing revenues at highly excessive rates. This has created multiple layers of sub-tenants for oppression and tax collection (Swamy, 2010, pp. 7-9). Under this system, the *Zemindars* were the actual owners of land by the laws. The *Zemindar* used to distribute lands to the tillers or farmers by *Jotedars*³¹ or intermediaries for a fixed revenue collection. The common peasants were just

²⁹ Under the colonial Governor General Lord Cornwallis, the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 was enacted as a grand contract between the East India Company and the *Zamindars*, the landholders of Bengal. Under this act, the landholders and Zamindars were admitted as the absolute owners of landed property to the colonial state system. This has created layers of intermediaries to oppress farmers and tillers (Bansal, 2014, p. 3).

³⁰ Large land owners in Bengal with revenue collection and tax extraction rights instituted during the Mughal dynasty and modified during the British rule. Position modified under colonial Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, *Zamindari* is the entitlement for the land (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 22).

³¹ An intermediary who used to distribute lands and collect taxes from the peasants on behalf of *Zeminder* under the Permanent settlement Act 1793 (Chowdhury, 2008, pp. 34-35).

*Barga*³² cultivators (Chowdhury, 2008, p. 35). They used to cultivate lands on the understanding that two-third share of crops goes to *Jotedars* and one-third to cultivators. This repressive act has abolished the inherent rights and privileges of the peasants including Indigenous people and their traditional connection with land and natural resources which lead to revolt against the British colonial power (Chowdhury, 2008, pp. 34-35).

2.2.1. Indigenous people's insurrection against British oppression

The history of Indigenous people in this subcontinent is an epic of resistance, survival, endurance and determination like that of many other surviving Indigenous groups around the globe. During the capitalistic domination over land, the Indigenous people had carried out numerous insurrections, uprisings and revolts against the tyranny, oppression and subjugation under British colonial rulers and their agents/intermediaries such as, *Jotedars*, moneylenders, and local traders. The *Santal* Rebellion commonly known as *Santal Hul* was a native rebellion on 30 June, 1855 in present day Jharkhand state of India against both the British colonial authority and reaction to the corrupt *Zamindari* system and their operatives (Bahadur, 2013, p. 3). The basic reason for this catastrophe was the economic privatization of the *Santals* resulting from the Permanent Settlement Act. Although the *Santal* Revolution was brutally suppressed, it marked a great change in the colonial rule and policy. A separate district named *Santal Pargana* was created by the *Act XXXVII of 1855* to give them a homeland with a sense of security. Later on *Santal Pargana Tenancy Act 1949* was enacted after independence for the safety and special identity of this area (Sagar, 2005, p. 29). The day of rebellion is still celebrated among the *Santal* community in Bangladesh and India with great respect

³² A pattern of share cropping during British period: two-third share of crops goes to *Jotedars* and one-third to cultivators (Chowdhury, 2008, pp. 34-35).

and spirit for the thousands of the *Santal* martyrs who sacrificed their lives along with their two celebrated leaders *Sidhu* and *Kanhu Murmu*³³, in their glorious albeit unsuccessful attempt to win freedom from the rule of the *Zamindars* and the British (Tudu, 2010, p. 11). The *Santal* Insurrection was the first revolt against British colonial power before the first anti-colonial resistance popularly known as the *Sepoy Mutiny*³⁴ in 1857 (Seema, 1995, p. 1771).

Later on the *Munda Revolt* in 1899-1900 in Chhotonagpur, presently in Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand state and led by Birsa Munda, was aimed against the British Authority and *Diku*³⁵ intermediaries like the *Thikadars* (contractors) and money lenders including *Zamindars* who exploited tribal people through the grabbing of their lands and making them bonded labourers in their own land (Singh, 2008, p. 89). During this revolt, the *Mundas* along with *Oraons* came into intermittent conflict with the British establishment from 1897 to 1900, seeking to retain their full ownership of lands and control over natural resources. However, while the revolt was suppressed, it had brought about a remarkable successful result in the *Chhotnagpur Tenancy Act 1908* that prohibited land dispossession of tribal land and also provision for restoration of the alienated land in Chhotonagpur region in undivided British

³³ The Santal rebellion commonly known as *Santal Hull* was a native rebellion in present day Jharkhand, in eastern India against both the British colonial authority and corrupt upper caste *Zamindari* System the *Santal* people started on June 30, 1855. The rebellion was led by the four Murmu Brothers - Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav and two sisters- Phulo and Jhanu (Tudu, 2010, p. 11).

³⁴ During British rule, the *Sepoy Mutiny* in 1857 was known as British India's first revolt for independence. The rebellion escalated as a result of various grievances among the soldiers on the use of paper cartridges. The soldiers were asked to bite off the paper cartridges for their rifles which they believed were greased with animal fat, namely beef and pork. This was, and is, against the religious beliefs of Hindus and Muslims (Seema, 1995, p. 1771).

³⁵ *Dikus* refer to non-indigenous people especially local traders and money lenders who appeared to as exploiters of indigenous people (Singh, 2008, p. 89).

India (Vidyarthi, 1981, p. 102). These two revolts were remarkable against the injustice and exploitation by the British colonial powers and their operatives, the *Zamindars*, money lenders and traders in the history of the Indian sub-continent. Unfortunately, these two historic movements remained unrecognized in the mainstream discourse even after the independence of British India in 1947 and its partition into two separate countries; India and Pakistan. This partition was based on the two new nations' theories on religion (Giorgio, 2007, p. 81). These Indigenous people have lived for centuries in this sub-continent with their distinctive life styles. Due to the partition of British India and the formation of the nation states of India and Pakistan in 1947, and finally Bangladesh in 1971, these Indigenous people have been divided through geographical and political boundaries (Bleie, 2005, p. 11).

Overall, the domination and control over the Indigenous people in the sub-continent did not begin with British colonization; it has a long history over centuries during Hindu and Muslim rule in India. During the British period the Indigenous people have been discriminated against, stigmatized, marginalized, pathologized and criminalized for centuries. They have been represented as 'wild, lawless savages who lived with nature but without government, husbandry' (Battiste, 2000, p. 68) by the mainstream society. As they have resisted British colonial expansion, they have been branded as "criminal tribes" under the *Criminal Tribes (CT) Act* in 1921. After the partition in 1947, the Criminal Tribes (CT) Act was replaced by the "*Denotified Tribes*" but the stigma and dehumanizing schemes against Indigenous people are prevalent in all three major states (Debnath, 2010, p. 55) in India. More likely, even today, they are portrayed as an uncivilized and backward section of the population from the post-colonial perspectives. However, the Indigenous people are officially no longer considered criminal tribes in the legislation of the state and perception of the

majority population. But, they are marginalized and deemed to be at the lower strata of society. The construction and position of the Indigenous people can be viewed in Said's Orientalist Discourse (Said, 1978) based on the binary of "us versus them". The Indigenous people are positioned at the lowest level of the social hierarchy in the discourse of Bangladeshi policies, practices, and laws imposed by the major dominant Bengali society (Debnath, 2010, p. 56).

2.3. Indigenous people under Pakistani colonial rule of deception

During the Pakistani colonial period, the Indigenous people of North-Bengal underwent many forms of intrusion, discrimination and the special rights and privileges that Indigenous people used to enjoy under British colonial rule were completely eliminated (Bhardwaj, 2010, p. 3). The customary *Adivasi* laws did not necessitate the type of documentation required for statutory laws because customary practices were rooted on communal land ownerships under the local chiefs and village leaders (Debnath, 2010, p. 58). At some stage, those traditional institutions of Indigenous people have been outlawed and abandoned for the colonial interest of accumulating wealth and resources from East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh) to West Pakistan (Ali and Rehman, 2001, p. 8).

The perennial suffering of the peasants, including Indigenous people, resulting from the *Permanent Settlement Act of 1793* continued throughout the Pakistani colonial period. The outburst of peasants against the exploitation of the *Zemindari-Jotedari* system was reflected in the '*Tebhaga*' movement, which was aimed to ensure cultivating peasants should get two-thirds of yielded crops and one-third to the owner of the land (Chowdhury, 2008, p. 35). This movement by peasants was led by Illa Mitra the wife of *Zemindar* Ramendra Mitra of Ramchandrapur, then in the Malda District and presently in the Nawabganj district in Bangladesh (Panjabi, 2010, p. 53).

This movement occurred at Nachol under the Nawabganj sub-division in greater Rajshai district. This is why it is also known as the Nachol Rebellion (*Bidroho*), Nachol being mostly inhabited by Hindus and *Santal* who belonged to the cultivating class, having no land of their own (Panjabi, 2010, p. 55). The movement was initiated by Ila Mitra with communist and Kishan Samity leaders, local Santal leaders with the objective of “Sat Ari Jin o Fasaler Tebhaga” (for husking seven *Ara* and three share for cultivation) (Roy, 2005, p. 2). This was because the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 allowed *Zemindars* at the top of land owning systems but they had no direct link with the cultivation of lands. *Zemindars* used to distribute lands to *Jotedars* through negotiation on the basis of fixed taxes yearly. *Jotedars* used to distribute the lands to individual peasants on the arrangement that all investment costs of cultivation has to be borne by the farmer and the total yielded crops must be shared equally between the cultivator and owner of the land. This system of cultivation was known as ‘*Adhiary Pratha*’ (half-half system) mostly prevalent in Rangpur-Dinajpur from 1945 to the 1950s (Chowdhury, 2008, p. 35). Ila Mitra played a heroic role in leading the movement against oppression of peasants and she was honoured as “*Nacholer Rani*” or “*Rani Ma*”. Despite being a wife of a *Zeminder*, she took side of the peasants and had undergone inhumane torture by Pakistani colonial rulers (Panjabi, 2010, p. 53).

After the crucial suppression of the Nachole Revolt, the Pakistani colonial rulers enacted the *East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act (EBSATA) 1950*³⁶. This act abolished the *Zemindari* system and eliminated all rent receiving interest and

³⁶ The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950 was a law passed by the newly formed Democratic Government of Pakistan for its eastern provinces (East Bengal), present day Bangladesh. The bill was drafted on 31 March 1948 during the early years of Pakistan and passed on 16 May 1951. This act abolished the Zamindari system in the region, after which the lands of the state were under the federal government (Roy et al. 2010, p.467).

intermediaries. Tenants/cultivating peasants were named as *Malik* (owner) and entrusted with the right to transfer, inherit and cultivate according to their own choices (Roy et al. 2010, p.467). Ironically, many Indigenous people were unable to get ownership rights on land due to ignorance, trickery by corrupt colonial officials, ethnic discrimination and lengthy and difficult procedures for getting their claims formally recognized, not even on the basis of long-standing cultivation followed by a Cadastral Survey (CS) in 1962 (Bleie, 2005, p. 222 and Barkat et al. 2001, p. 26). For an example, in 1961-62, 1800 acres of land previously owned and cultivated by *Santals* have been taken by the colonial government to be converted into sugar farms by force making thousands of Indigenous people landless and toiling for a pitiful wage on their ancestors' land in Katakhal, under the Gobindaganj Upazilla in the Gaibandha district (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 24).

The abolition of the *Zamindari* system was seen as a democratic move to a people's state rather than a feudal class system (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 25). This law has defined that there would not be any intermediary interests between the government and its people. The government has become the only landlord and the cultivators were relieved from the oppression of intermediaries. But, the effect of the law has perpetrated national politics and governance in the Pakistani period (Bleie, 2005, p. 223). It is significant that Pakistani colonial power tended to protect the interests of landed elites rather than help peasants. In 1961 Land ceiling was raised to 125 acres by the military regime to satisfy the feudal landlords of both West and East Pakistan, and to consolidate their power base for political purposes (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 25). The feudal landlords gained more lands through corruption, bureaucratic favors and bias in distribution. The crucial thing during the Pakistani colonial period was the Enemy Property Act. The Enemy Property Act was enacted by the Pakistani colonial

rulers in 1969 confiscated the properties of mostly Hindu and Indigenous minorities who have fled to neighbouring countries following the communal riots in 1948, 1950, 1964, 1965 and war between India and Pakistan. They were deemed enemies of the state (Trivedi, 2011, p. 3). The enemy property act by the Pakistani colonial regime exacerbated the sufferings of minorities including Indigenous people, which renamed as Vested Property during the post-independence period of Bangladesh (Benkin, 2007, p. 1).

2.3.1. Indigenous people under the domination policy of Pakistani period

The Pakistani colonial rulers started to inflict oppressive colonial policies and practices to suppress the Bengali-speaking population through the imposition of the Urdu-language as a state language in all spheres of national life. This phenomenon was an attack on the Bengali nationalism, culture and language. In the Islamic nation state of Pakistan, Bengali people organised an anti-colonial movement, rejecting the first Pakistani Governor General Mohamed Ali Jinnah's declaration that "Urdu, and only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan" (Singh, 2003, p. 241). This covert policy was designed in parallel to the British colonial education policy (Macaulay's English Education Policy) to promoting and establishing a permanent position for the use of the English language in Indian educational institutions. Lord Macaulay's speech in the British Parliament on 2nd February 1835 clearly states a strong colonial imposition to destroy local language, culture and heritage of Indian sub-continent;

"I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native self-culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (cited in the Sunday Post, 2008, 28 January).

In the same way, Pakistani rulers intrigued to strengthen their political control and domination over the liberal culture of Bengali nationalism through imposing radical Islamic Pakistani nationalism (Jabeen et al. 2010, p. 100). The Bengali speakers resisted linguistic hegemony through the Language Movement in 1952. On the sacrifice of many lives for the mother tongue, Bengali became the official language of then East Pakistan (Majumdar, 2012, p. 1). In this Language Movement, minorities and Indigenous people participated spontaneously. Later on, the concurrent economic and political repression, discrimination and subjugation turned into an ant-colonial struggle leading to the liberation war in 1971 (Hashanat, 2012, p. 4).

2.4. Indigenous people in between Bengali vs Bangladeshi Nationalism

After independence, again the Indigenous and ethno-linguistic minority groups struggled against injustice, racial prejudice and maladministration, with the rise of Bengali nationalism and a nationalist language dominant policy of the state. The Indigenous people had fought against Pakistan for a new country with a hope to be recognized as a distinctive cultural and linguistic identity. But their hope turned into ashes at the very beginning of a newly born state. The first constitution of Bangladesh in 1972 states that;

“The unity and solidarity of the Bengali nation, which deriving its identity from its language and culture, attained sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bengali nationalism³⁷”.

The state has systemically made Bengali the official language of the state and the medium of instruction. All the citizens of Bangladesh are to be known as Bengalis, thus denying the existence of numerous ethnic communities who have been living in

³⁷ The Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972, Article 9.

this soil for centuries with their different mother languages and cultural identities (Samad, 1998, p. 3). The repressive one culture, one-nation and mono-linguistic dominant policy of the state had created repercussions, a sense of isolation and identity crisis among the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. In protest over the state's imposition of Bengali nationalism on Indigenous people, Manobendra Narayan Larma, the only representative from the CHT, and non-Bengali member of the then parliament refused to endorse this constitution (Mohsin, 2011, p. 160):

“You cannot impose your national identity on others. I am a Chakma not a Bengali. I am a citizen of Bangladesh, Bangladeshi. You are also Bangladeshi but your national identity is Bengali ... they (Hill People) can never become Bengali” (Cited in Mohsin, 2011, p. 160).

It is a paradoxical that the people who had fought against the politics of hegemony of the Pakistani state using language and culture as its tool; themselves have turned into hegemons and coercively imposed their own language and culture upon other minority/ethnic identities within a year of independence. There is no state policy for the protection and promotion of ethnic languages within the Bengali dominated and politicised state. The discrimination and exploitation against the Indigenous people is deep rooted in the Bangladeshi society. Khandoker argues that the ‘chain of exploitation begins with a Bengali villager and ends with the State’ (Khandoker, 2000). Similarly, Siddiquee and Faruqi (2010, p. 461) indicate that:

“The religious and cultural values that the majority people pursue are discriminatory in nature. The level of social tolerance (corruption, patronage, child abuse, treatment of women and the poor) in Bangladeshi society is very high and is the in-built theological mindset of the major policy actors”.

Thus, under the political movement of Bengali nationalism, the newly born state has appeared as coercive, suppressive, and exclusionary regarding Indigenous people's identity, rights and privileges in Bangladesh.

Within a few years of independence, secular Bengali nationalism has been in decline after 1975 with the rise of radical Islamist Bangladeshi nationalism. Nationalist politics constitutionally undermined minority and Indigenous people who have certain religious faiths other than the majority's Islam (Mohsin, 1997, p. 92 and Samad, 1998, p. 4). The 5th and 8th amendments of the constitution have drawn a distinctive separation between majority and minority, the latter including the Indigenous people of Bangladesh. The constitutional amendment declares that (Samad, 1998, p. 6):

“The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic³⁸”.

After a few decades later, the same thing appeared in the 15th amendment of the constitution in 2013 (Riaz, 2013, p. 7):

“The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but the State shall ensure equal status and equal rights in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions”.

Thus, the policy, legislation and constitution have been produced and sanctioned by the nation state of Bangladesh to impose majoritarian authority and hegemony over the minority and Indigenous people. The decolonized nation state of Bangladesh is merely an extension of colonial and imperialist rule. The state's pro-active role of imposing religious, linguistic, cultural and economic hegemony over its Indigenous people is a reverse act of Pakistani colonial ruler that justifies physical and cognitive internal colonization legitimized by the constitution.

³⁸ The Constitution of Bangladesh, 8th amendment in 1988.

2.5. Land grabbing and dispossession from land in Bangladesh

The Indigenous people of North-Bengal ‘are being displaced and dislocated from their ancestral lands due to forcible land occupation, in the name of exploration natural resources without the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples’ (UN, 2008, pp. 8-9). They have become victims of systemic multiple discrimination, and this undermines their life chances. The continual and intensive land grabbing by local powerful and influential people with political linkages have made the *Santal* and *Oraon* disadvantaged and vulnerable (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 18). As a result, their livelihood and survival have been badly impacted. The ownership to land is perceived as an indicator of socio-economic status among the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. It is one of the reasons that land is ‘grabbed’ from the Santals and *Oraon* by those who are more educated and more powerful. The violent nature of land-grabbing peaked between 1971 and 1980 in the immediate aftermath of the nine-month long independence war fought by Bangladesh against Pakistan in 1971 (IRIN, 2011). The land grabbing process is propagated through preparing fake documents by the land grabbers in connivance of corrupt land officials, and sometimes by threat, harassment and deceptive promises. The deceptive promises demonstrated that buyers deceptively record lands beyond the quantity proposed by the sellers. The local, powerful and influential Bengalis with political pull take advantage of the voiceless, powerless and marginalized Indigenous people through the forgery of documents with the involvement of dishonest land officials. In addition, the local class-based hegemonic culture and the ‘criminalized political economy’ (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 280) are the crucial factors for forced land dispossession against humanity as well as of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. For example, a recent incident indicates that land grabbing has become a growing

concern among the *Santal* Indigenous people in Dinajpur. On the 6th of June 2013 (The Daily Star, June 21, 2013) the local land grabbers, led by the local landlord and his gang attempted to grab 25.53 acres of disputed lands at *Roghunathpur* village under *Bulakipur* Union in *Ghoraghat Upazila* in Dinajpur district. They have also burnt down the houses of the victims. It has been reported in the Newspaper (The Daily Star, June 21, 2013) that for several centuries, the *Santal* Indigenous people used to grow cereal crops, fruit trees, and vegetables in their ancestral lands but local powerful land grabbers with the connivance of police administration illegally attempted to obtain their lands (The Daily Star, June 21, 2013). In this way, the *Santal* and *Oraon* ethnic community people are being harassed, intimidated, imprisoned, and forced into court litigation, further pushing them into the vicious cycle of poverty.

Along with living in poverty, the victims of land grab experience threats, fear, insecurities and unforeseen uncertainties which disrupt their well-being. Even though in most cases, demonstrations have been arranged for the safety and security of the Indigenous people and the exemplary punishment of the involved land grabbers, but in reality, the local, powerful and influential land grabbers are linked with political support and remain beyond the reach of legal actions. The organized land grabbers with political connections are perceived as both violent and venomous in the dismal political landscape of Bangladesh, according to residents of these two sampled communities. Consequently, the Indigenous people of the North-Bengal are becoming more helpless, powerless and less resilient because government and law enforcement agencies are ambivalent to protect their land rights in the country.

2.6. Re-classification of *Khas* Land and Vested Property Act

Along with land grabbing by powerful influential people and forcible acquisition of

land by social forestry projects, the government has declared many lands and properties of Indigenous peoples' as *Khas* (public) land and vested properties. The issue centred on *Khas* land and vested property has made the life of Indigenous people vulnerable and critical. The government's re-classification of Indigenous people's land as *Khas* land and vested property is a long debatable and contentious issue in the context of Bangladesh. The research participants have reported that even though their lands have been recorded in 1940 and 1962 *Gazette* but ironically during the survey in 2005, many of their lands have been purposively re-classified as *Khas* land and *vested* property (Bleie, 2005, pp. 232-233).

Historically, the *Enemy Property Act 1965* enacted by Pakistani colonial rulers in 1969 had confiscated properties of minorities, mostly Hindus and Indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, *The Enemy Property Act* was renamed as the *Vested Property Act* in 1974 and appears as an encroachment on the law of inheritance to private ownership which confiscated properties of minorities. Just after the independence of the country, the *Vested Property Act* distorted the secularism and basic principles of the constitution underpinning national unity and solidarity in a diverse country (Trivedi, 2011). The Bangladesh Government is the custodian of 2.1 million acres of land under the vested property act (Barkat, 2004, p. 2). This has been possible as a result of corrupt government officials at district and Upazilla levels listing properties whose owners are alive and still living in Bangladesh (Samad, 1998). It has been found in a study that political affiliations of local influential people in collaboration with the land administration, trickery by land officials, use of force and crookedness and fake documentations are basis for wresting property away from the minority communities (Trivedi, 2011). The government of Bangladesh is the custodian of 3.3 million acres of *Khas* land

including agricultural, non-agricultural and water bodies (Barkat et al. 200, p. 3). But, Indigenous landless people are unable to claim and receive *Khas* land. A study of Barkat et al (2000, pp. 5-7) has pointed out that landless people hardly ever get enlisted as a recipient of *Khas* land due to systemic flaws in the enlisting process where local, influential and political powerful elites control the *Khas* land distribution mechanism. These elites are the illegal occupants of most *Khas* land. In addition to the complicated application process, the lack of information dissemination regarding availability and distribution of *Khas* land, bribery and corruption by the land officials and relevant public representatives, the potential beneficiaries' lack of contacts with government offices, and lack political and social patronage of the landless are the obstacles for the fair distribution of *Khas* land to the rightful beneficiaries in Bangladesh.

However, after a four decades long demand for repealing the act, recently the Bangladesh Government has enacted the *Vested Property Return (amendment) Bill-2011* on 28 November, 2011 in Parliament (BSS, 2011) to return the vested properties of minority communities. Even so, this may hardly embrace the demand of minority people as those vested properties largely remain under illegal custody of the influential people who play a crucial role in the country's political domain (Ethirajan, 2011). Similarly, the non-distribution of *Khas* land to the actual landless people has been a long legacy of deception. It needs to be addressed by fair political commitment and good will of government in order to enhance the livelihood of the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized Indigenous people of North-Bengal.

2.7. Impact of Communal Riots and Liberation war

The land dispossession among the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous people started in

1947 during Pakistani colonial rule. During the volatile communal riots (1948, 1952, 1962-65) and ‘*Nachole Uprising*³⁹’, many Indigenous people had to go to India in fear and lack of security. When some of them eventually returned home, many of them found that their lands have been forcibly grabbed by local, powerful and influential Bengali people (Bleie, 2005, pp. 209-213) taking the advantage of the fear-factor. Even after the enactment of the *East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act (EBSATA) 1951* which declared tenants/cultivating peasants as *Malik* (owner) and entrusted with right to transfer, inherit and cultivate according to their own choices, many Indigenous people were unable to get ownership rights on land due to ignorance, trickery, ethnic discrimination, and lengthy and difficult procedures for getting their claims formally recognized, not even on the basis of long-standing cultivation. The forcible acquisition of Indigenous people’s land continued even after the post-independence period due to their marginality and powerlessness in a political elite-dominated state (Bleie, 2005, p. 232).

During the period of 1971 to 1986, many Indigenous peoples’ lands have been dispossessed. At that time, many of them fled to India as Refugees during the Liberation War in 1971 (Bleie, 2005, pp. 211-213). When they came back to Bangladesh, they could not obtain the ownership of their lands and properties because of occupation by powerful local influential people. They were once again victims of a deliberate act of deception. After liberation, the influential people have taken over the land of the Indigenous people through illegal documents and as a result of registering their lands in their own names. The war of liberation still remains as a traitorous memory for the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. Ganesh

³⁹ A Peasant movement in the 1950s in the area of Nachole, Rajshahi associated with *Tebhaga Movement* with an objective of “*Sat Ari Jin o Fasaler Tebhaga*” (for husking seven Ara and three shares for cultivation) (Roy, 2005, p. 2).

Soren, a *Santal* activist of Dinajpur district comments that:

“Our land was grabbed with little pretence, with brute force. As many Santals had fled to India during the war, many Bengalis thought how we can get this land for free and occupied it. The returning families (after the war) then had to start their lives from scratch, without land, without a source of food” (IRIN, 2011).

The forcible acquisition of Indigenous people’s land continued even after the post-independence period due to their marginality and powerlessness in a political elite-dominated state of Bangladesh. This has also been partly possible on their inability to protect their rights due to illiteracy and innumeracy.

2.8. Illiteracy is an impediment to land litigation and justice system

A very low level of literacy prevails in the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities in comparison to the national literacy rate. According to the 1991 Census, only 14.1% were found to be literate among these two Indigenous communities. The female literacy rate is only 7.41 percent, compared to 20.5 percent male literacy (UNESCO, 2005, p. 141). The low level of literacy and numeracy is reflected in their little knowledge of land-related laws and judicial systems in Bangladesh. Having inadequate knowledge of land laws, they are easy prey to deception, fraud, and procrastination in the justice system. It is reported that Indigenous people hardly get fair justice from the judicial courts to retain their ancestral lands due to corruption (Bleie, 2005, p. 235). Another aspect is that following a court case is very expensive for the Indigenous people as the land-related cases are abnormally lengthy processes, which also indicates the ‘deterioration of legal institutions’ (TIB, 1998) in Bangladesh. The victims are dealt with in the legal justice system of Bangladesh, even as it has not been reckoned as ‘a sanctuary of the vulnerable’ (UNDP, 2008). A study conducted by Sarwar et al. (2007, p. 15) indicates that land-related cases are pending over the years, and on average it takes

9.5 years for settlement. Many of the victims who are involved in litigation mostly experience huge financial losses and sometime end up as paupers while pursuing court cases to retain control over dispossessed lands. In addition, discriminatory behaviour, negative attitudes and negligence of the concerns raised by the Indigenous people are ignored by both the majority populations and the formal institutions alike. The local government offices (UP, Upazilla offices, land registry offices, settlement offices) and judicial courts pose barriers against attaining any support regarding land-related problems. Because of their marginalized position in the society, they have limited representation to influence those land administration institutions, and their concerns are largely ignored. The details have been elaborated in Chapters Five and Six of the thesis.

2.9. The Social Forestry projects reproducing social instability

The Forest Department (FD) of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has not been forthright in its role in appropriating lands of the Indigenous people of North-Bengal. The Social Forestry (SF) projects of the government have started encroaching into the traditional lands of Indigenous people (Besra, 2008). From a study, it shows that the Forest Department has forcibly occupied 1500 acres of land most of it belonging to the *Santal* Indigenous people in Nawabganj Upazilla under Dinajpur district in early 1980s (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 19). During the encroachment of land, the Forest Department has been deceiving stakeholders in promising that they would be given 50 percent share of the benefits in cash or kind of the Social Forestry projects. However, after cutting off all the trees, the local Bengali people have been returned their lands for farming, but the Indigenous people were not granted their shares as entitled recipients, let alone returning their occupied lands to the actual land owners who have been paying land taxes for years. The regressive commitment and

discriminatory behaviour deprived the Indigenous people of their rightful share of benefits from the social forestry projects, which indicates their helplessness as they live with injustice. As a result, many of the Indigenous people were forced to be day labourers on their own lands and to live in poverty (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 12).

The promulgation of social forestry was promoted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the 1980s in order to improve human welfare through reducing widespread poverty existing in developing countries targeting predominantly local poor, disadvantaged and marginalized communities through ‘environmentally sustainable pro-poor growth’ (Mir, 2003). Bangladesh, being one of a member of ‘Developing Member Countries’ (DMCs) received a 171 US million dollar loan from the ADB for social forestry projects. This and a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) grant (Salam and Noguchi, 2005, p. 211) in 1981 were used for implementing five social forestry projects in different parts of the country. The government launched the country-wide Social Forestry Project in the late 1980s with support from the United Nations Development Program and the Asian Development Bank (US \$44 million loan) (Castro and Nielsen, 2001, pp. 229-239). The Government of Bangladesh unfortunately undermines sustainable development through the planting of exotic trees that undermine the natural environment (Zashimuddin, 2011). Examples of exotic plants include *Acacia nilotica*, *A. catechu*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Eucalyptus*, etc. Planting these was meant to provide employment opportunities to the rural disadvantaged population. This was the idea behind social forestry projects (BDF, 2011).

However, these social forestry projects are a major reason for the dispossession of the lands of the Indigenous peoples of North-Bengal. The social forestry projects are

intended to prioritize marginalized people as its beneficiaries in reaping benefits and participation in national consultation forums with a view towards mutual benefits for both the government and the beneficiaries. It has been stated in the *Social Forestry Act 2004* of Bangladesh Government in Article 6 (2) that “landless people, abandoned women, backward sections of society, and poor Indigenous people” (Roy et al. 2010, p. 522) will be prioritized in the selection of beneficiaries of the social forestry programs. It has also stated in the *Social Forestry Act 2004* of the Bangladesh Government that from the income of the social forestry projects the participating local beneficiaries are expected to receive 25 to 75 percents of the benefits (Roy et al. 2010, pp. 530-32) on the nature and scale of forestry. But, the benefit-sharing arrangements were found to be problematic in Bangladesh (Castro and Nielsen, 2001, pp. 229-239). In addition, the *Social Forestry Act 2004* opens the door of representation of small ethnic communities and Indigenous people (Roy et al. 2010, p. 534) in the National Consultancy Forum for overseeing the issues related to social forestry programs across the country. In reality, the social forestry projects spurred criticism and public resentment among the various stakeholders and its beneficiaries, including Indigenous people. Regarding social forestry in Bangladesh, Alam (2009, p.159) points out that the forest policy was not formulated through a bottom-up approach where local peoples’ concerns were not addressed properly. Furthermore, the corruption of forestry officials has also been a major threat to the development of social forestry in Bangladesh.

2.10. Indigenous Children are under linguistic hegemonic policy

The dominant mono-lingual policy in the medium of instruction in education has played a critical role in exclusion of Indigenous children from the mainstream education system. The overt mono-lingual language policy in education in

Bangladesh has been enshrined explicitly in the country's constitution that does not recognise any ethnic languages except the dominant national language, *Bangla* (Rahman, 2010, p. 346). Neither the Constitution nor any Bangladeshi law specifically recognises or protects Indigenous people and their rights in Bangladesh. I have drawn on the report of UNESCO illustrating that the Indigenous people belong to ethno linguistic minorities, and they are underprivileged, marginalized and systemically excluded from education due to the dominant language policy (UNESCO, 2005, p. 3). The existing education system has denied the special need of Indigenous children; that of being able to learn in their mother tongues. The existing education system is 'not relevant, appropriate, flexible or inclusive' (Kosonen, 2005, p. 87) with regard to the needs of Indigenous children in Bangladesh and strongly argues that without a sufficient understanding of the instructional language, learning is obstructed. The Indigenous children's education is severely obstructed due to the absence of learning using their mother tongues. In addition to that government primary schools are cynical about receiving Indigenous children, erroneously labelling them as 'uncivilised', 'not speaking Bengali', 'incapable of learning', 'too old to be admitted', and 'would soon drop out of the school' (Oxfam, 2006, p. 18). In addition, the cultural discrimination and "derogatory remarks" against their national identity regarding their history, life-styles and food habits discourages Indigenous children from attending in the schools (Durnnian, 2007, p. 19). Negative stereotypical contempt by teachers and classmates, derogatory representation in the curricula and contempt about Indigenous culture actively play a role in excluding Indigenous children from schools. The curriculum in primary school textbooks is entirely oriented to the dominant Bengali model, and seen through the lens of the

post-colonial view, it ‘fails to combat and eliminate misconceptions and prejudice against Indigenous populations’ (Rae, 2006, p. 54).

However, the Government of Bangladesh has taken some initiatives to introduce education in the mother languages of the Indigenous communities. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 states that:

“Measures will be taken to ensure the availability of teachers from ethnic groups and to prepare texts in their own languages so that ethnic children can learn their own Indigenous languages⁴⁰”.

Along with that the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP- III) also states that more attention should be paid to tribal children and ethnic minorities who belong to language minorities to address their particular needs in formal schools. It also points that tribal children are encouraged to learn in their mother tongues. Textbooks should be written in mother tongues and Indigenous teachers should be provided (GoB, 2011, p. 59). But Government’s rhetoric and window-dressing initiatives have kept out thousands of Indigenous children from schools. For an instance, recently the *Santal* Indigenous community has been divided in to two groups on the use of letters and fonts in education in mother tongues (The Prothom Alo, 24 January, 2014). One group is backed by the NGOs trying to use the Bengali font and another group is advocating for Roman scripts in the education of mother tongues. The debates on selecting letters and fonts have jeopardized education in the Santali language in Bangladesh (The New Age, 10 January, 2013). Scholars like Seung and Kim argue that the practice of using Roman script in writing the Santali language is a tradition over centuries in the Indian sub-continent and which is grammatically sound and widely accepted by the majority *Santal* population in the

⁴⁰ It has been detailed in the National Education Policy 2010 in Chapter Two, Article, 18, p. 7 (Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh).

country (Seung and Kim, 2010). The other faction is backed by some political wings who are spreading a propaganda that writing the Santali language in Roman scripts is a conspiracy to convert the *Santals* into Christianity, as it is a contribution of European Missionaries in the sub-continent.

It is to be noted that more likely the first ‘Bengali Newspaper and Dictionary’ (Adhikary, 2012) have been produced by the pioneer of Bengal renaissance, William Carey from the Baptist Missionary Society of Serampore in 1818. He and P.O. Bodding a Missionary of the *Santal* Mission of the Northern Churches from Benagaria for the first time produced the ‘Santali Grammar and Dictionary’ in 1928 in the Indian sub-continent (Bodding, 1929). It has been proved that writing Santali in Roman script only can ensure proper pronunciation, meaning and language standards. Imposition of Bengali letters and fonts in writing the Santali language will distort its unique pronunciation, meaning and significance. In other words, more likely it is a colonial attempt to impose Bengali nationalism, culture and language to destroy the linguistic diversity of the ethnic communities in Bangladesh.

2.10.1. Lack of teachers from Indigenous community

Lack of teachers who are from Indigenous communities is another challenge for the education of Indigenous children in Bangladesh. The children do not get enough empathy, support or cooperation from Bengali teachers, as they cannot communicate and interpret learning materials with Indigenous children (Rae, 2006, p. 52). The teachers’ recruitment and deployment policy in the primary education system is inconsistent with the special need of Indigenous children. The Directorate of Primary Education (DoPE) is the responsible authority to recruit primary teachers in government primary schools. The National Education Policy 2010 clearly states that

‘for lower classes (class I to V), female teachers will get priority’ (MoE, 2012, p. 9). In the budget speech of 2012-13, Finance Minister narrated that:

“A total of 47,680 teachers will be recruited under the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP- III). We had a plan to raise the number of female teachers in primary schools to 60 percent in all around the country” (Muhith, 2012).

At the implementation stage, the ‘*Teacher’s Recruitment Rules*’ under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MPaME) provisioned that 60 percent of jobs will be reserved for women candidates in Bangladesh. Under this policy guide lines, Indigenous women are expected to be recruited equally as teachers in primary government schools beside their non-Indigenous counterparts. In a recent circular on recruitment of assistant teachers in government primary schools dated 15 November 2012 under the Directorate of Primary Education (DoPE) for 3rd Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-III), there was provision to recruit assistant teachers (Alormela, 2012) from Indigenous communities as a continuing process of the state.

Along with that the comprehensive sector wide program entitled Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP- III) is a five year (2011 - 2016) sector wide program enlightened by Bangladesh’s 2010 National Education Policy. The objective is to establish:

“An efficient, inclusive and equitable primary education system delivering effective and relevant child-friendly learning to all Bangladesh’s children from pre-primary through Grade V primary.”

The PEDP- III also states that more attention should be paid to tribal children and ethnic minorities to address their particular needs in formal schools. It also points out that tribal children are to be encouraged to learn in their mother tongues. Textbooks in these mother tongues and Indigenous teachers should be provided.

Since the independence of Bangladesh, the consecutive process of teacher's recruitment in government primary schools is inconsistent with education policy and the delivery of quality primary education with regard to children from Indigenous communities.

However, despite complying with the expected net enrolment ratio in primary schools of 94.9 percent, (GoB, 2012) Bangladesh will not be able to achieve the MDG-2, because of 'poor governance, corruption, poor quality of teaching-learning process, teacher absenteeism, lack of motivation of teachers, lack of monitoring and supervision, teacher's involvement in non- teaching activities, poor salary structure and lack of incentives for teachers, and lack of community involvement (Rabbi, 2005, pp. 35-37).

2.10.2. The quality of primary education is at stake

In the primary education sector, the teacher's 'low status, poor salary and limited career options' (Rabbi, 2005, p. 63) are the contributing factors to the shortage of qualified and skilled teachers in primary schools which directly impact the quality of primary education in Bangladesh. Hasan (2012) has also added, 'low motivation factors, lack of opportunities for professional development, extremely high work load, scarcity of resources in the schools' have demotivated teachers from resuming teaching in government primary schools. Evidence from the existing literature suggests that quality of education in the primary sector is at stake due to various contributing factors, from the class room environment to top level management (Rabbi, 2005, p. 31).

The Dakar Framework of Action (2000, p. 4) has defined quality of education in terms of recognized and measurable learning outcomes especially in literacy,

numeracy and essential life skills (Rabbi, 2005, p. 26). A report of UNICEF on *Quality primary education of Bangladesh* states that the “traditional and dominant way of teaching in most schools tends to focus on memorizing facts. There is little emphasis on developing analytical, practical or vocational skills, which results in several issues such as low achievement, high dropout and high repetition rates” (Unicef, 2009, p. 3). Another report of UNICEF also indicates that most of the children who complete primary education do not reach expected competencies because of ‘poor teaching methods, overcrowded class rooms and the lack of home support due to poverty and lack of resources at home’ (Unicef, 2008, p. 5).

A similar study report of *BRAC Research and Evaluation Division* on quality primary education in Bangladesh also points out that “quality of teaching in primary schools is poor” (BRAC, 2004, p. 117) which lacks interactive and creative teaching methods between students and teachers out of the prescribed textbooks. Another study, the *Report on Primary education in Bangladesh: challenges and success* conducted by Ardt et al. (2005, pp.7-12) identifies teachers’ quality, location of schools, relevance of material taught, class size and management/supervision of schools are the major determinants of the quality primary education. They have indicated that due to the poor quality of primary education, achievement and competency levels of most children are very low. They have found the bottleneck of low quality of primary education in Bangladesh, which is “Rote-learning” as the main method in the curriculum (Ardt et al, 2005, pp.9-14). Textbooks in government schools often fail to interest students or are not considered relevant to their lives.

2.10.3. A global call for Indigenous children’s rights to education

The global commitment to Education for All (EFA) stresses the need to provide quality basic education for all children, youths and adults, including Indigenous

children (UNESCO, 2011). UNESCO strongly promotes multilingual education as a means of achieving quality education for all (EFA). Their position is summarised in the three basic principles below:

“UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers”.

Apart from this, Bangladesh ratified the legally binding UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC 1989). Therefore, the government recognises children as holders of rights, and their rights cover all aspects of their lives - civil, political, economic, social and cultural. The following article 28 (a) of the UN CRC recognises all children’s rights to education that is free and compulsory:

“The development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own”

Bangladesh has ratified ILO Convention No. 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations in 1972. The convention in Article 23 states that “children belonging to the populations concerned shall be taught to read and write in their mother tongue ...” (ILO No.107, 1957). This convention has not formed the basis of any actions or plans by the government. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples 2007 in Article 14 contains specific provisions on education of Indigenous children:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning”.

2.11. Access to health care services

Access to health care is a fundamental human right and ensuring healthcare service

to rural poor, disadvantaged and marginalized people is a constitutional obligation of the Government of Bangladesh (Rahman et al. 2005, p. 10). The Article 11 of the Bangladesh constitution states that:

"The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed".

In addition, Article 16 of the constitution also states that the state shall adopt effective measures to progressively reduce disparity in health care. The constitutional provisions are made to protect, promote and respect health care as a fundamental component of human rights in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2006, p. 6).

Since independence in 1971, the government of Bangladesh has been striving to improve health care delivery services to reach the impoverished people in rural areas. The recent *National Health Policy (NHP) 2009* is supposed to provide health care services with an 'optimum quality, acceptance and availability' (MoHFW, 2012) to rural 'poor and disadvantaged sections of the population'. But it has turned out to be a 'purchaser' of services from the basic principle rather than becoming of 'providers' of services (Osman, 2008, p. 267). The National Health Policy (NHP) confirms that:

'Every citizen has the basic right to adequate health care' and 'the State and the government are constitutionally obliged to ensure health care for its citizens' (MoHFW, 2012).

The goals and objectives of the NHP clearly indicates that there should be a 'sustained availability of health services for the people, especially for communities in both rural and urban areas (goal-2), 'optimum quality and availability of primary health care (goal-3), and 'presence of full-time doctors, nurses and other officers/staff, provide and maintain necessary equipment and supplies at each of the Upazila Health Complexes and Union Health and Family Welfare Centres (goal-8)' (MoHFW, 2012). In principle, the NHP is committed to ensure 'primary health care

services to reach every citizen in all geographical regions within Bangladesh' with special 'focus on the disadvantaged, the poor and unemployed persons' (MoHFW, 2012).

Despite having specific policy goals, objectives, principles and strategies to improve better health service provision mechanisms, there exists an undesirably dismal picture of health in Bangladesh, which badly impacts on Indigenous people. The health sector is operated through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) by two bifurcated directorates (Health and Family Planning) from tertiary to grassroots level (ward and village) in the whole country. The health sector is administered through the MoHFW in seven administrative divisions and sixty four districts, each of which is divided into Upazilas (476 in number) and Upazilas into unions (4,770). The government health service is operated through 'four-tiers of government-owned and staffed facilities' (Osman, 2008, p. 274) namely; regional level, district level, Upazila level, Union and Ward level respectively. At the regional level 13 public medical college hospitals with bed capacities of 250 to 1,400, with a total bed capacity of 8,000 and district level 59 district hospitals with bed capacities ranging from 50 to 250 beds, with a total bed capacity of 5,295 provide a wide range of specialized laboratory facilities for the treatment for in-patients and out-patients whereas specialized institutions are location at central capital city for treatment of complicated cases. In the rural areas, Primary health care service is provided through four-tier systems (Rahman et al.2005, p. 3) i.e. Upazila level, union level, wards level and community level. The standard set up for health services in an Upazila consists of a health complex, Union Health & Family Welfare Centre (UHFWC) at union level and Community Clinics (CCs) (satellite clinics) at ward and village levels. There are 417 Upazila Health Complexes (UHCs) with beds capacities vary

from 31 to 50 with total 13,000 beds approximately. There are 4,400 Union Health and Family Welfare Centres (UHFWC) at the union level covering a population of about 30,000 each (Osman, 2008, p. 274) and 11,262 Community Clinics (CCs) (satellite clinics) at Ward level each covering with a population of 6,000 to 7,000 which are the prime source of public health care facilities at rural areas in Bangladesh. The country scenario of health services is presented here to have an idea on the health facilities with regard to the Indigenous communities in rural Bangladesh. The following table describes the numbers of health facilities and responsible staffs for operating public health care facilities in rural Bangladesh.

Table 2: Managerial structure and Health Facilities at Rural Areas in Bangladesh

Level of Rural Health Services	Number of Health Centres	Facilities	Health Staffs
Upazilla	463	Upazilla Health Complex 31 to 50 bed hospitals TB Clinics (in some)	Upazila health & family planning officer (UHFPO) Junior Consultant/Medical Officer
Union	4500	Rural health centre, union sub-centre or union health & family welfare centre (UHFWC).	Medical Officer Medical Assistant Family Welfare Visitor (FWV)
Ward & Village	14,000	Community Clinics (CC) Satellite Clinics	Health Inspector Assistant Health Inspector Health Assistant Community Healthcare Providers (CHCP)

Source: Health care network of Bangladesh, MoHFW, p. 5

The public health service delivery system of Bangladesh runs on a top-down approach where substantial decisions regarding health policy formulation, service delivery mechanisms, allocation and utilization of resources etc. are directed from central level to the lower level organizations to accomplish the administrative order (Islam and Ullah, 2009, p. 7). Under a rigid centralized policy, more often scholarly articles and media present a very dismal picture of public health facilities in Bangladesh. Those health facilities have been found ineffective and inefficient to meet the growing health needs of rural populations for multiple reasons in terms of

shortage of health personnel, inadequate medical resources, inaccessibility, unavailability of necessary medicines, mismanagement, political intervention, and a lack of community participation in the service delivery chain. A recent report in a daily English newspaper shows that 4,133 doctors have been appointed to work at community health care centres in the year of 2011, but most of them have been found practicing elsewhere, especially in the *Upazillas* or district levels that were not originally designated postings for them (The Daily Star, 22 December, 2011). In another report, it has been found that a health sector of Bangladesh has been facing serious problems in operating its activities, as there are shortages of health personnel of around 42,000, including doctors, nurses and other health technicians (The Daily Janakantha, 3 November, 2011). Apart from that, lack of monitoring activities and absence of doctors and health technicians are major impediments for not functioning government health care centres in rural areas as anticipated (The Daily Janakantha, 20 January, 2012). This acute crisis of health personnel has put rural health services in a jeopardized condition. As a result, rural Indigenous people are less inclined to visit those health centres. A study of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) reveals that only 20 percent of people use public health services (CPD, 2002, p. 7). Another study, a USAID led survey revealed that in rural areas 46% people go to the UHFWC, 11% to NGOs, and 18% to private practitioners. Thus, rural people are moving away from utilizing public health centres and are moving towards the private sector for their health service needs. As mentioned earlier, centralized control over health service delivery limits peoples' participation in the decision making process (Islam and Ullah, 2009, p. 14). Furthermore, increased widening gaps between poor and rich, and rural and urban areas in accessing public health care services manifests the poor access to such services of those marginalized groups. A recent study of

Osman (2008, p. 278) presents that there is unequal access to existing public health facilities for delivery, antenatal care (ANC) and immunizations between poor and rich, and rural and urban areas. The national average ratio of deliveries attended by skilled personnel between poor and rich is 4.5: 60.1 percent and ANC coverage ratio is 28.3: 91 percent. The urban-rural differential in ANC coverage is also quite significant which 71: 46 percent. There is also a vast gap in immunization coverage between rich-poor and rural-urban areas which is 89: 64 and 71:81 percent respectively (Osman, 2008, p. 278).

According to the Ministry of Finance (MoF, 2011) financing to the health sector is also a major determinant for the functioning of health care services in rural and marginal areas of Bangladesh. In the national budget of 2011-12, 5.4 percent of the total budget is allocated for the health sector, which has seen a gradual decline of 0.8 percent from 2010-11(6.2 percent). The study of Osman (2008, p. 272) revealed that ‘out of pocket’ spending by the public is the major contributor to financing, which is 47.3 percent, followed by government revenues at 26.2 percent, external donors’ contributions at 25.8 percent, and 2 percent from NGOs. Besides the lack of financing, there is a serious lack of people’s involvement in the health care sector. In line with the policy strategy of the Government of Bangladesh, community participation adheres to ‘changing the health-seeking behaviour of poor people, by building partnerships between government and local communities’ (Mahmud, 2004, p. 12). In fact, the intended participation of the local community people in the health sector is ignored, which makes communities unrepresentative, marginalized or excluded as citizens of the country.

2.12. Access to Social services

Apart from being deprived of basic social services such as education, basic health care facilities, and water and sanitation, the Indigenous people are also excluded from the benefits of social protection programs. The Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) are an important strategy of the government's policy, intended to provide 'basic minimum assistance' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 3) to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. This program is particularly aimed to protect poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups such the ethnic population, the aged, widows and destitute women, and physically challenged people from tumbling into widespread poverty. These programs are specially operated during times of hardship and natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, drought, effects of climate change, seasonal hunger (*monga*⁴¹), and life cycle risks such as sickness, disability or old age, disease, and economic risks such as unemployment or high inflation (ADB, 2010, p. 1) that adversely affect people's well-being (Khuda, 2011, p. 88). In order to address their well-being as well as to improve their resistance and resilience to shocks (Ahmed and Bari, 2011, p. 11) currently more than thirty different social safety net programs (Morshed, 2009, p. 1) are in operation by the Bangladesh Government. All of these programs are targeted to specific vulnerable groups, untargeted for the entire nation in things like fuel subsidies, conditional in things like the primary education stipend program, and unconditional in things like the old age allowance either in cash or material/in-kind form, depending on the nature of the programs. SSNP is aimed to prevent intergenerational cycles of poverty, protect against damage after natural

⁴¹ *Monga* is a local Bangla word that means a famine like situation, which appears especially in September through November or in Bangla months *Aswin* and *Kartik*. People usually call the period as *mora kartik* (month of dead literarily poverty and hunger), meaning the months of death and disaster. These two months give rural people more hard time than usual because of extremely shrinking job opportunities (Mohammad, 2006, p. 1).

disasters, and provide immediate relief during emergencies. It also seeks to ensure employment, education and nutrition for the poor to address inequality and widespread vulnerabilities (CPD, 2008, p. 23). The following section of the thesis will focus on the social safety programs in Bangladesh with special reference to Indigenous people. It is obvious that the poorer Indigenous people in Bangladesh face the worst risks and vulnerabilities during natural calamities, anticipated risks due to seasonal poverty during lean periods of the year such as Monga (seasonal hunger and poverty during the year of September to November) in North-Bengal, and routine crisis in the struggle of everyday life (Rahman, 2006, p. 10).

There are thirty social safety net programs in operation in Bangladesh through thirteen ministries, along with the Bangladesh Bank (BB), the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and other NGOs. The social safety net programs are an imperative strategy of the Bangladesh Government, which contributes to an increased household income, improved quality and quantity of food-intake, and significant improvements in comprehensive welfare especially in school enrolment, particularly for girls as well as reducing the level of poverty and vulnerabilities. In broad categories, there are two types of safety net programs are being implemented; one is cash transfer (conditional and un-conditional) another is food/in-kind transfer to the intended recipients. Examples include the Primary Education Stipend Project, Female Secondary School Assistance Program, and stipends for students with disabilities are conditional cash transfers that depend on enrolment in schools. Old Age Allowances, Allowances for Retarded/Disabled Persons, Allowances to the Widowed, Deserted and Destitute Women etc. are un-conditional cash transfer safety net programs. On the other hand, Vulnerable Group Feeding Program, Vulnerable Group Development, Gratuitous Relief, Test Relief and Food for Works etc. are

known as food/in-kind transfer safety net programs (World Bank, 2006, p. 14). Scholars argue that direct cash transfers rather than delivering food or other items in-kind provide greater choices and empowerment to the recipients to meet their various needs for their livelihoods (CPD, 2008, p. 3).

The SSNPs are administered by various ministries/departments of the government and NGOs, with little or no coordination among them, resulting in duplication, overlap and wastage of limited resources (Khuda, 2011, p. 103). In terms of operation and reaching to the intended recipients, the safety net program reflects 'poor planning, coordinating, targeting and implementing' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 3). Even though there are quite a number of programs in operation compared to the needs of many eligible beneficiaries, there are still large numbers of people who are underserved and not benefiting from those programs. In a country like Bangladesh where 40 percent of people are living below the poverty line, only 39 percent of eligible households are covered through various social protection programs and 60 percent of eligible households are still to be reached under those schemes (BIDS, 2003) due to mistargeting and leakages⁴². Despite limited coverage to the disadvantaged people whatever the range of operations, there exists a high level of leakage of around twenty to forty percent (Devrajan, 2006, p. 17) in distributing food items, as large numbers of intermediaries are involved in the whole distribution chain. Devrajan (2006, pp. 17-18) points out that mistargeting, leakages and lack of political support are in impediments against the smooth functioning of safety net programs in Bangladesh. Similarly, Mishra (2006, p. 28) argues that social safety net programs are inadequate in coverage, inflexible, unable to absorb communities at

⁴² By leakage, it denotes the drips of resources which mean that it does not reach to the eligible recipients of safety net program.

risks, and characterized by leakages and misappropriation. Another World Bank (2006, pp. 36-42) study on social safety nets in Bangladesh finds substantial root causes of poor coverage, and malfunction of those existing programs which are represented by inadequate coordination among the ministries, overlaps and gaps in providing services, administrative incapacity, involvement of large number of intermediaries in delivery services, lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and political patronage in selecting beneficiaries but without political support for the sustaining of the programs. Morshed (2009, p. 12) points out that pervasive politicization even in rural areas in selecting beneficiaries by politicians for their own clients limits the potential opportunity to helping the poor and the most needy.

Apart from institutional deficiencies in providing safety net programs, incoherent policy is also responsible for low performance because most of the social safety net programs address 'ex-post' coping initiatives with a few being 'ex-ante' preventive measures (Ahmed, 2007, p. 3). Under this dismal situation, Devrajan (2006, p. 18) quoted a phrase from Milton Friedman in analyzing social safety net programs of Bangladesh as, 'Programs for the poor of poor programs'. In reality, the social safety net being a very crucial and sensitive program for the vulnerable groups of the population during disasters and risk periods, still large numbers of eligible recipients from Indigenous communities are out of reach due to ineffective and inefficient service delivery systems and defective policies of the government.

Summary of the chapter: This chapter describes the historical background of the complex process of marginalization, discrimination and deprivation of the researched indigenous people which started from British colonial period. The land tenure policy and tenancy act during British colonial period deprived the rights of farmers. The

land has become a commodity and means of capital accumulation for the colonial rulers. As a result, the indigenous people have revolted against the usurpers to establish their rights over land and natural resources. In the same way, during Pakistani colonial period, the Indigenous people have become crucial victims of land dispossession by the enemy property act. Even after the independence of Bangladesh, again the indigenous people have experienced multiple layers of deprivation in a newly born country. The enemy property act has been re-named as vested property act which caused massive land dispossession of the indigenous people. In addition, re-classification of *Khas* land, land acquisition by the forestry projects of Bangladesh government, forcible occupation by local powerful influential through forgery of documents have contributed land dispossession of the researched indigenous people which impacted on their livelihood. Due to their limited access to land, they suffer from poverty and multiple forms of vulnerabilities in terms of access to education, health care services and access to social security system of the government of Bangladesh.

Chapter Three: Key Concepts and Analytical Frameworks

3.1. Introduction

The lenses of the post-colonial conceptual framework and social relations approach will be applied to the two researched Indigenous communities of North-Bengal who are inherently dependent on land for their subsistence living. The land tenure policy throughout the colonial periods and the post-independence period has affected their life chances and ability to survive. The literature on colonial policy, practices and laws related to land will be addressed as these concepts are relevant to understanding their marginalization, discrimination and the extent to which their life chances have been thwarted through structural poverty. The role of key institutions have also been analysed to assess the life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

3.2. Well-being and quality of life

Bangladesh is one of the developing countries in South Asia. According to the Human Development Report 2013, Bangladesh falls within a category of countries characterised by low human development, as it ranks 146 out of 187 countries in the world in terms of life expectancy (69.2 years from birth), 8.1 expected years of schooling, 4.8 average years of schooling and \$1,785 per capita income (UNDP, 2013, p. 18). The *Forbes* (Worstell, 30 April, 2013) magazine published an article titled '*A Life in Bangladesh is not worth the same as a life elsewhere*' in the world indicates the acute burden of poverty, a vast gap between rich and poor, limited access to health care, clean drinking water, and rural dwellers living in traditional houses without any facilities associated with the modest standards of living.

Understanding the disparity between city and rural areas in such a low level of human development in this study, I have particularly focused on the well-being and quality of life of the two studied ethnic communities living in rural areas in North Bengal.

From a wide range of prevailing literature on well-being and quality of life, I have adopted a few concepts in the following section in relevance to my research topic. In measuring indicators of well-being and quality of life, Sen (2003, P. 43) has developed the capability approach and argues that the most important thing is to consider what people are actually able to be and do. The capability approach focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve. This quality of life is analysed in terms of the core concepts of ‘functioning’ and ‘capability’ (Sen, 2003, p. 43). This, the quality of life should be conceived and measured directly in terms of functioning and capabilities or the *freedom* people have to enjoy valuable activities and states instead of resources or utility. From the scholar’s theoretical perspectives, there is a set of core human capabilities that are critical to full human functioning and for assessing well-being as it is defined by Nussbaum and Glover (1995, p. 83):

“Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, being able to have good health, adequate nutrition, adequate shelter..., being able to use the senses, imagine, think, and reason; and to have the educational opportunities necessary to realize these capacities, being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves, being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one’s own life, This includes ... employment outside and to participate in political life..., being able to live for and to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings..., being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals and the world of nature ..., being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities”

This definition of well-being illustrates the well-being and quality of life of the two groups of Indigenous people in this research in terms of being able to live a normal

human life with dignity, rights to food, housing, education, and being able to actively participate in social and political life under the democratic governance system in Bangladesh. In this regard, to map out well-being aspects of the two researched ethnic populations, here I have adopted the systemic well-being paradigm of McIntyre-Mills (2008, p. 301) in the following table:

Table 3: systemic paradigm of well-being

Dimension of well being	Indicators
Physical health	Having a safe home on his/her own land in a secured community, clean water and sanitation, food security, household assets (clothes, bed, kitchen utensils, cattle and poultry).
Mental health	Security of life, knowledge, self-confidence, self-esteem, peace of mind, mutual respect, unity and trust in the community.
Socio-cultural	Education opportunities, access to heal care facilities and social services, family and community relationships, an effective traditional social institutions (<i>Manjhi</i> ⁴³ and <i>Dighori</i> ⁴⁴ Parishad)
Political	Participation and representation in the local government, ability to exercise an equal citizenship rights.
Economic	Access to employment, equal wages, just and fair price in food and commodities market.
Environmental and spiritual	Connection with land, forest and water, Living with nature is a religious and spiritual well-being.

Source: Adopted from McIntyre-Mills, 2008, p. 301.

The above table has also been documented in line with the ‘subjective and psychological well-being’ (Camfield et al. 2006, p. 22) in relation to the Bangladeshi context. The study of Camfield et al. (2006, pp. 22-25) showed that a set of life-indicators such as income, employment, housing, health, children’s education,

⁴³ A traditional social administrative system in the *Santal* community

⁴⁴ A traditional social administrative system in the *Oraon* community

personal security and cultivable land with cattle and oxen especially in rural areas are perceived as important factors for well-being in Bangladesh. More likely, those indicators are equally important for the well-being of the two researched ethnic populations in the rural areas of Dinajpur district in Northern Bangladesh. The above-mentioned paradigm systematically shows interconnected issues such as physical, mental, socio-cultural, political, economic, and environmental and spiritual aspects that affect their daily quality of life. In fact, the well-being of the researched populations is broadly associated with the ownership of land, sense of security of life, education and employment opportunities without discrimination, exercising equal citizenship rights, and social inclusion in the participatory democratic governance system of Bangladesh.

The well-being of the two researched communities is integrated with land, forest, water and the Mother Nature. The Indigenous people view land and the natural environment as part of their distinctive way of life. They have a sense of belonging to the soil and an intimate bond with nature as a part of cultural and religious beliefs where their *Bongas*⁴⁵, deities and spirits of their ancestors abide. Their social and religious festivals are associated with land, soil, trees, flowers and nature. For example, the *Sohorae*⁴⁶, *Baha*⁴⁷, the *Sarhul*⁴⁸ and the *Karma*⁴⁹ are the most important social festivals (Murmu, 2004 and Ekka, 2008, p. 5) celebrated with religious fervor and enthusiasm amongst these two ethnic communities in Bangladesh. Through

⁴⁵ *Bongas* in *Santali* means gods and goddesses, deities and supernatural creatures those reside in natural environment (Murmu, 2004).

⁴⁶ A social festival of the Santal community is held after harvesting period (Murmu, 2004).

⁴⁷ A flower festival or festival of renewal of the Santal community (Murmu, 2004).

⁴⁸ *Sarhul* festival is associated with praying for the fertility of land and a good paddy harvest (Ekka, 2008, p. 5).

⁴⁹ *Karam* festiva is a worship of trees performed symbolically with the *kadam* (*anthocephalus chinensis*) tree or its branches (Ekka, 2008, p. 5).

worshipping nature, trees, flowers and fruits, they seek spiritual assistance for the fertility of the land, increased crop production, and the well-being of the entire community. They have a mutual and bonding social capital in sharing economic resources with one another without any thought of profit or stockpiling, like in a market driven financial system at the cost of others' or of natural resources. Thus, land is not only a competitive and scarce natural resource but also it is perceived as an integrated source of well-being and life chances in the communal Indigenous society. In other words, land, water, forest and natural resources define the Indigenous way of living and survival against the benchmark of land as a commodity from the capitalistic point of view (McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 219). To the Indigenous people, land is a communal resource for sharing, with communal values being the essence of the Indigenous life-style. The dispossession of land either by government acquisition or fraudulent means have a direct effect on their well-being, physical connections with land, water, forest and environment, and the spiritual well-being of the entire community.

3.3. The conceptual frameworks

Chambers' 'vulnerability and poverty ratchets' (1983, pp. 115-117) has also been used to analyse the inter-generational cycle of poverty and indebtedness of the researched population. Chambers' 'deprivation trap approach enabled me to look at the vicious cycle of poverty; the syndrome of poverty and the poverty trap with reference to the most marginalized two ethnic communities of Bangladesh. These people live in the remote marginal and rural areas of Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. This conceptual framework enabled me to make a sense of the institutional power dynamics that produce, reinforce and reproduce social difference and inequalities and ultimately which effect on the human well-being and gender issues in the researched

locations. Throughout this study, I have also analysed Indigenous citizenship rights and gender aspects from the perspective of Epstein's (2007) "inclusion and difference paradigm" to articulate Indigenous people as being under represented and excluded in the social and political institutions that underpin their quality of life and life chances. The conceptual framework on social contract and citizenship rights in light of constitutional provision has been employed to assess the life chances of the most marginalized Indigenous people in this study. The key concepts to be discussed in this chapter are; the Critical Systemic Approach (Churchman, 1979, p. 52, Ulrich, 1983, P. 244 and McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 372), Robert Young's (2001) Post-colonial legacy, Abul Barkat's (2001) Political economy of *Khas* land administration in Bangladesh, Tone Bleie's (2005) Nationalism and Human rights challenges of Adivasis in Bangladesh and Linguistic Hegemonic Discourse by Durnnian's (2007) and Rahman's (2010) perspectives on how colonial legacy and its concurrent practices have resulted in Indigenous people's dispossession and negatively affected Indigenous children's education in Bangladesh. In addition to that Robert Park's (1928) Theory of Marginalization, Todman's (2012) Social Exclusion Theory, Abul Barkat's (2006) and Jordan's (2004) discourse on marginality and structural poverty, Lewis's (1970) culture of poverty and Jock Young's (2012) Theory of Relative Deprivation have been discussed to understand the nature of marginalization and deprivation experienced by the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. Finally, Kabeer's (2011) institutional dynamics lenses have also been employed to conceptualise the discrimination against Indigenous women in a patriarchal and post-colonial society and discrimination against children in terms of educational opportunities in the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.

3.3.1. Social contract and citizenship rights

This research attempted to look at the well-being and life chances of the two most marginalized ethnic communities in a democratic governance system in Bangladesh. The equal rights of every citizen of the country are enshrined in the national constitution. However, the true notion of citizenship rights or the ‘social contract’ (Rousseau, 1762, p. 52) between the governed and the government that define and limit the equal rights and duties of each citizen is not translated practically in Bangladesh. The social contract and the constitutional provision of rights do not guarantee equal citizenship rights or ‘the quality of life of the voiceless’ (McIntyre-Mills and Vries, 2011, p. 82) Indigenous people in Bangladesh included in this study. Thus, this research advocates for human rights legislation to address the well-being and life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

The well-being and quality of the two researched Indigenous communities is underpinned in a fragile democratic governance system within the framework of a ‘criminalized economic, political and administrative system’ (Barkat and Roy, 2004, p. 5) in Bangladesh. The following citation (Barkat et al. 2009, pp. 280-281) describes the real situation of the Indigenous people in the plain land of North-Bengal:

“Undue political influence and local class-based hegemonic culture, criminalised political economy, grabbing land by influential Bengalis with political back up, non-recognition of the traditional land rights system of the Indigenous communities by our government, communal riots and the consequential land grabbing incidents, 'distress sale' by Indigenous people of their valuable lands at a much lower price to escape communal tension and flee to India, illiteracy, poverty and lack of knowledge regarding the land laws to regain the lost land among the Indigenous people, different sorts of governmental acquisition of Indigenous lands in name of arrangements for 'reserve forest' or 'eco park' are the pertinent causes behind Indigenous land grabbing in the plain land”.

The on-going incidents of forceful land grabbing and dispossession of land of the Indigenous peoples of the plains regions in North-Bengal has a prolonged colonial historical context. The land rights deprivation of the Indigenous people started with the appropriation of the *Forest Commons*⁵⁰ of the Indigenous peoples by the British Colonial Forest Department in the 1870s (Rasul and Karki, 2006, p. 1). The *Forest Act 1878* of the British colonial government established absolute state property rights over land and forests for revenue generation and commercial exploitation (Hazra, 2002, p. 21). In order to serve the interest of the British Empire and the railway industry, the British Government acquisitioned Indigenous people's land and made it into reserve forests and restricted their access to the forests. Thus, the traditional customary right over the forests of the Indigenous people was totally and blatantly neglected (Hazra, 2002, p. 22). Following the footprints of British colonial administration, the land grabbing of Indigenous people's lands continued throughout the Pakistani colonial period. During the volatile communal riots in the 1950s and the India-Pakistan War in 1965, most land dispossession of the Indigenous people occurred under the pretext of the *Enemy Property Act*⁵¹. After independence in 1971, the peak period of land grabbing of Indigenous people was recorded during 1971-80s in the name of the *Vested Property Act*⁵² (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 38). Since the period of British colonial rule up to the present day the process of land dispossession of the most marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged Indigenous people is continuing under the hegemonic social and political policies of the country.

⁵⁰ Between 1865 to 1885, the British colonial government declared some forests as reserve forest and the rest of the government forestland declared Unclassed State Forest (USF), where tribal people's customary rights were allowed. This forest is Common Forest (Rasul and Karki, 2006, p. 1).

⁵¹ The property of Hindus and ethnic minorities who left Pakistan for India classified under the Enemy Property Act of 1965.

⁵² After the liberation in 1971, ironically the Enemy Property Act became the Vested Property Act.

3.3.2. The Post-colonial lenses: historic and societal perspectives

This research is set in a decolonized state with a view to explore the lived experiences of the two Indigenous communities living in North-Bengal. The post-colonial framework has been employed in this research to assess life chances of Indigenous people who are struggling to survive with due justice in colonially inherited multi-faceted exclusions, violence, racial discrimination and marginalization. Post-colonialism theory ‘asks for justice’ (Parsons and Harding, 2011, p. 2) and it voices against social and psychological suffering, exploitation, violence and enslavement done to the powerless victims of colonization around the world. It also encounters the supremacy of the dominant western perspectives and seeks to re-position and empower the marginalized and subordinated “Other” (Smith, 2007, p. 12). The complex nature of colonialism draws a visible line between a dominant majority and minority; “us versus them” (Nandi, 1998, p. 2) that continues to affect and impact Indigenous communities throughout the world. In another words, post colonialism ‘attacks the status quo of hegemonic economic imperialism and the history of colonialism and imperialism, but also signals an activist engagement with new forms of political position’ (Young, 2001, p. 58).

By the course of time, the legacy of colonial penetration, discrimination, oppression and marginalization during the British and Pakistani colonial periods made their lives vulnerable. Even after the emergence of the new nation state of Bangladesh, the forcible acquisition of Indigenous people’s land continued due to their marginality and powerlessness in a ‘political elite-dominated state’ (Bleie, 2005, p. 232). The two Indigenous communities who are inter-generationally residing in Bangladesh come under the multiple forms of systemic marginalization, and their existence has come under threat. The on-going oppression and discrimination against the

Indigenous people in North-Bengal is perpetuated through the legacy of imperial and colonial practices in the past. The present condition of the systemic negation, fragmentation and devaluation of these two communities simply describe lives that are no better than they were under the colonial periods.

3.4. Does Neo-colonialism and internal colonization still exist in Bangladesh?

The nature of colonialism perceived in Bangladesh is the outcome of an inherited colonial footprint through the manifestation of political, economic, and cultural intervention and hegemony. In the modern state of Bangladesh, the lives of Indigenous people are worsening, compared to the conditions under alien colonial rulers, due to detrimental policies and practices imposed upon them by the state. The voices and narratives of the research indicate that Indigenous people are still experiencing the scourge of deprivation, discrimination and marginalization ruthlessly through the state's colonial and neo-colonial policies and practices despite living in a decolonized Bangladesh. The violent nature of internal colonization is depriving rights and privileges, causing the deterioration of traditional institutions and belongingness, and disrupting the livelihoods of Indigenous people in Bangladesh. The struggle, oppression and discrimination experienced by Indigenous people in everyday life is rooted in colonialism, and their vulnerability is reflected by the internal colonization imposed by the majority Bengali dominant society through culture, language, legal, monetary and political authorities.

After the emergence of new nation state of Bangladesh in 1971, a few changes had been made in land administration system but with less practical implications of legislation that causing perennial suffering of the tillers in establishing their rights over land (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 82). In an independent Bangladesh, land reforms are

guided by a Euro-centric, colonial-imperial legal system which was dominated by fraud in a hegemony controlled by political landed elites (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 27). The Constitution of Bangladesh does not refer to the existence of the cultural and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh, as the so-called ‘democracy’ is a prerogative of the ‘dominant majority only’ (Samad, 1998, p. 2).

Therefore, since independence to the present time, a vested interest group representing the power structure comprising of local influential, dishonest politicians, government officials and emerging “bourgeoisie” (Barkat et al. 2000, p. 2) have illegally occupied many lands, ignoring legislation and legal documents. The massive illegal occupation by local powerful and influential people, under government support in the name of social forestry and the Vested Property Act in 1974, re-classification into *Khas* land through forgery and illegal documents with the connivance of corrupt land officials have caused land dispossession and internal displacement not just of Indigenous people but of almost 10 million ethnic Bengali Hindus as well (IRIN, 2011). This kind of livelihood disruption has been possible due to lack of just law enforcement as well as large scale ignorance to the most pronounced intertwined aspects of Land and Agrarian Reform, which could secure tenant’s rights over land. In addition to that Billah (2011, p. 1) rightly describes that ‘the land record system in Bangladesh is archaic, obsolete, illegible and an impression of a complex labyrinth of land rights. The record of rights is the subject of forgery and a means of calculated deprivation to land rights particularly of the helpless and downtrodden’. Moreover, the land administration has been changed many times after independence.

In 1972, a land ceiling of 33.3 acres was re-established and various presidential orders provided for the distribution of *khas* land amongst the landless. Later on, in 1984, the Land Reform Ordinance limited future land acquisitions to 21 acres whilst retaining present ceilings. *Benami* (ceiling avoiding) transfers to relations are outlawed, but again evasion is easy. Legal recognition to the rights of share-croppers is given for the first time and share-cropping is established as the only admissible form of tenancy contract. In 16th May 1997, Government declared the *Khas* Land Distribution Policy for the landless, people affected by river erosion, helpless freedom fighters, and destitute women. But, the policy has not yet been implemented due to poor governance, unholy alliances with vested classes, corruption and non-retention of identified *khas* land, which is illegally occupied by powerful and influential people who have political patronage (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 31). Moreover, land administration is jeopardized under the operation of two ministries and three separate institutions. The record preservation of land is performed under the Ministry of Land (MoL) and land registration and settlement is done under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. The lack of coordination between two ministries and of three separate departments has complicated the land administration and management system in Bangladesh (Barkat, 2005, p. 24). However, after a four decade long demand for repealing the act, recently the Bangladesh Government has enacted the *Vested Property Return (amendment) Bill-2011* (BSS, 2011) on 28 November, 2011 in Parliament to return the vested properties of minority communities. Even so, this would hardly embrace the demands of the minority people (Ethirajan, 2011) as those vested properties largely remain under the illegal custody of the influential people who play a crucial role in the country's political domain. Similarly, the non-distribution of *khas* land to

the actual landless people has been a long legacy of deception. The Indigenous people are the worst victims of corruption, nepotism and mismanagement in a new born country.

Thus, the livelihood of poor, disadvantaged and marginalized Indigenous people is under threat in a new nation state where Bengali and Indigenous people have fought liberation war against Pakistani colonial rulers together with a vision to re-create a land of hope, peaceful co-existence and security. But under the political hegemony, the local corrupt land officials and powerful landed elites exploit illiterate and naïve Indigenous people. They have appropriated the imperialistic mechanisms in a decolonized state. The neo-colonial mechanism is driven by physical and material appropriation of lands of the Indigenous people of Bangladesh. As a result, the Indigenous people continue to struggle to live and survive with justice in colonially inherited multi-faceted exclusions, violence, racial discrimination and marginalization.

3.4.1. Critical systems approach for inclusion in the governance system

Even after the forty years of independence, the Indigenous people of Bangladesh are still under the scourge of discrimination, deprivation, and marginalization due to colonially inherited discriminatory laws, policies, and administration (it has been detailed in the earlier section of the thesis) that affect their entire livelihood. The constitutional provision of equality⁵³ before the law and equal treatment⁵⁴ (non-discrimination) on the ground of religion, race, and caste is under a critical situation with reference to minority groups such as, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and ethnic

⁵³ All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law (Bangladesh Constitution, 1972, Article, 27).

⁵⁴ The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Bangladesh Constitution, 1972, Article, 28.1).

minorities of Bangladesh. As a result, the researched Indigenous people are deprived from accessing equal opportunities in terms of education, jobs in the public sector, accessing health care and other social security services in the country. These systemic implications reflect their social exclusion, lack of participation in the democratic decision-making process, and further marginalization in the decolonized state of Bangladesh. For an example, in analysing an equal opportunity⁵⁵ of Bangladeshi citizens in the public services, Siddiquee and Faroqi (2010, p. 461) have indicated that:

“The religious and cultural values that the majority people pursue are discriminatory in nature. The level of social tolerance (corruption, patronage, child abuse, treatment of women and the poor) in Bangladeshi society is very high and is in-built theological mindset of the major policy actors. Acceptance of discrimination is very much in the social psychology of Bangladeshi people”.

To address the wider discrimination, deprivation and exclusion in the national policy and legal system, Anu Mohammad (1997, p. 12) an academic and a national icon for policy advocacy to protect the natural resources of Bangladesh emphasized the need for the inclusion of ethnic minorities of Bangladesh in the democratic governance system. He has stated that:

“Bangladesh is not a country of Bengalis alone despite the fact that large majority of its Population is Bengali, as Bangladesh is not a country of Muslims alone despite the fact that the large majority of its population is Muslim. There are other people of other national identities, other religious and believer-nonbeliever communities. This is a multinational, multi believer country, and everybody irrespective of colour, race, religion, gender has the same right in private and public sphere. This must be reflected in constitution, legal system, and property system”.

This thesis also employs a *critical systemic approach* (Churchman, 1979, p. 52, Ulrich, 1983, P. 244 and McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 372) to enhance inclusion and

⁵⁵ There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic (Bangladesh Constitution, 1972, Article, 29.1).

participation in the democratic governance and decision-making process of polices in the areas of education, land, health, and other social services concerned with the life chances of the researched Indigenous people in Bangladesh. West Churchman developed an open, systemic approach and argued that the ‘systems approach begins when first you try to see the world through the eyes of another’ (cited in Jackson, 2003, p. 139). He stressed the importance of considering the social, political, economic and environmental factors when undertaking an analysis and making a decision. In order to ensure equal participation in democracy and the national policy formulation process, this thesis has engaged critical systemic thinking perspectives to address the systemic context of life chances and the social, economic and environmental well-being of the researched Indigenous population.

This study has adopted, drawn on and paraphrased Ulrich’s (1983, P. 244) *critical heuristics of social planning*⁵⁶ to conceptualize the social systems, policy designs and planning in terms of reality (what is the case) and in terms of normative ideals (what ought to be the case) to address the life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in North-Bengal. The *Santals* and *Oraons* are the two marginalized ethnic communities who are the victims of multi-layered systemic discriminations due to social exclusion, deprivation and limited citizenship rights. To address their multiple vulnerabilities, non-recognition in the national constitution as the Indigenous people, structural marginalization, and gradual land dispossessions that badly affect their livelihoods and life chances, their inclusion in participatory

⁵⁶ Ulrich (1979, p. 244) has described twelve critically-heuristic categories of pragmatic mapping for socially rational planning. Ulrich poses 12 questions. He stresses that they should be asked in terms of reality (what is the case) and in terms of normative ideals (what ought to be done).

democracy, governance and decision-making is vital. The actual purpose of critical systemic design is to address the social, economic, environmental well-being and life chances of the two researched Indigenous populations of Bangladesh. The measure of success is inclusion and participation in the democratic governance system that is essential. Ulrich (1979, p. 313) argues that:

“Democratic participation of the affected citizens need not be an obstacle to rational planning and decision making but is actually an indispensable part of it...”

The relevance of democratic participation is significant because when people are excluded from participation in governance, their basic needs, citizenship rights, and their social concerns, such as the gradual dispossession of land that affect their entire livelihoods remain unaddressed. In this regard, McIntyre-Mills (2003, p. 372) stresses that:

“Life chances of citizens can be enhanced in multiple ways through inclusive, integrated policy and planning by, with, and for people and a sustainable environment. This requires a process of including representatives of all interest groups, irrespective of age, gender or socio-cultural back-ground”.

Thus, the study uses the critical systemic approach to enhance the inclusion and participation of the researched Indigenous people in the pluralistic democratic governance system of Bangladesh. Without addressing their social, economic, environmental well-being and life chances in terms of participation in the decision-making process; they will be further marginalized in the society.

3.5. Marginalization, social exclusion and proletarianization

In the development literature, the term of ‘marginalization’ has no ‘precise definition’ because this term ‘has different meanings to different people’ (Shafie and Kilby, 2003, p. 4). In sociology, this term refers to marginalization as the social

process of ‘becoming or being made marginal to’ or ‘having the lower standing within the wider society’ (Anupkumar, 2012, p. 3). In other words, being marginalized indicates being alienated from the society as marginalized people are not considered as a part of the society. Very often marginalization is associated with poor, vulnerable people, minority and ethnic communities who are excluded from meaningful participation in the society, labour market and are not entitled to equal rights in the society.

Bush and Ayeb (2012, p. 20) point out that marginality is ‘a social position of inferiority- one that is caused not by the actors’ essential features, but by the dominant discourse, law and institutions’. According to them, those who are in a marginal position, they reside distanced or excluded from the mainstream site of power. Arguing that relatively marginality is a fluid concept as cited in Cullen and Pretes (2000, p. 217) ... ‘Marginality is much more than a site of deprivation: ... a site of resistance’ where power becomes the central determinant of marginality. They have also pointed that the social constructivist view perceives marginality as a power relationship between a group viewing itself as a “centre”, and consequently viewing all minorities and non-members as marginal or “other”. Scholars like Cullen and Pretes (2000, p. 217) state that social marginality is ‘based on such characteristics as gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, occupation or languages’ which construct a margin between core and periphery. Thus, marginalization leads to social exclusion.

Apart from social marginality, as Cullen and Pretes (2000) characterized as mentioned above, Bernstein and Claypool (2012, p.186) echoed that ‘Social exclusion may be experienced negatively, both psychologically and physically’. Dr. Lynn Todman, director of *the Institute on Social Exclusion* at the Adler School of Professional Psychology, suggests that social exclusion refers to ‘processes in which

individuals and entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources (e.g. housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation and due process) that are normally available to members of society and which are key to social integration' (Todman, 2012).

Silver Hilary (2007, p. 15) argues that 'social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live'. Cruz-Saco (2008, p. 2) claims that "social exclusion is produced by systematic and institutional discrimination and other forms of rejection that leave out persons or groups from the mainstream system of economic, social, and political relationships". According to her, excluded persons and groups do not participate in the benefits of social capital with an equal sense of belonging due to discrimination, rejection and intolerance perpetuated through a systemic and institutional framework. For an example, the ethnic groups in a country are also minority groups; they are often marginalized because their traditions, linguistic, and cultural traits are distinctively different from the mainstream population. Bellani and D' Ambrosio (2011, p. 68) also claim that marginalized people are socially excluded and unable 'to participate in the basic political, economic and social activities of the society in which they live due to persistence in the state of deprivation' which obstruct their 'minimum standard of well-being and living'.

The researched Indigenous people are encapsulated under the vicious cycle of vulnerabilities and marginalization in the country. This research identified that the Indigenous populations from the research locations are living under threat of further

land loss either by forcible occupation by local powerful people or through acquisition by the state in the name of social forestry projects, *khas* land as well as vested property. If such types of incidents continue amongst the two researched Indigenous communities within the framework of a '*criminalized economic, political and administrative system*' (Barkat and Roy, 2004, p. 5) in Bangladesh, they will be even more vulnerable and marginalized.

The dispossessions of land, loss of employment opportunities and eviction from their homesteads have led to the researched Indigenous populations being in a marginal position and becoming vulnerable and destitute in the Bangladeshi society. Oscar Lewis (1966, p. 24) regarded this process in *the culture of poverty* as an outcome of *lumpen proletariat*. Under this downward proletarianization (Bratsis, 2003, p. 661) process, the marginal and small independent farmers are transformed into wage workers. Robert Redfield (1956, pp. 138-139) has also said in the *Peasant Society and Culture* that the landless labourers would not be able to practice peasantry because they have lost their ancestral lands and they will be transformed into industrial workers, urban social classes, and proletariats. Proletarianization is the 'set of processes which increases the number of people who lack the means of production, and who survive by selling their labour' (Tilly, 1979, p.1). Thus, they become the part of proletariat class of 'exploited workers' (Bratsis, 2003, p. 661) whose livelihoods depend on the value of their manual labor. They have weaker voices and minimal representation in the democratic institutions of the country. Under the current situations, the constitutional rhetoric does not guarantee the citizenship rights of the Indigenous people. This is why my research has attempted to invoke human rights approach to revitalize the democratic citizenship rights of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh.

3.6. Gender frameworks and women’s land inheritance rights

The Santal and Oraon communities are patriarchal societies where women have no inheritance rights even though men and women work alongside each other in agricultural activities for subsistence living. The Indigenous women of the two research locations are denied to a rightful share of ancestral lands and access to resources through patrilineal customary inheritance laws that characterize the unequal power relationships of Indigenous women in Bangladesh. The customary practices of these two Indigenous communities indicate that the sons have full rights of ownership to the fathers’ properties.

Table 4: Women’s inheritance rights and empowerment in Bangladesh context

National Benchmark	Indigenous people in Bangladesh
<p>The constitution of Bangladesh is enshrined with equal opportunity for men and women.</p> <p>According to the <i>Muslim Family Laws</i> in Bangladesh, the women get one-eighth share if there is child and one-fourth if there be no child from the estate of her husband (Chowdhury, S. 2014, p. 5).</p> <p>According to <i>Dayabhaga</i> School of Hindu law, women are excluded and have limited inheritance rights (Aktar and Abdullah, 2007, pp. 89-90).</p> <p>Inheritance for Bangladeshi Christians is guided by <i>The Succession Act of 1925</i>, which provides equal inheritance rights for men and women (Ministry of Law, 2014).</p> <p>In terms of gender equality, Bangladesh ranks 111 out of 187 countries in the world according to Human Development Index (HDI) of UNDP (UNDP, 2013, p. 18).</p> <p>The National Women Development Policy 2011 of Bangladesh stresses women’s full access to and control over earned income, inheritance, credit, land and market to levelling existing inequalities and promoting equal rights between men and women in the society (National Women Development Policy 2011, Article, 25.2).</p>	<p>According to the customary practices of the <i>Santal</i> and <i>Oraon</i> community, women do not have inheritance rights even though men and women work alongside in agricultural activities. But a daughter inherits mother’s property if there is any (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 246).</p> <p>Descent and property are transmitted through the male line amongst these two Indigenous communities (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2011, p. 7).</p> <p>Apart from patrilineal Indigenous communities, among the matrilineal <i>Garos and Khasis</i> another Indigenous group of the greater Mymensingh and Sylhet districts of Bangladesh, property and descent go to mother’s to daughter’s (Agarwal, 1994, p. 103).</p> <p>A 53 percent of <i>Santal</i> women cannot participate in the traditional social power structure and 80 percent women cannot go independently outside side of home for shopping and cultural functions (Barkat et al. 2009, pp. 252-253).</p> <p>Around 80 percent <i>Oraon</i> women cannot take household decisions independently and 70 percent women are verbally abused in the households (Barkat et al. 2009, pp. 173-174).</p>

Source: Compiled from different sources as mentioned above on 12 February 2014

The embedded customs demonstrated that if there are no siblings from a couple, the husband's property will be inherited by the sons of his brother (s) (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 246). In exceptional cases, if a father does not have any son, only in that case can daughters inherit property (Kamal, Samad and Banu, 2003, p. 24). Generally, a wife will not be the owner of her husband's property. But it is only when a mother is the owner of some property that the daughters can inherit that property according to the customary land inheritance practices of these two ethnic communities (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 246).

A recent study of Sarwar et al (2007, p. 5) found that 'legal and social restrictions' inhibit women from owning or inheriting land through inheritance, purchase, or from the government in a patriarchal society. The Indigenous people uniformly follow the customary practice of passing all land to their sons, and never to their daughters. In the researched Indigenous communities, descent and property are transmitted through male line and women remain systemically devalued without property and genealogical identity. The patrilineal social structure prevents Indigenous women from inheriting property, land and other resources due to the absence of structured and organized legal codes (Chakraborty, 2004, p. 75) even though the national constitution guarantees equality and equal protection for all citizens. The constitutional rhetoric of gender justice, equity and equality, inclusion and participation seemed to be well documented but in practice those pillars are in dismal situations. The discriminatory inheritance laws existing in most of the Indigenous communities further hinder women's overall emancipation in the society (Roy, 2004, p. 8). Thus, Indigenous women are deprived from hereditary rights and having limited control over household resources and decision-making processes.

The Indigenous women in the researched locations are excluded from participation in the traditional social structures in the community. At the community level, in terms of participation and representation in traditional social institutions such as *Manjhi* and *Digori* Parishad and the local government power structures, they are excluded and feel alienated from the democratic process in the local government. As a result, the Indigenous women in the researched locations perceive that they are marginalized and have limited life chances because of their limited access to health care services due to their poverty, economic insolvency, educational disadvantage and limited understanding of the root causes of health and well-being issues. There is need to address 'Strategic Gender Needs' (March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 103) to challenge women's subordinate and different position in society and stress for women's equality, equity and empowerment.

3.7. Conceptualization of women's empowerment

According to the Constitution of Bangladesh (1972), women's rights are protected based on the universal principles of equality. The Article 28 (2) of the constitution states that women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life. Despite having stringent laws and regulations, the women in general all over the country experience some sort of discrimination in terms of inheritance rights, wages in the labour market, and participation in the decision-making process due to women's lack of empowerment (Chowdhury, 2010, p. 2). The issues centred on women's empowerment have been defined, conceptualized and elaborated in many different ways in the literature. Here, I will use a few conceptual frameworks that will enable me to address the Indigenous women's empowerment issues in the researched locations.

The contemporary discourse on women's empowerment in Bangladesh originated from years of gender discrimination beyond biological (sex) differences in terms of social, cultural, economic, religious and legal perspectives by the imposed dominance of patriarchal society (Nazneen, Hossain and Sultan, 2011, p. 8). Recently, "empowerment" is technically used to address gender mainstreaming, women's autonomy and gender equality despite existing theoretical debates in explaining those terms (Haque et al. 2011, pp. 17-18). Scholars endeavoured to define empowerment in different paradigms addressing root causes or enabling factors that make women powerless, vulnerable and marginalized in the society. Haque et al. (2011, p. 24) contributes to the concept of women empowerment in terms of economic decision-making, household-decision making, and physical movement. Economic decision making refers to women's independent decision-making capacity to share or to control domestic financial resources. Household decision-making indicates women's ability to make decisions on their own health care, child health care, which food to be cooked each day and their effective role on family planning. By physical movement, women empowerment denotes women can go shopping, go outside the village/town/city or to hospital alone and whether they can visit their relative's house without being escorted. These three concepts of empowerment are conducive to the process of women's empowerment.

In alignment with Haque et al. (2011), Nazneen, Hossain and Sultan (201, p. 8) mention 'political empowerment' of women which interprets women's full entitlement of citizenship rights, rights to compete and to be elected in different tiers of government institutions and rights to be an effective users of public services. Khan and Ara (2006, p. 77) point out that empowerment is the "transformation of

structures of subordination through radical changes in law, property rights, control over women's labor and bodies, and the institutions that reinforce and perpetuate male domination". Reeves and Baden (2000, p. 35) argue that the concept of women's empowerment is embedded with political discourse which denotes contested meaning. According to them, women's empowerment is a bottom-up process of transforming social and culturally constructed subordinated relationships between men and women and "unequal gender power relations through individuals or groups developing awareness of women's multiple forms of subordination and building their capacity to challenge it". Kabeer's (2001, p. 19) definition has sketched out a wider viewpoint of women's empowerment. She has defined empowerment as "the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". Her holistic approach covers a dimension of empowerment that elaborates resources (material, social and human), agency (motivation and purpose) and achievement, which enhance women's ability of choices or capabilities. Kabeer's definition of empowerment calls for a continuing process which urges women's power of negotiation, control over their lives and resources to be met through the transformation of social, cultural, religious and economic power structures. In addition to that Sara Hlupekile Longwe defines women's empowerment as "enabling women to take an equal place with men and to participate equally in the development process in order to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men" (March et.al, 1999, p. 92). The core of the meaning of women empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own destiny in terms of rights to make choices and control over resources and participation in the decision making process.

3.8. Institutional dynamics on human well-being and gender justice

In this research, I have adapted Naila Kabeer's (1994, P. 264) *Social Relation Approach to Institutional Analysis* to analyse institutional dynamics and the key role of institutions on the well-being of the researched population. This conceptual theory enabled me to make sense of institutional power dynamics that produce, reinforce and reproduce social differences and inequalities, which ultimately have an effect on human well-being and gender issues in terms of the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power in society.

Table 5: *Institutional dynamics on human well-being*

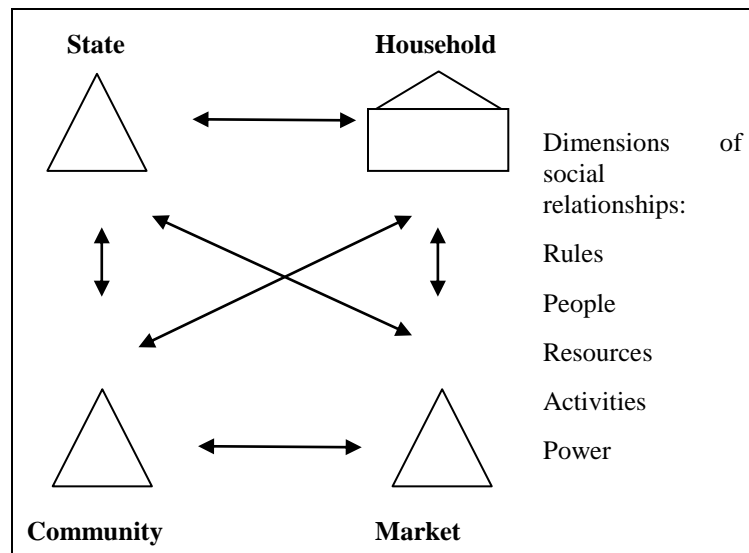
Key Institutions	Indicators for well-being
State	Constitution, legal framework, equal opportunities, land management and administration, welfare, equal inheritance laws
Market	Firms, financial corporations, farming enterprises, multinational companies
Community	Local government, service delivery of NGOs, community-based organizations
Family/Kinship	Household, extended families

Source: Adapted from Kabeer's (1994, p. 36) *Social Relation Approach to Institutional Analysis*

The relevance of using this conceptual framework is that human well-being is perceived as concerning survival, security, autonomy to participate fully in the decision making process at both the personal and collective level. These key institutions are inter-related dimensions of social relationships in terms of rules, resources, people, activities, and power (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1996, p. 18). Those dimensions are significant to the analysis of social inequality in general, and gender inequality in particular. Any change in the policy or practice in one institution will cause changes in others. Human well-being is largely dependent on the institutional rules or governing patterns, how the activities are carried out, how the

resources (human, material, and intangible) are mobilized and distributed, how the people are included or excluded in those institutions, and who has the power or authority to control the distribution of resources in those institutions (Kabeer and subrahmanian, 1996, p. 27). Thus, the institutional dynamics frameworks have also been employed to conceptualise the well-being of the two research ethnic communities in the patriarchal and post-colonial society of Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.

Figure 2: The Role of Key Institutions and their Role



Source: Adapted from Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 108

In this study, I have attempted to analyse Indigenous women's role and position in the society through Moser's *Gender Roles* (March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay, 2011, p. 56) and *Social Relation Approach* (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2011, p. 7) in the research setting. The research finds that women from these two Indigenous communities perform a 'triple role' (reproductive, productive, and community-managing activities) (as cited in March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, pp. 56-59) more likely for low-income women in most societies.

This research has also analysed the role of family, community, market and the state on the Indigenous women's unequal position in the society. Kabeer's (1994) *Social Relation Approach* is envisioned to analyse structural relationships that create and reproduce systemic differences and gender inequalities not only in the family or household but also across a range of institutions including community, market and the state.

In terms of inheritance rights, access to education and health services, women are still in a vulnerable position. Their vulnerability and marginalized position are perpetuated because descent and property are transmitted through the male line, where women remain devalued without property and 'genealogical identity' (Kabeer, Mahmud and Tasneem, 2011, p. 7) in these two ethnic communities. The Indigenous women face 'double discrimination' (Das, 2011, p. 57) by their Bengali neighbours and by the male members of their own communities. Women from these two communities do not inherit land. The only exception is in families that do not have sons. Apart from being excluded from traditional community administrative structures and deprived of hereditary rights, the Indigenous women face serious 'gender violence' (AITPN, 2008, p. 8) including verbal and physical violence that stigmatise them in Bangladesh because of their 'gender identity' (Reeves and Baden, 2000, p. 22).

As a result, women suffer from food insecurity, inadequate health care and sanitation facilities during lean seasons of the year when they have no work or other employment opportunities. Besides that women from these two Indigenous communities are found engaged in agricultural activities for subsistence living,

where women get comparatively lower wages than men. Thus, Indigenous women's position in the society is lower than men as having limited control over household resources and decision making processes in a patriarchal society. This research determines to what extent those institutions play a critical role in creating and reproducing gender inequalities amongst the two ethnic societies in Bangladesh. The detailed implications of the key role of institutions that effect on the well-being of the researched populations have been narrated in the findings and analysis chapters (chapter five and six) of the thesis.

3.9. Structural poverty and systemic discrimination in Indigenous life

Poverty is widespread in developing countries like Bangladesh. The definitions of poverty vary considerably among the nations as each and every country has distinctive criteria to measure poverty. In investigating the nature and intensity of poverty in Bangladesh, it has been classified in different ways such as, extreme poverty, relative poverty, absolute poverty, chronic poverty, and people living below the poverty line (BBS, 2009). For an example, around 40 percent of the population (Index Mundi, 2012) live below the poverty line. They are lacking both money and basic necessities such as, food, water, education, healthcare, and shelter needed to successfully live. This is one of the highest rates among developing countries. On the other hand, there is an increased discourse to address the well-being of the vast population. Elimination, reduction and eradication of poverty are also equally important. At this stage, Ali and Hossain (2006, p. 3) ask a vital question 'why do the needs and the interests of the poor and the poorest have so little influence on policy and political outcomes'? Indeed, a valid question which has been overlooked in all those years in the discourse of combating against poverty in Bangladesh. The key contributing factors leading Indigenous people in North-Bengal to live below the

poverty line is the focus of this thesis. The core question is: what are the structural causes of poverty?

The contemporary discourse of conceptualization of poverty indicates ‘poverty as multi-dimensional deprivation, not merely of income, but of capabilities, entitlements and rights’ (Green, 2006, pp. 1110- 1111) where poor people are in ‘a state of relative powerlessness and exclusion from decision-making processes and social and economic opportunities’. Titumir and Rahman (2011, p. 10) point out that ‘poverty results from lack of assets, limited economic opportunities and poor education and capabilities as well as disadvantages rooted in social and political inequalities’ in Bangladesh. Stating that poverty is being conceptualized as a multi-dimensional and dynamic process, Grist et al. (2006, p. 2) encompass poverty as ‘notions of limitations to, and deprivation of, resources, often focussed on lack of income or access to food, but also including other material, social and psychological deprivations that affect individual well-being’. The scholars have also addressed marginalisation; discrimination and social exclusion of ethnic and religious minorities are very severe due to hidden social and political inequalities and significant inadequacies in human rights practice and governance.

Abul Barkat (2006, p. 2), an economist of Bangladesh mentions that poverty originating from the marginality is a structural form of poverty created by the suppressive structure of the state perpetuated through discrimination, oppression and lack of equal opportunities. Another experienced economist Rehman Sobhan (Sobhan, 2011) also indicates that ‘Bangladesh has become a more unequal society - captive within two economies into two societies divided between a privileged elite and the excluded majority of the population’ and there is ‘need for constructing a

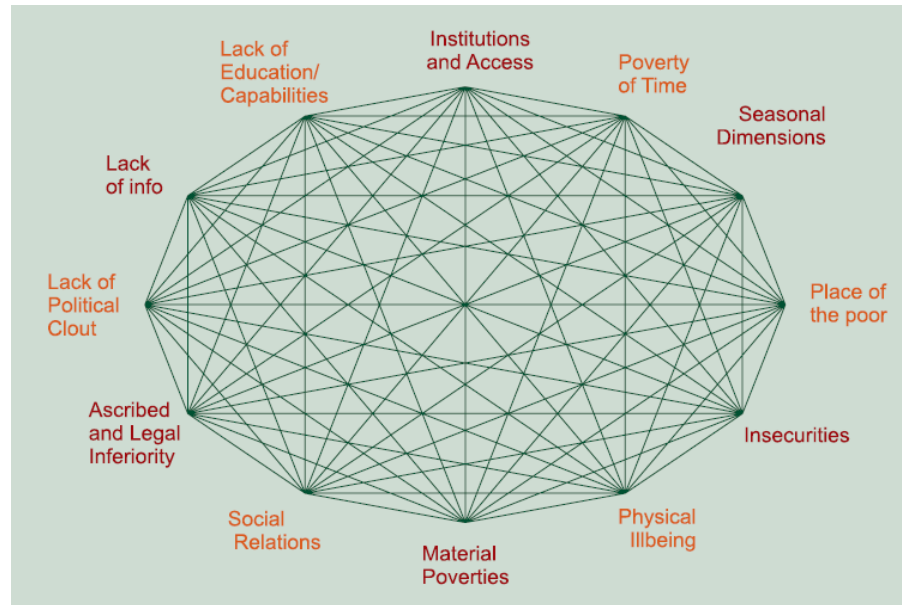
more equitable and just society in Bangladesh'. The conventional linear thinking of ruling out poverty through 'transfer of cash or some kind of assets' has been questioned by Shamim Ahmed (2011) and urgently seeks to address systematic issues of social exclusion of the poorest whose rights and claims are hardly acknowledged by their neighbours or the state. Similarly, Marufa Haque (Haque, 2012) argues that poverty is being comprehended by multi-dimensional indicators such as income, cost of basic goods, and daily calorie intake, but the root causes of denial opportunities to the poorest people are not being realized.

The supporters of the "structural" school of thought argue that poverty is the product of structural factors inherent to either the economy and/or to several interrelated institutional environments that serve to favour certain groups over others, generally based on discriminatory practices on gender, class, or race (Jordan, 2004, p. 22). In line with Jordan, Islam (2005, pp. 4-5) concurs that structural theories of poverty posit that poverty is caused by the structure of the larger socioeconomic order which produces inequality, and consequently poverty as in the theory of marginalization, encompasses human deprivation and marginality.

In describing the web of poverty's disadvantages, Chambers (2006, p. 3) has illustrated twelve dimensions of poverty which are inter-connected and inter-dependent to each other. The first cluster is income poverty which has a direct connection on consumption-poverty. The second cluster is material poverty which refers lack of wealth and other assets such as, shelter, clothing, and furniture including poor access to services. The third cluster of poverty derives from Amartya Sen's capability deprivation which describes beyond material deprivation such as human incapability including skills and physical difficulties and self-respect in the society. The fourth cluster of poverty broadly explains multi-dimensional view of

deprivation with material lack or want as only one of several mutually reinforcing dimensions. Chambers has also indicated that the people, who are in bad conditions or living with poverty variously described as marginalized, vulnerable, and excluded or deprived.

Figure 3: The web of Poverty's Disadvantages



Source: Chambers, 2006, p. 3

To illustrate the multi-dimensional causes of poverty, a common nature of poverty that the researched population experience in their daily life has been described here not to blame them for their fate. The nature of poverty includes an inter-generational sub-culture which Lewis (1970, p. 70) termed as a ‘culture of poverty’ that shares common traits of ‘institutional repression and discrimination’. The culture of poverty in these two researched Indigenous communities in North-Bengal have synergistic manifestations of ‘segregation, lack of economic resources, high rate of unemployment, illiteracy, high incidence of borrowing from local money lenders at usurious rates of interest’ literally in a new colonialism where powerless marginalized Indigenous people are living no better than in a ‘servile colonial status’

(Shafie and Kilby, 2003, p. 7). The common culture of poverty that exists amongst the researched Indigenous communities of Bangladesh is the manifestation of deprivation in every aspect of social, economic and political life. As they are poor, they have little voice, power and influence on the national policy and practices that concurrently push them towards further marginalization and deprivation.

3.10. Systemic Discrimination against Indigenous people in Bangladesh

The Constitution of Bangladesh does not directly mention the Indigenous peoples, but it is understood that the Indigenous people are the part of the disadvantaged community from the constitutional term, ‘backward section of citizens’ (The Lawyers and Jurists, 2012). But the reference to “backward segments of the population” is yet to be demystified in Bangladeshi context. On June 30, 2011 the Bangladesh Parliament has passed the 15th amendment of the National Constitution (Reflections, 2011). The term, ‘backward segment of the population’ has been replicated ambiguously in the 15th amendment without asserting the term ‘Indigenous’ to recognize this segment of the population. Article 23 (a) of the constitution after the 15th amendment states that the state will take initiatives for the development of traditional culture and heritage of ‘different tribes and small ethnic communities’ (Chtlaws, 2011) in Bangladesh. After forty years of independence, the constitution of the secular democratic country has replaced ‘*backward section of the population*’ with ‘*Tribes and Small Ethnic Communities*’ to address and identify the Indigenous people in Bangladesh.

The daily English newspaper *New Age* (August 10, 2012) reports that denial of ‘constitutional recognition to national minority groups is just depriving many citizens of the privileges of what they are legally entitled to’. Condemning the overtly critical

role of the state, Mandal (2007, pp. 4-5) argues that discriminatory laws and policies have led to multiple discrimination and deprivation of Indigenous people. As a result, torture, extortion, land grabbing, forcible eviction, violation against women etc. have been the part of regular nightmares for Bangladeshi minorities. The minister of law of Bangladesh in 2012 affirmed that:

“Anybody or any authorities who are found to be directly or indirectly discriminating against Indigenous people will be dealt with through the law. The rights to culture and self-identity of any citizens are constitutionally recognized. No one can deny them” (Bdnews24.com, 1 August, 2012).

In contrast, on the eve of celebrating World Indigenous Day 2012, a Bengali daily newspaper (The Prothom Alo, 8 August 2012) reported that there is on-going conflict within the government about Indigenous issues. Early on March 11, 2012, the Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) ministry has issued a letter to all district commissioners "restricting" (The Daily Star, 8 August, 2012) the celebration of World's Indigenous People's Day on August 9. The letter instructs all the administrative units to "monitor intensively that no support from the government side is granted to any programs on Indigenous People's Day". Moreover, the government has banned the use of the term “Indigenous” effectively, which has unsurprisingly sidelined all such groups living in the country and diminished their political, economic, socio-cultural, and land rights (The Daily Star, 8 August, 2012). The investigative reports of those daily newspapers have rightly elaborated that Bangladesh Government is in continual denial regarding the existence of Indigenous in this country because UN has legitimized some obligations to the Indigenous people. If any country fails to comply with those obligations, her participation in the UN peace keeping mission would be hampered (The Daily Star, 8 August, 2012).

The clear motif of government's political repressive, denial and non-recognition to the Indigenous people has been exposed in the above mentioned newspapers' reports.

Describing the deplorable situation of Indigenous people of North Bengal, Shafie and Kilby (2003, p. 3) argue that 'discrimination and exploitation lead to their exclusion and marginalization'. A voluntary organization working on Advocacy in Bangladesh, named Voluntary Service Organization (VSO), urges that "Indigenous communities be recognised as highly vulnerable to human rights abuses and injustice as their lack of education and poor access to health services prevent them from forming adequate defences. Indigenous people in Bangladesh have long been discriminated by the dominant cultures" (VSO, 2009). The website of Indigenous People's Issues and Resources has also published an article stating that "In north-western Bangladesh, the social discrimination faced by Indigenous people is so severe that many ethnic Bengalis refuse to serve food and drinks to Indigenous persons in rural hotels and restaurants" (IPIR, 2011). ECDO, an organisation to promote Indigenous well-being, also argues that Indigenous people find it far more difficult to enjoy their fundamental human rights because of discrimination and human rights abuses on the basis of ethnic origin for lack of specific legal mechanisms against such discrimination (ECDO, 2012).

The UNHCR (2008) also notes, 'It is widely believed that the Bangladesh Government has deliberately undercounted the *Adivasi* population to emphasize their marginality. Lower numbers mean that their legitimate demands can be more easily dismissed or ignored by governments and thus excluded from relief aid or development programs'. ILO (2006, p. 3) has also acknowledged that "The Indigenous people in Bangladesh are among the most marginalized and excluded

groups in society. Poverty and unemployment levels are high due to a number of factors, such as loss of land and forest/natural resource rights, displacement for purpose of modernization and industrialization, and discrimination”.

3.11. Institutional Marginalization and Strategic Needs

This research has also attempted to address to what extent, the key institutions such as, the state, market, community and household play a critical role in creating and reproducing structural inequalities in these two ethnic communities. Naila Kabeer’s (1994) conceptual framework of the Social Relations Approach has been employed in this study with the objective of institutional analysis and its implications on social relations aimed at development as human well-being. Kabeer (1994) argues that human well-being is seen as concerning survival, security, and autonomy in decision-making processes that shape one's choices and one's life chances, at both the personal and the collective level. Those key institutions produce, reinforce, and reproduce social differences and inequalities in society that underpin the wellbeing and life chances of the Indigenous people in the researched locations (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 103).

The process of discrimination and exploitation initiated by the state and market has paved the way for the exclusion and marginalization of Indigenous people in Bangladesh (Shafie and Kilby, 2003, p. 2). It has been identified that the Indigenous people in Bangladesh are the most impoverished sector among the poor. The Indigenous communities of North-Bengal are socially isolated from the wider society and have little access to the mainstream socio-cultural, economic and political spheres of the country. Social exclusion from the employment, unequal wages in the

labour market and lack of political voice have led to marginalization as individuals or as a social group in Bengali dominant society.

The Indigenous people of North-Bengal cannot have access to state-provided resources like primary education, primary health care services, development services, public employment and legal systems. The Indigenous people very often face derogatory attitudes from public officials in terms of accessing public health care systems, which are being replaced by churches and NGOs⁵⁷ with limited use of public health care systems. Bleie (2005, pp. 174-75) points out that there are three main reasons for which they cannot avail of state- provided resources. These are; the historical legacy of state discrimination which makes the Indigenous people profoundly sceptical about interacting with state officials and state agencies; the systemic nature of current discrimination by state agencies and the widespread lack of knowledge among the Indigenous people of their own basic rights. From an Indigenous perspective, it has been argued that the state's lack of recognition of collective rights such as the right to education in mother tongues, rights to lands and natural resources and non-recognition of constitutional and human rights' are also conducive to their sceptical perception about the government.

In the last few decades, the state has completely failed to recognize constitutional and human rights-based obligations including legal protection, equal treatment and social justice before the law for the Indigenous communities of North-Bengal. Over the centuries, the plight and sufferings of the two Indigenous people have not been heard globally. In contrast, the struggle against exploitation and struggle for land rights and cultural rights of the Indigenous people of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

⁵⁷ Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)

locally known as *Jummas*⁵⁸ and also the struggle and movement of Garos⁵⁹ for management rights over their ancestral forests and against the government's plan to establish eco-park are known internationally. But the struggle of the Indigenous people of Northern-Bengal to establish rights over their ancestral lands and natural resources or against enforced eviction from their agricultural lands and homesteads have never hit the international headlines or been reported on by leading human rights organizations and networks around the globe (Bleie, 2005, p. 59). There are 18 different ethnic groups in North-Bengal who speak their respective mother languages and co-exist with the Bengali majority population with their distinctive traditions. Their life and plight is commonly accompanied by 'poor health, disease, hunger, malnourishment, illiteracy, restricted access to resources, poor housing, unemployment and lack of basic services such as water, sewerage, electricity and so forth. The colonial history of the Indigenous people characterises 'exploitation, deprivation, deterioration of livelihoods, occasional experience of famine and severe food insecurity (Bleie, 2005, p. 169).

The Indigenous community in the North-Bengal face food insecurity during the months of September to December every year, as this is the lean season and most of the people remain unemployed due to scarcity of work or increased competition from the local migrant labourers. In this critical period of the year, they have to depend on the 'forest-based and water-based foods. But presently, the reduction of forest and water lands has threatened them with starvation and food insecurity, even though they have an unsung history of survival that is based upon an extraordinary ability to

⁵⁸ The indigenous people of Chittagang Hill Tracts (CHT) known as *Jummas* for cultivating crops in the hills

⁵⁹ The indigenous people of greater Myemensingh areas locally known as *Mandi* which means men or women

cope up with crises, shocks and stresses as they have effective survival and adaptive strategies.

To address structural inequalities prevalent in society, Strategic Needs (Reeves and Baden, 2000, p. 14) are significantly important because they challenge Indigenous people's subordinate positions in society and stress the need for equality, equity and empowerment. From the vulnerable position of Indigenous people in Bangladesh, the strategic needs are for self-determination, access to socio-economic resources, freedom of choice and power relations, and participation in decision-making processes in society (it has been detailed in the chapter six). Under this situation, the human-rights based approach is significantly important for the development and life chances of the Indigenous people in North-Bengal.

3.12. Human Rights-Based Approach to Development

The relevance of the human rights of the marginalized Indigenous communities has gained increasing 'moral and legal legitimacy' (Bleie, 2005, p.43) around the world as a part of comprehensive development approaches, which promote the rights-based approaches to development after the World War II. It is surprising that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) does not reflect any specific reference to minority protection. Even during the process of decolonization from 1940s to late 1960s, the newly independent states did not give recognition to their own tribal and Indigenous populations. Only one exceptional case exists in the constitution of India in 1947, where ethnic communities have been named as 'scheduled tribes and tribal (Bleie, 2005, p.46), and they are entitled to protection under the mechanism of the state. The history of specific rights of minorities, tribal and Indigenous populations have been broadly addressed in the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Convention 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations in 1957, which only came in force in 1967.

The concurrent injustices faced by Indigenous people around the world have led to international consensus, and the UN declared 1973-1982 the decade for Action to Combat Racism and racial Discrimination. The first NGO conference in 1977 in Geneva brought together spokespersons from every corner of the world for 50 NGOs and 60 Indigenous nations on the specific land rights of Indigenous people. Later, these initiatives urged the Commission on Human rights to establish a Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982 with a 'double mandate; to review developments of particular relevance for Indigenous populations and to draft standards' (Bleie, 2005, p. 47). During the period of the draft, many states with big numbers of Indigenous people were against the use of 'self-determination and peoples' in the draft, while ILO Convention 169⁶⁰ has recognised the terms, 'peoples and self-determination'. The working group took a decade to formulate the draft and in the mid-1990s it had submitted a draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People to the Commission on Human Rights. The draft declaration is a comprehensive document which incorporates 'rights to unrestricted self-determination, a collective right⁶¹ to ownership, use and control over lands and other natural resources, and rights to keep and develop native religions, culture and education, and to protect cultural and intellectual property' (Bleie, 2005, p. 48) for which the Indigenous people around the world have raised voices for a long time. Later in July 2000 a *Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues* has been established for

⁶⁰ Bangladesh government has not ratified yet the more comprehensive ILO Convention 169 (Bleie, 2005, p. 48)

⁶¹ The rights of all to be exercised collectively (Bleie, 2005, p. 48)

promoting partnerships between governments and Indigenous people around the world.

Tribal and Indigenous rights are fundamentally interconnected with the modern western technocratic terminology of ‘environment and sustainable development’ as there are ‘sacred relationships with lands, nature and environment’ (Bleie, 2005, p. 54) among Indigenous people. The colonialists and later colonial administrators and new state institutions have severely damaged and violated the native sacred laws of the land. The last half of the Twentieth Century intensified commercial exploitation of native lands, forests and natural resources through eco-tourism, mining, forestry, fishing, agriculture and hydro power development. As a result, most of the ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples have been expropriated or occupied by state authorities or private companies or by later settler populations. The Indigenous populations have been speaking before national and international agencies about the devastation and damage caused to them.

A prominent Indian leader from Canada named George Manuel announced his intention to form an international organization for Indigenous peoples to fight for their rights in the United Nations at the first World Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972. Later, the *Brundtland Report* in 1989 has emphasized on environmental protection and management in relation to Indigenous people. Similarly, the *Rio Declaration on Development and Environment* which is so called *Agenda 21* acknowledges the vital role of Indigenous people in management and development and calls for recognition of their culture, identity and interests in participation aimed at sustainable development. As a follow up from Rio, another *Convention on Biodiversity* came in to force in 1993. It has also

‘acknowledged the importance of recognising the knowledge held by Indigenous communities and calls for equitable sharing of benefits arising from the commercial utilization of such knowledge and practices. Indigenous peoples and many other rights based organizations have been raising their voices for a long time to gain entitlement rights over lands, natural resources, forests and the environment. From the historical background, the thesis stresses the implications of human rights to development based on international conventions, declarations and treaties for the two researched Indigenous communities of North-Bengal. The later section of the thesis will elaborate the detailed process of field research work on which the thesis is constructed.

Summary of the chapter: This chapter illustrates the analytical and conceptual frameworks on the systemic marginalization based on the historical references. The social contract and citizenship rights according to the provision of the national constitution are denied to the indigenous people in Bangladesh. The violation of rights and exploitation to the indigenous people started in British colonial period and continued even after the independence of the country. That’s why this thesis makes the case that inclusiveness in the democratic governance system is essential to end discrimination and deprivations towards the indigenous people in Bangladesh. Due to lack of addressing the well-being aspects of indigenous people particularly strategic needs of women, they have become marginalized and disconnected with development interventions in Bangladesh. This is why this thesis invokes for a human rights-based approach to raise the voice of the indigenous people for the inclusion and representation in the governance system in Bangladesh.

Chapter Four: Research Approach and Methodology

4.1. Introduction

To address the complexity of the subject adequately, a complementary approach combining both quantitative and qualitative instruments was followed in this study. This systemic approach to research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches and relies on participatory action research and my personal lived experiences. The research participants are from the *Santal* and *Oraon* communities who are located in the remote marginal areas of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh. The qualitative research approach includes a critical auto-ethnography, a case study, focus group discussion and in-depth interviews to address the research questions of the thesis. This research focuses on the most marginalized Indigenous people with special reference to poor women and their children of the above mentioned two Indigenous communities of North-Bengal

To operationalize the research questions, a complementary method of blending qualitative and quantitative approaches has been employed in relevance to particular situations, experiences and understanding the life chances of the marginalized people in this thesis. The following section of the thesis describes how the study has been conducted under this complementary method.

4.2. Rationale for Qualitative Research Method

A complementary approach that blends qualitative and quantitative research paradigms has been employed systemically in this study to explore respondents' perspectives of their real life struggles, narrative experiences and economic and political circumstances as conveyed in their own words. In order to articulate ground reality which is by nature subjective, interactional, contextual, fluid and

interpretative, qualitative methods have been applied in this research. The rationale for adopting qualitative research method is that it uses more flexible instruments, semi-structured methods, iterative processes, open-ended questions and probing that is conducive for participants to respond in their own words in a meaningful and culturally salient manner rather than giving them some fixed questions (Mack et al. 2007, p. 4). Throughout the research process, I have made every effort to translate the constructed realities and perceptions of the research participants under the challenging socio-economic and political landscapes that affect their livelihood, education, entitlement to rights, and access to social services in the country.

The qualitative research method employs an ‘iterative and naturalistic approach’ in a natural setting, unwrapping people’s lived experiences and meanings through a variety of empirical materials such as, case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, observations, interactions and visual texts on different perspectives and circumstances where they are located (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). In other words, a qualitative research is a type of investigative research which seeks answers systematically to a set of questions regarding values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations and produces findings that were not determined in advance, but they could be applicable beyond the boundaries of the study (Mack et al. 2007, p. 1). The major strength of the qualitative research to me is that it provides a diverse and complex textual description of what people experience by their lived experiences and produces in-depth and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). According to Dey (1993, p. 29) qualitative research describes, classifies, and makes connections and reflects as faithfully as possible the meanings people attribute to a particular life-situation.

Those meanings are expressed through actions, texts and images. Qualitative research aims to provide in-depth insights and understanding of the world as perceived by the researcher and his/her respondents, who are considered research participants. In the process of research, I continued to ask questions and to develop greater understanding of the issues from the collected data through an iterative process (Wilmot, 2005). In addition, qualitative research is often ‘emergent, flexible and dynamic’ as there is adequate room in the research design for ‘development and change’ (Frankel and Devers, 2000, p. 253). Qualitative research is a ‘non-linear and non-sequential process’ because to gather more in-depth information and explore new areas of interest data collection methods and techniques could be modified.

My concentration on qualitative approach has enabled me to explore critically how the research participants define and interpret meaning to their lives, how do they interact and experience challenges of life chances and well-being as Indigenous people in North-Bengal. Thus, qualitative research received validation through its methodological capacities in fulfilling my epistemological inquisitiveness about “the patterns of the human terrain” (Glesne, 1999, p. 193) where the research has been conducted. Substantially, critics argue that qualitative research has some limitations, as the outcome of the research is often regarded as unscientific, exploratory or subjective. In other words, the product of qualitative research seems to be criticism rather than the unfolding of a theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 7). Finally, qualitative research is not without flaws. It cannot be deliberately fully fabricated in all respects, considering the fact that from the standpoint of positivism, it does not pledge objectivity. Qualitative research is fundamentally subjective, however if there

are deficiencies in qualitative research, it is because a study is poorly conducted and/or not fundamentally methodological.

I have employed a systemic approach to research in this qualitative study. I am concerned that the qualitative research is ‘a process of enquiry and investigation; it is systematic, methodical and ethical’ (Neville, 2007, p. 1). The purpose of the systemic approach to research is to analyse the underlying causes of deprivation and marginalization of the two researched ethnic communities. In order to reveal and unravel a ground reality concerning the life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in a state of Bangladesh, a phenomenological approach has also been adopted in this study to explain and interpret the understandings and perspectives of the researched people who were the subject of the research. Consistent with the research topic a whole range of qualitative research tools such as, critical ethnography, case studies, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken in this systemic approach. The data used in this study has been gathered in a systemic manner in complying with ethical issues using the above-mentioned methods throughout the research process.

Conceptually, this research largely deals with citizenship rights, especially civil rights, rights of political participation, and social and economic rights (the right to social security and welfare) of the two most marginalized ethnic communities of Bangladesh. The conventional notion of citizenship rights of the diverse ethnic groups of people is perceived limited by the respondents under the framework of the national constitution of Bangladesh. The inadequate scope to exercise citizenship rights of the minority groups of people of Bangladesh is the grave concern of the thesis. This is why the research invokes human rights to address “the effective

participation of citizens in the governance of collective affairs” (Ulrich, 2003, p. 4) of the two researched ethnic communities of Bangladesh. In this research, the rights perspectives of the two marginalized ethnic communities have been constructed on the existing ‘complex social, political and economic’ (Harvey, Burns and Oswald, 2012, p. 115) landscapes of the country. Amidst the complex socio-political situation of Bangladesh, access to rights of the two most marginalized ethnic communities are the core element of the research. In order to dig out the ground of the social reality of the researched populations, a systemic approach to research has been designed through a ‘collaborative process of critical inquiry’ between the researcher and the informants of the study (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 12).

My self-perception and critical observation on the marginalized position of the research respondents have been described through an iterative process in the auto-ethnography section of the research. The case studies used in this research are drawn from the narratives of the research participants about their concepts and perceptions on marginalization. A broad range of interconnected issues on social, political and geographical disadvantages in terms of education, health and quality of life have been articulately addressed in this study. At the end of every in-person in-depth interview and focus group discussion, the key issues raised were re-presented in the meeting so that everyone could provide relevant input to the discussion. All the data gathered including field notes, in-person in-depth interviews, audio recordings, photos, and texts were used for systematic analysis throughout the research process in this study.

4.3. A critical auto-ethnography: my role as a researcher

I will begin by turning the lens onto my own role as a researcher, before discussing the study approaches in more depth. In this research, I have used an auto

ethnographic, personal narrative of my life experiences as part of the research process. I have been born and brought up in a remote *Santal* community in Rangpur district, neighbouring the district of Dinajpur where the research has been conducted. During my struggle throughout the academic and working journey of life, I have experienced and read extensively about the deplorable situation of Indigenous people in Bangladesh as presented by academic researchers, intellectuals and scholars mainly from the dominant majority over the past few decades, which have to some extent confronted issues and partly dissatisfied readers from the Indigenous communities. In this research, I have made myself known as an “insider researcher” (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 55) to these two Indigenous communities by virtue of belonging to the *Santal* community. Throughout the research process, I was aware of the possibility that an insider researcher can put the ‘trustworthiness or validity of the study at risk’ (Asselin, 2003, p. 100). At the same time, I have been inspired by the ideas of Asselin (2003, p. 100) in gathering data to keep my “eyes open”, assuming that I know nothing about the phenomenon being studied. Being an insider of the study, I have been motivated to capture the untold dynamics of deprivation and the process of marginalization of Indigenous people living in North Bengal in a dominated nation state through my perceived lenses and life experiences, neither diminishing nor being cynical to any valuable contribution made previously by the scholars of Bangladesh. From my inner feelings, this work is an expression of responsibility beyond solidarity with my Indigenous people’s continual struggle for rights of land, education, health care services and access to basic social services. I regard my work as a means to achieve human rights, equity and social justice in relation to my research participants’ shared experience of deprivation, discrimination and exclusion, which I have simultaneously encountered throughout my life.

My subjective role in the research is a crucial factor in locating myself in the research process. Dei (1999, p.397) argues that “locating oneself is important to knowledge production and validation. It is also crucial for how a text/discourse is read, understood, and interpreted. Thus, the personal location of the researcher contributes to the production of meanings (Dei, 1999, p. 397) as conveyed by the research participants on the research topic in certain circumstances. Being an insider, I have had the opportunity to be accepted and trusted as a fellow community member in the four different research locations. From my personal life experiences, I can relate my life challenges, experiences of exploitation, exclusion, constraints faced throughout my life’s struggle with the research participants. My subjective position as a male researcher and my identity (class, privilege, gender, and race) shaped my understanding of the lived experiences of the research participants in terms of how they are affected by the dominant coercive policy of the state perpetuating domination, subordination, oppression, and resistance in their communities. I have grown up in a marginal farmer’s family in a rural area and have experienced difficulties in schooling. I witnessed the misery of Indigenous people in my own community. From my personal practical experiences of social oppression, I have been motivated to contribute relevant and contextual knowledge that I have gained from my research participants in this thesis. This work is an expression of my mutual responsibility towards Indigenous communities as an educated Indigenous person touched by my inner common experience of sufferings, respect, sympathy and compassion for my fellow research participants. In this research, being an insider with my heart and physical presence, I have made every effort to uphold the unheard voices of my research participants with reference to the vicious process of marginalization, epistemic violence of colonial references, the coercive role of state

in creating deprived minority groups, and the struggle for their rights to land, education and health services in searching for better life chances and well-being in the dominant Bangladeshi society. With my long-term engagement with the research participants, I recorded their lived experiences and narratives based on their personal reflections, knowledge, and insights which later on helped me to articulate a meaningful context. Throughout the research process, my participants were my research participants and their perspectives are the core elements of this study, which, which is what I have learned being a post-graduate student studying in a foreign country, Australia. All this learning and first-hand experiences have been contextually replicated in this thesis based on subjects and conditions of the inquiry rather than solely my own interpretations.

As an author of the research, my role has been purely as a facilitator or a presenter of my participants' voices through their narratives, life experiences and their perceptions. I have sincerely listened to their voices and critically reproduced what I heard and what it meant both to the respondents and to me. Even though scholars like Rose (1985, p. 77) argue that "there is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases", to minimize biasness, I have been persistently conscious about my subjective involvement in the research as an insider, by virtue of belonging to the Indigenous community, to avoid any potential conflicts of interests and predetermined perceptions that might misrepresent the research findings, which have also been clarified in the latter section of validity, trustworthiness and reliability.

My research attempts to contribute to the literature of academic discourse as well as to fill a gap in available resources for the future researchers on the changing and never-ending paradigms of deprivation and marginalization within the disciplines of the Social Sciences. Methodically, I would say this research is not only "a means of

creating knowledge; it is simultaneously a tool for the education and development of consciousness as well as mobilization for action” (Gaventa, 1988, pp. 19-28). In terms of raising massive consciousness and mobilization for action, this research may expedite the reflectivity among policy makers, NGOs, donor agencies and relevant intervening development agencies to further understand the underlying causes of deprivation and marginalization, particularly in North-Bengal. Eventually, this research could enhance or may impact on the life chances and wellbeing of these two Indigenous communities. In addition, this research aims to unpack the untold and unheard voices of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in North-Bengal, who are the worst victims of systemic multiple deprivations and marginalization in the nation state of Bangladesh. This research also intends to encounter and critique the legacy of structural deprivation and marginalization perpetuated since colonization that has generated severe economic, educational, social and political deprivation and vulnerabilities among these two Indigenous communities in the decolonized state of Bangladesh.

4.3.1. Gaining access to the research sites

It has required quite a great deal of time and concerted effort to gain access to the selected research sites in four different locations namely, Birampur, Nawabganj, Parbatipur and Phulbari *Upazillas* (sub-district) under the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. Two *Santal* villages one under Birampur and another one from Nawabganj *Upazilla* and two *Oraon* villages one from Nawabganj and another one from Parbatipur *Upazilla* in Dinajpur district have been selected to conduct case studies, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews in order to facilitate this research. The demographic statistics about the researched population is mentioned in the chapter five in the thesis. It is to be noted that Dinajpur district is the heart land

for Indigenous people, where a total of 61,744 (4.42% of total population) Indigenous peoples of different ethnic groups live. The *Santal* are the largest Indigenous community in Dinajpur (GoB, 2013).

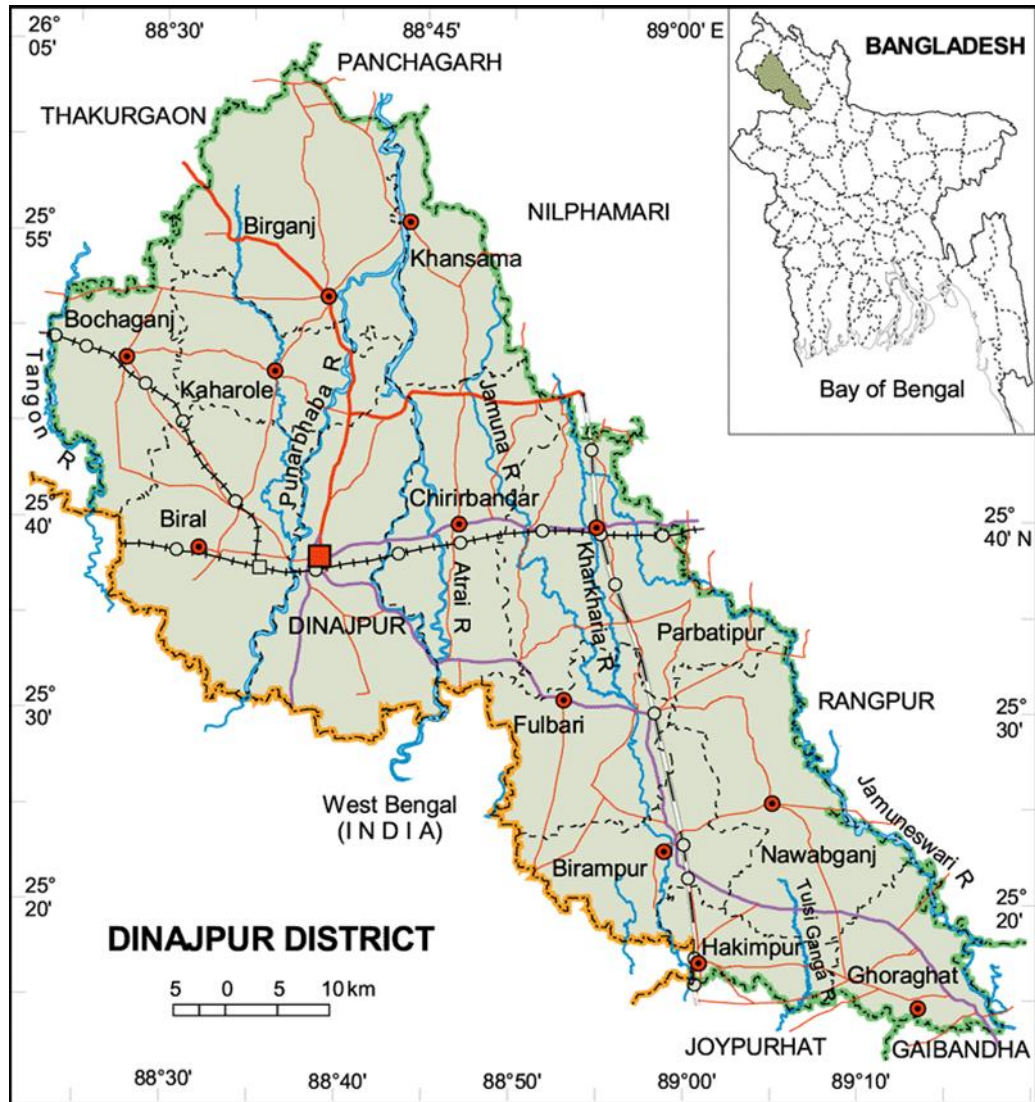
Before departing from Australia to Bangladesh, I had received a letter of authorization from Caritas Dinajpur regional authority to conduct this research under its working areas. I am indebted to Mr. Jogen Julian Besra, Regional Director of Caritas Dinajpur, whom I knew for a long time from my work with Caritas and through family relationships. On arrival in Dhaka, Bangladesh, I had been equipped with research study maintenance materials, required stationeries, photocopies of questionnaires and participants' consent forms, lap top computer with Internet access, and an activated mobile phone, knowing that these would be very helpful for conducting research as well communicating in a remote location.

On arrival in Dinajpur, my initial conversation with the Regional Director of Caritas Dinajpur and relevant employees about my research themes and approaches provided me with new insights to be explored under the working areas of the Caritas Dinajpur region. The regional authority of Caritas Dinajpur has circulated an official letter to their field offices and informed their staffs over phones about my possible logistics support requirements, such as accommodation, introductions with relevant staffs and briefings about the nature of their work, as well as the overall socio-economic conditions of the locality where I will be conducting my research.

The first research site I visited was Buski village which is located in No. 3 Khanpur Union under Birampur *Upazilla* in Dinajpur district. The primary survey revealed that there were 98 *Santal* families, comprising 412 people including men, women, and children who have been living there for a long time. On the first day, villagers reported to me that they have been living in panic as a result of the threat of being

evicted if the highly controversial Phulbari Open Pit Coal Mine Project is implemented in their neighbourhood. A separate case study regarding the implications of the Phulbari Open Pit Coal Mine Project has been formulated in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Image: 1: The map of the Research locations of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh



Source: <https://www.google.com.bd/search?q=map+of+dinajpur+district>, Accessed on 5 March, 2014.

I was accompanied there by my friend, Mr. Raimond Hasda, who comes from the same village. I used to know him from my student life while he was studying at Rajshahi University. Knowing that he works in the Phulbari Area Development Project (ADP) of World Vision Bangladesh, I had email communication with him

from Australia. On my request, he had contacted his villagers, especially village headmen and community leaders earlier about my intended visit. I accompanied him on his motorbike on a fifteen kilometre trip away from Phulbari town (a sub-district town) where I have to stay in a rented house for most of the time during my research for the convenience of transportation and communication to these four different research locations. As we arrived on that day, I was warmly greeted by the villagers and village headmen. I introduced myself and briefed them about my intended research work in their village. They had assured me support to the best of their ability for my intended research during the whole period of time needed, as nobody from a *Santal* community has done a doctoral thesis before about their rights and lived experiences. From Buski village, out of 98 families, 40 households had been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on the pre-determined criteria such as profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have voluntarily agreed to contribute to this research.

My second research site was Khidirpur village situated under Nawabganj *Upazilla*, where 74 *Oraon* Indigenous families comprising a total population of 236. I used to know Mr. Andrias Khalko while I was studying in St. Philip high school in Dinajpur during the 1990s but I had never been to his village before. I contacted him by mobile phone and visited the village only 2 kilometres away from Bhaduria Bazar and the Dinajpur-Bogura highway. On my first visit, he introduced me to the village headmen, elders and other villagers. I briefed them about my intended research work and they agreed willingly to co-operate with me. From Khidirpur village out of 74 families, 40 households had been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on the criteria of profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have willingly agreed to contribute to this research.

Image: 2: Participants of Focus Group Discussion at Khidirpur Village under Nawabganj Upazilla in Dinajpur district



Source: Picture taken by a volunteer on July 27, 2011

My third location was Panchpukur village situated under Parbatipur *Upazilla* in Dinajpur district where 197 *Oraon* and *Santal* Indigenous families were living. It has a total population of 827. Geographically, this village is a meeting place of three *Upazillas* namely, Parbatipur and Nawabganj *Upazilla* under Dinajpur district and Bodorganj *Upazilla* under Rangpur district. I had been accompanied by Mr. Philip Panna who was my class mate during junior high school in the late 1980s at Boldipukur High School, Mithapukur *Upazilla* in my home district of Rangpur. He introduced me to the village headmen, elders, and local school teachers of Caritas Primary School. I briefed them about my intended research in their village and they heartily agreed to extend their co-operation as needed. From Panchpukur village out, of 197 families, 40 *Oraon* households were selected for in-depth interviews on the criteria of profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have willingly consented to contribute in this research.

My fourth research spot was Sirampara village located at No. 7 Ward in No. 9 Kusdoh Union under Nawabganj *Upazilla* of Dinajpur district. My primary survey discovered that in No. 7 Ward, there are 12 small villages around which are scattered 202 *Santal* and *Mahali* Indigenous families, comprising a total population of 827 men, women, and children living there for a long time. Because the majority population lives in Srirampara, therefore the whole area located in No. 7 Ward has been brought under the Sirampara village for the purpose of the research.

Image: 3: Participants of Focus group Discussion at Srirampara village in Nawabganj Upazilla, Dinajpur



Source: Picture taken by a volunteer on July 22, 2011

This village is clustered around *Swapnopuri* (Dream Land), a private entertainment park where *Santal* and *Mahali*⁶² Indigenous people have been living for a long time in an environment of contrasts. This theme park is built on 920 acres of land (Lonely Traveller, 2010) and prominent for its artificial and natural beauty in North-Bengal. The adjacent amusement park is popular in Bangladesh. Hundreds of people visit there for recreation, leisure, entertainment and picnics every day. This village had

⁶² *Mahali* is an ethnic community who have similarity with the *Santals*. Their main profession is making handicrafts from bamboo.

been selected purposively to present a harsh reality of two different realms. On one side, the neighbouring villagers are living with hardships. On the other side, many visitors come to this entertainment park for amusement and parties. Such a huge entertainment park in a rural setting has changed the geographical landscape of that area, fascinating people from all around the country.

I have been to this park ten years ago. During my research work, my inner thoughts provoked my interest to explore the surrounding areas and quality of life of people living around this theme park. Just simply, I asked the neighbours how this park has been built in such a remote part of the country. I have been told by the elders of those villages that this entertainment park had been built on the lands of Indigenous people. I urged them to provide me some evidence about it but nobody seems to speak out anything against the land lord, the owner of that amusement park. The owner of this park has strategically purchased the lands from the neighbouring *Santal*. I have seen that the size of the park has been gradually expanding every year, pushing the neighbourhood further down. The contrasting environment of that area seems awkward to me at the very beginning of the research but in the course of time it appeared to me as a normal routine of life.

I was able to access this village with my research volunteer, Mr. Silvanus Hasda, who knew people from this village personally. In his company, he introduced me to the village headmen, elders and other villagers. I have explained to them about my intended research work and they have whole-heartedly supported me in conducting this research. From this village, out of 202 families, 40 households (*Santal* and *Mahali*) have been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on the pre-

determined criteria like as profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have voluntarily agreed to contribute to this research.

During my data collection period, I have visited every nook and cranny of the four different research locations. At the time of conversation with the villagers, I have been motivated to reflect on the overt and covert manifestations of the all-pervasive policies adversely impacting on this small community with regard to land dispossession, encroachment by social forestry projects, eviction due to the Phulbari Coal Mine Project, poor attainment of education, and denial of their citizenship rights in the country. Throughout the research process, my critical observation was able to distinguish multiple forms of oppression and marginalization explicitly prevalent among these two poverty-stricken Indigenous communities, which have forced them to live on the edge of physical extinction. I have been re-shocked in my life with painful experiences as a living witness to the plight of Indigenous people resulting from practices and policies that overtly failed to protect and provide a new lease of life to these two marginalized communities. During my research field work in four different locations, my friends, peers, research volunteers who were selfless and honest, and people from the local community whole-heartedly supported me to accomplish this study. I cherished a sense of gratification for being an insider by virtue of belonging to an Indigenous community, my local connections, willingness to consult with research participants, my ability to speak a language they use in everyday life, my sense of reciprocity and mutual respect, diligence and hard work were contributing factors to my success in four-months of data collection in four different landscapes of Dinajpur district.

4.4. Case study approach

In this research, I have employed the case study method, which is descriptive and explorative with a view to articulate my research contributors' wide viewpoints of their life struggle for existence and their understanding of marginalization and dehumanization in the country. A case study is a process of narrative inquiry to clarify meaning through multiple perceptions for construction of knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000. p. 438). Under this case study approach, the life story method and an oral history interview method have also been used for formulating a case study (Faraday and Plummer, 1979, p. 776). In addition to the case study, a critical ethnography has also been used to gain background information based on the life experiences of the Indigenous poor women, and the marginalized and vulnerable communities. The ethnography incorporates structure of culture, social beliefs, and behaviour contextually, holistically, and as a result of participants' observations and in-depth study where the researcher was a learner and accumulator of first-hand information (Sarantakos, 1993, p. 266). In this regard, available documents, such as, the base line survey report of Caritas Dinajpur, the Annual Report of Caritas Bangladesh, books and publications on Indigenous people of North-Bengal, and the Bangladesh Government's census reports have been accessed. In addition to that reports and features published in the national newspapers, such as *the Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo*, *the New Nation*, *The Daily Korto*, *Kalerkantha*, etc. have also been studied and analysed. Information has also been gathered from the websites of different NGOs that are conducting socio-economic activities in North-Bengal, such as Caritas Bangladesh, World Vision, BRAC, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS), Gram Bikash Kendra, and Community Development Agency (CDA) to articulate the life histories of Indigenous people. Moreover, narratives and histories

of community leaders, teachers and religious leaders have been gathered to formulate case studies and ethnography in this research consistent to research objectives.

In collecting and making sense of these case studies, I have integrated both the perspectives of my narrator's (emic) own terms and words and my interpretations (etic) consistent with the thematic issues. These case studies bring out powerful insights and illuminates meaning into the social, cultural, educational and policy issues of the two Indigenous communities that they experience, confront, resist and challenge in the context of Bangladesh. I made an effort to enable the participants' voices to be heard in connection to the contestations of their citizenship rights, entitlement to their rights to land, oppression and injustices while living in the dominant Bangladeshi society. Merriam (1988, p. 11) has precisely said that case studies "concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation". Accordingly, case study as a methodological approach has become an inevitable choice for this research in the investigation of the socially fabricated reality of marginal experiences and accomplishing inclusive depiction of these two marginalized Indigenous communities in Bangladesh.

4.5. In-depth interviews

Qualitative research adopts two types of interviews; structured and semi-structured. For the suitability of this research, semi-structured interview methods has been adopted because they offer open-ended questions that need to be asked the respondents to cover the specific research topics. In this regard, the role of an interviewer is also important in qualitative research. Kevale (1996, pp. 3-5) has illustrated the role of an interviewer with a metaphor of a 'miner and traveller'. The interviewer can be a miner who unearths valuable metals, digs nuggets of data or

meanings, and accumulates authentic experiences consistent with the research topic. An interviewer can also be a traveller who consistently wanders around landscapes, gets involved in conversations with the people encountered and gathers new understanding and insights which are told throughout the journey (Kevale, 1996, pp. 3-5). In addition, Seidman (2005, pp. 63-65) argues that an interviewer needs to be a good listener, as listening is an important skill for a research conversation basically on three levels in terms of what the participants saying. A high level of concentration and attentive listening generates robust information in an interview. Throughout the research process, I have been an attentive listener to the research participants and have had to repeat questions and rephrase them for their better understanding. In this regard, Wengraf (2001) suggests that an interviewer 'requires more training and more mental preparation before each interview rather than simply delivering lines prepared and rote-learned in advance'. Before undertaking every interview, I used to prepare myself according to the questionnaire schedule, and I also grew the habit of recapturing the previous interviews so that the conversations with research participants go well in line with my stated objectives. Almost in every instance, I needed to interpret and translate questionnaires into Bengali and in their respective mother tongues. I have been responsive and patient to make understandable the conversations between me and the respondents. Rubin and Rubin (2005, pp. 13-15) emphasize the importance of 'responsive interviewing' stating that initially an interviewer starts a discussion on a narrow range of topics, then tries to enter in-depth to get detail, depth, focused information, meaning and understanding on the particular research topic.

The in-depth interviews were held in four different research locations as mentioned above with 160 participants for collecting robust information, data, individual

personal histories, perspectives and experiences. To cope up with busy schedule of research participants, I had to visit them early in the morning and late evening as they were engaged in agricultural activities during day time for their living. In some cases, I have had to accommodate with their suitable times and dates for interviews. The participants have been asked, using semi-structured questionnaires, on their perceptions of development, marginalization and how the issue of marginalization affects their daily life and livelihood. Thus, the semi-structured interview method has been used in this study to contain open responses that have allowed respondents to choose their own terms in explaining their understanding of and perceptions of marginalization, rights violation and vulnerability which they experience in the country.

4.6. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Under this study, four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) have been conducted to gather and accumulate robust information from the targeted participants through the Participatory approach. Throughout the research process, the researcher (me) and participants have been collaboratively involved in unfolding experiences, testimony of learning consistent with research themes, and exploring new lessons to be learnt from particular situations or problems (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 16). Many social scientists assume that participatory approach is a methodology which emphasizes on ‘intellectual analysis with experiential knowing’ (Burns, 2007, p. 11) with a view to support change and assessing the impact of that change. Participatory approach is mainly concentrated on ‘learning through reflection and doing, and being in it’. Checkland and Holwell (1998, pp. 10-11) justify that Participatory approach is the “most powerful form of knowledge generation ever devised” in a systemic way, as it intends to dig out the dynamics of human behaviour and problems with a view

to 'bringing about change in society'. In other words, participatory approach is a collaborative process between the researcher and the people involved in the situation for a critical inquiry and a deliberate process of reflective learning (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 12). According to Burns (2007, p. 12), action research is mostly embedded in the cycle of plan, act, observe and reflect. Action Research bears some distinctive characteristics which address the following issues; there will be orderliness in approach in changing the organization, it acknowledges prescription and description in presentation, and theory will emerge from both data and initial theory in action research (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 19). According to them, participatory approach is a "continual inter-subjective discourse" used in qualitative research to investigate social phenomena through 'systemic practice' (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 20). In this thesis, to some extent, I think that it is action research because you were taking action through collecting data to challenge the process of proletarianisation of the researched population.

Gaventa and Cornwall (2006, p. 122), argue that there are inextricably intertwined linkages between knowledge, power and freedom as it enables marginalized people to exercise greater voice with an aim to 'transform social and power relations'. With regards to power and knowledge, they have also set reference to Participatory approach which enhance people to 'empower themselves through the construction of their own knowledge' (Indigenous or popular knowledge) in a 'dynamic process of action, reflection and collective investigation' as it contributes to the process of change (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006, pp. 123-124). In analysing their approaches, they have also referred the work of Robert Chambers in regard to participatory approach as it aspires to dig out 'poor people's realities' such as, 'new insights, priorities and definition of problems' that would address in the change process

(Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006, p. 125). In another word, participatory approach paves the way to gather the ‘voices of the poor’ in relation to ‘poverty, environment and livelihood’ (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006, p. 125).

Under this study, the FGDs have been conducted to gather information from the research participants in a voluntary nature of participation. In every discussion, a moderator has been selected from the participants to lead the discussion by asking participants to respond open-ended questions in line with the research questions delivered to them beforehand. In this process, I have also tried to ensure equal participation of all the participants in order to bring out hidden and unnoticed claims and problems they face in their daily life which would be articulated through a policy frame work to protect and defend their rights. The drawings, audio-tape and photographs of focus group discussions have been preserved and demonstrated for evidence to support the field work under taken amidst the two marginalized Indigenous communities of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh.

4.7. Sampling, Participants, and Data Collection

Sampling in qualitative research is an important component because “poor study site selection as and/or poor sample decisions may weaken or ruin eventual finding” (Berg, 2001, p. 29). Being aware of the potential concern, a sample size has been taken into consideration of the population of the two the Indigenous groups so that the sampling becomes relevant and significantly a representative one in this study. The rationale for choosing these two Indigenous communities is because statistically from official records they represents a high rate of poverty, vulnerability, marginalization, land loss, and other socio-economic problems associated with their daily life struggles. I have been cautious in selecting every case study that should be

more likely representative of the problem among these two Indigenous communities in four different locations as they are the most marginalized and their citizenship rights are inadequately protected due to adverse policies and laws in Bangladesh.

Structurally, the qualitative research method uses three of the most common sampling methods: purposive sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling (Mack et al. 2007, p. 5). This research project has employed purposive sampling as it has been found the most suitable on the basis of pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question with a view to gather in-depth insights from the participants. Patton (2002, p. 230) argues that “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth, information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research”. Particularly, for in-depth interviews, the sample size has been determined by taking in to account both government statistics and NGOs gathered information of the targeted population. Hence, under this research process, “conservative estimation” (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 41) has been used for the sampling purpose where the risk of over statement is absent and thus, methodologically it appears as more appropriate and relevant to the study.

The full spectrum of research participants have been selected from the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in Bangladesh in order to scale up their voices to be heard and their problems to be materialized. The research participants were common villagers’ especially indigenous men and women. I have been able to communicate with all the respondents physically with a web of social network and living in the community. The research participants have also been assured that all the information will be confidential for the research purpose and which will not affect their daily life and livelihood at any stages. Before initiating in-depth interviews and

focus group discussions, verbal and written consent of the participants has been taken and even their actual names have been hidden for the anonymity of the research purpose. Under this research, a total of 160 persons including 138 males and 22 females (40 from each location) were recruited for in-depth interviews and a total of 85 persons including 58 males and 27 females were consulted for focus group discussions in four locations in order to maximize the range of demographic characteristics of the participants, in terms of gender, age, education and occupation. For the focus group discussions, snowball techniques have also been employed to identify hidden populations to whom the research participants refer as potential participants to contribute to the study. Apart from that government and non-government officials, school teachers, mainstream political leaders, local Union Parishad (UP) members, and community leaders have also been consulted to verify the data gathered from the research participants.

Over all, the role of the research participant's is significant to me who provided authentic data in this study. Their perceptions and opinions were the core elements of this research. I have learned life struggle and resilience from them as a researcher. The research participants have been shared the research findings for their feedback, addition and clarifications throughout the cycle of research process.

4.7.1. Sources of Data

The primary data of this research was collected through in-depth interviews, audio-taped records from focus group discussions, case studies and field notes documenting personal observations, experiences and critical reflections. The collected data have been analysed and interpreted in this thesis to capture rights perspectives of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities without distorting their perceptions and lived experiences. I have made every effort to reflect their own words and

understanding as what they have told me in this research. The secondary data was broadly gathered from a wide range of available sources like as, published books, e-books, journal articles, documents and experiences of post-colonial history around the globe, documents of historical-geographical context of colonialism in the sub-continent, newspaper articles, the official constitution of Bangladesh, education and health policy documents, national budget documents, social safety net program documents, land management and administration policies, *khas* land distribution policies, social forestry acts, land ownership records and settlement byelaws, and other print media. The traditional customary practices, tribal laws, culture and religious distinctiveness, and historical documents have also been consulted in this research process.

During my field work for this research, I had the opportunity to make a close contact with different sections of individuals from these two Indigenous communities in the rural areas. It was my advantage to getting closer to people as I was living with them in the community. In the course of research cycle, I have met them individually and groups from April to August 2011 in order to collect data for this study. I have spent a quality time with my research participants that shaped my new insights and outlook about their persistent struggle and survival in my home country.

4.7.2. Challenges faced during data collection

In every research location, the first question I have been asked was that from which organization or NGOs I come to them. In any rural areas of Bangladesh, it is a usual question to be asked to a stranger because hundreds of NGOs are working in the grassroots level. It may be not wrong to say that Bangladesh is a breeding ground of NGOs as it has a success case in operating micro finance activities in the world. Thousands of NGOS are registered under the Social Welfare Directorate, and

Women and Children Welfare Directorate and the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) in Bangladesh. As per in November 2013, a total 2,291 NGOs are registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB). (See the website of NGO Affairs Bureau, 30 November, 2013). From my working experiences in the NGOs back to my home country, I can relate that after the ravages of liberation war in 1971, many dedicated individuals took initiatives for people's welfare, at the beginning in the form of relief and rehabilitation, which subsequently transformed into NGOs working in a wide ranging areas of development and social change (TIB, 2007, p. 2). Those NGOs are mainly operating a wide range of humanistic and voluntary works for people's welfare as a complimentary force to the state sector in the area of micro-finance, women empowerment, education, health, environment, rights-based awareness and other important issues for social development. Being a stranger to the intended research participants, I have been primarily identified as a staff of one of the many NGOs working in the rural areas.

When I have explained my identity to them that I will be in their areas for conducting a research, again they asked me what we will get in return of doing that. This type of questions provoked my thoughts to look at the matter in deeper perspectives. Then, I have realized that NGOs are involved in carrying out different kinds of bench mark survey and impact assessment in the areas. So, it is very common to get such types of questions from the research participants. In one research location, in the Buski village, the village headman asked me what steps I will take to dissolve the land problems of the people. Definitely, I had no satisfying answer to him like to many other respondents. I explained to them that this research is for the fulfilment of my study at Flinders University in Australia. If I have any opportunity to work on these

burning issues, I will work in the future in my life. I knew that my humble answer might not give them a hope but that what I could say in that particular situation.

In another location in Srirampara just after I have finished conducting focus group discussions with participants, I have been approached by a non-Indigenous young man asking me that whether I will work on the land retention issues in the future. Understanding the situations, I replied to the young man that this discussion is held to gather information that I needed for my study in Australia. After the young man left the spot, then the villagers informed me that he was the relative of the owner of the entertainment park. The Srirampara village is adjacent to the theme park ‘Swapna Puri’ which has been strategically built on the land of Indigenous people. The detailed has been narrated in the chapter four of the thesis. The relevance of pointing out this incident is that the local powerful landed elites control over the life, land and resources of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. In many instances, it has been widely reported that the local powerful influential people illegally grab the ancestral lands of Indigenous people. Any person who protests against the injustice of local land lords has to either embrace death or face severe consequences. For an example, a young man from the *Santal* ethnic community named Alfred Soren of Bhimpur village, Naogaon, was killed on August 18, 2000 when he tried to resist the eviction of the Indigenous community from their land. The raiders lead by local land lords set fire to his house and stabbed him to death (The Daily Star, 22 January, 2011). In another recent incident, a young man from also the *Santal* ethnic community who was an Assistant Commissioner of Land, a first class public servant of Gobindaganj Upazilla under Gaibandha district was murdered on 11 January, 2014 (The Asia news, 13 January, 2014). According to the newspaper sources, it is known that he has taken some protective steps for Indigenous people in his locality as the miscreants set

fire on the houses of ethnic minorities' aftermath the 10th general election (5 January, 2014) violence occurred in the country. In this way, any kinds of social movement of the ethnic communities for fair justice are suppressed either by killing or threat in the North-Bengal of Bangladesh. During my field research work, I was aware of any potential conflict of interest and minimized it to conduct my study within the time frame.

I was also aware of that interview is a set of tools to gather information from the intended respondents for my research. Before going to the field research I have read a wide range of literature on the methods and procedures for interviewing people. But, I found it practically a challenging job interviewing women as a male researcher. By virtue of my gender identity and women's subordinate position in these two ethnic communities, I found it very difficult to interviewing women. Even though, men and women work together in the field and there are not veil or *purdah* systems in the researched communities like the Muslim community in Bangladesh (Nasreen, 2006, p. 5). I have been also aware on the possible consequences of interviewing women in a quiet place in terms of cultural perspectives. At every research location, I interviewed male respondents first and women at the last being aware the cultural difference between the relationship of a man and woman. My belongingness to the same ethnic community and my well-versed in ethnic languages helped me to make an inter-personal mutual relationship and a rapport building with the community members both men and women. In one research location in Panchpukur, the female primary school teachers assisted me to introduce with other women and helped me to make a mutual understanding with the women respondents. Thus, I was able to conduct women's interview in these research locations. As a male

researcher, my job was like a reporter or a narrator to dig out a whole range of information regarding women's and children's life chances.

Image: 4: Boro pukuria coal mine at Phulbari Upazilla in Dinajpu



Source: Picture taken by the researcher on May 8, 2011

During my five-months long field research in four different locations in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh, I was based at Phulbari town (a sub-district town) in a rented house which is 80 kilometre away from Dinajpur district headquarter for the convenience of transportation and accessibility to the intended research locations. Before going to the data collection, I was aware of the people's resistance at Phulbari centred on the Phulbari open pit coal mine project. In a protest against the most debated coal mine project, five persons were killed and more than fifty persons were injured on a protest against the coal mine on August 26, 2006 (Phulbari resistance, 2007). I have been told by the villagers of Buski where I conducted my data collection that they are living with the panic, threat and psychological depression for being evicted if this coal mine project is being implemented. As the Buski village is strategically located under this coal mine project area, the Indigenous people are living with eminent threat to be evicted from their ancestral lands as the project will 'dig a series of holes of 300 meter deep over a total area of 59 square kilometers'

(Lang, 2008) and which will displace between 50,000 and 500,000 people including Indigenous people belonging to *Santal*, *Oraon*, *Munda* and *Mahali* communities who live in around 100 villages in Phulbari and surrounding sub-districts including Birampur, Nawabganj and Parbartipur of Dinajpur district (Gain, 2007, p. 3). Despite of displacement of thousands of people, the proposed coal mine project will cause a serious human and environmental hazard which will aggressively contribute to the noise, dust and water pollution and consequently it will destroy agricultural and ecological diversity in that project area. I have chosen this area because it will offer me sufficient data for my research.

Image: 5: Indigenous women planting rice at Nawabganj Upazilla in Dinajpur district



Source: Picture taken by the researcher on July 29, 2011

I had to fit into the busy life of the research participants. The peak harvesting period of rice during April to May and planting period during July to August was the busiest time for the research participants as most of them were engaged in agricultural works. For the convenience and accessibility, I had to visit the participants early in the morning and late in the evening because in day-time most of the participants were busy in agricultural works. Despite coping with busy time of the research

participants, I had to consider the environmental and natural situations of those research locations to keep my work steady. I had to face severe unavoidable challenges during the heavy monsoon period in the months of July-August when the rural roads were muddy and it was very difficult to avail any convenient transportation to reach to the research locations. The road transportation has slightly disrupted my pace of work for a while. To cope up with the natural environment and situations, I had to hire a motorbike to reach to the research locations in order to continue my research work according to the schedule despite of many constraints and hazards in my daily life.

Image: 6: Indigenous men harvesting rice at Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district



Source: Picture taken by the researcher on May 7, 2011

Regardless of the social and work commitments of respondents and the challenges posed by the rainy season and non-availability of transportation on muddy roads I faced challenges in meeting my research participants. During the field research, in one location (Srirampara village) I could not meet any targeted respondents for the first two weeks to be because of the social festivals such as marriages, and funerals. In rural areas, social festivals are usually held right after harvesting period when people have some food grains in stock to spend on festivals. Sometimes, those social

festivals are held for longer time probably for a few weeks and which is associated with the high rates of alcohol consumption. I have experienced that the longer those social festivals occurred, the more they struggle economically to survive day to day and hand to mouth. The effects of those long duration of those social festivals sometimes causes cyclical damages to individuals, families and communities resulting in ongoing and inter-generational poverty and further marginalization which badly affect their children's schooling and family expenses. The direct effects of the social festivals amongst the two researched Indigenous communities have been narrated in detailed in chapter four and five of the thesis. Despite many challenges faced on the way of my research journey, I have been encouraged by my family members, academic supervisors, peers, friends and volunteers to accomplish the research work within scheduled time frame.

4.7.3. Strategies undertaken for data gathering

Based on the questionnaire schedule approved by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University (see Appendix for sample questions) in-depth interview, case study and focus group discussion have been conducted. The very important first step was for me to make a rapport building and communication with the intended participants in all the four different research locations. From the first day of the field work, I made an effort to maintain good rapport and relationships with villagers especially village headmen, local school teachers, influential people and community leaders. During my interaction with villagers, I have also communicated with intended volunteers and those who really would like to assist my research work.

For the in-depth interviews that were typically semi-structured and open ended, I have carried out household survey of the whole village that represents total

population (male, female, and children), socio economic conditions, rate of education, amount of land and others information. From the primary household survey, a representative sampling has been adopted which covered a wide range of categories like as, landless people, day labourer, land owners, educated, and service holders, women and female headed families, widow, physically challenged people including men and women. I have to make a door to door visit and talking with intended participants and also explained to them about the objectives of my research. After validating their willingness to participate in the research and confirming date and time with interviewees, I have thoroughly briefed them on the questionnaires. During in-depth interviews that always occurred in a friendly and informal manner, I have interpreted the questionnaires in their own languages, and precisely documented their comments on the format through self-guided shorthand. A participant's consent form has also been used to justify participant's contribution to the research. As a part of iterative process, after a few days later, I had to re-check comments given by the interviewees & clarifications on the questions asked. Then, I had to finalize interviews after re-confirming with each respondent in every research location.

For conduction of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), I had to select participants from the primary survey who could be potential participants to contribute on the topic. Then, I wrote a formal letter to every participant to invite them in the discussion attaching the questionnaires and topic for discussion on a specific date, time and a suitable place.

I made an effort before the focus group or research conversation to also select a facilitator and interpreter for the discussion from amongst the participants. This helped to engage the participants. In every discussion, I have played the role of a co-facilitator. I had to make arrangements for necessary stationary, refreshments, gift

items and imbursement to the participants. The discussion had been written down in details by a pre-selected minute's recorder along with me and I have recorded the whole discussion session for the evidence of the study. My case studies were broadly concentrated on the emerging issues such as, land dispossession, land transfer, displacement and eviction from land, social forestry projects as it undertakes local people's land, primary education for Indigenous children, inheritance rights of Indigenous women, coal mine affecting the livelihood of the local people, health services to marginalized people, social discrimination in accessing basic social services especially social safety net programs and local movements on entitlement of rights and recognition in the constitution of Bangladesh.

In gathering data, I have applied the "triangulation"⁶³(Denzin, 1978, p. 291) technique. A total of 160 in-depth interviews, 4 focus group discussions, and multiple case studies (see Appendix for questionnaires' schedule) along with filed notes were conducted over a period of five months. At the end of each interview and focus group discussion, the whole feature has been reviewed to the participants for verification. The interviews, audio-tapes from focus group discussion, case studies and field notes were transcribed in to English from the participants' own languages and Bengali. The details have been explained in the data storage, organization and analysis part in the later section of this thesis.

4.8. Validity, trustworthiness and reliability

Acknowledging the subjectivity and flexibility as an inherent characteristics of the qualitative research, questions may arise on the validity, trustworthiness and reliability of its findings. To ensure the research findings are believable and

⁶³ Triangulation is broadly defined as the combination of methodologies in the study of same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978, p. 291).

trustworthy, careful reflection and appropriate measures have been taken in this study. During my five months-long field work for this research, I have maintained and established an intimacy and constant engagement with the research participants, developed a reciprocal trust and rapport, and iteratively verified their feedback and opinions to make the findings are “congruent with reality” (Merriam, 1988, p. 183). Under this research, I have applied multiple data collection methods to acquire authentic data (triangulation) through employing individual in-depth interviews, focus groups discussions, informal conversations, and case study approaches. At the same time, I have meticulously verified their feedback, opinions and reflections during and after the data collection period and reviewed them during my data analysis process. On each event, I made a careful attempt to share the findings with the research participants to attain their perspectives and critical reflections to make sure that their opinions and live experiences are truly replicated in this study.

Throughout the research process, I made every attempt to clarify my subjective position as an insider in the research. I have made every effort to minimise possible conflicts of interest and biases in consideration of my preconceived assumptions so that the research findings do not deviate from the original text. As a researcher, I have made an effort to enable the research participant’s descriptions and voices to be heard so that the contexts develop a rich and meaningful expression to make this study valid, reliable and authentic. For external validity, transferability and fittingness, I have been transparent in providing full descriptions of research settings, locations, samples, and research processes undertaken in this study.

Finally, I left an audit trail, in the form of original interview sheets, minutes of focus groups discussion, audio-taped of the discussions, memos, diaries, transcripts and

computer applications for coding and data analysis for detailed justification of the research process to validate the findings are authentically saturated from the data.

4.9. Ethical issues

I was concerned with ethical obligations as per guidelines and approval obtained from *Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee* of Flinders University, Australia to conduct this research. Contextually, this study encompasses a broad range of rights issues which are ‘reflexive and sensitive’ (McGarry, 2010, p. 8) in the social context of Bangladesh. Being aware of my research participant’s situation, power structure, unbalanced social position, deeper social and structural inequalities, I have been careful so that my current research does not create any negative impact and disrupt their way of life. At my best level, purposively the “blaming and shaming” (Hargreaves, 1998, p. 328) game has been minimized in considering the well-being of the research participants and confidentiality of the data. For the production of data, I have built up and maintain relationship, proximity, developed a mutual emotional boundary, and engaged my research participants effectively with due respect in the study. Throughout the research process, I have prioritized the interests of the research participants. Before initiating individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, verbal and written consent of the participants have been taken and their actual names remained unspecified. Disclosure during and after interviews of information about participants was completely restricted to any third party in this study.

Throughout my journey of life as being grown up in the Indigenous community, I have been a living witness of disastrous living conditions, underprivileged situations, multiple forms of deprivations and discriminations in terms of accessing land rights, education, employment and basic social services of Indigenous people in

Bangladesh. To contribute and giving back to the community where I do belong is the ethical obligation of this research study.

4.10. Data storage, organization and analysis

During my five months-long field work, I have been cautious in storing all the collected data gathered from the respondents in my every day of work for this research. All the collected data such as, laptop computers, interview prompts, minutes of focus group discussions, notes, memos, diaries, auto-ethnographies, pictures, diagrams, audio-taped and transcripts both hard and soft copies have been secured in a locked suitcase in my locked room at Phulbari, Dinajpur in Bangladesh. Access to those materials to any other persons was strictly prohibited for the confidentiality of the data. After coming from field work, every night I used to type transcriptions, personal notes, observations and critical reflections on the research themes in my laptop computer. Then, again I have to approach to my research participants for their feedback and clarifications on their given responses.

Throughout this research process, I used computer applications Microsoft Office Words and Excel tools to produce statistical evidence and coding the main axial themes. The collected data has been organized accordingly on each axial thematic issues like as, access to land, primary education for Indigenous children, and health care access to Indigenous women, women's land rights and empowerment and access to basic social services. On each axial theme, I have created codes and sub-codes on the thematic issues extracted from participant's response and re-grouped them on the ground of thematic issues that appear similar ideas between the existing similar issues of an axial coding. From this point, I started my critical analysis on the data produced by the research participants. In this case, I adopted narrative approach to present the voices of respondents with rich primary texts and corroborated with

secondary data to analyse on each axial theme. In the course of time, every axial theme has been analysed on the basis of ground reality to what extent the minority Indigenous people gradually have become marginalized in the dominant Bengali society, how state and different institutions playing a crucial role for their structural deprivations, what are the policy and practices that causing plights of Indigenous people, and how the interventions of the state, market and community can rescue those marginalized Indigenous population for better life chances and quality of life and aligning them with the mainstream society. The detailed analysis on core axial themes has been illustrated in the findings and discussion chapters of the thesis.

4.11. Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I have detailed my research methodology, methods, and approaches for comprehensive exploration of life chances, lived experiences and narratives of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities living in the remote areas of Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. My methodological approaches, theoretical and epistemological issues and ethical obligations have also been clarified in this chapter. Acknowledging my subjective role in the study, I have also clarified the relevant processes how I have minimized the subjectivity in the process of meaning making in the study. I have also provided detailed descriptions of my journey and gaining access to the research sites, challenges faced during research, sampling and strategies for data collection, data organization and analysis in this chapter. Further, I have narrated the measures undertaken to avoid biases and pre-conceived assumptions in order to demystify knowledge and lived experiences of these two Indigenous communities through presenting their voices, stories and perceptions and their living as minority groups in the Bangladeshi society.

Chapter Five: Research Findings; Land and Well-being

5.1. Introduction

The research explores the life chances of the *Santal* and *Oraon* communities living in Northern Bangladesh. The thesis makes the case that the ownership of land and access to land rights has a direct and immediate effect on socio-economic conditions, such as primary education and access to health care services that determines the life chances and quality of life of the Indigenous people of North-Bengal. The findings of the study have been organized under five systemically linked themes. These are: access to land rights, rights to primary education, access to health care services, Indigenous women and land rights, and access to social services for the most marginalized people. The key findings and outcome of the research have been organized to address the research questions, in terms of life chances and the socio-economic development of the most marginalized Indigenous people including women and children. This chapter makes the case that the women from both the researched communities are systemically impoverished. The thesis argues that the following interlinked themes are vitally relevant. This chapter of the thesis will elaborate the key findings in terms of each axial theme with reference to qualitative and quantitative evidence. In so doing I address each research question. The aim of the chapter is to build an evidenced based argument to address the research questions, methodologies and procedures of the research. In addition the women's empowerment and access to basic social services also serve as indicators for development of life chances. These are critically linked to access to lands, education and health services of the researched Indigenous population under Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.

5.2. Research Location: Dinajpur a Northern district of Bangladesh

Dinajpur is a northern district under the Rangpur Division of Bangladesh with a total population of 2,99,0128 (BSB, 2011) comprising 13 *Upazillas* (sub-districts) located 412 kilometres away from Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The average literacy rate of Dinajpur district is 60.45 percent. The main occupations of the people are in agriculture 42.85 percent; agricultural labour 29.19 percent wage labour 2.48 percent, commerce 10.2 percent, and transport services 5.58 percent respectively (BSB, 2011). Being an agricultural district, in terms of landholding patterns, there are 40 percent landless, 30 percent small farmers, 25 percent medium farmers, and 5 percent large farmers (BSB, 2011) out of 42.85 percent in Dinajpur. According to the Population and Housing Census of 2011, the total ethnic population of Dinajpur district is 66,861 with 49,861 *Santal*, and 4,566 *Oraon*, Barman 1,629 and others 10,805 (BBS, 2011). It is to be noted that the census of ethnic population is always underestimated. In the census of 1991, the total *Santal* population of Bangladesh was shown at 202,744 and the total *Oraon* population was counted at 11,296 (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 27). A more exact estimation of the Indigenous populations is a contested issue as many other factors that cause their underdevelopment in Bangladesh.

5.2.1. Demographic statistics of the research participants

This research has been undertaken in four different locations namely, Birampur, Nawabganj, Parbatipur and Phulbari *Upazillas* (sub-district) under the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. Two *Santal* villages, one under Birampur and another one from Nawabganj Upazilla, and two *Oraon* villages, one from Nawabganj and another one from Parbatipur upazilla under Dinajpur district have been selected to conduct the study.

Table 6: Demographic statistics of the in-depth interview research participants

Research Location	Ethnic Community	Total families	Total population	Total Households	Male	Female
Buskipara	<i>Santal</i>	98	412	40	35	5
Khidirpur	<i>Oraon</i>	74	236	40	33	7
Srirampara	<i>Santal</i>	202	827	40	39	1
Panchpukur	<i>Oraon</i>	197	827	40	31	9
Total		571	2302	160	138	22

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter 3 for details of the research design and process)

Buski village is located at No. 3 Khanpur Union, under Birampur *Upazilla* in Dinajpur. There were a total of 98 *Santal* families comprising a total population of 412 including men, women, and children who have been living there for a long time. From this village, out of 98 families, 40 households from different age groups ranging from 25 to 70 years have been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on the pre-determined criteria, such as profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have voluntarily agreed to contribute to this research.

Khidirpur village is situated at No. 6 Vaduria Union under Nawabganj *Upazilla* in Dinajpur. The study found that there were a total of 74 *Oraon* Indigenous families comprising a total population of 236. From Khidirpur village, out of 74 families 40 households have been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on the criteria of profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have willingly agreed to contribute to this research.

Panchpukur village is situated at No. 10 Harirampur Union under Parbatipur *Upazilla* in Dinajpur. The research identified that there were a total of 197 *Oraon*

and *Santal* Indigenous families living, with a total population of 827 including men, women, and children. Geographically, this village is a meeting place of three *Upazillas* namely, Parbatipur and Nawabganj Upazilla under Dinajpur district, and Bodorganj Upazilla under Rangpur district. From Panchpukur village, out of 197 families 40 *Oraon* households have been selected for in-depth interviews on the criteria of profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have willingly consented to contribute in this research.

Sirampara village is located at No. 7 Ward in 9 Kusdoh Union under Nawabganj *Upazilla* of Dinajpur district. Here, it is to be noted that under No. 7 Ward⁶⁴, there are 12 small scattered villages, where 202 *Santal* and *Mahali* Indigenous families comprise a total population of 827, including men, women, and children. From this village, out of 202 families, 40 households (*Santal* and *Mahali*) have been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on the pre-determined criteria like as profession, education, land ownership and women and female headed households who have voluntarily agreed to contribute to this research.

In this research, a total of 160 persons including 138 males and 22 females (40 from each location) were recruited for in-depth interviews, and a total of 85 persons, including 58 males and 27 females were consulted in focus group discussions from the above-mentioned four different locations, in order to maximize the range of

⁶⁴ The Union Parishads (Ups) are the lowest rural administrative and local government units in Bangladesh. Each Union is made up of nine wards. Usually one or several villages are designated as a ward. A Union council consists of a chairman and 12 members, including 3 members exclusively reserved for women. The Union Parishads are formed under the Local Government (Union Parishads) Act, 2009. A Union body is primarily responsible for agricultural, industrial, and community development within the local limits of the Union (Sabharwal and Berman, 2013, P. 339).

demographic characteristics of the participants in terms of gender, age, education and occupation.

Table 7: Research participants of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Research Location	Ethnic community	Focus Group discussion	Male	Female	Total
Buski	<i>Santal</i>	1	13	7	20
Khidirpur	<i>Oraon</i>	1	10	8	18
Srirampara	<i>Santal</i>	1	21	2	23
Panchpukur	<i>Oraon</i>	1	14	10	24
Total		4	58	27	85

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter 3 for details of the research design and process)

The study identified that most of the research participants are living in the remote marginal areas of Dinajpur district, and they are engaged in agricultural-activities for their livelihood. The following section will illustrate how land ownership is categorized and landlessness is defined in the context of Bangladesh.

5.2.2. Defining landlessness in the research location

Around 88.4 percent (FAO, 2012, p. 5) of all households in Bangladesh live in rural areas and primarily depend on land and agricultural activities for their livelihood. The ownership of land is a major determinant of the ‘economic solvency, social power and hierarchy’ (Rahman and Manprasert, 2006, p. 54) of an individual in the rural society of Bangladesh. A study of FAO (2010, p. 5) identifies essentially four classes of agricultural landowners in Bangladesh: “People who own homestead land only but have no land for cultivation; People who own homestead and agricultural land and take lease land to increase their farm area; People who own agricultural land but lease out part of it because they cannot manage all the land; and People who own agricultural land but lease all of it to others for cultivation (sharecropping or money arrangements)”. A large proportion of people are found landless in rural

areas. The measurement of landlessness in Bangladesh diverges according to the definition found in the statistical sources. The Land Occupancy Survey (LOS) of 1977 and 1978 and the national survey on Land Occupancy carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) identified that “ten percent of rural households own over half the country’s cultivatable land; another fifty percent of the cultivable land is shared between sixty percent of the rural households; and a third of the rural households own no land at all” (Chowdhury, 2008, p. 233). This survey has developed and distinguished three categories of landless households: “Landless I – Household with no land whatsoever; Landless II – Those who own only homesteads but no other land and; Landless III – Those who own homesteads and 0.2 acres of ‘other’ land” (FAO, 2012, p. 5).

Being landlessness is both ‘the cause and the manifestation of poverty, insecurity, indebtedness and powerlessness’ (Rahman and Manprasert, 2006, p. 54) of most households in the rural society of Bangladesh. The percentage of landless households defined as “functional landless” (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 175) those with less than 0.05 acres of land in Bangladesh was estimated 49.6 percent in 1995 (Rahman and Manprasert, 2006, p. 55) living with poor living conditions and inequitable social structures. In the rural areas, most of the landless people are poor and engaged to labour markets both in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors for their subsistence living. The main agricultural labour market that is found in all areas in Bangladesh occurs during the *Aman* (wet season) rice harvesting period and the *Boro* (dry season) crop (Quisumbing and Baulch, 2009, p. 19). Non-agricultural labour embodies working as Van/Rickshaw pullers, day labourers in rice husking mills and

other off-farm activities, usually a secondary profession for subsistence living (Quisumbing and Baulch, 2009, p. 22).

From the available literature and sources, I have found discrepancies in the categories defining land ownership. A study conducted by Akanda and Ito (2009, p. 2) on land ownership in rural Bangladesh, has classified farmers as; “small farmer owning land up to 1.0 hectare, medium from 1.0 to 3.0 hectares, and large above 3.0 hectares. Households owning less than 0.02 hectare cultivable land, not dependent on farming, were categorized as non-farm households”. Rashid, Sharma and Zeller, (2002, p. 45) have defined “Farmers owning up to 1.5 acres of land, which roughly fits the definition of small farmers in Bangladesh”. Kamruzzaman and Takeya (2009, p. 9) have cited that “approximately 79.4 percent farmers are landless (≤ 0.20 hectare), marginal (0.20 hectare to ≤ 0.40 hectare) and small farmers (0.40 hectare to ≤ 1.00 hectare)” in the country. Ferarri (2008, p. 79) has also indicated that marginal farmers are those with landholdings of 0.5 to 1.49 acres, small farmers are those with 1.5 to 2.49 acres, and medium size those with 2.5 to 7.5 acres.

I have relied on the official census of Agriculture 2008 conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) that has defined the size/amount of farm holdings and non-farm holdings as follows: “non-farm holdings have cultivated land less than 0.05 acre, small farm holdings having minimum cultivated land 0.05 acre but up to 2.49 acres; medium farm holdings having operated land in between 2.50 to 7.49 acres; and large farm holdings having operated land 7.50 acres and above” (BBS, 2008, p. 23).

5.2.3. Typology of research participants

From the above definitions and categorizations of land holding patterns that exist in Bangladesh, I have classified 160 in-depth interview participants from four different

locations according to the three typologies: landless, marginal and medium households. This research intends to determine sociological position, level of marginalization, and accessibility to social services (education, health and social safety net programs) of research participants in terms of their landholding patterns. It has been previously discussed in Chapter Two in the thesis that ownership of land is the contributing factor for economic strength, social power and status in the society as well as indicator of living conditions, education for children, access to health care and other social services that lead to life chances and well-being of the researched population.

5.3. Access to land and livelihood

The following typology summarises the categorization of land ownership in the rural areas of Bangladesh. It gives a sense of the relevance of land for life chances. The amount of land indicates capacity to feed a family and indicates the capital assets held by the family. The land is an indicator of quality of life. The amount of land provides a measure of the marginalization and deprivation in the dominant society of Bangladesh. Thus, land has been the central point of economic power, social and political power, and status in rural society. The ownership of land plays a vital role in the rural livelihood of Bangladesh. The means and modes of production, livelihood and quality of life are largely dependent on the use of land. It is assumed that all economic activities in the rural areas are predominantly concentrated on the ownership of land.

Table 8: Typology of land owning status of research participants

1. Landless/non-farm households	A person who has neither cultivated or operated land or has cultivated land less than 0.05 acre.
2. Marginal farmers/ share croppers	Farmers are those with landholdings of 0.5 to 1.49 acres.

3. Medium farmer	Farmers having operated land in between 1.5 to 7.49 acres.
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Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2008, p. 23.

This research has demonstrated to what extent access to land is vital for livelihood of the research participants from the different four locations under the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. In this section of the thesis, the land ownership status and root causes for land dispossession of the respondents will be addressed. In addition, how the dispossession of land is impacting on their livelihood and socio-economic conditions will also be discussed in the following section.

5.3.1. Land owning Status in the Research Locations

In the above-mentioned four different research locations under Dinajpur, a total of 571 families have been primarily surveyed, comprising 2,302 men, women, and children. Out of 571 families, 160 households (40 from each location) have been purposively selected for in-depth interviews on pre-determined criteria, like profession, education, land ownership and female-headed households who have voluntarily agreed to contribute to this research.

Among 160 respondents 138 were males and 22 were females. I have personally observed during the research that women's lower socio-economic status, engagement in household activities, lower level of participation in social activities, and those women are less likely to answer complex issues as males all contributed to their lower rate of participation in this study. During my field research, I have approached to as to many women as I could for selecting them in my interview purpose but most of them declined to participate in my research. From my personal experiences, I can say that traditionally men have dominated in those socio-cultural affairs, even though

men and women are found working in agricultural fields side by side in the rural areas.

This study reveals that the total amount of land owned by 160 households is 246.96 acres. From the four different research locations, 24 households have been identified as the “functional landless” (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 175) with the total amount of land as 6.37 acres who have no land or have less than 0.5 acres of land. Out of 24, 11 of them were found living on other’s land, like as father or relatives’ land, government’s declared *Khas*⁶⁵ land, property identified as a *vested property*⁶⁶, and lands brought under Social forestry (SF) projects on which they do not have any legal documents.

Table 9: Land Owning Status in the Research Locations

Research Location	Ethnic Community	Landless	Marginal	Medium	Total Households
Buski Para	<i>Santal</i>	13	23	4	40
Amount of Land in Acres		4.64	13.62	20.19	38.45
Khidirpur	<i>Oraon</i>	5	34	1	40
Amount of Land in Acres		0.8	29.9	4	34.7
Srirampara	<i>Santal</i>	3	21	16	40
Amount of Land in Acres		0.8	25.7	78.95	105.45
Panchpukur	<i>Oraon</i>	3	33	4	40
Amount of Land in Acres		0.13	63.7	17.26	81.09
Total Participants		24	111	25	160

⁶⁵ State land under the administration of Ministry of Land (MOL) in Bangladesh arising either from new formation or seizures in excess of 20 acres ceiling under land reform legislation; usually known as public land or Khas land (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 175).

⁶⁶The vested property was known in Pakistan as ‘enemy property’ after the 1965 Indo-Pak war. On 6 September 1965, Pakistan proclaimed a state of emergency under the Defence of Pakistan Ordinance at the outbreak of war with India. Under the rules, the Governor of East Pakistan passed an Order on 3 December 1965 regarding enemy property by which the property of the minorities was declared “Enemy Property”. After liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, the enemy property became vested property (Trivedi, 2007, p. 1).

Total amount of land in acres	6.37	132.92	120.4	259.69
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Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

Out of 160 respondents, 111 households are categorized as marginal farmers with a total land ownership of 132.92 acres, of whom there are farmers who have lands from 0.5 to 1.49 acres. They have been found struggling for livelihood and susceptible to land loss through fake documents, encroachment by social forestry projects, occupation by new-settlers and by local, powerful, influential people in the four researched locations.

Table 10: Characteristics of land holding patterns of the Research participants

Typology	No. of Households	Characteristics on the basis of land holding patterns
Landless/non-farm households	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have neither cultivated or operated land or has cultivated land less than 0.05 acre. - Some of them have homesteads only - Living on other's land father's or relative's i.e. <i>Khas</i> land, vested property, social forestry - Living on both agricultural and non-agricultural labour - Categorised as hard core poor, vulnerable, and the most marginalized groups
Marginal farmers/ share croppers	111	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers are those with landholdings of 0.5 to 1.49 acres - Lands owned by hereditary or by purchased - Have homesteads on their own lands - Crucial victims for land loss, through fake documents, encroachment by social forestry projects, occupied by new-settlers and local powerful influential - Have a high record of mortgaged out lands,
Medium farmer	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers having operated land in between 2.50 to 7.49 acres - Lands owned by hereditary or by purchased - Very often sold out lands for treatment of family members, economic hardships, children's education, pursuing court cases and other purposes - Re-classified their lands as <i>Khas</i> land, undertaken by social forestry projects, fake documents,
Total	160	

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

A total of 25 households out of 160 households were identified as medium farmers having minimum cultivated land from 1.5 acre to 7.49 acres with total amount of lands 120.4 acres who are also the potential victims of land loss. The causes were, not having land related documents, re-classification of their lands as *Khas* land, and their lands have been undertaken by social forestry projects and by means of fake documents.

5.3.2. Roots causes for land dispossession

Land dispossession has been reported as a common problem by the research participants in the four different locations. Two major causes have been identified for land loss; one is distress sale by the land owners and another is forcible occupation by the different stakeholders. The stakeholders involved in land occupation are identified as the local influential people through forgery of documents and the government itself through re-classification of *Khas* land and vested property, and acquisition by Social Forestry (SF) projects in Bangladesh. The research attempted to ascertain the root causes for land dispossession among these two communities and came up with prospective reasons for land dispossession. Land dispossession is perpetuated by the acquisition by government in the name of *Khas* land, vested property, and occupation by local influential people and new-settlers through fake documents. The instances of land dispossession are a widespread and growing concern due to denial of land rights to the Indigenous people in North-Bengal. The major reason for ‘marginalization and pauperization’ (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 256) of the Indigenous people is their land dispossession. The local, powerful and influential Bengali with political back up take advantage of the voiceless, powerless, and marginalized Indigenous people through forgery of documents, with the connivance of corrupt land officials. The local class-based hegemonic culture and the

‘criminalized political economy’ (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 280) are the crucial factors for forced land dispossession. In the following sections of the thesis, the causes for land dispossession have been elaborated with empirical evidence from the research.

5.3.2.1. Land dispossession by distress sale

From the four researched locations, it has been found that out of 160 households, 8 families have sold land amounting to 4.67 acres in the last year (see appendix for questionnaires 5 and 6) due to economic hardships, poverty, court-cases, and treatment for family members, maintaining family expenses, and bearing the education cost for their children.

Table 11: Status of land loss by distress sale of the research participants

Research Location	Ethnic Community	Households	Land in acres
Buskipara	<i>Santal</i>	1	0.16
Khidirpur	<i>Oraon</i>	1	0.33
Srirampara	<i>Santal</i>	6	4.18
Panchpukur	<i>Oraon</i>	0	0
Total		8	4.67

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

An extensive focus has been made to investigate the land loss among these two Indigenous communities. To what circumstances are Indigenous people forced to sell out their land for survival and livelihood? The research project has found out the significant root causes of selling out land among these two Indigenous people from four different locations within Dinajpur district. The nature of selling out lands by the actual legal owner occurs among community people and people from outside the community. The driving factors for selling out lands have been identified which are

as follows; poverty, economic hardships, maintaining family expenses such as treatment costs and children’s education, and the pursuit of court-cases.

Economic hardship has been identified as one of the major causes of land loss in these two researched Indigenous communities. The respondents informed that they sold their lands to maintain the cost of education of their children and even sometimes they sold their lands for the celebration of marriage ceremonies and funerals. In times of sickness and morbidity, where huge amounts of money are needed for the treatment of their family members, they are also forced to sell out lands because of their inability to re-pay the accumulated high-interests of private loans.

Table 12: Reasons for selling out Lands of the research participants

Research Location	Ethnic Community	Category of Households	Land in acres	Reasons
Buskipara	<i>Santal</i>	Marginal	0.16	Economic hardships and pursuing court cases
Khidirpur	<i>Oraon</i>	Marginal	0.33	Poverty and pursuing court cases
Srirampara	<i>Santal</i>	Medium	1	Maintaining family expenses
		Medium	1	Treatment cost for family members
		Marginal	0.33	Expenses for children’s education
		Medium	0.45	Pursuing court cases
		Medium	0.6	Poverty and economic hardships
		Marginal	0.8	Financial hardships
Panchpukur	<i>Oraon</i>	0	0	Not reported
Total		8	4.67	

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

It has also been found that sometimes, the Indigenous people would take loans or credit from the local money lenders and loan sharks, who impose higher interest rates

(as it detailed in the chapter six sections 6.3.2). They do not keep an account of the total money they owe, which seems to rise higher than the actual money borrowed. Consequently, they have to sell their lands to repay those loans. Along with that it has been found that there is a vicious rate of mortgaged out land found in both these two Indigenous communities. In the long run, they cannot pay their debts, and so they are bound to sell their mortgaged land without finding any alternative solutions. In this way, the researched population disposes their land by distress sale, which makes them even more vulnerable and marginalised.

5.3.2.2. Land dispossession by occupation and re-classification

The research showed that out of 160 households, 18 families reported that their lands have been dispossessed, amounting to 78.82 acres, by the different stakeholders in the last one year (see appendix for questionnaire 6). The stakeholders involved in land occupation are identified as follows; local influential people through fake documents, government's declaration of *Khas* land and vested property, lands brought under Social Forestry (SF) projects, through fake documents after the liberation war, occupation by new-settlers with the help of local, powerful and influential people, inability to pay back mortgaged amounts of money, local land grabbers who did not alter or compensate for occupied lands, and being without adequate money to re-new leases from the government. The following table describes in detail the driving factors of land loss among the research participants.

The research findings indicate that two groups (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 37) are deeply involved in land grabbing against the Indigenous people of North-Bengal. One consists of local, powerful and influential people who have strong political patronage, and other is government itself. This includes government institutions, such as the Forest Department (FD) of Bangladesh.

The continual and intensive land grabbing by the local, powerful influential people who always have political linkages and by the government has made the disadvantaged and vulnerable Indigenous communities' existence at a stake (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 18) as ownership to land is a grave concern for continued survival of Indigenous people. The detailed description of the driving factors for land dispossession has been articulated in the following table of this thesis.

Table 13: Driving factors for Land Dispossession of the research participants

Research Location	Ethnic Community	Category of Households	Land in acres	Driving factors for Land Dispossession
Buskipara	<i>Santal</i>	Landless	0.27	Without being compensated by local grabber
		Medium	10.88	Re-classified as <i>Khas</i> land, fake documents and undertaken by Social forestry
		Marginal	0.12	Local powerful influential by fake documents
		Medium	0.19	Not matching relevant land documents
		Marginal	2.31	Unable to re-new lease from government without having money
		Marginal	0.27	Without being compensated by local grabber
		Marginal	0.49	Re-classified as <i>Khas</i> land having documents
Khidirpur	<i>Oraon</i>	Marginal	1	Occupation by local powerful people
		Marginal	0.07	Forgery of documents
Srirampara	<i>Santal</i>	Medium	3	Declared as vested property –having documents
		Medium	0.58	Forgery of documents
		Medium	2	Declared as vested property –having documents
		Marginal	2.6	Forgery of documents
		Marginal	0.11	Occupation by powerful influential

		Marginal	0.33	Occupation by local powerful influential
		Marginal	49.64	Forgery of documents after liberation war
Panchpukur	Oraon	Marginal	0.33	Forgery of documents
		Medium	4	Forgery of documents
Total		18	78.82	

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process).

5.3.2.3. Dispossession of land by forgery of documents

The land grabbing process is propagated through preparing fake documents by the local, powerful and influential people, and by new settlers in connivance with corrupt land officials, and sometimes by threat, harassment and deceptive promises. From the above mentioned table, it has been found that a total of 59.8 acres of land of 9 households (7 marginal and 2 medium) had been taken. These households were found victims of dispossession of land by local, powerful and influential people through forgery of documents.

Anil Mardy a villager of Buski (Interview no. 31) in No. 3 Khanpur union under Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district objects that his ancestral 1 (one) acre of land has been illegally occupied by a powerful local Bengali through forgery of documents. To retain the land, a court case is pending. He has told me:

“My inherited property has been confiscated by illegal occupation by a local powerful Muslim man. In 2000, during rice plantation we had a fight between Santals and Muslims people to take control over the disputed land. The Muslim occupier filed a court case against me. Still the case is pending for a verdict. I have sought legal help from the local church but I have been refused. Now, I have no means to fight against the powerful influential but waiting for a justice from the court”.

The land dispossession by means of fraudulent and forged documents by the local powerful influential people, conniving with corrupt land officials is a looming threat

for the survival and existence of the two researched Indigenous communities. It has been detailed in Chapter Six (sections 6.5.2) of the thesis how the market plays a problematic role in land dispossession of the researched populations.

5.3.2.4. Land acquisition by Forest department

The land dispossession of the researched Indigenous people is also propagated through acquisition by the Forest Department of the Bangladesh Government. From the four research locations, 3 cases of marginal households who have lost a total of 15.9 acres of land in one year through acquisition by the Forest Department have been reported. The Forest Department plays a deceitful role in appropriating the lands of the Indigenous people.

Philip Murmu, an elderly man of Buski village (Interview no. 25) in No. 3 Khanpur Union under Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district reports that he has received a favourable verdict from the court. Despite this, he is still unable to take control over his ancestral land, amounting to 4.53 acres, from the local forest department. He grieves that;

“All those years, I have pursued the court case spending lots of money and time and finally I got justice from the court. Even having the verdict favourable to me, I can’t take control over my land because the local forest department has already planted trees on my land. This is really frustrating because without being able to cultivate that land my livelihood is in a critical condition”.

Another respondent, Mathias Tudu, a villager from Buski (Interview no. 32) under No. 3 Khanpur Union under Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district reports that his 0.49 acres of land has been occupied by the local social forestry project due to the unjustified declaration of his property as *Khas* land. He expressed his deep grievances towards the aggressive social forestry project of the government.

“My livelihood is severely hampered due to occupation of my land by the forest department. I am passing my days with anxieties how to feed my family and bear educational expenses of my children. I have a small land left to cultivate to support my family. To get back my ancestral land, I have approached to NGOs working in our locality, UP chairman and TNO but I did not get any help and support from them. If I could get back that land my livelihood would be easier and I could support my children’s education in a better way”.

In addition to the narratives of the respondents, from a previous study it has been reported that the Forest Department (FD) has forcibly occupied 1500 acres of land (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 19) most of it belonging to the *Santal* Indigenous people in Nawabganj Upazilla under Dinajpur District in the early 1980s. During the encroachment of the land, the Forest Department told the stakeholders in a deceitful manner that they would be given 50 percent share of the benefits in cash or kind. After cutting off all trees, the local Bengali people have been returned their lands for farming, but the Indigenous people were not granted their shares as entitled recipients, let alone returning occupied lands to the actual land owners who have been paying land taxes. The regressive commitment and discriminatory behaviours deprived the Indigenous people of their rightful share of benefits from the social forestry projects. This manifests their helplessness and their living with injustices. As a result, many of the Indigenous people are forced to become day labourers on their own lands, leading to structured poverty (Kamal et al. 2003, p. 12).

5.3.2.5. Re-classification as Khas land and vested property

The ancestral lands of Indigenous people have been either re-classified as *Khas* land or declared as vested property due to fraudulent documents that have been produced by dishonest land officials. The concept of *Khas* land evolves from the frequent changes of land legislation and fixation of land holding ceilings in Bangladesh. According to land administration in Bangladesh, any person holds land beyond the ceiling of 20.66 acres will be undertaken the custody of government as public land or

Khas land (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 28). The property enlisted as ‘enemy property’ during the Pakistani Colonial Period is re-named as vested property which is also under the custody of the Bangladesh Government (Trivedi, 2011, p. 4). From the four research locations, 3 households (1 medium and 2 marginal) have been identified as having lost a total of 14.53 acres of land because of re-classification to *Khas* land and vested property without any legal reasons. The following narratives of the respondents detailed how they have lost their in this manner.

Ambrose Murmu from the Buski village (Interview no. 14) of No. 3 Khanpur union under Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district claims with grief that his 1.34 acres of land had been listed as vested property, previously known as enemy property during the Pakistani Colonial Period without any substantial logical explanation. He narrated that:

“It is a long standing case between me and local forest department. When I wanted to plant trees on my land in 1960, the local forest officials have prohibited me saying that this piece of land has been declared as vested property. I was surprised how my ancestral land could be enlisted as vested property even possessing legal documents with myself. Since then, I have tried to take control over my piece of land but without receiving assistance from local government and other organizations it is quite impossible for me to retain my inherited land”.

The legacy of reclassifying private land into *khas* land and vested property, previously known as enemy property, during the Pakistani Colonial Period has had a detrimental effect on the researched population. The study indicates that the colonial law (the Enemy Property Act by the Pakistan regime during the 1965 Indo-Pak war) basically remained unchanged when Bangladesh became independent (Barkat et al. 2001, p. 31). The Vested Property Act is perpetuating dispossession of huge amounts of land, disruption in social capital formation and creation of parasitic vested

interested groups (Barkat et al. 1997, p. 5) that cause further marginalization of the researched population.

5.3.2.5. Impact of Liberation war

During the Liberation War in 1971, many Indigenous people fled to India for shelter and security. Upon their return, they could not get back their lands. Many of their lands have been either confiscated as enemy/vested property or occupied by the local powerful and influential people with muscle, who literally grabbed their lands. When they come back to Bangladesh, they could not get the ownership of their lands and properties because of either their lands have been declared as *Khas* lands and vested properties, or their lands have been occupied by local influential people.

Lucas Soren, aged 55 from the village of Buski (Interview no. 26) in No. 3 Khanpur Union under Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district narrates his memories of the deadly impact of the Liberation War in 1971, which threatened his livelihood. During the liberation period, he had lost his legal documents of land and as a result his 2.31 acres of land have been declared as *Khas* (government) land. He could not even re-collect his land documents as the local land registry office at Phulbari (neighbouring Upazilla) has been burnt down during the Liberation War. He laments with grief that:

“This land was my inherited property bought by my forefathers from the local land lord a long time ago. I have tried to take on lease my own ancestral land and have submitted application to the local Tehsil office. The local UP chairman has assured me that he would allocate the land and in return I have paid him 14,000 Taka for this work to be done. But unfortunately, no body worked for me. The land has been leased out to the refugees (migrated settlers) in 2009 and they have registered that amount of land on their names”.

After the liberation of the country in 1971, the local powerful influential people have taken over the lands of Indigenous people through illegal documents. Without land

documents, many of them could not reclaim their ancestral land while the major dominant group is in control.

5.3.2.7. Land litigation process is unusually lengthy

The study indicated that due to lack of awareness, illiteracy and having very little knowledge on land-related laws and the judicial systems in Bangladesh; the Indigenous people face challenges for legal justice. Poverty and economic hardships also delay justice. This reflects corruption in the judicial system, as Indigenous people are unable to financially afford or bribe concerned court officials, especially judges, lawyers and clerks (CARE, 2003, p. 11). In addition, maintaining a court case is very expensive for the Indigenous people as the land related case is an abnormally lengthy process, which also signifies the ‘deterioration of legal institutions’ (TIB, 1998) in Bangladesh. Many of the victims who are involved in litigation mostly experience huge financial loss and sometimes end up as paupers to pursue a court case for a long time to establish their rights to land. One of the focus group discussants from Srirampara village stated that:

“We do not get legal aid form the local government to resolve land-related disputes. In my knowledge, there are not any NGOs, who are working to support the land litigation process in our community. The existing judiciary systems and lawyers make the land case longer. The victims cannot bear the expenses to pursue court cases for twenty years. As a result, people lose their interest to retain their lands. The lack of lawyers amongst our community is also responsible for lengthy land litigation process”.

In addition, the following case illustrates that land litigation is an unusually lengthy process in Bangladesh, which results in homelessness and destitution;

Josua Mardy, father of four sons and one daughter, has been evicted from his ancestral land from the village of Dholagachpara, under No. 9 Kushdoh Union in Nawabganj Upazilla in Dinajpur district by local powerful land grabbers, and he has

been living with his family members for 32 years in a rice husking mill compound at Kamalpur village under No. 7 Shibnagar Union, Phulbari Upazilla under Dinajpur district. He has been pursuing a court case for 32 years to get back his 15.74 acres of land, which is now under the occupation of illegal land grabbers. As I interviewed him, he told me his agonizing story as below;

“The problem started when my father lend that land to a Bengali Muslim share cropper. The share cropper again has lent that land to another person. The third person sold out that total amount of land to a migrated settler through forgery of documents. This property is not a Khas or vested property, nor even sold out to anybody with the permission of district commissioner. The district court has provided verdict in favour of me but the occupiers have petitioned a case again to turn down the verdict as they demand that that lands are their purchased property. The court case has been very complicated now and all those years I have spent lots of money and time to re-gain my property. I have been frustrated by the lengthy and complicated process of the court procedures as I am not educated enough to understand all of those complicacies. My future is uncertain as I always face the threat of eviction even from my present land lord. At this age, I just want justice for the better future of my children”.

Like him many people face discriminatory behaviour, negative attitudes and negligence towards any concerns of the Indigenous people by the formal institutions like as local government offices (UP, Upazilla offices, land registry offices, settlement offices) and the judicial courts. The procrastination of justice in Bangladesh is a major factor for land dispossession of Indigenous people in the researched locations.

The above section provides the empirical evidence of how the land of the researched population is gradually being dispossessed by a whole range of different factors which includes the distress sale of land owner due to poverty. In addition to that land dispossession is driven by occupation by the powerful local influential with political linkages. The re-classification of the land as the *Khas* (public) land and vested property purposively induced by the local land officials have contributed to land

dispossession of the researched participants. Besides, land is being dispossessed by the forgery of documents and land acquisition by forest department in the name of social forestry projects in the researched locations. Moreover, during the liberation war in 1971, many of the research participants' land has been either occupied or re-classified as vested property. Due to lengthy process of land litigation process, many research participants are unable to take control over their ancestral land which impact on their livelihood.

5.4. Education for Indigenous children

This section addresses systemic discrimination experienced by Indigenous children in primary schools across the sampled population in four different locations of this study. My area of concern was to ask people about the challenges they face in enhancing primary education of their children. The key themes that emerged from my research are: poverty and unaffordability of education materials, discrimination in the schools and social exclusion by broader community, language barrier as a result of medium of instruction, non-availability of text books in their respective mother languages and the lack of representation in curriculum design as well as the lack of recruitment of teachers from Indigenous communities. Typically in the study area, the educational challenges can be summed up in the following key case studies and narratives of the respondents. This chapter also discusses the policy issues involving primary education of Indigenous children in the research areas. To what extent does the existing educational policy of Bangladesh contribute to educational marginalization, particularly among ethnic minorities regardless of social, economic and political factors that exacerbate marginalization? The relevant policy factors that need to be addressed to reduce marginalization are also critically analysed in the following section.

5.4.1. Status of primary education of Indigenous children

The study attempted to know the current enrolment rate of Indigenous children in the research locations. A survey has been conducted of the total 160 households. It has been found that amongst the 160 households, a total of 248 students (boys 127 and girls 121) were identified in the researched locations. It has also been assessed against the benchmark of the Bangladesh Government's free school textbooks and stipends program in the primary schools. The result shows that a total of 224 students received free textbooks and 86 students received stipends in the research locations.

Table 14: Status of primary education of Indigenous children

Research location	No of Houses	Primary School Children		Total	Textbook Received	Stipend Received	Did not get Textbooks	Did not get Stipend
		Boys	Girls					
Buski	40	30	15	45	40	30	5	15
Khidirpur	40	35	47	82	73	8	9	74
Panchpukur	40	23	31	54	48	18	6	36
Srirampara	40	39	28	67	63	30	4	37
Total	160	127	121	248	224	86	24	162

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research process)

The study also revealed that 24 students did not get free textbooks. A significant number of students (a total of 162) did not receive stipends for different various reasons, such lack of parent's communication with the school, low attendance in the schools as parents engaged them in their household work, and a large number of students have been studying under the missionary schools, which are excluded from this intervention.

5.4.2. Challenges faced by Indigenous children in the school

The study also endeavoured to point out the key challenges faced by the Indigenous children of the researched locations based on the interviews and focus group discussions. The research identified the following challenges described in the table below;

Table 15: Perception on barriers of Indigenous children's education

Research Location	Research Participants	Perception on barriers of Indigenous children's education				
		Financial Incapacity	Language Barriers	Helping Parents	Discrimination in Schools	Lack of Indigenous Teachers
Buski	40	11	6	9	10	4
Khidirpur	40	15	9	15	1	-
Panchpukur	40	12	11	6	11	-
Srirampara	40	11	13	5	11	-
Total	160	49	39	35	33	4

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

The key themes that emerged from my research are: poverty and unaffordability of education materials, helping parents, discrimination in the schools and social exclusion by the broader community, language barriers in relation to the medium of instruction, non-availability of text books in their respective mother languages, and the lack of representation in the curriculum design as well as the lack of recruitment of teachers from Indigenous communities. The following sections of the thesis illustrate the challenges identified by the research respondents regarding the education of Indigenous children in the remote researched locations of Bangladesh.

5.4.2.1. Financial incapacity and helping parents

Bangladesh is predominantly a rural country and poverty in rural areas is highly concentrated. Combating rural poverty to enable children to go to school is a

challenging issue for the Bangladesh Government, especially among the marginalized and disadvantaged tribal minorities living in the northern part of the country. A total of 49 respondents identified financial incapacity, and a total of 35 respondents narrated that helping parents is one of the barriers against the education of Indigenous children in the research location. One of the FGD participants from Buski village commented that;

“The children from needy family cannot go to schools as their parents can’t bear educational expenses for them due to poverty and financial incapacity. Even though, we hear primary school is free but related expenses for education materials and school fees is very which is not possible for us to bear those expenditures. Very often, Parents engage their children in household chores like as looking after cattle’s, goats, fetching water and fuelling wood etc. rather than sending them to schools”.

Primary education is free in Bangladesh according to policy, but not so in practice, as students from poor and deserving families do not get stipends due to nepotism and corruption (Shekh, 2005, p. 3). Moreover, the poorer families from the marginalized ethnic communities are unable to meet the basic requirements, such as cost of uniforms, private tutoring, additional fees and educational materials such as notebooks, pens and pencils for students (Chowdury et al. 2000, p. 8).

5.4.2.2. Medium of instruction: a dominant monolingual policy

The medium of instruction in education and a dominant monolingual policy have undermined the education of Indigenous children in the researched locations. The research identified that 39 respondents out of 160 narrated that the language problem is a major challenge for Indigenous children in the completion of primary education in Bangladesh. One of the FGD participants from Buski village commented that;

“Language is the barrier for primary education of our children. Due to language barriers as the instruction of language is Bangla which is an arch impediment for Santal Indigenous children in primary schools. Our children

can't speak and understand Bangla. This is why they are demotivated to attend the schools”.

The Indigenous people belong to ‘ethno linguistic minorities’ and are underprivileged and marginalized. They are excluded from education due to dominant language policy (UNESCO, 2005, p. 3). The existing education system has denied the special learning needs of Indigenous children in their mother tongues. One of the FGD participants from Srirampara village insisted that;

“We do not have teachers and textbooks in our mother languages. Our children cannot communicate with teachers from dominant majority and can't understand what is written in the books. So, how can we educate our children? Education in mother languages should be introduced in Class I to III. If bi-lingual education up to class III is ensured, children from our community could attend schools regularly”.

The monolingual language policy in Bangladesh does not recognise any ethnic languages except the dominant national language *Bangla*. Neither the Constitution nor any Bangladeshi law specifically recognises or protects Indigenous people and their rights for education in mother languages in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2010, p. 346). Thus, the Indigenous children in the researched locations from the both Indigenous communities are in a critical situation under the existing primary education system.

5.4.2.3. Discrimination against the Indigenous children

The 45 ethnic communities in Bangladesh prefer to be identified as 'Indigenous' or 'Adivasi' but ironically they have been called many different derogatory words like 'Adibasi', 'Khudra Jatiswatta', 'Upazati', 'Pahari', 'Nritattik Jatigosthi' that have been frequently used in various textbooks from primary to secondary levels creating confusion and identity crisis among the students (Durnnian, 2007, p. 15). I will illustrate how representations have a deep affect among the students by using a textbook used for early learners in elementary level. It is a common allegation of the

Indigenous people that the primary school level textbooks contain ‘wrong and misleading information’ about the culture and lifestyle of the country's Indigenous communities, which creates a negative impact on the Indigenous children in the existing education system. One of the FGD participants from Panchpukur village has claimed that;

“The contents of the textbook are objectionable. There are some derogatory descriptions on the Indigenous people’s life-style, culture and food habits. In the textbooks, something written about the Indigenous peoples that discourages them to attend in schools. Because they have to face negative comments from other students in the school”.

For an example, in the social science class IV text book, under Section 12, entitled, *Lifestyle of Indigenous People*, there is a brief description on the *Santal* from pages 88 to 91. The book depicts the houses of *Santal* people, mentioning that, “They don’t have any windows in their houses” (Modina et al. 2009, p. 88). This comment is illogical, and children consider it funny. In addition, the post-colonial footprint of depicting Indigenous people is prevalent in this book. The book states that:

“At present, Bengalis have influence on the Santal Indigenous people. Many of them being educated have adopted modern life-styles. As a result, their behaviour is changing” (Modina et al. 2009, p. 90).

The government primary schools are cynical about receiving Indigenous children, erroneously labelling them as ‘uncivilised, not speaking Bengali, incapable of learning, too old to be admitted, and would soon drop out of the school’. In addition to that the cultural distinction and “derogatory remarks” against their national identity regarding their true history, life-styles and food habits discourages Indigenous children from attending the schools. Moreover, government schools and their curricula do not reflect Indigenous cultural values and language, and parents do not find it relevant to their communities or livelihoods.

Negative stereotypical contempt by teachers and classmates, derogatory representation in the curricula and misconception about Indigenous culture actively play a role in keeping Indigenous children away from school. The curriculum in primary school textbooks is entirely oriented to the dominant Bengali model and presented through the lens of the post-colonial view, which fails to combat and eliminate misconceptions and prejudice against Indigenous populations.

5.4.2.4. Lack of Indigenous teachers

Since independence, the consecutive process of teacher recruitment in government primary schools is inconsistent with education policy and delivering quality primary education with regard to children from Indigenous communities. One of the FGD participants from Buski village commented that;

“We don’t have teachers from our own community. Our children don’t get enough support from Bengali teachers. If there were teachers from our own community, they could interpret and help our children in understanding Bangla for our children. At the same time, our children would feel empowered and encouraged to go to schools. As there is no Indigenous teachers from our community to support our children in enhancing primary education, our children feel alienated in the schools”.

Scholars note that Indigenous children have lower enrolment rates, higher drop-out rates and lower competency levels compared to non-Indigenous children not only in Bangladesh but around the globe (Rae, 2006, p. 51). Under this perspective, recruitment of government primary teachers from Indigenous communities would be conducive to successful completion of primary education of Indigenous children in Bangladesh. One of the FGD participants from Srirampara village strongly urged that;

“A quota for Indigenous teachers in recruiting in primary schools has to be mandatory so that we can get teachers from our community. Teachers from our community can look after our children better in assisting education”.

Another FGD participant from Buski village demanded that;

“An Indigenous teacher should be employed in a school where Indigenous children are attending in the school like our locality. It should be made compulsory. A quota for Indigenous teacher has to be mandatory in the primary teacher’s recruitment and transfer policy for better education of our children”.

5.4.2.5. Lack of resources for recreational activities

The lack of recreational activities demotivates Indigenous children in going to school. One of the FGD participants from Khidirpur village commented that;

“Our children do not want to go to schools because there are no recreational facilities in the school. As a result, they lose interest in going to school. Another factor is that children do not have an interest in education. They like to hang around here and there and they spend time in playing and want a free life”.

Another FGD participant from Khidirpur village indicated that;

“In the primary schools, there are resources for recreational activities. Entertainment or recreational activities should be introduced in the existing educational environment would be conducive to children’s’ attraction to schools”.

One of the FGD participants from Khidirpur village urged that:

“A mass awareness needs to be created among the Oraon Indigenous people especially to parents, guardians and all walks of society about the importance of promotion of education which should start from a family as it is a traditional centre point for education”.

Another FGD participant from Srirampara village insisted that;

“For poor people like us, government should do something for us. Our children have high dropout and non-completion rate. To check the dropout rate, appropriate measures should be taken like as stipends program, mid-day meal at schools and providing educational materials free of cost. This will encourage children from our community to attend schools regularly”.

5.5. Access to primary health care services

Even though the constitution of Bangladesh enshrines access to primary health care as a fundamental human right, there is structural alienation and discrimination in accessing health care services for the two researched underprivileged Indigenous people in North-Bengal. The study has identified that there are some underlying potential determinants that inhibit Indigenous women and children in seeking health care services in time of need, such as antenatal and postnatal care, delivery at birth, and medical intervention against other life-threatening and high-risk morbidities. The following section of the thesis will illustrate significant results of the study exploring key determinants of health care seeking behaviour, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings regarding access to public health care services, with an emphasis to quality of life of the two Indigenous people of Dinajpur district.

5.5.1. Health-care seeking behaviour of the research participants

The research has attempted to identify the health care seeking behaviour of the research participants from the four different research locations based on the interviews of 160 persons, including 138 males and 22 females (40 from each research location) and another 85 persons, including 58 males and 27 females who were consulted for focus group discussions.

A total of 86 respondents indicated that they go to the local village doctors for health care services. A considerable numbers of respondents (38) use the health care facilities of local government, and 24 respondents still use the services of traditional healers. Only a negligible number (12) of respondents can afford to go to private hospitals. Due to poverty and systemic discrimination in the public health centres, they can not access health care services in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

Table 16: Health- care seeking behaviour of the research participants

Research Location	Research Participants	Health-care seeking behaviour			
		Traditional medicine	Village Doctor	Union/Upazilla health complex	Private/mission hospital
Buskipara	40	7	27	6	-
Khidirpur	40	10	16	9	5
Panchpukur	40	3	29	5	3
Srirampara	40	4	14	18	4
Total	160	24	86	38	12

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

5.5.1.1 First-hand availability of health care services

The respondents were asked through in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) held in the four different locations with *Santal* and *Oraon* communities on their perceptions, thoughts, feelings and access to health careservices during times of morbidity and illness. A total of 86 respondents have said that at the initial stage they approach the local Village Doctors (VDs). And a total of 24 respondents said that they go to the Traditional Village Healer (TVH) as a part of their cultural beliefs and practices for seeking health care services. An elderly FGD participant from the Panchpukur village suggested that:

“The reason for low level of accessing primary health care is that our community people’s beliefs in superstitions and traditional health practitioners like as Ojha or kabiraj. Still many people believe that traditional healers can rescue people from any kinds of ill-being using herbal medicines and mantra among the Oraon Indigenous people”.

The study has also found that there is a long tradition and practice of traditional healers, herbal medicines and superstitions in both these two communities. One of the FGD participants from the Buski village narrated that:

“At the initial stage of any sickness or morbidity, they go to the traditional healers during their sickness. This is a part of Indigenous lie-style. In the past,

they used to get treatment from the traditional healers who are locally called Ojha or kabiraj. Before wide-spread practice of medical doctors, they used to be regarded as healers of any sickness. The people in the Indigenous community still believe that those traditional healers can rescue people from snake biting and any other disease”.

From my personal observation in the research locations, I can say that the Village Doctors (VDs) are the primary contact point for millions of rural poor in the country. Those Village Doctors are the informal providers as an alternative sources of care, providing basic and essential outpatient health services to millions of poor people in the rural areas. Close proximity to clients, availability to the community day and night, sympathetic behavior, well established relations within the community, and flexible payment methods have made the village doctors a popular source of care.

One of the FGD participants from the Khidirpur village said that:

“Indigenous People in our locality are largely dependent on the local village doctors (LMF) for any kinds of illness and health problems. Those local village doctors are easily available and that’s why people tend to use their health care services for any kinds of health problems”.

The village doctors have been perceived as first-hand health service providers, since they are available round the clock. It has also been found that when the traditional method of healing failed and the nature of sickness get complicated, they then approach nearby trained doctors (MBBS) and hospitals located in urban city centres.

One of the FGD participants from the Srirampara village said that:

“Usually our community people are found reliable to traditional healers for any kind of health issues. Then they approach to the local village doctors. When the nature of sickness gets complicated, then they approach to nearby MBBS doctors and government hospitals as well as private clinics”.

A similar situation has been found in the study of Mahmood et al (2010, p. 3) which states that rural village people are more inclined to seek health care services from

‘Village Doctors’ (VDs)⁶⁷ as they have been found ‘popular and first choice’ of treatment, rather than from trained healthcare professionals (MBBS Doctors) of public health care facilities. The reason is that village doctors are available round the clock. There is provision for house calls, lower consultancy fees, and availability of medicines which make them the most preferred (Mahmood et al. 2010, p. 8) source of health care providers against the unavailability and inaccessibility of public health care providers.

5.5.2. Perception on using local government health facilities

In this study, the research participants were asked about their perception on using the local government health facilities in the rural areas. Out of 160 interviewees, a total of 67 respondents said that due to lack of awareness and campaign materials they do not go to those rural health facilities. A total of 48 respondents complained that even though they go to those rural health centres, they do not get proper medicines and services due to lack of doctors and nurses. A total of 40 respondents narrated that they do not want to go there any further for the apprehension of being discriminated on the basis of ethnicity. Only 5 respondents said that they do not go those health centres due to distance. The following table describes the perception on using local government health care facilities in the research locations.

⁶⁷ Informal healthcare providers and or drug vendors practicing allopathic medicine many of them do not have government accredited training in the system of medicine that they were practicing (Mahmood et al. 2010, p. 8).

Table 17: Perception on using local government health facilities

Research Location	Research Participants	Perception on using local government health facilities			
		Lack of awareness/campaign materials	Distance of health centres	Lack of doctors and nurses	Discrimination against
Buski	40	13	-	19	8
Khidirpur	40	19	5	7	9
Panchpukur	40	19	-	7	14
Srirampara	40	16	-	15	9
Total	160	67	5	48	40

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research design and process)

5.5.2.1. Lack of awareness on public health care services

A total of 67 respondents stated that the lack of awareness amongst the Indigenous people and the absence of any campaign and promotional activities run by the government indicate their poor level of access to health care facilities. An elderly man from the Khidirpur village commented that:

“Our community people do not have adequate idea about how to use the existing government health facilities in our locality. Even many of the women do not know about the widowed, deserted women and maternal allowance which can be available from those local health care centres. He cited an example of a NGO named CCDB that has provided them booklet and information board regarding health services of local government levels. But people are not aware of it and sometimes even do not look at it. A minimal level of health awareness is prevailing in our Indigenous community”.

Personally I have investigated with reference to the comments of the villagers and found that a sign board of an NGO named CCDB regarding the health and social services of the local Upazilla government is hanging on a tree. This sign board details what kinds of services can be available for women from the women’s department of the local Upazilla (sub-district). The irony is that such types of important and relevant information remained unnoticed by local community dwellers.

Image: 7: A sign board regarding women's health and social services in Khidirpur village under Nawabganj Upazilla in Dinajpur district



This study has pointed out that a large number of respondents are reluctant to go to these public health facilities because they do not know what kinds of health services and facilities are available. It has also been observed that they have no inclination to use these public health facilities as they are deemed to be less important factors in their daily lives. One of the participants of the FGD from the Panchpukur village informed me that;

“We heard that Bangladesh government provides health care services to grass roots people in the country through Union Health Centres. It has been observed that our community people do not want to

receive health care services from those centres. Even during the different immunization programs, they are found reluctant to get those services as they do not appear on due date and time on account of their negligence and lack of awareness”.

As a result, they are deprived of accessing public health care facilities. This research suggests that in the four different locations respondents were found reluctant to go to local public health care centers even for immunization and vaccination programs because of their lack of awareness and negligence about the existing local public health facilities.

During my field research work, I have met a woman from the *Oraon* community who is a health assistant of Union Health centres from Panchpukur village. She has been working for several years with rural government health centres. From her working experiences, she explained to me that:

“There are initiatives from the government of Bangladesh for primary health care for the grass roots people but the fact is that the Oraon Indigenous people do not want to avail these services as they do not go to those rural health care centres. Those health care centres provide medications in fair prices. If our community people would go to those centres, they would have been financially

benefitted. Instead of going there, they purchase required medications from private market in high price which really effect on their income and living”.

Similarly, another study of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) shows that there is little awareness about contagious diseases such as, diarrhoea, fever, and reproductive health problems or STDs and HIV/AIDS due to illiteracy and lack of access to information among the rural people (CPD, 2002, p. 14). The research findings have also found that the lack of campaign and promotional activities regarding existing public health care facilities limit the access of these two Indigenous groups of people from the research locations to health care services. Thus, an elderly person from the Srirampara village stressed that;

“The health rights of the marginalized community like ours should be materialized by us. We need to know what kinds of health services are providing these local government health clinics. Then, we need to inform our community people to have health care services for those health centres at cheaper and affordable cost. Thus, we will be able to establish our health rights as human rights”.

5.5.2.2. Lack of doctors, nurses in rural health facilities

A total of 48 respondents complained that even if they go to these public health care facilities they do not get proper services due to unavailability of doctors, health staffs and required medicines. A woman from the Khidirpur village complained that:

“The health services of local governments are operating in ward health centres but we do not go there for receiving any health care services. If some people go there, they do not get proper services and treatment and medications without cost. Sometimes, they are given the same medicines for different diseases”.

Another elderly woman from the Khidirpur village narrated her experience, saying:

“Our people especially the women do not want to go to government run health centres because they get same medicines for different symptom of diseases. Many of them complained that there are not adequate medicines, doctors and nurses in the Union health centres. That’s why our people are demotivated to go to those government health centres”.

The contemporary literature also supports the study illustrating that infrastructural deficiencies (Osman, 2008, p. 279) such as, managerial inefficiency, misdistribution of health personnel between rural and urban areas, unavailability of doctors and health staffs, high levels of absenteeism (41 percent) of doctors and unwillingness to work in rural health facilities, lack of drugs and supplies, absence of monitoring mechanisms, and lack of accountability of service providers to the community and institutions concurrently reproduce sufferings by prohibiting rural disadvantaged Indigenous people from accessing public health care services.

5.5.2.3. Fear of Being Discriminated against

A total of 40 respondents said that for the fear of being discriminated de-motivated and disinclined them to go to these public health care facilities. A woman from Khidirpur village in the FGD said that;

“We do not want to go to the local government health services. If we go there we are looked upon differently. We have to wait in a queue for a long time. We are served in the last, some times without any medicines. We do not want to be further discriminated”.

The research respondents have also reported that local public health staffs treat them differently and look down on them as ‘unclean and unexpected’ service users. Indigenous women are especially not inclined to attend mainstream health facilities due to apprehension of being ill-treated and discriminated. One woman from the Khidirpur village stated that;

“As we have heard that there are not enough health care facilities in those government health services, we feel comfortable to go to the Christian missionaries’ hospitals located in Dinajpur town. During the illness, delivery or birth of a baby we go to mission’s hospital. We are treated better there than anywhere else in our areas”.

They suffer from structural alienation in the dominant Bengali society. This alienation plays a critical role in their abstaining from using available public health care services. In addition the respondents have shared their experiences that poverty and the daily struggle for survival have led to their withdrawal from accessing health care services. Inequity in access to health services systematically excluded poor, disadvantaged and marginalized Indigenous people from attaining free and subsidized public health services in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Even though these services are free and subsidized, the cost burden especially for drugs, transportation and laboratory tests, as well as some form of illegal hidden costs and informal payments limit the capacity of the poorest quintile of Indigenous people in seeking health care treatment as they cannot afford to pay for it due to their poverty. In addition to poverty, the systemic discrimination against the indigenous people in the public health centers is also barrier for accessing health care services in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

5.6. Indigenous women's empowerment

The research was undertaken amongst the two most marginalized Indigenous communities living in the remote rural areas in northern part of the country. It has been noted that descent and property are transmitted through the male line in the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities. Women remain systemically devalued without property and genealogical identity. The concern is that Indigenous women face discrimination, social exclusion, structural marginalization, gender identity problems, and systemic oppression in a patriarchal society (Besra, 2014, p. 339). Women are deprived from hereditary rights and have limited control over household resources and decision-making processes. From my personal observations in the research locations, I can assume that denial of a rightful share of ancestral lands and

access to resources in patrilineal customary inheritance laws characterizes the unequal power relationships of Indigenous women in Bangladesh. As a result, they are marginalized, victims of violence, and excluded from holding powerful decision making positions. Socially and economically they also face multiple systemic forms of discrimination. The discriminatory position of Indigenous women in society requires a thrust for women's empowerment.

5.6.1. Indigenous women's inheritance rights in the society

The *Santals* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities of Bangladesh are patriarchal, even though men and women work alongside each other in agricultural activities for subsistence living. During my field work, I have interviewed both men and women from these two Indigenous communities regarding women's roles and position in society. According to the narratives of the respondents, I can summarize that the customary practices of these two Indigenous communities indicate that sons have full rights of ownership to the father's property. However, only when a mother is the owner of some property, can daughters inherit that property according to the customary land inheritance practices of these ethnic communities (it has been detailed in the Chapter Three section: Women's Empowerment). Women from both these Indigenous communities are engaged in agricultural and domestic activities beside the men for substantial living in a marginalized rural setting in Bangladesh.

5.6.2. Perception on women's rights to inherit property

A total of 160 research participants have been interviewed and consulted regarding women's land inheritance rights and ownership in the two Indigenous communities. The findings of the research demonstrate a mixed perception on Indigenous women's inheritance rights to land and properties in the two researched communities. To some extent, the Indigenous women's land inheritance right is a debated and contested

issue in both communities. Through this study, a wide range of different opinions have been perceived from the respondents.

Table 18: Perception on women's rights to inherit property

Research Location	Research Participants	Women's rights to inherit property				
		Equal Share	Half share	One-fourth share	Charity/will	Traditionally No
Buskipara	40	1	-	9	-	30
Khidirpur	40	4	6	7	7	16
Panchpukur	40	9	-	29	-	2
Srirampara	40	7	-	21	8	4
Total	160	21	6	66	15	52

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research process)

Out of 160 interviewees, 21 respondents voiced that girls should get an equal share of land as boys, while 6 respondents argued for women to have a half-share of men's inheritance. It was reported that 66 respondents contended that women could be given one-fourth of the proportion of men's lands for their survival, livelihood and well-being. Only 15 interviewees responded that women should be given some land on the wish of parents without any legal bindings as a charity or kindness. A total of 52 respondents said that traditionally there is no rights of Indigenous women's inherit to land rights.

The research identified that 52 research participants expressed reluctance and they were adamantly opposed to giving any land rights to women based on the long tradition and customs that have been followed over centuries amongst the two Indigenous communities. The customary practice tends to justify that women do not inherit any piece of lands and properties from fathers but only from mothers. An elderly male respondent from the Buski village indicated that:

“The rights of women inheriting land do not exist in our community. It has been practiced over the centuries that women do not inherit lands from their natal family. At this stage, it is very difficult to turn down traditional and customary practices of land inheriting rights in our Santal community”.

A village headman from *Srirampara* village who supports the existing traditional practices which disinheriting women claimed that:

“If women are given land rights, this may raise family disputes and violence against women generated as a result of commercial interests, and it could trigger a high rate of divorce and extra-communal marriages of Indigenous women for land procurement which could destabilize peace and harmony in the society”.

Regarding the Indigenous women’s inheritance rights, I have a detailed interview with Sushani Toppo, a woman from Pachpukur village who has contested for the post of vice-president (women) at No. 15 *Lohani Para Union Parishad* under *Badarganj Upazilla* of Rangpur district in the year 2011. She opposed the idea of giving land rights to women in the community. She said that:

“The Indigenous people are still illiterate. There is lack of awareness among the people in terms of education, land rights, health care services and other social issues in the society. If we introduce to land inheritance rights to women, many problems such as, dowry, domestic violence for property, and commercial relations with brothers and sisters could arise in the community. Such types of emerged problems may create a dismal situation in the community. We need to educate our daughters properly so that they can establish themselves in the society. Personally, I think that it is not the due time to entitle women with inheritance rights in our community”.

More like them, other respondents with similar perceptions urged that women should transfer or sell out land to people outside the family or outside the community when they are married to outsiders. From this point of view, respondents perceived that if women are conferred land rights, it could produce social instability and undermine their family traditions.

Despite this, there exists a long traditional practice. A majority proportion of

research participants (66 research participants) are inclined to bring some positive changes in order to establish women's rights over land and property, arguing that women have the same rights as males to be entitled to land for survival and livelihood. A *Santal* woman from the Buski village urged that:

“Women should be given land rights as they are inheritors equal to sons for their well-being and to end the many years of gender discrimination. If the women become the custodian of lands, the land dispossession will be drastically decreased in our community”.

The woman explained to me that land dispossession by selling out due to poverty and economic hardship is an alarming issue in the community. If the women are given land rights, like her, many women claimed that there could be a possibility to stop land dispossession in the community. Similarly, an *Oraon* woman from Panchpukur village commended that:

“The traditional practices of land inheritance of our community need to be reformed and restructured in considering equal inheritance rights to male and female. We neglect and pay less attention to our daughters; we need to give them inheritance rights. If women possess land, they will be empowered as ownership to land is regarded as a social power in the community”.

From the four different locations and villages, the research participants claimed different opinions on entitling Indigenous women's land rights, based on customary practices. Simultaneously, a disproportional share like half-share, one-fourth share and lump-sum share between boys and girls have also been mentioned by the research participants. The outcome of this research is significantly positive as the majority of the research participants are in favor of bringing changes in customary practices that deprive women from inheriting lands and properties. A village leader from the Khidirpur avowed that:

“It is the time to change our social structures and traditional customary practices of land inheritance in our community in line with the Muslim and Christian community. Women should be given land inheritance rights not as a

charity but as a right to equal share of a father's property. In this way, we can establish gender justice within our community".

The existing literature on women's inheritance rights in Bangladesh indicate that according to the *Muslim Family Laws* in Bangladesh, women get a one-eighth share if there is a child and one-fourth if there be no child from the estate of her husband (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 5). The inheritance rights of Hindu women in Bangladesh are guided by the *Dayabhaga* School of Hindu law that shows that women are excluded and have limited inheritance rights (Aktar and Abdullah, 2007, pp. 89-90). And, the inheritance for Bangladeshi Christian women is guided by *The Succession Act of 1925*, which provides equal inheritance rights for men and women (Ministry of Law, 2014). Apart from patrilineal Indigenous communities, among the matrilineal *Garos and Khasis* another Indigenous group of the greater Mymensingh and Sylhet districts of Bangladesh, property and descent go to the mothers to daughters (Agarwal, 1994, p. 103). The inheritance processes differ from community to community, but to some extent, the right to inheritance is significant to define women's equal power-relationship in society.

This study suggests that that re-forming and re-structuring customary practice of the two Indigenous communities is significantly important to enhance women's participation in the traditional social structures and decision making processes both at family and community level. Thus, society will recognize and value women's contribution, voice and position in society for women's empowerment, equality and better quality of life chances.

5.6.3. Perception on Indigenous women's empowerment

In order to conceptualize Indigenous women's empowerment issues, the research participants were asked a set of questions (see appendix interview questionnaire from

19 to 27). The research participants have responded with their perceptions on women's empowerment issues which have been detailed in the following table.

Table 19: Perceptions on Indigenous women's empowerment

Research Locations	Research participants	Participation		Welfare		Access		Control		Awareness	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Buskipara	40	13	27	14	26	16	24	15	25	10	30
Khidirpur	40	15	25	40	0	40	0	9	31	0	40
Panchpukur	40	17	23	29	11	25	15	4	36	6	34
Srirampara	40	17	23	39	1	40	0	37	3	17	23
Total	160	62	98	122	38	121	39	65	95	33	127

Source: Based on the interviews of the study as detailed in Chapter Four

The research participants have been asked to conceptualize Indigenous women's empowerment in terms of women's participation in decision making in the family and participation in the traditional social institutions, getting involved in any income generating activities, having access to social recreational activities, having independent decision making in family planning, and having awareness of girls' free education and basic health care services.

The study demonstrated that even though the two researched Indigenous communities are patriarchal, a total of 98 respondents conveyed that the women have participation in the in decision making in the family and in the traditional social institutions. One of the respondents from Srirampara village (Interview number 9) stated that:

"To some extent, the Indigenous women can take part in the activities of traditional social structures such as Manhji Parishad at the time of social

resolution, disputes mitigation and any other social program. The Indigenous women also can take part in the decision making process in terms of girls' education and marriage. This is a very positive culture. I think that those practices need to be sustained for the women's empowerment in our community".

In terms of welfare, 122 respondents stated that the women are allowed to get involved in any income generating activities. One of the respondents from Panchpukur village (Interview number 8) reported that"

"Now a day, the Indigenous women are allowed to get involved in any income generating activities or in any organizations such as NGOs or Samiti's. Many of the women are involved with NGOs for group savings and they can withdraw loan from NGOs in time of need. This is happening because of many NGOs are operating their micro-credit program in our neighbourhood. The presence of NGOs in our areas, have enable women to get involved with to get involved in any income generating activities. I think that this is just a growing concern amongst our community and it has to be nurtured properly for the better socio-economic prospect of Indigenous women in our society".

In terms of access to mobility and social recreational activities, a total of 121 respondents accounted that the women have mobility and access to social recreational activities in both researched communities. One of the respondents from Srirampara village (Interview number 23) commented that:

"The Indigenous women in our community are allowed to go out and visit their relatives when they want to. In this case, male family members do not restrict them very much. The Indigenous women nowadays also can undertake decisions in terms of family planning and medical treatment they needed at their due time".

With regard to women's independent decision making in family planning and medical treatment, a total of 95 respondents narrated that women do not have independent control over decision making in family planning and medical treatment. One of the respondents from Buski village (Interview number 39) argued that:

“In my opinion and from my lived experiences, I can say that the Indigenous women are not given minimal medical treatment in their due time at the household level. They need permission from their husbands or male members from the family. There is also lack of rural government medical facilities near our community”.

In terms of women’s awareness on girls’ free education and basic health care services, 127 respondents conveyed that the Indigenous women from the both researched communities do not have awareness of girls’ free education and basic health care services. One of the respondents from Khidirpur village (Interview number 3) commented that:

“In our community, the women have limited awareness regarding girl’s free education and stipends programs and basic health care and immunization services that could be available from the government. I think that women are reluctant to seek any information regarding women’s welfare. The lack of awareness and lack of self-confidence are also perceived as the barriers for Indigenous women’s empowerment”.

In terms of the Indigenous women’s empowerment issues, the research participants provided mixed perceptions on women’s empowerment. However, the study indicated that even though the Indigenous women have access to participation in the decision-making process in the family, welfare and social recreational activities, in terms of independent decision making in family planning and medical treatment the Indigenous women have limited access. Moreover, the researched women have limited awareness on girls’ free education and basic health care services in all four different researched locations. Based on the above discussion, it is summarised that indigenous women in the research locations have limited empowerment in the society.

5.6.4. Discrimination and violence against the Indigenous women

The area of concern is that Indigenous women face discrimination, social exclusion, structural marginalization, gender identity issues, and systemic oppression in

patriarchal society. Descent and property is transmitted through the male line both in the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous communities where women remain systemically devalued without property and genealogical identity (Kabeer et al. 2011, p. 7). Denial of a rightful share of ancestral lands and access to resources in patrilineal customary inheritance laws (Chakraborty, 2004, pp. 55-56) characterizes the unequal power relationships of Indigenous women in Bangladesh. As a result, they are marginalized, victims of violence, and excluded from holding powerful decision making positions (Roy, 2004, pp. 6-7). Socially and economically they face multiple forms of systemic discriminations.

The incidence of violence and discrimination against Indigenous women is significantly high due to their marginalization, social exclusion and lack of representation in society. The patrilineal society imposes restrictions on women's mobility, limits their access to economic resources, and they have little participation in the decision-making process within a household. Along with family, the critical role of community, market and state are also contributing factors for women's subordinate position and structural inequalities.

At the community level, in terms of participation and representation in the local government power structures, they also experience similar discrimination, alienation and powerlessness. Due to their Indigenous and racial identity, their applications and opinions are largely ignored in terms of accessing social safety nets such as old age schemes, widow's allowance and other provisions of basic social services at the local government level (it has been detailed in the Chapter Six, section 6.5.3).

In terms of wages in the agricultural sector, Indigenous people, especially women are discriminated. The poor landless households have limited options but to sell their

physical labor in the market for subsistence living. The discrimination of wages is informally institutionalized in the rural setting even though men and women performed the same type of work. A large proportion of the respondents (153) have reported that on average men earn *two hundred fifty taka* per day while women get paid *two hundred taka* which is equivalent to nearly 3 Australian Dollars only. As a result, the discriminatory inheritance laws and violence against the women in both researched Indigenous communities further ‘hinder women’s overall emancipation’ (Roy, 2004, p. 8) in society. The following table will illustrate the perceptions on discriminations and violence against Indigenous women in the both researched communities.

Table 20: The perception on discrimination and violence against women

Research Location	Research Participants	Perception on wages		Violence against women	
		Discriminatory	Equal	Family	Work Place
Buskipara	40	40	0	1	39
Khidirpur	40	40	0	5	35
Panchpukur	40	40	0	7	33
Srirampara	40	33	7	7	33
Total	160	153	7	20	140

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research process)

The above table showed that out of 160 respondents a total of 153 respondents detailed that there is a wider discrimination in terms of agricultural wages against the Indigenous women. The study has also reported that 140 respondents claimed that Indigenous women are victims of violence in the work place and only 20 respondents have narrated those Indigenous women also experience violence at the household level. The following sections of the thesis will focus on violence against Indigenous women in the work place and in the family.

5.6.4.1. Discrimination of wages and violence in work place

The study showed that women from both researched communities experience discrimination and violence in the work place. In terms of wages in the agricultural sector, the Indigenous people, especially the women, are discriminated against. The poor landless households have limited options but to sell their physical labor in the market for subsistence living. The discrimination of wages is informally institutionalized in the rural setting even though men and women performed same type of work. A large proportion of respondents (153) have reported that on average men earn *two hundred fifty taka (BDT)* per day while women get paid *two hundred taka (BDT)* only which is equivalent to 2.80 Australian dollars per day. More often, their payments are delayed up to one week. One of the women respondents from Khidirpur village said that:

“We the women work in the agricultural sector under the rain and sun with our male counterparts. Even though we perform the same work as men, we are getting paid less than men. The discrimination in wages does not only belong to the non-Indigenous people but also amongst the Indigenous communities”.

The prevailing literature also indicates that sometimes, their payments are denied ‘completely or partially’ (Reeves and Baden, 2000, p. 22). One of the women respondents from Srirampara village said that:

“We do not get our wages every day; I mean at the end of the day of our work. The employers pay us after 4 to 5 days and sometimes after nearly one week. Most of the time, they give us partial payment of the week and we have to wait for another week to get the rest of the payment. The irregular payment made our life critical as we cannot arrange our family expenses accordingly”.

The study has also identified that the Indigenous women are ‘stigmatized and verbally and physically abused’ (Reeves and Baden, 2000, p. 22) in the work place in the farm by the dominant Bengali population. A total of 140 respondents that Indigenous women face verbal and physical harassment during work outside of their homes from non-Indigenous community members, as traditionally males and females

work together as daily wage laborers in the both researched Indigenous communities.

5.6.4.1.2. Violence in the Family

In the patriarchal society of Bangladesh, domestic violence such as, dowry-related violence, verbal abuse, harassment, humiliation and physical torture against women is a common phenomenon both in rural and urban areas, especially within the less educated and lower socio-economic classes (Hossain and Suman, 2013, p. 79). Khatun and Rahman (2012, p. 21) have also stated that majority of women in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh experience different types of violence such as, physical (slapping, beating, choking, kicking), psychological (verbal abuse, threats of abandonment, intimidation) and economic (denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, controlling access to health care and employment). Even though, the *dowry-system*⁶⁸ does not exist in these researched communities, the study reported that Indigenous women are also victims of some sort of violence at the household level. The respondents were reluctant to answer questions about violence against women in the family. Out of 160 research participants, 20 respondents conveyed that Indigenous women experience domestic violence such as, verbal abuse, battering, intimidation and denial of resources in time of their need in the households. Most of the respondents (out of 20) agreed that the effect of alcohol consumption by their husbands is related to domestic violence at the household level in the researched locations. One of the women (focus group discussant) from Khidirpur village recognized that:

⁶⁸ According to the dowry system, the bride has to give a large amount of money, furniture, ornaments and many things to the bridegroom at wedding. The dowry related domestic violence against women is increasing in an alarming rate. Money is the most common form of dowry practiced in the lower socioeconomic classes. Inability to pay the dowry demand causes different types of violence against women. In rural areas of Bangladesh, practice of dowry is very common, domestic violence relating to dowry demand is equally very common (Hossain and Suman, 2013, p. 84).

“Violence to women often occurs after excess drinking habits of their husbands. It has also been noted that when male members are normal, they have a peaceful life. The level of violence gets worse when husbands drink excessively and ends up with arguments, quarrelling and physical assault that also badly affects entire well-being of other family members”.

Another woman from the Srirampara (focus group discussant) also commented that:

Women in our community have to suffer lots. The men indulge in drinking and send their wives to work for daily subsistence living. Thus, Indigenous women carry a double burden working outside the home as income earners and working at home in maintaining the household through doing chores.

The study reported that the level of violence in both researched Indigenous communities is largely associated with the consumption of alcohol by male members of the family during the social festivals. The detailed has been illustrated in the chapter six sections 6.5.3.1 of the thesis.

5.7. Citizenship rights and social services

In Bangladesh, the Social Safety Net Programs (SSNPs) aim to protect poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups, such as the ethnic population; old aged, widowed and destitute women; and physically challenged people from tumbling into widespread poverty (Ahmed, 2007, p. 3). It is especially obvious that Indigenous poor people in Bangladesh face the worst risks and vulnerabilities during natural calamities, anticipated risks due to seasonal poverty during lean periods of the year such as *Monga* (seasonal hunger and poverty during the year of September to November) in North-Bengal, and routine crises in the everyday life of struggle (Rahman, 2006, p. 10). The food insecurity during the critical period of the year has been detailed in the Chapter Six, section 6.3.3 in the thesis. The research has special focus on the marginalized Indigenous people living in rural settings with vulnerabilities and risks in Dinajpur district. .

The study pointed out in the following table of the thesis that the Indigenous people are largely excluded from citizenship rights and access to social services. Only 35 respondents reported that they have received some social benefits; for instance 1 freedom fighter allowance, 23 Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) cards, 1 relief payment during disaster and 10 old aged allowances. A major proportion of the respondents said that they did not get any other social security benefits as they do not have voice and representation in the local government. They are deprived based on their ethnic identity. In addition to that as they do not have community-based effective organizations, they are unable to influence the local government in the researched locations.

Table 21: Citizenship rights and Social Services

Research Location	Research participants	Level of Access to social security service				
		Freedom Fighter Allowance	VGF and VGD	Relief during disaster	Old aged allowance	No social security benefits
Buski	40	1	4	1	6	28
Khidirpur	40	0	10	0	0	30
Panchpukur	40	0	2	0	0	38
Srirampara	40	-	7	-	4	29
Total	160	1	23	1	10	125

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research process)

The study has also attempted to conceptualize the perceptions on access to citizenship rights as citizens of the country amongst the two researched Indigenous communities in the following table:

Table 22: Perception on access to citizenship rights

Research Location	Research participants	Perception on access to citizenship rights			
		Education	Employment	Khas land	Only Voting Rights

Buski	40	-	-	-	40
Khidirpur	40	24	0	2	14
Panchpukur	40	-	-	-	40
Srirampara	40	-	-	-	40
Total	160	24	0	2	134

Source: Based on the survey and interview notes (see chapter four for details of the research process)

The study conveyed that the respondents have limited access to citizenships rights in the country. A total of 24 respondents have commented that they can access education rights as citizens of Bangladesh. A large number of the participants (134) out of 160 respondents have narrated that they can only exercise their voting rights during the national and different tiers of local government elections. The study has also pointed out that out of 160 respondents, a total of 125 respondents reported that they do not have any access to avail social security services from the local government. The following section of the thesis will elaborate their limited access to social security services from the local government due to their weak representation in the local government, deprivation based on their ethnicity and inactive community based organizations.

5.7.1. Weak representation in the local government

The local government authority or Union Parishad (UP) has large control over listing beneficiaries, and providing those social security services. Usually, the Indigenous people are left out from enlisting process, as they have a weak voice and a limited stake in the local government. It has also been reported that the local government authorities and public representatives are reluctant to hear any matters raised by the Indigenous people and their concern is hardly valued. It has also been illustrated in

the Chapter Six section 6.5 titled the systemic implications of the key institutions in enhancing the life chances in the thesis.

5.7.2. Deprivation on the basis of Ethnicity

The majority of the respondents have reported that the only citizenship right they have is the ability to vote during the elections. Apart from that access to other citizenship rights such as social security benefits is limited for their marginalized position. In contemporary society, Indigenous people are discriminated and humiliated in terms of their different ethnicity. The study has reported that whenever they approach to the local government offices, their just demand is ignored and their application is not taken as a matter of concern. They are socially and ethnically neglected, which results in their low self-esteem and inferiority complex. To some extent, living with dominant non-Indigenous people, they live with fear and insecurity. Their human rights are denied and fair justice is obstructed. This is discussed in more detailed in the Chapter Six, section 6.5.1 which emphasized that the state appears to be coercive not a sanctuary for the vulnerable in the thesis.

5.7.3. Inactive community based organization

The study conveyed that in all the four Upazillas (sub-district), where this research was undertaken, there is *Adivasi Somaj Unnayan Somity* which is an elected body that works in collaboration with respective *Upazilla* offices for the development of Indigenous people. It has been reported that those organizations distribute stipends to the Indigenous students once a year and sometimes they also provide domestic animals, like cows and goats as a token of development. One of the focus group discussants from Srirampara village stressed that:

“Our Mukhia (community leaders and spokespersons) have to stand strong and work hard for the benefit of our community. The chairmen of the Adivasi

Somaj Unnayan Samiti of each Upazilla do not investigate the land sale application properly. It has been noticed that they only mediate during the sale of Indigenous people's land to non- Indigenous persons according to the EBASTA act 1950. It is the time for us to get united and make a strong demand to stop selling Indigenous people's land. If it is not stopped now; our existence will be in a critical position in the future”.

Another important aspect is that the head of those organizations verify and recommend permission for selling out land to non-Indigenous people. The research participants responded that those organizations are inactive in protecting rights and delivering social services to the Indigenous people due to lack of social capital in both researched Indigenous communities. It has been also been detailed in the section on traditional structures and social capital in the community (see Chapter Six, section 6.5.3.2 below).

5.8. Summary of the chapter

This chapter discussed the research findings according to the five axial themes of the thesis in terms of access to land, education for Indigenous children, access to health care services, Indigenous women's empowerment and citizenship rights, and access to social services. It has also narrated demographic statistics, land holding status, and root causes of land dispossession caused by distress sale, forcible occupation, re-classification into *khas* land and enemy and vested property of the research participants. The key findings of each axial theme have been supported by empirical evidence, narratives of the respondents and also from the secondary sources. The following chapter is an extension of the core findings of the research that discusses and analyses the systemic implications on livelihood and life chances of the two researched Indigenous communities of North-Bengal.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Analysis of Systemic Implications

6.1. Introduction

In this research, I have drawn on, paraphrased and adapted Kabeer's (1994. P. 264) *Social Relations Approach to Institutional Analysis* to analyse institutional dynamics and the key roles of institutions such as, the state, market, community and family on the well-being of the researched Indigenous population. The systemic implications were addressed across three groups, namely the landless households, marginal households at risk of becoming landless and medium households with enough land to survive. The three groups form a continuum and are characterised in terms of five axial themes, namely access to land, education, health care, women's empowerment and access to basic social services. The characteristics of these three groups are discussed and analysed in this chapter.

6.2. Analytical approach: Typology for understanding the lived experiences

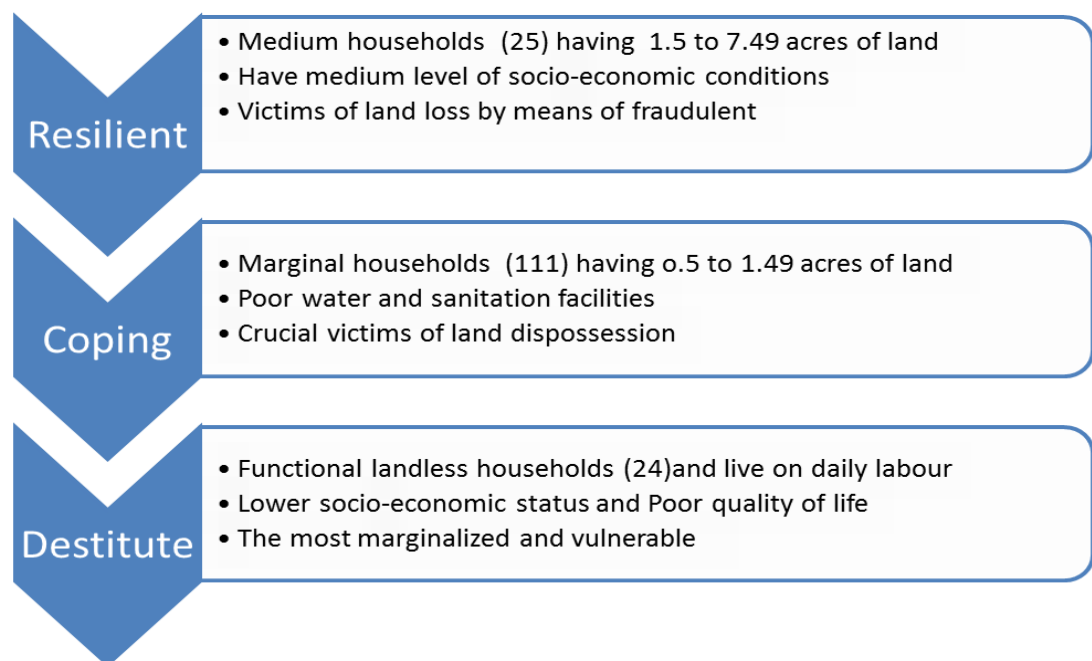
The research identified that a total of 24 households out of 160 were found landless who are the poorest of the poor and most marginalized in the researched communities. In a real sense, they are at the on the brink of destitution. The research also identified a total of 111 marginal households who were found at the risk of becoming landless and 25 medium households who have some land and are coping with the stress of daily life-struggle. In this study, I have employed a typological approach to analyse the narratives of lived experiences by the research participants. The typologies provide the basis for my discussion of the commonalities and differences across the narratives.

At this point, I would like to present three case studies from landless, marginal and medium households of researched locations in the following section. The case

studies contribute a typical picture of households in terms of coping with stress’, ‘just making ends meet’ and ‘on the brink of destitution’ or ‘destitute’.

The study also indicates that there is a ‘downward mobility⁶⁹’ (Richardson, 1977, p. 303; Lipset and Zetterberg, 1956, p. 159) of the researched populations due to their gradual dispossession of land, inter-generational cycles of poverty, and limited access to social services in the country. In analyzing the ‘dynamics of poverty’ in rural Bangladesh, (Rahman et al. 2013, p. 109;Osmani and Sen, 2010, p. 17) scholars indicate that the changes of income of households is also accompanied by the changes in socio-economic factors such as literacy, gender parity in school, health care, morbidity, and asset holdings. Those socio-economic factors contribute to the downward mobility amongst the rural poor in Bangladesh.

Figure 4: The continuum showing the downward mobility



Source: Created by Besra on the based on interviews as detailed on Chapter Four

⁶⁹ The movement of a social group or class to a lower status indicates the downward mobility (Richardson, 1977, p. 303; Lipset and Zetterberg, 1956, p. 159).

For an example, the children from the lower socio-economic background are silently excluded from school and are at the risk of dropping out which also shows a downward mobility (Das, 2011, p. 2) in terms of education. On the basis of the research findings, it may be argued that due to gradual land loss, complex land tenure policies, and poverty the medium households are becoming marginal households and marginal households are becoming functionally landless in the researched locations. The following diagram shows the downward mobility of the three continuums.

6.2.1. Case study one: household on the brink of destitution because they are landless

Max Khalko, aged 48 from Khidirpur village (Interview no. 18) under Nawabganj *Upazilla* in Dinajpur is a landless. Day-labouring in the agricultural sector is his main occupation for the subsistence living of his family. Apart from his main occupation, he is a fuel wood collector for livelihood. In rural Bangladesh, more than 95 percent of households are dependent on solid fuels such as wood and “*kharkuta*” which means agricultural crop residue, grass, straw, shrubs, animal dung, coal etc. as they are the available source of domestic energy (BBS, 2004, p. 69; Akhtaruzzaman et al. 20013, p. 12). The collecting and selling of fuel wood is also an occupation for livelihood in rural Bangladesh. The relevance of presenting his lived narratives in this case study is that he is struggling to survive with his family members without having land, not even a homestead on his own land. During my field research work, I have talked to every respondent involved in this study and I have found that this household is the most marginalized and on the brink of destitution. Mr. Khalko lives with his wife and three daughters. His wife is also a day-labour in agricultural related work. Both of them are illiterate. By inheritance, he has no lands and he lives on another person’s land in a thatched house. He has no hand tube well of his own for

drinking water. For household consumption, he has to rely on a neighbour's hand tube well which is untested for the presence of arsenic. Besides, he has no basic sanitation or latrines on his own. He and his family members use either the neighbour's toilet, or they openly defecate in the nearby reserve forest. During the interview, I asked him why he does not have any tube well and basic sanitation facilities for his family members. He replied to me:

“I have no cultivable lands from where I could get food grains for my family consumption. Every day, I and my wife have to look for a wage-labour job for daily income to feed my family members. When I do not find a day-labouring job, then I go to the forest to collect branches of trees as fuel wood and I sell them in the local market in the afternoon. Whatever I could get money from selling those collected fuel wood, I buy food stuffs and other things required for my family. Installing a hand tube well and sanitation is very expensive for me. I could not afford to spend ten to fifteen thousand taka (10,000 to 15,000 Bangladeshi Taka is equivalent to 250 Australian Dollars) for them. Moreover, I do not have a permanent land of my own where I could set up a tube well and sanitation for my family”.

He has three daughters aged 5 to 14 years old and all of them are attending nearby schools. Two of his girls are studying at local missionary primary schools and both of them have received free school textbooks. His older daughter is attending Year VIII at a high school located at Bhaduria Bazar, which is three kilometres from his house. I have asked him how he manages the cost of education for his three children and he responded to me:

“For the case of my two younger daughters who are at local missionary primary school, I have to spend a little amount of money. I can afford their school dress and stationaries through my hardships. But for the older one, who is at year VIII at local high school the cost is higher. Even though, she receives monthly stipend from the government but other cost associated with education such as, school dress, transportation during monsoon, and stationaries is much more. Being a landless day-labourer it is quite challenging for me to keep up spending for the education of my children”.

I am also aware about the girls' secondary education system in Bangladesh. The Female Secondary School Stipend Project (FSP) in Bangladesh was established in 1982 to increase the enrolment of girls in secondary schools, thereby delaying marriage and childbearing (Schurmann, 2009, p. 505). This initiative has been related with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 in terms of girls' school enrolment and promotes gender equality and empowerment of women in Bangladesh. Despite these stipends provided to female secondary students, it does not cover all educational costs such as tutoring services and other associated costs incurred by families. The provision of stipends benefits middle class and wealthy households to enable them to send their daughters to school (Schurmann, 2009, p. 513). The poorer households face structural disadvantages in sending their girls to school, as they usually confront difficulties in bearing the educational expenses for education. In addition, they are deprived in getting stipends for girl's education based on their ethnic identity and marginal position in the mainstream society.

During the in-depth interview, I had an inclusive discussion with him about the rights of Indigenous people in terms of education, access to health care services, women's rights and access to social safety net programs in the context of Bangladesh. He responded to me that during the sickness or morbidity of the family members they avail of the health care services from the local village doctors. Due to their lack of awareness and fear to be discriminated against the ethnicity, they do not go to the rural public health care centres in their areas. In terms of agricultural wages, I asked both him and his wife and they have narrated their experiences to me:

“In our area, men get more wages than women even though we perform the same work in the rural farm. Usually, men get 300 Taka and women get 250 Taka in a day. The wage discrimination against the women is widespread in our area. It is very disturbing that especially women get paid after few days some times after a week. In some instances, payments are partially paid after a

week. The irregular payment makes difficult to meet our basic family need in time”.

I asked him how they coped with and managed the food consumption for the family during the critical or needy periods of the year, especially from March-April (Chaitra-Baishak) and October-November (Aswin-Kartik). He has replied to me:

“During the monga (seasonal hunger) we survive by eating rice with vegetables once a day. We supplement other two meals of the day with bread, fried rice, puffed rice, and tea without sugar. Those times of the year are very crucial for us. We cannot even manage our basic need of household food. That’s why I have borrowed seven thousands taka (7000 BDT is equivalent to 125 Australian Dollars) from a NGO with 12 percent of interest rate to be paid every month. Now, I am worried about how to repay the loan when I do not have any employment opportunities”.

6.2.2. Case study two: just coping with contingencies typical stresses faced by a marginal households

Malcolm Mardy, aged 34 (Interview no. 38) from the Sirampara village under Nawabganj Upazilla of Dinajpur district is belong to a marginal household at the risk of becoming landless. He is living with his wife, son and his mother, and he has only one acre of land for his livelihood. In terms of water and sanitation facilities, he has a hand tube well and a *kucha* latrine for his family. During the in-depth interview, he has told me that it is very difficult to survive and meet basic needs, such as, food, clothes, medical treatment and other costs with one acre of land in the rural areas. To supplement the family expenses, they make handicrafts from bamboo and sell them in the local markets. He has also informed me that a total of 49.64 acres of land has been stolen from his family by the forgery of documents right after the impact of the Liberation War in 1971.

During my field research, I have encountered the biggest land acquisition problem that I have ever come across in my entire life. I have been hearing from my childhood that in almost every village land problems exist in the Indigenous

communities. This wretched situation reminds me of my paternal uncle who used to live near Rangpur town, neighbouring the district of Dinajpur, which is also my birth place. I recall that I used to visit my uncle with my parents along with other brothers during the school holidays. We used to spend quality time as he had large tracts of land with plenty of fruits trees around his house. The abundance of fruits and vegetables were special delights to us. But he became a pauper when he started making friends with dominant majority people. Gradually, he had been deceived by their fraudulent means and he has lost most of his land. Compared to the case of my uncle, the case of Malcolm is quite different. This case is the result of the Independence War in 1971. During the war, the forcible land-grabbing by local influential people, predominantly Bengali Muslims has been a matter of treachery against the Indigenous people irrespective of geographic location in the country. The land-grabbing peaked between 1971 and 1980 (IRIN, 2011) in the immediate aftermath of the nine-month long independence war fought by Bangladesh, where many Indigenous people have fought with their Bengali counterparts against Pakistan in 1971. Taking advantage of the fear factor and the destruction of the land registry office during the liberation war, the local powerful influential people forcibly occupied the land of minority Indigenous people by means of forgery of documents. During the in-depth interview, he has described his longstanding grievances with contempt to the existing justice system. He narrated to me:

“A total of 49.64 acres of my ancestral land has been occupied through forgery of documents by the local powerful influential people taking the advantages of burnt down of Phulbari (neighbouring Upazilla) land registry office during liberation war. Many people lost land documents like me as they have been burnt down as well. My father died in pursuing court cases to take control over our land. I have been relentlessly pursuing court case to retain my father’s land. The existing court justice system is ostensibly length and favourable to the moneyed man. In my deteriorated financial conditions, I am tired and usurped to pursue court case. I wonder how long I have to wait for a fair justice.”

6.2.3. Case study three: typical resilient household

Charles Hembrom is the headman of the Buski village under Birampur Upazilla in Dinajpur district. He is part of a medium household with 4.95 acres of land and is living with his wife, two sons and one daughter. His elder son is married and works in a local NGO. His second is in the brotherhood in a Catholic Congregation of the Holy Cross Brothers in Bangladesh. The youngest daughter studies in a college in Dinajpur town. His livelihood is dependent on agriculture and the crops yielded from the land. Having a reasonable amount of land, he can afford three meals for his family. He has reported me that he has also sold out his 0.66 acres of land to pay land development taxes, social debt and building houses and other family expenses. Like other villagers in the community, he has also borrowed fifteen thousand taka (15000 BDT is equivalent to 250 Australian Dollars) from BRAC during the financial crisis to bear the education cost for his daughter and for other household expenses. In terms of water and sanitation, he has a hand tube well which is untested for the presence of arsenic and has a *kucha* latrine. During sickness, his family members go to the local village doctors because the doctors and nurses in the rural public health centres are not available.

During my field research work, I stayed in his house whilst working in this community. In conducting in-depth interview, I have discussed with him intensively on the rights of Indigenous people in terms of, education, women's rights to property, access to health care services, and also access to available social safety net programs in the context of Bangladesh. Regarding the women's rights to inheritance and women's participation in the traditional social institutions, he is adamant to change the traditional customary practices of the women's land inheritance system. He narrated to me that:

“The Santal women are excluded in the traditional social institutions which are administered by men. Along with that traditionally there are no rights for women to inherit land and properties in the Santal community. We have been following this system over the centuries and it cannot be changed in overnight. Even myself, I will not give my daughter any land!”

He reported to me that he is still striving to retain his ancestral land of 10.88 acres which has been enlisted as *Khas* (government) land without any proper justification that it should revert to the government. He is combating the government to prevent their taking control over his ancestral land. At the time of the research he was waiting for the verdict of a court case. He said that:

*“I have been tired out by pursuing a court case for thirty (30) years to retain my ancestral land and lost faith in the existing court administration as it has been found to me unusually a lengthy process. Under this critical condition, I could not even produce land documents because during the liberation war the local land registry office at Phulbari (neighbouring Upazilla) has been burnt down. I don't understand why the court does not take an account of land record of 1942 and 1962, where the ownership is indicated clearly. In all those of years, I have already sold out some of my land and assets to bear the expenditure of court case. In 2004, the local UP chairman has occupied the disputed land as it is considered to be a *Khas* land. To retain my land, I have approached to the local church and NGOs for assistance and legal support but did not get any responses from them. Now, I am living with unforeseen uncertainties”.*

6.3. A summary of the socio-economic conditions

The research identified that a total of 24 households out of 160 were found to be “functionally landless” (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 175), those who have neither cultivated nor operated land or has cultivated land less than 0.05 acres. Out of 24 households, 13 were found who have only homesteads and 11 of them do not have homesteads, but are living on another person's land. Another person's land refers to the land of relatives and neighbours in the same village. Most of the landless households depend on labour markets both in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors for their subsistence living. The main agricultural labour market that is found in all areas in

Bangladesh occurs during the *Aman* (wet season) rice harvesting period and the *Boro* (dry season) crop (Quisumbing and Baulch, 2009, p. 19). The non-agricultural work involves working as van/rickshaw pullers, day labourers in a rice husking mills and other off-farm activities for a subsistence living. Those households have been classified as the vulnerable, and the most marginalized groups in the researched locations. The research also identified a total 111 households out of 160 as marginal households at risk of becoming landless who have landholdings of 0.5 to 1.49 acres with stable homesteads. Like the identified 25 medium households out of 160 with enough land to survive, the marginal households depend on the income and crops yielded from land for their living as well as mitigating their family expenses. In terms of meeting basic needs such as, education, medical treatment, water, sanitation, nutrition and housing quality etc. they have to largely depend on the income from the agricultural sector. From the four different locations, only 23 respondents out of 160 participants were found who are engaged in service sectors, especially working with NGOs, primary school teachers and working with Christian missionary's institutions. The rest of the respondents have to rely on agricultural wage labour and the income and crops harvested from the land for their living in the rural community.

The research has also demonstrated that Indigenous women's empowerment issues such as women's land inheritance rights, control over house hold resources and wages, and participating in the decision-making process both at family and community level. The research indicated that the Indigenous women in the four researched locations amongst the two different Indigenous communities are deprived from their inheritance rights. This research made an assessment on the perceptions of the respondents on women's land rights in these two communities where, because of tradition and customs, women do not inherit any land. The research showed that out

of 160 interviewees, 21 respondents voiced that girls should get a share of land that is equal to the boys, while 6 respondents argued for half-share of boys to women. It was reported that 66 respondents contended that women could be given one-fourth proportion of men's lands for their survival, livelihood and well-being. Only 15 interviewees responded that women should be given some lands on the wish of parents without any legal binding as a charity or kindness. A total of 52 respondents said that traditionally indigenous women did not have the right to inherit land.

The detail on women empowerment issues such as controlling household resources and wages and participation in the decision making process in the family and community activities will be discussed later in this section.

During my field research work, I have visited all the four researched locations in the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. All of these four researched villages are located in the remote rural areas, on average 20 kilometres away from the respective *Upazilla* of Birampur, Nawabganj and Parbatipur (sub-district) under the Dinajpur district. The dirt and muddy roads took me to those villages from the Phulbari *Upazilla* town where I have been located most of the time for conducting this research. The natural green landscape in the rural areas, including the researched villages of Bangladesh is fascinating. I have noticed that none of those researched villages have electric or power supply, whereas the neighbouring Bengali villages in the research locations have power. The researched population live in the darkness literally. I mean that they were living without the access to electricity. The researched population have to depend on nature and agricultural production. Bangladesh is already experiencing the adverse impacts of global warming and climatic change (Government of Bangladesh, 2010. p. 2). The climatic change hazards, such as irregular monsoons, untimely rainfall, and crop failure due to drought, crop damage due to flash floods and

monsoon, and scarcity of drinking water may have significant effects on agricultural production, food security, public health and livelihood of the rural population in the country (Government of Bangladesh, 2010, p. 8). Access to sustainable electricity in rural areas is vital for improving agricultural production, enhancing socio-economic development in rural areas, and improvements in the standard of living and quality of life in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

6.3.1. Housing, water and sanitation facilities in the research locations

From my early childhood, I have been familiar with the housing types, water and sanitation facilities of Indigenous people in rural areas of Bangladesh not because of my field work which led me to visit every household of the targeted participants in the four different research locations, but also my growing up in the *Santal* ethnic communities in my rural village of Hajipur in Rangpur district. Most of the houses of the research participants are built with mud walls or bamboo thatched with straw from dried paddy, wheat plants and corrugated iron sheets. I have seen very few houses made with brick walls and roofed with iron sheets of the medium households in the researched locations.

Image: 8: A typical Santal house in rural areas in Bangladesh



Source: Picture taken by Besra from the Buski Village on 8 May 2011.

The hand-pump tube well or well is still the main source of water for drinking and other household activities. The research found that a total of 43 households (16 landless, 26 marginal and 1 medium) out of 160 interviewed households do not have a hand tube-well of their own (see table in page). For drinking and other household consumption, they have to rely on their neighbour's hand tube-well.

I have also found that a total of 117 households out of 160 are using hand tube wells untested for arsenic. The arsenic problem is present in the study area like the rest of the country. In terms of drinking water, all the researched households including the community people are under risk of arsenic contamination. From the secondary sources, I have known that arsenic contamination in ground water in Bangladesh, being the main source of drinking water, is the biggest in the world (The Independent, 7 May, 2000). The arsenic is a severely toxic industrial and geochemical pollutant that mainly concentrates in well water; tube well, food, fish and vegetables and about 35 million people in Bangladesh are at potential risk from drinking arsenic-contaminated water (Ahmed, 2003). The arsenic concentration in ground water in Bangladesh is a public health problem which adversely impacts on the human body, resulting in long-term health effects such as, ulcers, gangrene, internal cancers (Bladder, kidney, lungs) and external cancers, neurological effects and peripheral vascular diseases (Nuruzzaman and Ahmed, 2003). In the North-Bengal districts of Rangpur and Dinajpur and their neighbouring districts, the ground water is also contaminated (Zakiuddin, 2000) by arsenic. Under this situation, the researched population are living with unforeseen uncertainties with an alarming public health threat. A study of UNICEF indicates that access to safe drinking water reached 97 percent in the early 1990s but the discovery of arsenic contamination in tube wells reduced this figure to 74 percent in rural areas in Bangladesh (UNICEF,

2008, p. 2). Thus, the researched population are under the acute crisis of inadequate access to safe drinking water, firstly for not having a tube well and secondly having a tube well but untested for arsenic contamination. The presence of arsenic contamination in the underground water in North-Bengal is a threat against public health and the well-being of the entire population.

In terms of sanitation facilities, the research identified that a total of 40 households (19 landless, 20 marginal and 1 medium) do not have a sanitary facility or latrines, a total of 106 households from marginal and medium have *kucha*⁷⁰ latrines and 14 medium households have *pukha*⁷¹ latrines out of 160 research participants in the four different research locations. This empirical statistical evidence shows poor sanitation facilities prevailing amongst the researched population. The use of basic sanitation rate is much lower than the national figure. Coverage to basic sanitation nationally is 80.4 percent, and it is 78.9 percent in rural areas of Bangladesh (Saroar and Rahman, 2013, p. 5) in the four different researched locations. The lack of basic water and sanitation facilities undermined the life chances of the most marginalized ethnic communities in the researched locations of Dinajpur district. In other words, inadequate water and sanitation facilities prevailing amongst the researched population represents a lower socio-economic development and a slower attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of Bangladesh.

⁷⁰ The *kucha* or basic sanitation is a kind of Pit latrines with slab but no water seal (Saroar and Rahman, 2013, p. 3).

⁷¹ The *pukha* or improved sanitation is a kind of Pit latrines with slab and water seal (Saroar and Rahman, 2013, p. 3).

Table 23: Water and sanitation facilities in the researched locations

Research Location	Types of Households	Research participants	Sources of water		Sanitation type		
			Arsenic untested hand tube well	Having no hand tube well	No latrines	<i>Kucha</i> Latrines	<i>Pukha</i> Latrines
Buskipara	Landless	13	5	8	11	2	0
	Marginal	23	16	7	3	20	0
	Medium	4	3	1	0	4	0
Total		40	24	16	14	26	0
Khidirpur	Landless	5	2	3	3	2	0
	Marginal	34	24	10	10	15	2
	Medium	1	1	0	1	1	6
Total		40	27	13	14	18	8
Panchpukur	Landless	3	0	3	3	0	0
	Marginal	33	26	7	5	28	0
	Medium	4	4	0	0	0	4
Total		40	30	10	8	28	4
Srirampara	Landless	3	1	2	2	1	0
	Marginal	21	19	2	2	18	1
	Medium	16	16	0	0	15	1
Total		40	36	4	4	34	2
Grand Total		160	117	43	40	106	14

Source: Based on the interviews from the researched locations as detailed in Chapter Four

During my previous work in *Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan* a national NGO that campaigns for good governance in Dhaka, I was involved with mobilizing grassroots people on advocating for the fulfilment of MDG obligations of the Bangladesh Government and bring the grassroots' voices to the Policy makers of national level. The relevance was that good sanitation and hygiene practices are conducive to health, education, and socioeconomic development. In this research, I have

practically assessed the access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities of the researched populations. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of Bangladesh also states that '*The proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation halve by 2015*'. (MDGs Bangladesh, Target 7C). Around 20 percent of people, including Indigenous people living in the marginal areas of the country are without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation facilities.

To make safe drinking water supply and basic sanitation equitable and sustainable in order to meet the basic needs of particularly the under privileged groups and regions, the Government of Bangladesh has formulated a few policies, such as the National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation, 1998, National Water Policy 1999, National Policy for Arsenic Mitigation 2004, and National Sanitation Strategy 2005 (LGC, Bangladesh Government). All of these policies of the Bangladesh Government are intended to expand and improve water supply and sanitation services in rural areas, and sharing the cost of installing water and sanitation facilities will be subsidized partially or fully (Local Government Division, pp. 10-12). But, the lack of implementation of those relevant policies and the lack of promotional campaigns for better health and hygiene simultaneously in order to stop defecations in the open bush or fields; have meant that the researched Indigenous people are living with inadequate water and sanitation facilities. The poor water and sanitation practices may have a detrimental health impact, especially on the children and the community in general. The children may have greater chance to be infected by diarrhoea, typhoid and other water-borne diseases which may cause child mortality and children's absenteeism from schools (UNICEF, 2008, p.3). The research urges the promotion of safe drinking water supply and good hygienic sanitation practices

through the local government agencies and the working NGOs in the researched communities.

6. 3. 2. Livelihood, savings and borrowing pattern

During the time of need, there is a common tendency of the researched population to take loans, or borrow money either from NGOs or local money lenders to maintain the family expenses, for medical treatment, to bear the cost of children's education and many other purposes. Interest on these loans depends on the amount of money borrowed and from which sources it is borrowed. The money lenders unscrupulously charge much higher interest rates than the working NGOs in the researched areas. The NGOs play an important role in providing loans through micro-finance programs in rural Bangladesh, including in the researched locations. Poor rural households and women are eligible for membership in these NGOs. Every member has to save some money on a weekly or fortnightly basis depending on the operating systems of NGOs. Only the registered members are entitled to borrow loans against their savings. The study identified that 159 households are involved with NGOs and they have some savings in those operating NGOs in the researched locations. It also indicates that a total 129 households (N= 86 from NGOs and 33 from local money lenders) have borrowed different amounts of money from those sources. In terms of interest, the research showed that the interest rate paid to the local money lenders is much higher than the NGOs. Mostly the landless (N=9) and marginal households (N=18) are the customers of local money lenders in the researched locations.

Table 24: Livelihood, savings and borrowing pattern of the research participants

Research Location	Types of Households	No. of houses	NGOs /Banks	Borrowing from NGOs			Borrowing from money lender		
				NGOs	Amount (BDT)	Interest (BDT)	Money lender	Amount (BDT)	Interest (BDT)
Buskipara	Landless	13	13	3	18,000	3,000	5	10,000	5,000
	Marginal	23	23	3	14,500	4,400	6	23,500	10,000
	Medium	4	4	3	38,000	5,700	1	20,000	1,000
Total		40	40	9	70,500	13,100	12	53,500	16,000
Khidirpur	Landless	5	5	3	9000	1040	1	1000	300
	Marginal	34	34	20	74500	7370	8	9000	3000
	Medium	1	1	3	26000	2740	0	0	0
Total		40	40	26	109,500	11150	9	10,000	3300
Panchpukur	Landless	3	3	1	12000	1240	2	8500	2500
	Marginal	33	33	11	139700	11420	2	5000	2500
	Medium	4	4	11	83200	7870	3	112000	49000
Total		40	40	23	234,900	20,530	7	125,500	54,000
Srirampara	Landless	3	3	2	14000	1940	0	0	0
	Marginal	21	20	12	111500	10260	3	17000	2200
	Medium	16	16	14	121000	9600	2	4000	1400
Total		40	39	28	246500	21800	5	21000	3600
Grand Total		160	159	86	661,400	66,580	33	210,000	76,900

Source: Based on the interviews from the researched locations as detailed in Chapter Four

The dynamics of this pattern indicates that landless and marginal households tend to borrow money from the local money lenders. The reason behind that it is easier to borrow money from money lenders than NGOs. As a result, borrowers from landless and marginal households need to pay higher interest rate which also thwarted them to the vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty.

6. 3. 3. Food insecurity during the critical period

Livelihood and food security refer to the continual provision of basic human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education and health of the researched population.

Food security means to have enough food grains in stock for future consumption in the rural areas in Bangladesh (Ali, 2005, p. 161). The rural Indigenous population face many challenges to achieve and maintain their livelihood and food security due to their landlessness and lack of employment opportunities. In an agrarian rural community, the researched population largely depend on the food grains yielded from land, agricultural wages, and raising livestock because of land is the main basis for livelihood. Rice is the main staple food produced in the study locations, followed by wheat, vegetables, potatoes, mustard, onion, pulse, and maize. Livestock like cows, goats, and buffaloes, and poultry rearing is very common in the researched areas. The family expenses, such as education costs for children, agricultural expenses for fertilizers and irrigation, treatment for family members, and meeting the requirements of food and clothes for the whole family members come from the aforementioned sources. After mitigating all of those basic needs, there is an impact on the food consumption pattern of the researched populations during the critical period of the year. In the normal times, the researched population have meals three times a day with rice, lentils, vegetables, potatoes, eggs, and meat. The research indicated those 24 landless households and 111 marginal households who possess less than half-acre of agricultural land are susceptible to food insecurity. This makes it difficult for those households to attain food security from their own farm production and agricultural wages. Thus, in terms of food security, the ownership of land, its possession and cultivation, has socio-economic implications in the rural areas in Bangladesh.

In terms of food intake habits even during the critical or *Monga* period of the year, the research indicates that there is food insecurity and shortages among the research participants. It is anticipated that the rural Indigenous people in Bangladesh face the

worst risks and vulnerabilities during lean periods of the year, such as *Monga* (seasonal hunger and poverty during the year of September to November) in North-Bengal, and routine crisis in the everyday life of struggle (Rahman, 2006, p. 10). During this time, there are no employment opportunities in the agricultural sector in the rural areas. Without having a job and income opportunities, there is a detrimental impact on household food consumption patterns. The respondents reported that during this critical period of the year mostly they have to live on two meals a day. The following table describes the food intake habits of the research participants from the different four research locations during the critical period of the year.

Table 25: Food in-take habits during the March-April and October-November

Research Location	Research participants	Food in-take habits in critical period	
		Three meals in a day	Two meals in a day
Buski	40	11	29
Khidirpur	40	4	36
Panchpukur	40	18	22
Srirampara	40	21	19
Total	160	54	106

Source: Based on the interviews from the researched locations as detailed in Chapter Four

The above table details the food eaten daily by the research respondents included in the study at the researched locations during the critical period of the year, locally called the *monga*⁷² or *obhav* (seasonal poverty and hunger) period. In the study areas, the month of March-April (Chaitra-Baishak) and October-November (Aswin-Kartik) are the crucial periods in terms of food insecurity. These two seasons are the lean or

⁷² *Monga* is a local Bangla word that means a famine like situation (month of dead; literarily poverty and hunger), which appears especially in September through November or in Bangla months *Aswin*. These two months give rural people more hard time than usual because of extremely shrinking job opportunities (Mohammad, 2006, p. 1).

off season, when the scope for agricultural employment or any other wage labour is limited in the rural areas. The persistence of food shortages during the sowing of crops and the pre-harvest period is common in the researched locations. The rural households have to wait until the *Boro* and *Aman* harvesting period. The lack of income and absence of employment opportunities directly affect the food consumption pattern in the researched locations. The food vulnerability and food insecurity leads the researched people consuming two meals in a day depending on the economic conditions of the household. The study reported that 106 households have two meals and 54 households have three meals a day during these two critical periods of the year. The nature and types of food intake habits have an impact on nutrition in terms of intake of calories, protein, fat, iron and vitamins. The food and nutrition also affect the school children and women from the researched locations. The landless and marginal households are more often food insecure. One of the key informants (Interview no. 37) from Khidipur village stated his concern:

“During the time of Abhav (needy/hunger period) we do not have any day labour job. Without having rojgar (income) we have to satisfy ourselves with cooked rice soaked in water overnight (panta bhat) in the morning. At night, we eat fried rice, fried wheat, and sometimes puffed rice with tea without sugar in it. Thus, we could barely fill our stomach in those critical periods”.

The lack of employment opportunities in the lean period limits people’s purchasing power because they have not enough money to buy food ingredients from the local food market. One of the key respondents from the Srirampara village (Interview no. 23) narrated his experiences:

“We do not have to buy food for six years because we get them from our own land. When we finish our food stocks at home, we need to buy food from the market. We cannot afford to buy food from market because they are becoming more expensive. We do not have any work during Aswin-Kartik and have no other alternative sources of work. During this period we merely have two meals in a day”.

The lack of employment opportunities and income to buy food lead the researched population to gather food items from nature. A landless woman from the *Buski* village (Interview no. 11) described her sufferings during the critical period:

“During the time of hunger and starvation (critical period), we the women go for gathering water and forest based wild foods, such as wild potatoes and root vegetables from nearby forests and shellfish, snails, and crabs etc. from water commons (rivers, marshes, ponds) to supplement our food items. But now a day, those natural foods are also disappearing with the degradation and decimation of forest and waters resources”.

The gradual disappearance of wild foods due to degradation of forests, privatization of water resources, and environmental damage caused by extensive use of fertilizers and pesticides (Bleie, 2005, p. 196) have brought the researched Indigenous people food shortages. This is especially true for the Indigenous women, who are mostly in the charge of daily food collection, preparation and allocation. They experience difficulties in meeting nutritional requirements. In a study of livelihood and food security in rural Bangladesh, Ali (2005, p. 3) found that:

“In line with cultural norms, women take food after the men in the household. As a result they have to be satisfied with the leftovers, which are usually not enough to satisfy their calorie requirements as well as being nutritionally inadequate”.

In order to meet food and nutritional requirements, the research indicated that there is an urgent need to provide food relief, like the Vulnerable Groups Development (VGD) under the social safety net programs of the Bangladesh Government in the researched locations. The study detailed that the coverage of social safety net programs is inadequate in the researched locations (see chapter four; section access to social services). A similar conducted by NETZ (2011, p. 6) showed that the Indigenous people of North-West districts of Bangladesh are structurally excluded from information on social safety nets because of cultural prejudices, lack of political

importance as they are out of the social power structure, and lack of representation in the local government bodies. The study reported that only 35 respondents out of 160 were found who received benefits from the social safety net programs of the Bangladesh Government in the researched locations. A village headman from the Srirampara village (Interview no. 36) shared his experiences regarding the non-availability of social safety net programs of the Indigenous people:

“The local vested interested groups resist poor and eligible Indigenous people to become recipients of social safety net assistance. They want them to migrate for seasonal work in other areas. The motif is that in their absence, they will confiscate their homesteads and lands”.

Even though few of them receive social security benefits, many of them are exploited as bonded labour according to the narratives of the researched participants. An elderly man from the Srirampra village (Interview no. 22) described that:

“The poor Indigenous people are sometimes issued social safety net cards (VGF and VGD) as a means of exploitation by the local land lord and political-elites to maintain patron-client relationship with a view to avail their cheap labour during the peak harvesting period”.

Thus, the researched Indigenous people are more likely to be trapped in an inter-generational cycle of indebtedness and poverty during lean seasons and the gaps between the two harvesting periods (*Chaitra-Boishakh and Ashwin-Kartik*) of the year. In addition to that the research has also identified that in the rural labour-market dynamics due to limited employment opportunities during lean periods, the rural people tend to migrate to the urban areas. The migration of young boys and girls has become very common in the study areas because of the rapid growth of export-oriented garments factories in Dhaka.

6.4. Mapping a continuum of life chances

For the purpose of discussion and analysis, I have broadly categorized 160 research participants into three continuum groups in terms of landless households, marginal, and medium households based on land ownership status to map out their life chances living in the remote marginal areas of Dinajpur district.

Table 26: Characteristics of land holding patterns of the Research participants

Typology	No. of Households	Characteristics on the basis of land holding patterns
Landless households	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have neither cultivated nor operated land or has cultivated land less than 0.05 acre. - Some of them have homesteads only - Some of them don't have lands by hereditary - Living on other's land father's or relative's i.e. Living on both agricultural and non-agricultural labour - Categorised as hard core poor, vulnerable, and the most marginalized groups.
Marginal Households	88	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers are those with landholdings of 0.5 to 1.49 acres - Lands owned by hereditary or by purchased and have homesteads on their own lands - Crucial victims for land loss, through fake documents, encroachment by social forestry projects, occupied by new-settlers and local powerful influential.
Medium Households	48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmers having minimum cultivated land 1.5 acres to 7.50 acres and above (only 3 households were found having land 7.50 acres and above) - Lands owned by hereditary or by purchased - Victims for land loss through fake documents, occupied by new-settlers, and local powerful influential and by the declaration of vested property, <i>Khas</i> lands and encroachment by social forestry projects.
Total	160	

Source: Based on the survey and interviews of the households in the researched locations as detailed in Chapter Four

The continuum of life chances is linked with land and livelihood, access to education, health and social services, and women's empowerment issues. Across this continuum, the class structure is developed by a host of socio-economic factors, such as ownership of land and property, level of education, occupation type and access to

health and social services. The above table describes the common characteristics of the three groups which are also described in the following sections.

6.4.1. Landless households are at the most vulnerable

The 24 landless households out of 160 households have neither cultivated or operated land and have become functionally landless. They have less than 0.5 acres of lands, obtained by inheritance, or their lands have been lost through forcible occupation by the local, powerful and influential people through forgery of documents, reclassification as *Khas*⁷³ (public) land and vested property, and by occupation by social forestry projects of the Bangladesh Government. The research finds out that out of 24 households, 13 were found who only have homesteads and 11 of them do not have homesteads, but live on another person's land especially fathers' or relatives' i.e. *Khas* land, vested property and the land under social forestry department. They have been found as the worst victims for land dispossession by selling out due to poverty, economic hardships, bearing expenses for children's education cost, treatment cost for family members and pursuing court cases to retain ancestral lands.

The majority of the households live on both agricultural and non-agricultural labour for subsistence living. They have been categorised as the poorest, the most vulnerable, and the most marginalized groups amongst the researched participants. Most of them are engaged in agricultural day-labour work, where women earn comparatively lower wages than men. Wage labour is the only means of the breadwinner in the family in a remote rural agricultural society in Bangladesh. The landless households' pattern has a history of suffering from seasonal food insecurity,

⁷³ Public land owned by the government

and poor nutrition intake during lean seasons of the year, when they have no work or other employment opportunities. The food consumption patterns during the critical period of the year of the research participants have been elaborated in the later section of the thesis.

The children from the landless households have very poor rates of school attendance, high dropout and non-completion of primary education rates, as their parents are mostly illiterate and have less awareness of the importance of education. They are also unable to afford educational materials and some hidden costs associated with primary education even though primary education is compulsory and free, as poor and deserving families do not get stipends due to nepotism and corruption (Rabbi, 2005, p. 63).

Image: 9: Indigenous children in the primary school at the Panchpukur Village



Source: Picture taken by researcher on 16 May 2011.

The children from the landless households have less confidence in attending schools as their parents are unable to afford uniforms, reading materials, tables, chairs, and electrical power in their homes. Due to their struggle to meet even their most basic survival needs, the parents engage their children in household chores, looking after

cattle, fetching water and fuel, and looking after younger siblings, rather than sending them to school.

The research has also found that the landless households are vulnerable in terms of health, as they use mostly hand tube wells untested for arsenic for drinking water. They also do not have adequate sanitation facilities. The research found that a total of 16 landless households do not have a hand tube-well of their own and 19 households do not have a basic sanitary facility (see table in page). For drinking and other household consumption, they have to rely on their neighbours' hand tube-wells. It has been reported that they are also prone to high morbidity and mortality rates, because they have to sell their labour for living in the market dominated agricultural sector that undermines their health. During my field research, I have been living with these researched ethnic communities and have experienced their life struggle. In these two ethnic communities, women work in agriculture along with men in planting and harvesting crops. Besides, working in the open field under the sun and rain, I have seen them performing their domestic work as well such as, fetching water, fuel wood, cooking, looking after younger children and household cleaning. I have seen women from both communities engaged with agricultural work outside the home and domestic work that undermines their health

The women from the landless households of the two communities are the worst victims of discrimination in terms of accessing health care services from the government operated community clinics and hospitals. The women have narrated to me in the four focus group discussions held in four locations about their perceptions and experiences on using public health facilities in rural areas. The women from these communities have been found reluctant to go to those local government facilities because of lack of doctors and nurses and for the fear of being

discriminated against. The details have been elaborated in Chapter Four. As a result, the local village doctors and traditional medicines are the only first-hand available treatment options for them as they cannot afford to go to local *Upazilla* health complex for treatment. Moreover, the formal health insurance policy literally does not exist in the researched locations as well as it does in other parts of Bangladesh. These discriminatory actions undermine their quality of life, health and life chances.

In addition to that, the Indigenous women from both communities face double discrimination, first within the society, as women are excluded from participating in the traditional social institutions (see table on women's participation in social institutions in chapter 5), then, by the broader society. Whilst working in the agriculture field Indigenous women are often victims of verbal and physical abuse because of being poor Indigenous women. Women are denied their land rights to inherit ancestral land and properties in the researched locations, according to the traditional community practices. The detailed perceptions of the research participants on women's rights to inheritance property has been discussed with empirical evidence in chapter four under the section of women empowerment in the thesis.

The research has also identified that the population from both communities are systemically excluded from the benefits of the Social Safety Net Programs (SSNP) in the country. The study indicated that 35 respondents out of 160 households reported that they have received some benefits of the social safety net programs. The government of Bangladesh operates 30 such programs for poor and vulnerable people in the country (Ahmed, 2007, p. 3). Some of those are relevant for vulnerable and rural poor, such as Old Age Allowance, Allowance for Widow and Distressed Women, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Maternity Allowance for the Poor Mother, Primary Education Stipend Project (PESP), Test Relief (TR), Vulnerable

Group Feeding (VGF), Food for Work (FFW), Cash for Work (CW), Maternal Health Voucher Scheme (Ahmed, 2007, p. 5). Most of those programs are operated through the Union Parshid (UP) which is the lowest tyre of local government of Bangladesh. Informants from both communities conveyed that they feel helpless in the local political power-play in the local government’s economic structure. They have no voice, power and influence in this arena. They do not have representation in the local government and administrative body. Very often, their applications and opinions in accessing social safety nets are largely denied, such as in ‘food for work’, ‘100 days employment schemes’, ‘old aged schemes’, ‘widow allowances’ and other provision of basic social services (detailed in chapter four in the section of access to social services). The details on the access to social services have been elaborated with empirical evidence in Chapter Five under the section, Citizenship Rights and Social Services in the thesis.

Table 27: Characteristics of the land less households in the researched locations

Indicator	Systemic Implications on the based on land holding patterns
Land and Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landless households live on both agricultural and non-agricultural day labour - They are categorised as the poorest of the poor, the most vulnerable, and the most marginalized group. - They suffer from food insecurity and nutrition during lean season of period when they have no work or other employment opportunities
Access to Primary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents from land less households engage their children in household work - Children have poorer rate of school attendance, high dropout and non-completion of primary education - Parents cannot afford educational materials and some hidden cost involved with primary education even though primary education is compulsory and free - They lack of resources and infrastructures such reading table and education materials - They have a tendency to keep children at home in order to supporting income generating activities, such as helping parents in household chores, looking after cattle’s, and collecting water and fuel etc.
Access to Health Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They have inadequate water sanitation facilities (16 landless households do not have a hand tube-well of their own and 19 households do not have a basic sanitary facility) - Landless households They can avail treatment mostly from

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> local village doctors and traditional healers - Women from the landless households work both at home and outside which undermine their health - Women are being discriminated against in accessing health care services from rural public health centres
Women's Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women are denied to their land rights to inherit ancestral land and properties according to traditional customary practices - Women face discrimination in terms of agricultural wages - women are excluded from participating in the traditional social institutions within the community
Access to Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landless households have less voice, power and influence to the local government and administrative body - They are more likely left out from accessing the social safety net programs administered by the local government.

Source: Self-created based on the focus group discussion held in Buski village on 31 July 2011 as detailed in Chapter Four

The bottom line is that the landless households have limited economic capital, opportunities and choices to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty. This underpins their life chances. The households which are most politically, socially and economically marginalized are at risk of to be destitute in community life. They are increasingly becoming more landless and destitute than the relatively advantaged marginal and medium households in the researched locations.

6.4.2. Marginal Households are on the verge of further marginalization

The research identified that there are 111 marginal households out of 160 households which have landholding status from 0.5 to 1.49 acres and have owned those lands by inheritance or purchase. All of the households have stable homesteads on their own lands. Based on the information gathered from interviews and focus group discussions, the marginal households have also been found dispossessed of their lands by selling out due to poverty, economic hardships, children's education, pursuing court cases and other reasons. They have also been found victims of land loss through fake documents, encroachment by social forestry projects (discussed in chapter 4), occupation by new-settlers and local powerful influential people with political patronage in the researched areas. This research detailed that 4 marginal

households have sold out a total of 1.62 acres of land due to economic hardships and 11 households have been the victims of land dispossession by forcible occupation and re-classification of land (see in the chapter 5) in the last five years. While conducting this field research, most of the respondents recounted that they were gradually becoming landless because of poverty, economic hardship to maintain family expenses, and forcible occupation by the local land grabbers and the government in the name of social forestry projects in the researched locations.

Table 28: Systemic Implications of Marginal households of the Research participants

Measuring Indicator	Systemic Implications on the basis of land holding patterns
Land and Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marginal households have landholdings from 0.5 to 1.49 acres (111 households identified from the researched locations) - They live on subsistence agricultural production, wage labour and raising livestock's - They are victims of land loss through so-called 'distress sales' due to poverty, economic hardships, children's education, pursuing court cases and other purposes (4 marginal households were reported to distress sale of 1.62 acres of land). - They are also crucial victims for land loss, through forgery of documents (4 households reported of 53.27 acres) , encroachment by social forestry projects (1 household reported of 0.12 acre) occupied by local powerful influential (4 households reported 1.71 acres of land) and re-classification of <i>khas</i> land (2 households reported 2.8 acres of land).
Access to Primary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children from marginal households have poorer rate of school attendance because they help their parents (35 households reported) and high dropout due to financial incapacity of parents (49 households reported) and non-completion of primary education due to discrimination and language barriers (39 households reported) - Parents cannot afford educational materials and some hidden cost involved with primary education.
Access to Health Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They have poor water and sanitation facilities (26 households do not have hand-tube well for drinking water and 20 households do not have basic sanitation facilities). - They depend on health treatment from local village doctors and traditional healers - The women are discriminated in terms of accessing health care services from the rural public health centres
Women's Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women face discrimination in terms wages in the labour market - Women are denied to their land rights and excluded from participating in the traditional social structures (detailed in the chapter five).
Access to Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marginal households have weak voice, power and influence to the local government - Their concerns are largely ignored in the local government and administrative bodies in terms of social security benefits. The study reported that only 35 households receive some social benefits and 76 reported that they do not receive any kinds of

	benefits from the local government. - They are more likely left out for accessing social safety net programs administered through local government
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Source: Based on the focus group discussion held in Khidirpur village on 29 July 2011 as detailed in Chapter Four

A study of UNICEF conducted by Tietjen (2003, p. 3) detailed that children from the poorer households and disadvantaged ethnic minorities have poor school attendance and completion rate, as their parents cannot afford to pay school fees and other direct (school textbooks) and indirect costs (donation for school authorities) even though the primary education is compulsory and free in Bangladesh. As a result, children from socio-economically marginalized and disadvantaged groups have as low as 20 percent net enrolment in primary schools (Tietjen, 2003, p.2). During my field research work, I have visited every household of the research participants, and observed their vulnerabilities and coping with stress in the researched locations. Informants stressed that they do not have adequate reading materials or furniture such as tables and chairs or access to electric power in their homes that negatively impact the life chances of their children and their ability to obtain an education for their children. As a result, children have less confidence in attending schools because of the unaffordability of uniforms and education materials. According to the informants, the hand tube well untested for arsenic is the only source of drinking water, and they have poor sanitation facilities. The research identified that 26 households do not have hand-tube wells for drinking water and 20 households do not have basic sanitation facilities out of 111 marginal households from the four researched locations (see the table in page). It has also been informed that local village doctors and traditional medicines are the first hand available treatment for them as they cannot afford to go to local *Upazilla* health complex for

required treatment. The women from marginal households are engaged in agricultural work outside the home and also in domestic work that undermines their health. Like all other women in the community, the women from these households severely experience discrimination from accessing health care services from the government run community clinics.

The study also detailed that the women from the marginal households experience discrimination in wages in the labour market. Within the community, women are excluded from participating in the traditional social structures. The women are denied their land rights to inherit ancestral land and properties in the researched locations. Informants from marginal households reported that they also feel similarly helpless in the local political power economy of the local government structure as they have less voice, power and influence to the local government. As they do not have representation in the local government and administrative body, very often their applications and opinions are largely denied in terms of accessing social safety nets such as food for work, 100 days employment schemes, old aged schemes, widowed allowance and other provision of social safety net programs existing in Bangladesh.

6.4.3. Medium households are on further land dispossession

The research identified that 25 medium households have a total of 120.4 acres of cultivable land ranging from 2.5 acres to 7.50 acres and above (only 3 households were found having land 7.50 acres and above). All of them have owned those lands by inheritance or by purchase. Their living and surviving is heavily dependent on the crops produced from lands and raising livestock. All of those respondents from medium households have stable homesteads on their own lands in the four different researched locations under the Dinajpur district of Bangladesh.

The medium households enjoy relatively better life chances, in terms of children's education and accessing health care services than landless and marginal households. They cannot be termed better off in terms socio-economic indicators, because they also bear and share a culture of poverty along with the other two household groups. Based on interviews and focus group discussions held in the four researched locations, the informants reported that the medium households are also victims of land dispossession by selling out due to poverty, economic hardships, and treatment of family members, children's education, pursuing court cases and others. The research showed that out of 25 households 5 households have sold out a total of 3.5 acres of land and 6 households were victims of dispossession of land amounting to 20.65 acres in the last five years in the four researched locations.

Table 29: Characteristics of Medium households of the Research participants

Measuring Indicator	Systemic Implications on the basis of land holding patterns
Land and Livelihood	They have cultivable land from 2.5 acres to 7.50 acres and above (only 3 households were found having land 7.50 acres and above) and Lands owned by inheritance or by purchase
	Their livelihood is dependent on crops from land and raising livestock's
	They are also victims of distress sale of land and dispossession of land by forgery of documents
Access to Primary Education	Parents of medium households also struggle to afford educational materials and some hidden cost involved with primary education
	Children face language difficulties and discrimination in the schools
Access to Health Care Services	They have moderately good water and sanitation facilities (24 households are using hand tube well untested for arsenic for drinking water and 14 households have <i>kucha</i> latrines and 11 households have <i>pukha</i> latrines for sanitation facilities)
	Women are also discriminated in accessing rural public health facilities
Women's Empowerment	Women face discrimination in terms of wages in the labour market
	Women are denied to their land rights and excluded from participating in the traditional social structures
Access to Social Services	Medium households are also similarly helpless in local political power economy of the local government and administrative body
	They are also more likely left out for accessing social safety net programs

Source: Based on the focus group discussion held in *Srirampara* village on 23 July 2011 as detailed in Chapter Four

From my personal observation during my field research work, I can relate that children from medium households also have poorer rates of school attendance, high dropout rates, and non-completion of primary education as parents cannot afford educational materials and there are some hidden costs associated with primary education even though primary education is compulsory and free in Bangladesh. Informants from medium households reported that many of them also have inadequate reading materials, tables, chairs, and electric power in homes that badly interrupt the education of their children. Besides that due to poor infrastructure and absence of running water services, medium households also use hand tube wells untested for arsenic as sources of drinking water and they have moderately developed *pukha* sanitation facilities. The research identified that 24 households are using hand tube wells untested for arsenic for drinking water. 14 households have *kucha* latrines and 11 households have *pukha* latrines for sanitation facilities.

More likely than the other two household groups, the local village doctors and traditional medicines are the first available treatments even though to some extent they can afford to go to local *Upazilla* health complex for treatment. The women from those households are also engaged with domestic workloads that undermine their health. The women from these households experience discrimination from accessing health care services from the government managed community clinics and hospitals and their experiences are similar to those in the previous category, only more pronounced as they play an even smaller role in the broader society because of being poor Indigenous women. In terms of participation and representation in the local government power structures, they also experience similar discrimination, alienation and powerlessness along with the women from landless and marginal households. Due to their Indigenous and racial identity, their applications and

opinions are largely ignored in the local government administrative body in terms of accessing social safety nets such as old aged schemes, widowed allowance and other provision of basic social services as citizenship rights of the country.

6.5. The systemic implications of the key institution in enhancing life chances

To what extent do institutions such as, the state, market, community and household play a critical role in generating and replicating systemic inequalities in these two ethnic societies? This research strives to analyse the institutional power dynamics within and across the family, community, market and the state.

Table 30: The role and systemic implications of key institutions

Institutions	Landless	Marginal	Medium
State	<p>The recognition in the national constitution as Indigenous people</p> <p>Entitlement to <i>Khas</i> (public) land allocation</p> <p>Equal opportunities for employment during lean period of the year</p> <p>Elimination of discrimination in schools and language barriers in the mode of education</p> <p>Equal opportunities in health care services</p> <p>Rights to be recipients of social safety net programs</p> <p>Representations in the local government body</p> <p>Removal of institutionalized forms of women's discrimination on wages and properties</p>	<p>The recognition in the national constitution as Indigenous people</p> <p>Resolution of re-classification of lands under <i>Khas</i> land, vested property and occupation by social forestry projects</p> <p>Effective land litigation and court justice</p> <p>Elimination of discrimination in schools and language barriers in the mode of education</p> <p>Equal opportunities in health care services</p> <p>Representations in the local government body</p> <p>Removal of institutionalized forms of women's discrimination on wages and properties</p>	<p>The recognition in the national constitution as Indigenous people</p> <p>Resolution of re-classification of lands under <i>Khas</i> land, vested property and occupation by social forestry projects</p> <p>Effective land litigation and court justice</p> <p>Elimination of discrimination in schools and language barriers in the mode of education</p> <p>Equal opportunities in health care services</p> <p>Representations in the local government body</p> <p>Removal of institutionalized forms of women's discrimination on wages and properties</p>
Market	<p>The forgery of land related documents</p> <p>The exploitation of market in terms of wages</p>	<p>The forgery of land related documents</p> <p>The exploitation of market in terms of wages</p>	<p>The forgery of land related documents</p> <p>The exploitation of market in terms of</p>

			wages
Community	Systemic societal structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women. Women's Participation in the traditional social structures, and decision-making process Less participation in social activities/ restricted mobility Women's lack of representation and voice in decision making bodies in the community The subordinated position constraining women's life choices and chances.	Systemic societal structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women. Women's Participation in the traditional social structures, and decision-making process Less participation in social activities/ restricted mobility The subordinated position constraining women's life choices and chances.	Systemic societal structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women. Women's Participation in the traditional social structures, and decision-making process Less participation in social activities/ restricted mobility The subordinated position constraining women's life choices and chances.
Family/ Household	The systemic, unfavourable treatment of women on the basis of their gender, which denies them rights, opportunities or resources	The systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies them rights, opportunities or resources	The systematic, unfavourable treatment of individuals on the basis of their gender, which denies them rights, opportunities or resources

Source: Based on adapting Kabeer's (1994, P. 238) conceptual analysis

I have attempted to assess the impact of these on Indigenous people and their unequal position in the society through adapting the conceptual framework of Kabeer's Social Relation Approach (1994). This approach to gender and development planning was developed by Kabeer in order to analyse its implications for social relations aimed at development as human well-being. Kabeer (1994) argues that;

“human well-being is seen as concerning survival, security, and autonomy, where autonomy means the ability to participate fully in those decisions that shape one's choices and one's life chances at both the personal and the collective level” (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 103).

Kabeer (1994, p. 238) further argue that:

“Institutions produce, reinforce, and reproduce social difference and inequalities. Thus, unequal distribution of resources, responsibilities, and power are driving factors for women’s inequity”.

This Social Relation Approach has enabled me to analyse structural relationships that create and reproduce systemic differences and gender inequalities not only in the domain of family or household but also across a range of institutions including market and state.

6.5.1. The state appears to be coercive not a sanctuary for the vulnerable

-recognition in the national constitution and continuous oppression against Indigenous people has made their lives crucially vulnerable and their existence in this country is at stake. The informants of the researched locations narrated that the government itself is responsible for land dispossession of Indigenous people through acquiring lands for social forestry projects, declaring them as *Khas* lands and vested property. The Forest Department (FD) of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) plays a treacherous role in appropriating the lands of the Indigenous people. In many instances, the ancestral lands of Indigenous people have been either re-classified as *Khas* (public) land or declared as vested property due to fraudulent documentation that have been produced with the connivance of dishonest local land officials. The history of land dispossession amongst the Indigenous people in Bangladesh indicates that dispossession among the Indigenous people started in 1947 during Pakistani colonial rule. During the volatile communal riots (1948, 1952, 1962-65), the Nachole Uprising, and during the Liberation War in 1971, many Indigenous people had to go to India in fear and lack of security. When some of them eventually returned home, many found that either their lands have been forcibly grabbed by local powerful

influential Bengali Muslims (Bleie, 2005, pp. 209-213) taking the advantage of fear-factor, or their lands have been re-classified as *Khas* lands and vested (enemy) property by the state. Land dispossession is an effect of a legacy of the colonial footprint of complex land administration and management that Bangladesh acquired by inheritance. This has adversely affected the Indigenous people. The constitutional rhetoric of justice, equity and equality, inclusion and participation seemed to be well documented but in practice those foundations are in a dismal situation.

In terms of primary education for Indigenous children, the education policy of the state plays a crucial role in systemic discrimination and educational marginalization. The language barrier as a result of the prescribed medium of instruction, non-availability of text books in their respective mother languages and the misrepresentation of Indigenous people in curriculum design as well as the lack of recruitment of teachers from Indigenous communities have been identified contributing factors for low enrolment, non-completion and high dropout rates among the researched marginalized ethnic communities. The mono-lingual language policy in Bangladesh as represented explicitly in the country's constitution, does not recognise any ethnic languages except the dominant national language *Bangla* (Rahman, 2010, p. 346). Moreover, the teacher's recruitment and deployment in government primary schools is inconsistent with education policy and guidelines that underpin the educational achievement of Indigenous children. The recruitment of government primary teachers from Indigenous communities and deployment of Indigenous teachers in Indigenous populated areas would be conducive to the successful completion of primary education of Indigenous children in Bangladesh (ECDO, 2012).

In terms of health care services, the state has a fundamental obligation (Rahman et al. 2005, p. 10) for ensuring healthcare services to rural poor, disadvantaged and marginalized people in Bangladesh. Every citizen has the basic right to adequate health care' and 'the state and the government are constitutionally obliged to ensure health care for its citizens' (MoHFW, 2012). The state operates health care services through Upazila Health Complexes (UHCs/THCs) at *Upazilla* level, Union Health & Family Welfare Centre (UHFWC) at union level and Community Clinics (CCs) (satellite clinics) at ward and village levels. Those health facilities have been found ineffective and inefficient to meet the growing health needs of rural populations for multiple reasons: shortage of health personnel, inadequate medical resources, inaccessibility, and lack of necessary medicines, mismanagement, political intervention, and a lack of community people's participation in the service delivery chain.

The Indigenous people in the researched locations perceive that they are marginalized and have limited life chances because of their limited access to health care services due to their poverty, economic insolvency, educational disadvantage and limited understanding of root causes of health and well-being issues. This study suggests that age, level of education, occupation, and distance to service centres, infrastructure, socio-economic status and cultural issues are important determinants of healthcare-seeking behaviour among these two Indigenous communities. The research finds that Indigenous women are the worst victims of multiple forms of discrimination in accessing primary health care services. The structural alienation and discrimination towards underprivileged Indigenous groups in accessing antenatal and postnatal care, delivery at births, and other life-threatening morbidities signify their poor health, low life expectancy and poorer quality of life. Women in the

Indigenous communities are engaged in productive and reproductive work load which undermines their health and life chances. The rhetoric of constitutional obligation, fundamental human rights and gender justice for ensuring healthcare services to disadvantaged women and the marginalized people of Bangladesh are reflected in inequitable policy and practices.

The research has documented that water and sanitation related disease is a major public health threat. Informants reported that they use hand tube wells untested for arsenic for drinking water and use *kutcha/semi-pukha* toilets due to the absence of running water and the high cost of sanitation facilities. It has found a low level of awareness and of campaigns on healthy housing, disposal of wastes, and pure drinking water and sanitation facilities by the NGOs working in the researched locations. The inadequate housing facilities comprising mud walls and tin sheds and thatched structures replicate vulnerability and poverty. Structurally, the quality of life is curtailed with living in darkness as there is no electrical power supply in the researched locations. Thus, the non-electrified households have direct negative impact on education, health, hygiene and sanitation and income generating activities (Barkat et al. 2002, p. 5) which undermines their quality of life and limits life chances. There is a serious lack of access to health promotion services and community health workers in the rural areas. In this aspect, ongoing dialogue and consultation are needed to build mutual understandings between Indigenous communities and health service providers on preventive and curative care, healthy nutrition, numeracy, literacy and health budgeting for addressing well-being issues. The low level of literacy and numeracy poses barriers to accessing information and health services. These barriers also limit life chances. Community involvement in the planning, implementing, and monitoring is also simultaneously required in the

existing health care services for better service delivery to the rural disadvantaged population in the country.

The state has the responsibility to protect poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups, including the ethnic population, the aged, widowed and destitute women, and physically challenged people from tumbling into widespread poverty through social safety net programs either in cash or kind. It is documented that Indigenous poorer people in Bangladesh face the worst risks and vulnerabilities during natural calamities, anticipated risks due to seasonal poverty during lean periods of the year such as *Monga* and routine crises in everyday life (Rahman, 2006, p. 10). The social safety net programs are administered by various ministries/departments of the government and NGOs, with little or no coordination among them, resulting in duplication, overlap and wastage of limited resources (Khuda, 2011, p. 103). The informants stressed that the Indigenous people remain out of the reach of social safety net programs, due to ineffective and inefficient service delivery systems and defective policy of the government. The pervasive politicization even in rural areas in selecting beneficiaries by the politicians or local government representatives for their own clients limits potential opportunities to include the poor and the neediest Indigenous people (Morshed, 2009, p. 12). A significant 'Program for the poor of poor programs' (Devrajan, 2006, p. 18) has been identified as the authoritative program in Bangladesh, but Indigenous people remain deprived from benefits of social safety net programs. The respondents in the research locations reported that the Union Parishad (UP) has sole control over enlisting beneficiaries for providing those social security services at the grass roots level in the country.

The researched Indigenous people are intentionally left out from the enlisting process to be recipients of social security programs due to their weaker voice and minimal representation in local government in Bangladesh. It has also been reported that the local government authorities and public representatives are reluctant to hear any matters raised by the Indigenous people, and their concerns are hardly valued. The majority of the respondents have reported that the only citizenship rights they have achieved are their voting rights in any election. Access to other citizen rights is limited as a result of their marginalized position in society. It has been conveyed that whenever they approach local government offices, their just and right demand is ignored and their application is not taken as a matter of importance, unlike the majority population in the country. As a result, they are socially neglected which results in their low self-esteem and inferiority complex.

In terms of participation in the local government, specifically the Union Parishad (UP), majority of the respondents have expressed a sense of despair and dissatisfaction with regard to social wellbeing and the ability to access services from the local government (UP) at the researched locations. The informants stressed that Indigenous people are alienated with a sense of powerlessness and marginalization in the local government power-structures that are largely dominated by the majority Bengali population. There has been found a very low level of participation, representation and involvement of the Indigenous people in the local administrative bodies. This has developed a strong culture of despair and cynicism against the democratic functions of the local government among the Indigenous people in the researched locations. The rhetoric of participatory and inclusive democracy seemed to be 'window dressing' (McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 224) where Indigenous people have hardly a space for voice and representation in the local government structures.

The Indigenous citizenship rights still remain elusive, and there is despair in the rhetoric discourse of social inclusion for the disadvantaged population.

6.5.2. Market a diaspora of perennial exploitation

The Indigenous people in the researched location reported that they are vulnerable victims of market-related interventions during selling and purchasing lands, land litigation processes, accessing *Khas* (public) land, and in terms of agricultural day-labor wages which contribute to landlessness resulting in limited life chances. This research pointed out that Indigenous people are often cheated, betrayed and made victims of fraud by the crookedness of local corrupt land officials under the existing complex process of land registration during selling and purchasing prevail in the country. This study also finds that political affiliations of local influential people in collaboration with the land administration, trickery by land officials, use of force and crookedness and fake documentation are the basis for wresting property away from the minority communities (Trivedi, 2011). Many of the respondents alleged that by the intricacy of corrupt local land officials (Tehsil Offices⁷⁴, Tehsildar⁷⁵) and the powerful influential people, much land has been stolen from the Indigenous people in the name of re-classifying it as *Khas* Land (Public land) and vested property. My field research indicates that a large number of Indigenous families have either lost their own ancestral lands or have become landless through other ways. Once they are landless, the Indigenous people are unable to claim and receive *Khas* land due to flaws in the enlisting process where local, influential and politically powerful elites control the mechanism. These elites are the illegal occupants of most *Khas* land in the country. In addition to the complicated application process, the lack of information dissemination regarding availability and distribution of *Khas* land,

⁷⁴ Lowest union-level revenue unit comprising several *mouza*

⁷⁵ Local revenue collector

bribery and corruption of the land officials and relevant public representatives, the potential beneficiaries' lack of contacts with government offices, and the lack of political and social patronage of the landless all contribute to Indigenous landlessness (Barkat et al. 2000, pp. 5-7). In some instances, they are being obstructed in applying and claiming for *Khas* land by the local influential people as most of the *Khas* lands are illegally occupied by them. These are the obstacles against the fair distribution of *Khas* land to the rightful beneficiaries in Bangladesh. The Indigenous people of these two communities are unable to afford the cost of legal intervention, because pursuing a court case is very expensive in the existing situation of the country.

A study by CARE (2003, p. 19) indicates that due to the corrupt practices of land administration, 40 percent of the total cost of land litigation is paid as bribes to local registration, survey, settlement and *tehsil* offices, and 22.7 percent of the total cost is paid as bribes to the courts. This report has also shown that 924 households with lower incomes, earning less than three thousand taka in a month have paid a total of 742, 855 taka (BDT) as bribes to land officials in 2001 (CARE, 2003, p. 19). Another study, by Barkat et al. (2001, p. 221), pointed out that about 7000 to 10,000 taka is required for bribes in order to get one acre of *khas* land due to unfair practices and corruption in the local *Tehsil* offices. Further, Barkat (2005, p. 23) indicated that the number of land-related cases are 2.5 million including the pending cases in the courts, which constitute 77 percent of the total cases in the country. In every year in Bangladesh, people lose 24,860 taka for land-related court cases excluding the opportunity costs and externalities of which 1 percent is deposited in the revenue of the government in the name of court fees and stamp fees. In every court-case on average 45 people are affected and it takes 9.5 years to litigate land-related court cases (Barkat, 2005, p. 24). Thus, land related cases are an abnormally lengthy

process, which also signifies the ‘deterioration of legal institutions’ (TIB, 1998) in Bangladesh. The victims are apprehensive about the legal justice system of Bangladesh as it has not been deemed ‘a sanctuary of the vulnerable’ (UNDP, 2012) people, but as a tool of the privileged.

In terms of day-labor wages in the agricultural sector, the Indigenous people, especially the women, are discriminated against. The poor landless households have limited options but to sell their physical labor in the market for subsistence living. The discrimination of wages is informally institutionalized in the rural setting even though men and women performed the same type of work. Respondents have reported that on average men earn *Two hundred fifty Taka* per day, while women get paid *Two hundred Taka* (BDT) which is equivalent to four Australian dollars only. It has also been reported that when the Indigenous women demand equal wages, they are harassed, and local employers threaten their future employment prospects (Das, 2011, p. 58). As a result, they are forced to work under critical circumstances as underpaid labourers. In addition, very often the Indigenous women face verbal and physical harassment during work at the farm by the non-Indigenous community members.

The Indigenous women are the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh in terms of ethnicity, religious identity, and economic status even though they enjoy comparatively more freedom than their Bengali counterparts in reference to ‘absence of the system of seclusion or veil in society and women’s production related to economic participation’ (Chakraborty, 2004, p. 55). Being an agricultural community, the traditional Indigenous social structure concords men and women engaged in economic and agricultural activities. Women’s work participation does not result in their having rights to access other household resources and assets. The

patrilineal social structure deprives women from inheriting property, land and other resources due to the absence of structured and organized legal codes (Chakraborty, 2004, p. 75) at community level even though the national constitution guarantees equality and equal protection for all citizens. The discriminatory inheritance laws existing in most of the Indigenous communities further hinder women's overall emancipation in society (Roy, 2004, p. 8).

The traditional customary practices of the two researched Indigenous communities seclude women in representation in traditional social institutions like as *Manjhi* and *Dighori* parishad. Within a traditional patriarchal community, Indigenous women face marginalization, exploitation, and to some extent violence (Vinding and Kambel, 2012, p. 12). Despite deprivation in and out of the community, Indigenous women are also simultaneously discriminated in terms of wages in the wider labour market. In general, Indigenous labourers and agricultural workers of greater north-Bengal get paid less than Bengali labourers, and Indigenous women labourers get even less than their male counterparts (Chakraborty, 2004, p. 68). There is a common belief that women 'could be paid less on the grounds that they were secondary earners or merely earning pin money' (Kabeer, 2012, p. 13). According to a survey carried out in the districts of Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon in 1996-97, 69.1% of Indigenous women stated that they get paid less than men (Chakraborty, 2004, p. 69).

In Bangladesh, especially in these two researched communities, both men and women from the poor households were concentrated in daily wage labour (Kabeer, 2012, p. 33). The Indigenous women have a high demand as wage labourers by the landlords as they are found to be sincere, regular and cheap labour that could be easily exploited. The Indigenous women are 'stigmatized and described in derogatory terms' (Vinding and Kambel, 2012, p. 12) in the work place in the farm

by the dominant Bengali population where they are also verbally and physically abused. More often, their payments are delayed for up to one week. Sometimes, their payments are denied completely or partially (Chakraborty, 2004, p. 69). Vinding and Kampbel (2012, p. 26) have identified that Indigenous women are engaged in 'low-wage jobs, are often underpaid compared to the wages of Indigenous men and non-Indigenous women, and have little employment security'. Thus, under the factious diaspora of the market, Indigenous men and women are equally exploited by the local land administration in the land registering process, and in the labour market which underpins their equal citizenship rights and life chances in Bangladeshi society.

6.5.3. The role of festivals in the community

From my own experiences, I can relate that according to the traditional cultural values and life styles, social and religious festivals, such as marriage, funerals, *Karam*, *Fagua*, *Soharai*, and *Baha*, Christmas, and New Year (as detailed in the chapter one section; 1.3) amongst the *Santals* and *Oraons* community are celebrated with religious norms and fervour. During those festivals men, women, and children wear new clothes, invite their relatives and make different types festive food stuffs in every household. In those social and religious festivals, alcoholic drinks, such as *haria* (rice beer) are served among the adults. The collective drinking of alcohol during joyous seasonal festivals and important life-cycle events is an integral part of Indigenous life. Indigenous women are not allowed to drink alcohol before their marriages (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 246).

In Bangladesh, the consumption of alcohol is strictly prohibited both in social functions and religious rites as the majority of the population (89.5 percent) is Muslim. In Islam, any kind of addiction to intoxicating liquor, drugs and alcohol is

prohibited (Uddin, 2008, p. 67). According to the article 10 (2) of the *Narcotics Control Act of 1990*, no person except a holder of a permit granted under this act may consume any alcohol and only foreign nationals are allowed to consume alcohol in bars holding a licence (Roy et al. 2010, p. 567). The Indigenous people of the country are exempted from this act, and they are allowed to drink home-made alcohol such as *chulai, tari and Bangla mad* which are usually consumed by the lower socio-economic classes of the country (WHO, 2004, p. 2). Data from the 2003 World Health Survey indicates that 94 percent of people (male 87.4 and female 99.7) in Bangladesh are life time abstainers from alcohol consumption (WHO, 2004, p. 1). Only 0.3 percent (male 0.6 and female 0.0) of the total population are identified as heavy episodic drinkers (WHO, 2004, p. 1). It has also been reported that the alcohol made from fermentation of boiled rice, sugar-cane, and molasses is becoming an increasing concern both in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh in terms of morbidity and mortality. In 1998, 70 people died in *Gaibandha*, after consuming illegal homemade alcohol, and in 1999, 96 people reportedly died and more than 100 hospitalized as a result of drinking illegal homemade liquor in the north-eastern town of *Narsingdi* (WHO, 2004, p. 2). The above examples indicate that there is a direct impact on morbidity, mortality, and life chances in terms of consumption of alcohol in Bangladesh.

There are no statistics available to refer the consumption of alcohol per person in terms of litres within the researched Indigenous people in Bangladesh. Barkat et al. (2009, p. 167) however explain that by the course of time, the consumption of alcoholic drinks amongst the *Oraon* and the *Santal* community is relatively low because of their decreasing income, increase in expenses, and more diversified sources of recreation. But other scholars like as Bleie (2005, p. 187) argues that

excessive expenditure on alcohol, indebtedness are linked to the subsequent sale of land due to debts in the *Santals* and *Oraons* community and that this is responsible for aggravating poverty, eroding life chances, social well-being and further marginalization in the country.

During the field research, in one location at *Srirampara* village under Nawabganj *Upazilla* in Dinajpur district, I could not find any people for two weeks to be interviewed. Festivals such as, marriage and funerals are usually held after the harvesting period, when people have some food grain in stock to spend during those festivals. It can be argued that the longer those social festivals extend with excessive daily alcohol consumption, the more households will struggle. The effects of the long duration of social festivals, sometimes lasting one week or more, coupled with alcohol consumption are one of the causes of cyclical damage to individuals, families and communities, resulting in ongoing and intergenerational poverty, poor nutrition, and further marginalization. This, in turn badly affects their children's schooling and family expenses. McIntyre-Mills (2008, p. 337) indicates that educational achievements for the children and maintaining a working life for livelihood is challenging because of an unstable home environment due to excessive alcohol consumption.

The relevance is that regular excessive expense for alcohol leads to pauperisation, extreme poverty, and causes social ills in the community. In describing the life chances of Aboriginal Australians, McIntyre-Mills (2008, p. 307) indicates that alcohol and other drugs, money spent on alcohol, domestic violence, and lack of self-esteem are the constraints to well-being. Furthermore, in addressing the social health and well-being of the Aboriginal people in Alice Springs and Northern Territory in Australia, McIntyre-Mills (2003, p. 319) pointed out that spending money on alcohol

and other drugs, and the unavailability and cost of food in remote communities are causes and effects of social ills. These causes and effects become a cycle of damage to individuals, families and communities resulting in on going and intergenerational poverty, and marginalization (McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 13). She has also pointed out that higher morbidity and mortality rates, high rates of youth incarceration, and lower life expectancy are associated with violence and road deaths as well as diseases directly and indirectly linked with alcohol and poor nutrition (McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 12).

From this critical perspective, I have looked at the social health and well-being of the two researched communities. The higher rate of alcohol consumption during festivities underpins their quality of life and life chances in terms of the physical, mental and economic well-being of the two researched Indigenous communities. Bleie (2005, p. 188) explained this situation in her recent study amongst the *Santal* and *Oraon* community in North Bengal like this:

“There are newer, non-traditional kinds of alcohol, mostly locally produced country liquors with higher alcohol content than that of the traditional rice beer, which create dependency more rapidly. These liquors are sold at very high rates, mostly by Bengalis, in the more secluded corners of nearly every market place in north-west Bangladesh. It has become a commonly recurring situation for many Adivasi women and children to wait anxiously by their cold hearths for a father or son who was sent off to buy rice and vegetables to return home from the local market at dusk. The men often eventually reappear, drunk, abusive and empty-handed, having spent their precious money on liquor”.

The availability and misuse of alcoholic drinks in the local markets play a problematic role in the researched locations, which makes the Indigenous people more vulnerable to exploitation, to frenetic or binge alcohol consumption, extreme poverty and marginalization.

6.5.4. Traditional structures and social capital in the community

During my field research work, I have met village headmen in every research location. As I described in my access to research sites in Chapter Four (section 4.3.1), it was my unwritten responsibility to meet and brief the village headman before conducting any research in that particular village. The *Santals* and *Oraons* follow the traditional administrative system (*panchayat*), where the village headman is highly respected and obeyed (Bark at et al. 2009, p. 247). The *Manjhi* council among the *Santal* and the *dighori, parha* (village *panchāyet*) and the *māhāto* (secular head) systems amongst the *Oraon* community (as detailed in the chapter one sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2) are the traditional social administrative units. Those traditional social institutions perform major roles in the community in terms of resolving conflicts and disputes in society, performing ceremonial roles in marriages and funerals and other social and cultural functions, as well as uniting Indigenous people for community strength and solidarity. A common shared sense of belonging and living together with shared responsibility is the vital essence of these traditional social institutions of the researched Indigenous communities.

The research identified that inter-community networks, reciprocity and mutual understandings and inter-connectedness are systematically linked to social well-being and development of social capital. The role of social capital through social inclusion (bonds, bridges, and links with community) within the community can address the well-being issues in the community (McIntyre-Mills, 2008, p. 335). On the other hand, the fragile, inactive and disjointed traditional social structures have been perceived as systemic links that erode social capital, produce disharmony in social life with limited life chances, and cause social ills in community life (McIntyre-Mills, 2003, p. 243). Thus, the research indicates that a healthy setting in

homes, supportive networks and connections in the neighbourhood, access to food, education, physical and mental health, employment opportunities, belongingness to the community, self-confidence in terms of accessing health care and other social services are systemically interrelated factors linked to quality of life and well-being in a community (it has been detailed in the Chapter Three, section 3.2).

6.5.5. Household/ family

The Indigenous women from the both researched communities play a greater role in daily food preparation and food allocation in the family. From my personal understanding, I assume that food is essential for survival and adequate intake of balanced food with required nutrients is vital to leading a healthy and productive life. But a large segment of the population in rural areas especially, the landless and marginal households struggles to fulfil the nutritional requirements due to poverty and food insecurity (Akhtaruzzaman et al. 20013, p. 9).

According to the official statistics, the average per capita per day intake of food is 1,000.5 grams and the average intake of calorie is 2344.6 K. in the rural households of Bangladesh (BBS, 2010, p. 49). It is assumed that food consumption pattern is different in rural households than the urban households in Bangladesh. For the case of the both researched communities, the food consumption pattern is quite different from the majority population of the country. This study did not detail food consumption quantity per person in grams and calories, but it investigated their food consumption patterns during the most critical period (seasonal poverty and hunger) of the year. The study showed that there is a decline in food consumption amongst the research participants and they eat food less than 3 times a day due to shortage of food especially in the critical period of the year (as it has been detailed in this on section 6.3.3).

The food insecurity exists both in rural and urban households of Bangladesh when people lack transiently or persistently, access to sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food required for normal growth and development and for an active and healthy life (Akhtaruzzaman et al. 20013, p. 12). As per the first of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG-1), Bangladesh by the year 2015 has to eradicate hunger, chronic food insecurity and extreme destitution (GoB, 2013, p. 18). Thus, food security and food consumption patterns in the households are a grave concern for the two researched Indigenous communities of Bangladesh because they experience multiple vulnerabilities in their lives. The food consumption patterns in the researched Santal *and Oraon* households depend on the land ownership, income level, and resources (Bleie, 2005, p. 187).

I have been living with the community and I have been familiar with their food consumption practices during my field research work. It has been observed that rice, vegetables, fish, lentils, pork, meat, poultry and eggs are their common food menus. During the critical period (as detailed in the Chapter Five), women from these both communities traditionally collect water and forest based wild foods to supplement food consumption in the family. These are as follows; snails, carbs, oysters, turtles, mushroom, wild potatoes, bamboo shoots etc. (Barkat et al. 2009, p. 167).

The research indicated that according to the traditional unwritten patriarchal culture, women from both researched communities eat food last after serving all of their family members. There is no available statistics regarding the researched Indigenous women's per capita per day intake of food in terms of grams and calories in Bangladesh. Further, the research has also showed that to some extent the Indigenous women are also victims of abuse and violence in the households which have been detailed in the earlier section (see in Chapter Five section 5.6.4.1.2) of the thesis.

6.5.6. Multiple-layers of vulnerabilities

The research has showed that due to poverty and economic hardships marginal and medium households have been dispossessed of their lands as a result of distress sales (as detailed in the Chapter Five section 5.3.2.1). A total of 18 households (1 landless, 6 medium and 11 marginal) are victims of land dispossession by multiple reasons such as, forcible occupation of local powerful, re-classification of *khas* land and vested property, land acquisition by the forestry department, and by means of fraudulent actions (as detailed in the Chapter Five section 5.3.2.2). In the rural areas of Bangladesh particularly in the researched locations, land is the means of agricultural production for food security, source of income and livelihood. Due to gradual dispossession of land as mentioned above, the socio-economic conditions of the researched population have deteriorated, which is marked by homelessness (the study identified 24 households who do not have homesteads on their own land), limited access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities (43 households do not have a tube well and 40 households do not have any sanitation facilities as detailed in the chapter six section 6.3.1), indebtedness (86 households were found borrowing money from NGOs and 33 from local money lenders), and food insecurity during the critical period of the year (as detailed in the Chapter Six section 6.3.3). As a result, they are entrapped by multiple-layers of vulnerabilities and an inter-generational cycle of poverty. To analyse the multiple-layers of vulnerabilities and inter-generational cycle of poverty of the researched population, Chambers' idea of 'vulnerability poverty ratchets' (1983, p. 115) has been employed in the study. He has stated that:

“The poverty ratchet-the loss of assets or rights which is difficult to reverse-may be forced by a slow build-up of pressures which pass a threshold, by an expenditure which is foreseeable but large, or by a sudden crisis. Contingencies which force poverty ratchets are of five main types: social

conventions; disasters; physical incapacity; unproductive expenditure; exploitation”.

In terms of social conventions, the excessive expenses during ceremonies such as, weddings (Quisumbing, 2007, p. 13) funerals, and social festivals trapped people in to indebtedness by the selling of their lands, stored crops and household assets. A recent study of Tomlinson and Tariquzzaman (2009, pp. 9-14) states that on average 20,000 to 40, 000 BDT (equivalent to 300 to 600 Australian Dollars) is required to arrange a marriage in rural households in Bangladesh. Men are predominantly the sole income earner for the household, selling their labour at 120 to 150 BDT per day. To bear the expenses for food around 12,000 Taka, clothing around 25,000 Taka, and jewelleries around 15,000 Taka, it is inevitable to sell household assets such as, cows, goats and poultry. Thus, marriages or any social festivals are crucially expensive to the rural households in Bangladesh. It has been detailed in the section of the role of social festivals (it has been detailed in Chapter Six section 6.5.3.1) in the researched communities.

The natural and man-made disasters, such as the destruction of crops by drought and flood, and the driving of the peasants off their land and away from their resources contribute to vulnerabilities. The physical incapacity caused by morbidity is an effect of chronic sickness, arsenic contaminated water, water borne diseases, and environmental pollution from coal mining industries. In the researched locations, arsenic contamination in ground water and the probable open pit coal mining is a potential health and environmental threat (as detailed in the Chapter Four section 4.7.2). The loss of labour and earning power, of an adult reduces or stops the flow of income and food into the household. This is even more critical for the single-women and female headed households.

Unproductive expenditures, such as alcohol consumption (as detailed in Chapter Six, sections 6.5.3.1) gambling, bribes paid to pursue land-related court cases and failures in litigation worsens the impoverishment. Finally, the illegitimate acts of the powerful, such as land grabbing, forcible occupation of land by means of fraudulent, exorbitant interest rates of money-lenders, and discrimination in the judiciary and daily wages exacerbates vulnerability and poverty.

6.6. Basic needs for survival versus strategic needs for empowerment

In the researched locations, in both these Indigenous communities women are engaged in agricultural and domestic activities alongside men for substantial living in a marginalized rural setting. The women engaged in wage labour face wage discrimination that badly affects their living conditions. Low wage is directly associated with food shortage and poor nutrition in the family, high morbidity, poor water and sanitation facilities, inability to pay children's education costs, children have no confidence to attends schools and poor health care services that undermines their life chances. I have analysed the role of women through the lens of Moser's (1994) gender roles.

Table 31: Gender roles identification/triple role

Type of Role	Measuring Indicators
Reproductive Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child bearing and rearing responsibilities (infants, sick and aged care) - Maintenance of household (cooking, washing, cleaning) - Building and maintaining shelter for household members - Family health care and maintenance of labour force including future workforce
Productive Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secondary income earners for household - Work paid in cash/in-kind - Subsistence home production for family consumption - Agricultural wage workers
Community Managing Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social events and services to improve the community - Participation in groups and organizations - Voluntary unpaid work done in free time - Provision and maintenance of resources of collective consumption - Provision of health care, water and education

Source: Adopted and modified from Moser's Gender roles identification/triple role ((March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 56).

My research established that women from these two Indigenous communities carry a 'triple role' (March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 56) as producers, reproducers and working as volunteers within the community. This gender role is prevalent for low-income women in most societies. The typical productive role in these villages involves agricultural work as wage labourers for the household, fetching water and collecting fuel for family consumption. The typical re-productive role in these villages involves work for household maintenance, cooking, cleaning and looking after children. The typical community management roles of women in these villages are more contextual, as women have limited participation in traditional social institutions. Even though women take part in social and cultural functions in society, like in marriages, funerals, and social festivals, but their community role is not recognized yet. Women's equitable participation in social affairs can enhance empowerment and gender justice issues in the two researched ethnic communities.

Even though women from these two Indigenous communities were found engaged in agricultural activities for subsistence living as a counterpart of men, women's position in the society is lower than men, having limited control over household resources and decision-making. The research identifies that the *Santals* and *Oraon* communities are patriarchal societies, where women have no room for inheriting properties, even though men and women work alongside each other in agricultural activities. In terms of inheritance rights, participation in the social activities, access to education and health services, women are still in a vulnerable position. The vulnerable position of women in the society critically requires addressing the influencing factors of women empowerment which may lead to improve women's

self-determination, access to socio-economic resources, freedom of choice and power relations, participation in decision-making process, and reducing vulnerabilities through the conceptual framework of Strategic Gender Needs (SGNs) (Reeves and Baden, 2000, p. 14).

Table 32: Systemic Needs Analysis

Typology of Households	Basic Needs	Strategic Needs
Landless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living on wage labour (<i>Two hundred Taka</i> (BDT) which is equivalent to four Australian dollars) - Inadequate water and sanitation facilities (16 households do not have tube well and 19 households do not have basic sanitation facilities) - Food insecurity during critical period of the year - Discriminated at local health service providers - Women are denied land rights according to the customary practices - Women are excluded from social security benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal wages in the labour market - Alternative employment opportunities during lean period of the year - Provision of micro-finance projects/sewing machines to avoid the burden of money lenders - Equitable health care facilities - Rationalization of customary practices of women's land rights - Provision of social safety net programs - Women's Participation in the traditional social structures, and decision-making process
Marginal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living on wage labour (<i>Two hundred Taka</i> (BDT) which is equivalent to four Australian dollars) - Inadequate water and sanitation facilities (26 households do not have tube well and 20 households do not have basic sanitation facilities) - Food insecurity during critical period of the year - Discriminated at local health service providers - Women are denied land rights according to the customary practices - Women are excluded from social security benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal wages in the labour market - Alternative employment opportunities during lean period of the year - Provision of micro-finance projects/sewing machines to avoid the burden of money lenders - Equitable health care facilities - Rationalization of customary practices of women's land rights - Provision of social safety net programs - Stand for local government for voice and representations - Women's Participation in the traditional social structures, and decision-making process
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Living on crops from land and raising livestock's - Moderate level of water and sanitation facilities - Discriminated at local health service providers - Women are denied land rights - Social safety net services are not available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equal wages in the labour market - Alternative employment opportunities during lean period of the year - Provision of micro-finance projects/sewing machines to avoid the burden of money lenders - Equitable health care facilities - Rationalization of customary practices of women's land rights - Provision of social safety net programs - Stand for local government for voice and representations - Women's Participation in the traditional social structures, and decision-making process.

Source: based on the focus group discussion held in Panchpukur village 17 July 2011 as detailed in Chapter Four

The Strategic Gender Needs challenge women's 'subordinate and different positions' (March, Smyth, and Mukhopadhyay, 1999, p. 57) in society and stress women's

equality, equity and empowerment. This study indicates that the landless and marginal households have to struggle to meet their basic needs. Where basic needs are unmet, they usually suffer from food insecurity and malnutrition during lean seasons when they have no work or other employment opportunities. In the market, they are forced to sell their physical labour for subsistence living, which undermines their health. Discrimination in wages and high food prices exacerbates their vulnerability and increasingly they are becoming landless and destitute.

Women are denied land rights and opportunities, exploited in the market, because of their marginalized position in the society. Strategically, it is imperative to stand for Indigenous women's voice and representation in the local government and market for equal pay, and against exploitation. It has also been found that many NGOs such as, Caritas, Christian Community Development Board (CCDB), Grameen Bank, Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Services (RDRS), and Save Cred are working in the researched locations in the area of micro-finance activities. The provision of income generating activities and alternative employment opportunities during lean periods of the year such as machine sewing, raising livestock, small scale business, and awareness campaigns on literacy, women rights, and health and sanitation were found limited in these two Indigenous communities. In order to enhance the life chances of the poor landless, widowed and destitute marginal households *Khas* (public) land distribution have to be equitable, fair and priority-based. Importantly, the removal of institutionalized forms of women's discrimination on wages, in inheriting land and properties, and on control over resources should be enacted for women's empowerment, equality and better quality of life. Women's participation in the traditional social structures and decision making process both at family and community level will recognise women's

contribution, voice and position in society. In addition to that social safety net programs have to be transparent and fair so that eligible poor, disadvantaged, widowed, old aged and vulnerable people could be protected.

6.7. Empowerment of Indigenous women

In order to address the empowerment of Indigenous women in terms of the right to make choices, control over resources, and participation in the decision making process, I have modified a concept of Indigenous women’s empowerment below based on the prevailing literature (Haque et al. 2011, pp. 17-18: Kabeer, 2001, p. 19 and March et.al, 1999, p. 92) on women’s empowerment.

Table 33: Women’s empowerment (Longwe) framework

Framework	Indicators
Access	Women’s have right to inherit property or ownership of land women receive equal wages as men women have access to social recreational activities such as going to relatives’ house, local markets, going to cinemas, and attending function at NGOs or <i>Samiti’s</i>
Welfare	women are allowed to get involved in any income generating activities or in any organizations/NGOs or <i>Samiti’s</i>
Participation	women take part in the traditional social power structures like as <i>Manjhi Parishad</i> or <i>Dighori Parishad</i> in the community women take part in the decision making in the family for girl’s education and marriage
Control	women take decisions independently in family planning methods or medical treatment in time of need during sickness or at births
Conscientization	women are aware about girl’s free education and stipends programs, basic health care and immunization services from government Level of violence and discrimination women face in the daily life

Source: Adopted and modified from Women’s empowerment (Longwe) framework, (March et.al, 1999, p. 92), based on my interview schedules (see Appendix for questionnaire 19-27).

The indicators have been used to gather information during my field research (see Appendix for questionnaire on women empowerment from 19-27) to make an assessment of Indigenous women’s empowerment in these two researched Indigenous communities. The implications on this conceptual framework on the

Indigenous women's empowerment have been detailed in the Chapter Three and Five of the thesis.

6.8. Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, it has been discussed on Indigenous citizenship rights, social exclusion, structural marginalization, identity and systemic oppression from the conceptual framework of social relational approaches and institutional analysis. The research found that the state, market, community and family play a crucial role in creating and reproducing vulnerabilities and structural marginalization among the two researched ethnic communities in Bangladesh. The systemic implications of life chances across three continuums shows that landless and marginal households are relatively more vulnerable compared to the other two continuums. As a result they are led to further marginalization, and eventually those with the least resources tumble into an inter-generational cycle of poverty. They have limited life chances and their existence is at stake, compared to the medium households in terms of living standard, education of their children, water and sanitation facilities, access to health care and safety net programs provisioned in the country. This chapter summarises that landless, marginal and medium households commonly share the same characteristics in terms of their voicelessness, low level of participation and representation in the local government administrative bodies due to their different ethnic identity.

This chapter made the case that women across the continuum are the worst victims of discrimination, violence, exclusion and marginalization in terms of wages, participating in the decision making both at family and community and inheriting lands and properties in the two researched communities. However, this research makes an argument that strategic needs involving women in to alternative

employment opportunities such as the provision of micro-finance and income generating activities ought to be addressed adequately to enhance human rights-based approach for equitable policy implications for improved health and life chances of the Indigenous women in Bangladesh.

Chapter Seven: conclusion and policy recommendations to find a way forward

7.1. Introduction

The research detailed the complex process of marginalization amongst the researched Indigenous communities in the North-Bengal region of Bangladesh. The research made the case that Indigenous communities (in particular the women and children) are marginalised and unable to meet their strategic needs through being largely excluded from the democratic process. As a result, they have limited access to citizenship rights. The thesis makes the case that in the nation state of Bangladesh exclusion, deprivation and discrimination are systemic and the result is that the life chances of the women and children are affected and they are amongst the most vulnerable citizens in Bangladesh.

7.2. A brief summary of the research findings

The research was undertaken in four different locations namely, Birampur, Nawabganj, Parbatipur and Phulbari *Upazillas* (sub-district) under Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. Two *Santal* villages, one under Birampur and another one from Nawabganj Upazilla, and two *Oraon* villages, one from Nawabganj and another one from Parbatipur upazilla under Dinajpur district have been selected to conduct the study. From Buski, a *Santal* village under Birampur *Upazilla* in Dinajpur district 40 households (35 male and 5 female) were selected from 98 families, and from Khidipur, an Oran village 40 households (33 male and 7 female) out of 74 families and from Srirampara, a *Santal* village 40 households (male 39, female 1) out of 202 families under Nawabganj Upazilla, and from Panchpukur, an Oran village 40 households (male 31, female) out of 197 families were purposively selected for in-depth interviews who have voluntarily agreed to contribute to this research. In this

research, a total of 160 persons including 138 males and 22 females (40 from each location) were recruited for in-depth interviews and a total of 85 persons including 58 males and 27 females were consulted for focus group discussions in four locations in order to maximize the range of demographic characteristics of the participants, in terms of gender, age, education and occupation.

The typologies of research participants spans the landless, marginal and medium households on the basis of their land owing status, as the land has been perceived as a major determinant for livelihood and life chances in the researched locations. The research identified that 24 were landless, 111 were marginal and 25 were medium households out of a total 160 households (detailed in the Chapter Four see section 4.3.1). The study identified that dispossession of land by distress sale and forcible occupation is a grave concern for the research participants. It has been found that out of 160 households, 8 households (4 marginal and 4 medium) have sold out land amounting to 4.67 acres in the last one year (see appendix for questionnaires 5 and 6) due to economic hardships, poverty, pursuing court-cases, and treatment for family members, maintaining family expenses, and bearing education costs for the children. The study revealed that out of 160 households, 18 families (1 landless, 11 marginal and 6 medium) reported that their lands have been dispossessed amounting to 78.82 acres by the different stakeholders in the last one year (detailed in chapter four in the section 4.3.2) .

Due to gradual dispossession of land by means of fraudulent and forcible occupation by local influential people and acquisition by the government, the research detailed that the socio-economic conditions of the research participants were in a vulnerable position in terms of access to water and sanitation facilities (the root causes of land

dispossession have been detailed in Chapter Five, section 5.3.2). The research found that a total of 43 households (16 landless, 26 marginal and 1 medium) out of 160 interviewed households do not have a hand tube-well of their own (see table in the chapter five section). In addition to that that a total 117 households out of 160 households are using hand tube wells untested for arsenic. They are living with a public health threat in having no access to safe drinking water (see table in page in the chapter five). In terms of sanitation facilities, the research identified that a total of 40 households (19 landless, 20 marginal and 1 medium) from landless and marginal do not have a sanitary facility or latrines, a total of 106 households from marginal and medium have *kucha* latrines and 14 medium households have *pukha* latrines out of 160 research participants in the four different research locations. The lack of water and basic sanitation facilities undermined their livelihood, quality of life, health and well-being.

In terms of livelihood, savings and borrowing tendency during the critical period of time, the study identified that 159 households are involved with NGOs and they have some savings in those operating NGOs in the researched locations. It also indicates that a total 129 households (86 from NGOs and 33 from local money lenders) have borrowed different amounts of money from those sources. In terms of interest, the research showed that the interest rate paid to the local money lenders is much higher than that to the NGOs. The landless (9) and marginal households (18) are mostly the customers of local money lenders in the researched locations. This shows that their livelihood and quality of life is at stake because of their indebtedness to NGOs and local money lenders, which also affects their household food consumption patterns.

The research has also indicated that the 24 landless households and 111 marginal households who possess less than half-acre of agricultural land are crucial victims of food insecurity during the critical period (seasonal hunger and poverty). The study also reported that 106 households have two meals and 54 households have three meals in a day during these two critical periods of the year. The nature and types of food intake habits have an impact on nutrition in terms of the intake of calories, protein, fat, iron and vitamins. The food and nutrition also affect women's health and the schooling of children from the researched locations.

In terms of health care seeking behavior, a total of 86 respondents have said that at the initial stage they approach local Village Doctors (VDs). And a total of 24 respondents said that they go to the Traditional Village Healer (TVH) as a part of their cultural beliefs and practices for seeking health care services. With regard to using local government health facilities in the rural areas, out of 160 interviewees a total number of 67 respondents said that due to lack of awareness and campaign materials they do not go to those rural health facilities. A total of 48 respondents complained that even though they go to those rural health centres, they do not get proper medicines and services due to lack of doctors and nurses. A total of 40 respondents narrated that they do not want to go there any further for the apprehension of being discriminated on the basis of ethnicity. Only 5 respondents said that they do not go to those health centres due to distance. The empirical evidence and statistics shows poor quality of health care facilities existing in the researched locations.

In terms of access to free school textbooks and stipends for the Indigenous children in schools, the research identified that a total of 224 students received free textbooks

and a total of 86 students received stipends in the research locations. The study also revealed that 24 students did not get free textbooks and a significant number of students (162) did not receive stipends for various reasons (detailed in the Chapter Four section 4.4). In terms of challenges faced by the research respondents for schooling their children, the research identified that a total of 49 respondents opined financial incapacity of parents and a total of 35 respondents narrated that helping parents are one of the barriers for education of Indigenous children in the research location. In addition to that a total 39 respondents narrated that language problem is a major challenge for Indigenous children and 33 respondents' narrated that discrimination in schools are the major impediment for Indigenous children's education.

In terms of women's empowerment access to land inheritance rights, the research made an assessment and found that out of 160 interviewees, 21 respondents voiced that girls should get equal share of lands like as boys, while 6 respondents argued for half-share to women. It was reported that 66 respondents contended that women could be given one-fourth proportion of a man's lands for their survival, livelihood and well-being and only 15 interviewees responded that women should be given some lands on the wish of parents without any legal bindings as a charity or kindness. A total of 52 respondents said that traditionally there is no rights of Indigenous women's inherit to land rights. Besides that most of the respondents (153) informed that there is wage discrimination to women in the rural agricultural labour market in the research locations. The study also identified that most women are victims of some sort of violence (140) in the work place and also in the family (20). Based on perceptions of the research participants; this study indicates the need to reform some of the traditional customary practices. In policy terms it is

recommended that the unequal customary practices be reformed and restructured in line with the Bangladesh national constitution and the Bangladesh Women's Development Policy 2011. It is also recommended that the international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to eliminate discrimination and inequality against the women be enforced.

In terms of access to social services, the study also reported that only 35 respondents out of 160 households were found who received benefits from the social safety net programs of the Bangladesh Government in the researched locations (detailed in Chapter Four, section 4.7). The researched populations are systemically excluded from the benefits of social safety nets on the basis of cultural prejudices and lack of political importance, as they are out of the social power structure and have less representation in the local government bodies.

The research has also explored on the perceptions of citizenship rights in terms of education, employment, and allocation of *khas* land of the researched Indigenous people. The 24 respondents agreed that they can apply their rights to education, and only two respondents corresponded that as citizenship of the country they have received *khas* land from the government. A large number of respondents conveyed that being a citizen of the country, they cannot exercise any other rights but only voting rights.

Thus, the thesis made the case that the lack of citizenship rights enhances their process of marginalization and underdevelopment. They are the worst victims of multiple forms of structural vulnerabilities in the decolonized state of Bangladesh. This research revealed that the mono-nationalistic policy of the state has given

Indigenous people a fluid identity without being recognized as Indigenous people in the national constitution. In addition, the systemic discriminatory policies alienated them to access their rights to land, education, primary health care and other available social services. As a result, they are systemically and overtly excluded from the mainstream development interventions of the country. The thesis calls for a coherent inclusive policy of the state to scale up the bottom-up approach in order to address the livelihood and life chances of the two most disadvantaged Indigenous groups of people including women and children in North-Bengal.

7.2.1. Lessons learned from the best practices

The study indicated that the two researched Indigenous communities namely the *Santal* and *Oraons* of Bangladesh are socio-economically and politically in marginalized and vulnerable positions. The following section of the thesis will answer the research questions summarising the research findings and discussion.

To answer the first question that deals with the improvement of livelihood and life chances of the two marginalized ethnic communities, this study stresses that constitutional recognition as Indigenous people is essential to address their equal citizenship rights in Bangladesh. In this regard, examples can be cited from Australia and India. The Australian government's commitment to invest in housing, health, early childhood development, education, and remote service delivery to advance the fundamental social and economic rights of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (The Australian Government, 2010, p. 55) is a landmark for equal participation, representation, and constitutional recognition. In the neighbouring states, the constitution of India in 1947 where ethnic communities have been named as 'Scheduled Tribes and Tribals', are entitled to equal rights and protection under

the mechanism of the state (Bleie, 2005, p.46). In addition, the dispossession of land of the two researched communities by means of fraudulent, forcible occupation and grabbing, and through acquisition by social forestry projects needs to be stopped. The *Khas* land distribution policy, the EBASTA Act 1950 and the Vested Property Return (amendment) Bill-2011 should address the need and rights of the two researched Indigenous people in Bangladesh. A separate land commission for the plain-land Indigenous people could dissolve the land disputes in the country. Moreover, the Bangladesh Government is responsible to provide safe drinking water and sanitation facilities at minimum cost and other social security services to its citizens as provisioned in the national constitution to reach the target of the MDGs.

To address the second question in terms of lessons and best practices that could be beneficial regarding the Indigenous children's primary education and health care services, this thesis presents some examples from neighbouring countries below. The study has showed that the researched Indigenous children are facing challenges in primary education due to lack of provision for education in their mother tongues. In the neighbouring country of Nepal, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) has been provisioned in the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) that provided each ethnic community the right to get basic education in their respective mother tongues. To implement these linguistic rights of the ethnic communities, the government made legal provisions for imparting primary education in the mother tongues by introducing the Local Self-governance Act 1998, Education Act 2002, Education Regulations 2002 and Curriculum of Primary Education 2007 (Tumbahang, 2014, p. 1). The MTBMLE programme began in Nepal in 2007 and includes *Santali* and *Oraon* languages in the primary schools. Besides, citing the examples from India, Cambodia and Thailand Durnnian (2005, p. 20) argues that

mother tongue-based Multi-Lingual Education (MLE) in Bangladesh would boost enrolment and completion of primary education for Indigenous children. This education system will provide children to grow with learning, reading and writing in their own mother tongue and Bengali as well. The government of Bangladesh needs to translate the provision of mother tongue-based education for Indigenous children into practice.

Similarly, in terms of health care services, the study indicated that the researched population have limited access to health care services due to their lack of awareness, absence of doctors and nurses in rural health facilities and discriminatory practices in the health sectors of Bangladesh. Examples from Kerala, the south-western State of India and Sri Lanka indicate a better health care facility. The State government of Kerala had adopted several effective socio-economic policies in terms of organized health care facilities, committed organizations, the supply of clean and safe water, equitable food distribution, increased expenditure on public health, high literacy rate, developed communication systems, less social distance and people's consciousness, which contributed to improve the remarkable health status of Kerala (Panikar, 1985: Nag, 1985). Sri Lanka has gained comparatively high health status due to controlling malaria, improvements in the food supply, expansion of free education from kindergarten to University, free health delivery and the introduction of preventive medicine (Fernando, 1985). The Bangladesh Government has a good structure to provide health care services to the rural population through the Upazilla health complex, Union Health & Family Welfare Centre (UHFWC) at union level and Community Clinics (CCs) (satellite clinics) at ward and village levels (it has been detailed in Chapter Two, section 2.11). The effective implementation of health policy and management of rural health infrastructures of the government of Bangladesh can

ensure rights and access to health care services of the two researched Indigenous communities.

To address the third question of the research in terms of empowerment of marginalized people, this study suggests that social inclusion, participation in the democratic governance process and representation in the local government is vital. In terms of Indigenous women's empowerment, the study indicated that there is a need to reform and restructure the traditional customary practices of land inheritance systems in these two Indigenous communities. The Indigenous women's participation in traditional social institutions may pave the gate way for women's empowerment in the communities. The women need to be given more rights and responsibilities to meet their own strategic needs and the strategic needs of their children.

7.3. Policy recommendations: national constitution to the local government

The national constitution of Bangladesh has been amended fifteen times, mostly influenced by political strategies of dominance and achievements since independence in 1971. Despite the many changes so far, the national constitution still does not recognize the Indigenous people of Bangladesh despite country-wide campaigns and demand from the ethnic communities. The mono-nationalistic policy of the state denied the existence of 1.2 percent Indigenous people comprising 45 different ethnicities out of total population of 140 million in Bangladesh (Barkat et. al, 2009, p. 27), even though the Bangladesh has ratified international conventions such as ILO Convention 107 on 22 June 1972 (Roy et. al, 2010, p. 47). Besides living with non-recognition in the constitution as Indigenous people, the incoherently aversive policies and their critical implications have made the life of the two most

marginalized Indigenous people of North-Bengal convoluted. Even though there are many embedded commitments in the national policy documents and guide lines, such as the national budget, education policy, health policy and relevant acts and regulations of the state, the lack of implementation of those policy documents have contributed to life-long miseries and sufferings of the Indigenous people in the researched locations of Bangladesh. The research demonstrated that the systemic implications of discriminatory policies badly affected the human rights and livelihood of the Indigenous people including children and women in North-Bengal.

Similarly, at the local government level a dehumanized and frustrating situation is prevailing in the country. At the researched locations, the Indigenous people have less voice and weak representation in the local government administrative body. The thesis presented the case that the needs and concerns of the Indigenous people are largely ignored by the majority dominant populations of the country. Without being included in the local government power-structure, the Indigenous people of the two communities are being led to further marginalization and alienation in the country. This thesis has come up with some policy recommendations along with Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis in the following section that could strengthen their existence based on land rights and improve their livelihood and life chances in the country.

7.4. Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Analysis

To address the systemic context of life chances, social, economic and environmental well-being of the researched Indigenous population, here I have employed Ulrich's

(1983, P. 244) *Critical Heuristics of Social Planning*⁷⁶ approach in the following SWOT analysis. The rational discourse on practical reason and normative social reality (Ulrich, 1979, p. 311) has been applied to conceptualize the social systems, policy designs and planning in terms of reality (an is question) and in terms of normative ideals (an ought to question) to address the life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities in North-Bengal.

The parliamentary democratic government of Bangladesh plays a key role in planning, decision-making and implementation of all relevant policies concerning the Indigenous people through various ministries such as, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Land, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Special Affairs Division of Prime Minister's Office of Bangladesh. In addition, the national and international NGOs are largely involved with planning, decision-making, and implementation of relevant policies as complementary agencies of government at the grass roots level in the country. The above-mentioned different institutions, stakeholders, and organizations are the planners⁷⁷, experts⁷⁸, decision-makers and policy implementers in Bangladesh.

⁷⁶ Ulrich (1979, p. 244) has described twelve critically-heuristic categories of pragmatic mapping diverse perspectives. Ulrich poses 12 questions. He stresses that they should be asked in terms of many views on what is the case and what ought to be done spanning social, cultural, political, economic and environmental questions from the point of view of stakeholders who are to be affected by the policy decisions, not only the so-called powerful professionals.

⁷⁷ Planners have crucial skills in bringing together all the people whose expertise is needed (Ulrich, 1979, p. 256).

⁷⁸ Whoever has some relevant knowledge, experience or skill to contribute to the planning process for practical reason is to be considered an 'expert' (Ulrich, 1979, p. 255).

Based on the empirical and secondary data and my personal lived experiences, the study showed that the poor, vulnerable and marginalized two researched ethnic community people are more likely affected by the policies because they cannot voice their concerns in the decision-making process. They are the actual witnesses and social actors who uphold the moral responsibility of any success or failure of government policies. The affected researched population have limited opportunities to be emancipated in socially rational planning⁷⁹. Therefore, more often it is reported that there is limited scope of participation of the grass roots people in any policy design, planning and implementation in Bangladesh. A top-down and hierarchical approach is used rather than a bottom-up approach (Roy et al. 2010) in enactment of laws and policy formulations that have a direct and indirect impact on the livelihood and welfare of Indigenous people. For an example, the *Social Forestry Act 2004* of the Bangladesh Government in Article 6 (2) indicates that “landless people, abandoned women, backward section of people and poor Indigenous people” (Roy et al. 2010, p. 522) will benefit from the project. But in reality, the social forestry projects spurred criticism and public resentment among the various stakeholders and its beneficiaries. Regarding social forestry in Bangladesh, Alam (2009, p.159) points out that the forest policy was not formulated in a bottom-up approach where local peoples’ concerns could have been addressed properly with the constant change of climate factors in Bangladesh.

Further, any decision, laws, and policies of the Bangladesh Government are administered through the four-tier of local government (Division, District, *Upazilla*, and *Union Parishad*) administrative body (Unescap, 2003, p. 3). In Bangladesh, the

⁷⁹ For socially rational planning it is essential that the planner initiate a process of emancipatory self-reflection on the part of the affected (Ulrich, 1979, p. 257).

local government is largely responsible for delivery services to people’s door steps such as, the provision of water and sanitation services, health care services, and social security programs. This thesis makes the case that for the improvement of poor and disadvantaged rural people, a transparent, accountable and inclusive local government is essential in Bangladesh. Ulrich (1979, p. 308) argues that:

“A truly rational and truly democratic planning process must therefore start with a practical discourse among the involved and the affected in which the “problem” itself is the problem and in such a discourse the witnesses who represent the affected must not be required to submit to the rationality standards of the involved but must be entitled to argue polemically”.

Thus, the study conveys that in order to ensure accountability, participation, and degree of ownership over the policy, it is significantly important to accommodate the researched population in the inclusive policy discussion and consultation involving the relevant stakeholders and policy makers, which is also democratically sustainable (CPD, 2014, p. 1) in the context of Bangladesh. The following table sums up the findings and my analysis loosely inspired on Ulrich’ (1979, p. 244) twelve critically-heuristic questions for of pragmatic mapping for socially rational planning.

Table 33: SWOT Analysis

What is the case		What ought to be done in policy and governance system
Strengths	Bangladesh has a constitution that enshrines the democratic rights of all citizens.	To scale up the voice of the most marginalized representation in the democratic parliament and political parties could be increased for the Indigenous people.
	A positive level of tolerance, acceptance and mutual relationship across the ethnic and majority population in the country-wide of Bangladesh.	An un-interrupted and consecutive inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogues and networking between the Indigenous people and majority populations could more improve the peace and stability in the country.
	The government of Bangladesh is implementing few programs for the socio-economic development for the plain-land Indigenous people in North-Bengal of Bangladesh.	The ownership and participation of the marginalized Indigenous people in the development programs should be ensured. An accountable and transparent project management could improve the life chances of the most marginalized population.
Weakness	The potential of the constitutional	The equity and equality of all citizens needs

	<p>democratic rights of all citizens has not been translated in to practice.</p> <p>The 45 diverse ethnic communities are not recognised as the Indigenous people in the national constitution.</p>	<p>to be ensured within the democratic governance system through an inclusive policy framework.</p> <p>The recognition of the Indigenous people in the national constitution could dissolve an identity crisis and equal citizenship rights in the country.</p>
	<p>The on-going ‘illegal land acquisition’ by the powerful of the Indigenous people is a grave concern. The lands of the Indigenous people have been wrongly re-classified as <i>khas</i> land and vested property. The rural landless poor Indigenous people are systemically excluded from the distribution process of <i>khas</i> land.</p> <p>There exists a complicated land tenure policy and land administration in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Land (MOL) has both policy and implementation functions for Land administration, while the Ministry of Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs (MLJPA) deals with land transfer and registration (CARE, 2003, p. 6).</p> <p>The bifurcated land administration system under the two separate ministries and lengthy process of litigation resulting in land dispossession of the Indigenous people in the country.</p>	<p>The illegal land encroachment by the local powerful influential, unjust re-classification of <i>khas</i> land and vested property, and acquisition of land in the name of social forestry projects needs to be legally stopped for the existence of Indigenous people.</p> <p>A complete moratorium (Barkat, 2004, p. 10) should be imposed on further acquisition of the private and common lands of the Indigenous people. The EBASTA Act 1950 with reference to restriction on alienation of land by aboriginals should be applied in North Bengal. Any lands belong to Indigenous people should not be transferred to non-Indigenous people through sale, gift or will (Roy et. al, 2010, p. 474). The distributions of available <i>khas</i> land to the rural landless people have to be transparent. The land litigation process should be operated promptly with fair justice. The <i>Vested Property Return (amendment) Bill-2011</i> should be implemented without any delay. A separate land commission for the plain-land Indigenous people could dissolve the land disputes in the country.</p>
	<p>There is a commitment of government to introduce primary education for both communities. But, the lack of implementation of primary education in mother tongues for the Indigenous children in the country.</p>	<p>For an inclusive education system, the immediate implementation of primary education in mother tongues could combat the high-dropout rate and non-completion of primary education of the researched Indigenous children in the North-Bengal of the country (detailed in Chapter Two and Three).</p>
	<p>Even though there is commitment, the government is reluctant to recruitment and deployment of primary school teachers from the ethnic communities in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>The recruitment and deployment of primary school teachers from the ethnic communities could escalate higher enrolment and completion rate of universal primary education in Bangladesh.</p>
	<p>The limited access to primary health care services available by government-operated rural local health facilities such as, Union Health Centres and Community Clinics located at unions and ward levels of the two researched Indigenous communities. The lack of access to health care services due to multilayers discrimination undermined their life chances in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>The government-operated local health services have to be equitable, accountable and available to the Indigenous people living in the remote areas of the country. To motivate to use those rural health facilities promotional campaigns should be strengthened. There is an urgent need of the involvement and participation of the local community people in the provision of rural public health care services Bangladesh.</p>
	<p>The researched Indigenous people</p>	<p>The equitable and legitimate access to the</p>

	<p>have limited access to the basic social services especially the social safety net programs such as, VGF, VGD, and old allowance due to discrimination based on ethnic identity. The corrupted local governance systems exclude the researched Indigenous people in terms of enlisting and administering those programs.</p>	<p>social safety net programs of the researched Indigenous people could reduce their multiple vulnerabilities in their daily life struggle. It could rescue them from the indebtedness to NGOs and local money lenders. Those social safety net programs of Bangladesh government could also salvage the researched Indigenous people from the inter-generational cycle of poverty during the critical period of the year.</p>
	<p>The Indigenous women are deprived from land inheritance rights according to the customary practices. They are also excluded from participation in the traditional social institutions such as <i>Manjhi parishad</i> and <i>Dighori Parishad</i> in the researched ethnic communities.</p>	<p>The research indicates that there is a need to reform and restructure the traditional customary practices of land inheriting systems in these two Indigenous communities. The Indigenous women's participation in the traditional social institutions may pave the gate way for women empowerment in the communities.</p>
Opportunity	<p>The rights-based approach is an internationally a growing concern in the development arena amongst the national and international NGOs in Bangladesh.</p>	<p>A strong coordination among the national and international NGOs could have a sustainable impact on livelihood and life chances of the two researched ethnic communities in Bangladesh.</p>
Threat	<p>The extent of discrimination undermines the democratic potential of Bangladesh as it is evident in the chapter one (statement of the problem). The long-term deprivation, systemic discrimination and maltreatment of the researched Indigenous people may raise a potential possibility of spurring a communal conflict in the future. The afflicted Indigenous people may revolt, demonstrate and stand against the oppressive instruments of the state.</p>	<p>The risk of the communal conflict and insurgency in the researched locations is very minimal. The two Indigenous communities (<i>Santal</i> and <i>Oraon</i>) live sparsely all around the sixteen districts of Rangpur and Rajshahi division of North-Bengal of Bangladesh. Any kinds of conflicts and insurgency like the CHT (Kabir, 2005, p. 8) may not occur in the researched locations. Addressing the needs and demands of the researched Indigenous population could minimize the threat of revolt, conflicts, and demonstrations in the country.</p>

Source: Adapted and modified from Ulrich's (1979, p. 244) twelve critically-heuristic categories of pragmatic mapping for socially rational planning.

The following section of the thesis elaborates the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats (SWOT) Analysis of the whole thesis in terms of key concepts and research findings that is significant for the livelihood, life chances, and existence of the two researched Indigenous communities of Bangladesh.

7.4.1. Strengths

Bangladesh is an emerging democratic country with elected representatives in the parliament. The country has a rich tradition peaceful co-existence among people of

diverse backgrounds that is the benchmark for many other developing countries. Communal tension and conflicts badly impacted society during the Pakistani colonial period just after the partition of British India in 1947, which resulted in communal riots and forced migration to the neighbouring states of India. Nonetheless, the people have also experienced some turbulent events after the Liberation War, such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) insurgency in the mid-1970s, military coups in 1975 and 1981, a massive struggle for democracy in the 1990s, and post-election impact on minority communities since the 1990s to the present. However, except for those unexpected occurrences since independence in 1971, the people of Bangladesh are living moderately in a peaceful environment. Ethnic and cultural diversity is a unique resource for the country. There is an outstandingly positive level of tolerance, acceptance and mutual relationship prevailing between the ethnic and majority populations of the country.

The Development Assistance for the Special Area (GoB, 2013) of the Bangladesh Government under the Prime Minister's office has been initiated since 1996 for the socio-economic development of the plain-land Indigenous people in the areas of education, health, water and sanitation, self-employment projects, basic social services, and cultural institutions is praiseworthy. Besides, the NGO sectors including the national and International NGOs operate a large scale of development programs for plain land Indigenous people through a rights-based approach which is a growing concern in the country. In addition, there exist strong civil society networks and organizations amongst the Indigenous people in North-Bengal for conveying a sustainable change in the future.

7.4.2. Weakness

The research essentially dealt with the lack of policy implementation that badly impacted on the livelihood and life chances of the two most marginalized Indigenous communities of North-Bengal. The non-recognition of the ethnic communities of Bangladesh as *Adivasis* or Indigenous people in the national constitution is the greatest peril which thwarted the ethnic communities in a critical position. This resulted in an identity crisis and the subsequent isolation in the country as not being recognized Indigenous people in the national constitution of Bangladesh. Besides, the adverse land tenure policies, such as land grabbing by local powerful influential people through forgery of documents, land encroachment by social forestry projects of the Bangladesh Government, unjust re-classification of *khas* land and vested property, inactiveness of *EBASTA* act, and the unusually lengthy process of land litigations in the existing land administration system heavily impacted on their livelihood, life chances, education of their children, and access to health care and safety net programs. The systemic implications have been detailed in the chapter five and six of the thesis.

The lack of provision of primary education in mother tongues resulted in a high-dropout rate and non-completion of primary education for the Indigenous children in the researched communities. In addition to that the non-recruitment and deployment of primary school teachers from the ethnic communities negatively impacted on the attainment of MDGs goal-2 which aims to ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (Bhuyan, 2006, p.1).

The limited access to primary health care services available by the government-operated local health facilities of the two researched Indigenous communities undermined their life chances in Bangladesh. The wide-spread discrimination experienced by Indigenous women in the health care centres exacerbated their high morbidities and low life expectancy due to the dismal situation of health care services in Bangladesh. The Indigenous women are deprived of land inheritance rights and excluded from participation in the traditional social institutions which also depict inequality and discrimination in the researched ethnic communities. Moreover, the limited access to basic social services, especially the social safety net programs due to different ethnic identity and corrupted local government systems has led to social vulnerability.

However, at the present time, many NGOs are working at the grass roots level for the socio-economic development of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh. In a real sense, there is hardly any village that is not covered by the interventions of the NGOs in Bangladesh. Those NGOs are largely working on social issues in terms of primary education, water and sanitation, struggle against exploitation and discrimination, and provision of micro-credit that has weakened the assertive power of traditional *mohajons* (money lenders) in rural areas of Bangladesh (Mohammad, 2006, p, 5). Despite the NGO's large scale micro-credit operations to alleviate rural poverty, this thesis put few questions: "why does micro-credit fail to make any significant impact on poverty at the macro level? Why is it that despite the huge success of micro credit people in distress keep migrating to urban centres? Why does the *Monga* type situation persist?" (Mohammad, 2006, p, 7). In addition, over the years it has been

criticised that NGO accountability⁸⁰ in Bangladesh is largely symbolic and rhetorical (Siddique and Faroqi, 2009, p. 262). To address grass roots people's development activities, NGO accountability to government, donors, clients and internal management needs to be strengthened. Moreover, as every organization has different objectives and goals, the impact of development interventions seem to be minimal because there is a lack of coordination among the national and international NGOs in Bangladesh. The concerted effort and interventions of NGOs could have a sustainable impact on the livelihood and life chances of the two researched ethnic communities in Bangladesh.

7.4.3. Opportunity

The thesis makes the case that there is an opportunity for the Government and NGOs to intervene development initiatives through a rights-based approach. The rights-based approach is a growing concern in the development arena amongst the national and international NGOs in Bangladesh. The national and international NGOs are paying especial attention to the diverse needs of the disadvantaged and marginalized ethnic communities in North-Bengal. Those social-welfare organizations are working in line with the international conventions and treaties such as, UDHR, CRC, CEDAW, Conventions on Racial Discrimination, ILO conventions 107/169, and the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights 2007 with an emphasis on protecting the vulnerable ethnic people in Bangladesh.

⁸⁰ "NGOs accountability (e.g., upward vs. downward, internal vs. external) to donors is weak and largely symbolic, and been further eroded in recent times... NGOs have not developed downward accountability to their clients. The accountability in their internal management is weak, and there is also insufficient scope for NGO clients to participate in important decision-making processes" (Siddique and Faroqi, 2009, p. 262).

The research found out that there are some potentially relevant particular scope and opportunities for the development and life chances of the researched ethnic communities in Bangladesh. The consolidated effort of the national and international NGOs can make a difference in the area of policy advocacy, prioritizing the burning issues, such as enabling the complex land administration system to be fair and just and resisting land encroachment by powerful influential people and by social forestry projects. Through raising a massive awareness amongst the Indigenous people, the recommended policy advocacy initiatives are to combat the inter-generational cycle of poverty, re-classification of *khas* land and vested property, and curtailing the lengthy land litigation process of Bangladesh. In addition to that the concerted effort of the national NGOs, donor agencies, and the international NGOs may have a positive impact on the primary education of Indigenous children in their mother tongues, non-discriminatory and equitable access to primary health care services and access to social safety net programs through continuous policy advocacy, dialogues and negotiations with the relevant government agencies in Bangladesh.

In order to improve the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and life chances of the two researched ethnic communities, the Bangladesh Government may replicate the successful examples of other countries such as, India, Nepal, Mexico, Brazil, Australia and New Zealand accordingly as earlier discussed in this thesis, where the rights of Indigenous people are being addressed in the national context. At the end, again I would like to narrate the few initiatives of my host country of Australia in dealing with her Aboriginal people in the national and international context. Australia is a wealthy country and democratically inspiring and transformational in bringing the true meaning of solidarity and community development for developing countries. This notion of recognition and acceptance will pave the way for equal

participation, representation and constitutional recognition of the Indigenous people not only in Australia but also globally.

7.4.4. Threats

Although, the two researched Indigenous communities are currently living under the threat of poverty, marginalization and extinction on this independent country due to repetitive deprivation, systemic discrimination and maltreatment, the Indigenous people may face severe consequences in the future that may affect their livelihood and life chances critically in Bangladesh. The impact of exclusion from mainstream society may create long-term underdevelopment, human insecurity and escalation of inter-generational poverty amongst the two researched Indigenous communities in Bangladesh. Along with that there may arise a potential possibility of communal conflict in terms of accessing competitive resources either legally or forcibly such as lands, water bodies, and other natural resources in the researched locations that may destabilize the peace and harmony in the community.

For an example, the two-decade long conflict and insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) which originated in mid 1970s was triggered by the constitutional provision and dominance of Bengali/Bangladeshi nationalism over the distinctive identity of the Hill⁸¹ people (Roy et al. 2010, p. 17). The Hill people pursued constitutional safeguards for their protection and recognition as a separate community within the newly emerged nation state. Just after liberation, Sheikh

⁸¹Hill people refer to different ethnic communities living in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh (Roy et al. 2010, p. 17). These tribal groups are collectively known as *Jumma* for their slash and burn style of agriculture, which is also known as 'Jhum' cultivation. The *Jumma* people are distinct and different from the Bengali people of Bangladesh in respect of race, language, culture and religion (Rahman, 2005, p. 47).

Mujibur Rah-man, the then Prime Minister of Bangladesh attempted to impose Bengali nationalism over the different ethnic communities of CHT through adopting the constitution of Bangladesh on November 4, 1972, incorporating the ideals of Bengali nationalism over the non-Bengali population (Arens and Chakma, 2010, p. 23). But, the Hill people's delegation led by Manobendra Narayan Larma refused to endorse the constitution and demanded autonomy for the CHT with its own legislatures (Gulrukh, 2010, p. 9). The refusal of the state of Bangladesh to recognize the cultural distinctiveness of the Hill people and the subsequent political and economic policies of government spurred the rise of a sub-nationalist movement in the CHT (Khan, 2010, p. 41). On January 7, 1973, the *Shanti Bahini (SB)* (Peace Force) a military wing was formed and the *Parbattya Chattagram Janashonghoti Samity (PCJSS)* started its major activities only after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib on August 15, 1975. By the mid-1970s, the SB had started a full-scale insurgency in the Hills (Rahman, 2005, p. 48). From 1978 to 1989, the SB conducted major offensives within the CHT targeting the Bangladeshi military through bomb blasts, gunfire, arson, killing and kidnapping the local people. There were long negotiations with PCJSS in order to ensure political and economic stability as the country was facing severe criticism of its 'international credibility on external aid and assistance due to domestic political compulsion' (Kabir, 2005, p. 8). On December 2, 1997, a peace accord was signed between the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and the PCJSS to re-store peace and stability in the CHT. Even though the peace treaty has been accomplished; the political, economic and cultural dominance of the majority population of the country is still re-producing grievances and discriminations amongst the Hill people of Bangladesh (Chakma, 2010, p. 47). A

detailed account on the inflictions of Bengali and Bangladeshi nationalism over the Indigenous people has been explained in Chapters Two and Three of the thesis.

The long-term deprivation, discrimination and marginalization amongst the plain-land Indigenous people of North-Bengal may create deep rooted grievances, dissatisfaction and frustrations towards the aversive policies of the state of Bangladesh. The afflicted Indigenous people may revolt, demonstrate and stand against the oppressive instruments of the state. The ancestors of the two researched Indigenous communities have a glorious history of revolt and uprising during the British colonial period in the *Santal* Revolution in 1855-57 and the *Munda* Revolt in 1900 and also during the Pakistani colonial period in *Nachole Bidhraha* in the 1950s against the oppression, subjugation of the *Zamindars*, intermediaries and eventually against the suppressive policies of the state.

Here I do also assume that geographically the researched locations are very close to the neighbouring state of India where the governments at the centre and the states are encountering a severe internal security threat/challenge from the Indian Maoists/Naxalites movement. This movement originated primarily from austere poverty, wide disparity and discontent among the common people who aim at overthrowing the Indian State through agrarian armed revolution and capturing the political power (Dubey, 2013, p. 1). This type of armed revolt appears to be a very common phenomenon in developing countries where the lower echelon of people remain systemically out of power, development, opportunity and other social benefits provided by the respective states.

The research has detailed that people of the two Indigenous communities are undergoing perennial sufferings, discrimination, deprivation and marginalization in

all the spheres of life. They have discontent, dissatisfaction and frustrations largely due to the adverse policies of the state that badly impacted on their livelihood and life chances. From my personal assumption, I can say that the risk of replication of conflict and insurgency in the researched locations is very minimal. The two Indigenous communities (*Santal* and *Oraon*) live sparsely all around the sixteen districts of Rangpur and Rajshahi division of North-Bengal, Bangladesh. The Indigenous people are not condensed in certain areas like the CHT and the natural landscape of the North-Bengal is not hilly and it does not have a dense forest which could be a suitable terrain for any insurgencies. In fact, this study does not incite for any types of conflicts and insurgency at all that may disrupt the peaceful co-existence of all people in the country. Overall, this research aimed to address the key driving factors and policies that undermine the life chances of the Indigenous people of the researched locations.

7.5. Research Outcomes

This study has revealed that the gradual dispossession of land from the two researched Indigenous communities is a looming threat for livelihood and life chances. The research has demonstrated that ownership or possession of land in the rural economy is vital as it is the primary source of income and livelihood. The gradual loss of land of these two researched Indigenous communities has become a grave concern. If they continuously keep losing their lands or their lands are stolen by fraudulent means including their homesteads, their mode of living and livelihood would be in a critical situation in the near future. Their existence in the rural areas will be at stake. Ultimately for survival, they have to largely depend on earning their living as day wage labourers. They have to sell their labour in the market in order to live. This study has also reported that they get lower wages than other groups (as

detailed in the chapter five and six). This research was conducted in rural areas and I have practical experience of their daily struggle to earn a living. I have seen that there is a limited scope for getting a paid labouring job only during the peak harvesting and planting seasons. During the other lean or off seasons of the year, they remain unemployed and this severely affects their livelihood and life chances.

Throughout the conduct of this research, I have found that the loss of land is a major threat for the two researched Indigenous communities in North-Bengal. As more and more people lose their land, they will become increasingly more vulnerable and eventually destitute. One of my respondents from the Srirampara village (Interview no. 32) indicates that;

“If they lose land and they have no places to live in, one day they have to leave their native village. Most probably, they will end up working in the garments factory and residing in the slum of the cities and which will be a disaster for them”.

I do here affirm that even though I did not conduct this research in the urban areas, I have seen the vulnerable slum life in Dhaka and other cities of Bangladesh. From my experiences, I can relate that most of the slum dwellers have domestically migrated from the rural areas. Either they have lost their lands by river erosion or they have been systemically evicted from their homesteads. Consequently, they are living in unhygienic conditions with lack of water and sanitation facilities and food insecurity which undermine their life chances. Albercus Hasda from Srirampara village (Interview no. 39) stated that:

“There is a growing tendency amongst the youth from our community to migrate to urban areas especially in Dhaka and other districts of Bangladesh for a job in garments factories, manufacturing companies, and other industries. The reason behind migration is that there are no employment opportunities in the rural areas. Many of them do not have cultivable land of their own to support their livelihood. Again, those who migrate to the cities as

labourer and wage workers are re-trapped with poverty, marginalization in the city life because of their low income and quality of life”.

If they continue losing their lands and they do not have employment opportunities in the rural areas, the marginalized Indigenous people will be re-trapped under the vicious cycle of vulnerabilities and marginalization in the country. This research has identified that the Indigenous populations from the research locations are living under threat of further land loss either by forcible occupation by local powerful people or acquisition by the state in the name of social forestry projects, *khas* land as well as vested property (as detailed in chapter five and six). If such types of incidents continue amongst the two researched Indigenous communities within the framework of ‘criminalized economic, political and administrative system’ (Barkat and Roy, 2004, p. 5) of Bangladesh, they will be even more vulnerable and marginalized. Their consequences would be more likely the adverse impact of the proletarianization (Bratsis, 2003, p. 661) process (detailed in the chapter three).

In conducting this study, I had the opportunity to discuss with the informants in the researched locations on the current issues of democratic citizenship rights, legal and constitutional frameworks that may act on behalf of protecting and safeguarding the human rights of Indigenous people in Bangladesh. Being an insider and outsider of the research (as detailed my role as a researcher in chapter four of the thesis), I have scaled up the narratives of the research respondents impartially. The two Indigenous peoples from the research locations are becoming more marginalized and vulnerable because their lands are stolen either by the local powerful elites or acquisition by the state under a corrupted governance system (as detailed in the Chapter Five and Six). They have weaker voice and minimal representation in the democratic institutions of the country including the local government in the rural areas. Under the current

situation, the constitutional rhetoric does not guarantee the citizenship rights of the Indigenous people. That's why my research has attempted to invoke the human rights approach to revitalize the democratic citizenship rights of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh.

7.6. Limitations of the study

The study has been conducted in four villages (two *Santal* and two *Oraon* villages) in four different locations under Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. Due to limited resources, in terms of time and space, the research involved a limited number of participants (160 in-depth interviews and 4 focus group discussions with 85 persons) from the researched locations as detailed in chapter five of the thesis. A long-term engagement with the day-to-day life struggle and realities with the research participants could have produced a richer outcome for the study. However, within the short period of time, the study has reflected in-depth lived experiences, narratives and case studies of the research participants grounded in their specific context.

In addition to that the lack of relevant literature, statistical information with regard to demographic, economic, health, education, water and sanitation facilities, social safety nets, and food security, women's rights, social and political conditions of the two researched Indigenous communities to some extent limits the areas of exploration. To supplement the literature, I have used newspaper articles, news reports, and study reports of NGOs, websites of Bangladesh government ministries, and websites of NGOs working in the researched locations to make the case reliable and authentic. I left no stone unturned in exploring information and knowledge relevant to this study. This research is based on the lived narrative descriptions of the research participants rather than statistical evidence.

For an example, there has not been any research and survey done yet on the health aspects of the *Santal* and *Oraon* Indigenous people in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality, use of contraceptives, immunization, antenatal and postnatal care and use of public health care facilities. Unavailability of segregated data on the afore-mentioned particulars limits findings of the study to make a comparison with the national average and other Indigenous communities living in Bangladesh. Several limited studies have been conducted on the health aspects of Indigenous people living in CHT, such as antenatal care amongst the *Mru* community by Islam and Odland (2011), and fertility rates among the *Chakma*, *Marma*, *Tanchangya* and *Tripura* Indigenous communities in Rangamati Hill District by Kamal (2009). The unavailability of such type of health related segregated data recommends further research needs to be done on these two communities in the future.

Furthermore, this research has been conducted in four different villages with a small proportion of the Indigenous population in terms of Indigenous women's inheritance rights. The outcome of the research cannot generally conceptualise Indigenous women's rights to land. This research does not refer to or indicate the holistic picture of the two Indigenous communities. It is rather a starting point for questioning traditional practices of inheritance rights that has deprived women from inheriting land and properties over centuries. It requires detailed study in the future for restructuring traditional practices and customs that may enable women's rights to lands amongst the two Indigenous communities of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh.

7.7. A bottom-up approach grounded from the community to find a way forward

The research advocated that the role of community initiatives grounded from the community are primarily an important strategy to combat any kind of discrimination and maltreatment experienced by the ethnic communities in the mainstream society. Strong intra-community networks and social capital may address the driving factors of marginalization and alienation of the Indigenous people in the country. The basic foundations of social capital such as, trust, reciprocity, mutual understanding, togetherness, sharing ideas and views, and collateral unity and solidarity (Putnam, 1993: Putnam, 1995) which need to be built up amongst the two researched ethnic communities of North-Bengal. The traditional social institutions such as *Manjhi Parishad* of the *Santal* community and the *Dighori Parishad* of the *Oraon* community that can play major administrative roles in these two communities can build up strong social capital, community spirit, and mutual partnership in society. These customary social institutions can also raise awareness on legal rights and social responsibilities in collaboration with local NGOs and local government administrations in order to create a safe and peaceful neighbourhood through extensive cooperation, trust, and reciprocity.

This study makes the case that the positive impact of social capital is spreading around the world to combat poverty, and increasing the level of education, employment, and better quality of life. Strong social capital can also offer a safer community life. Thus, strong social capital among the two researched Indigenous communities could increase the level of education, employment, health and sanitation services, as well as a better quality of life. The thesis also invokes for

“conscientization” an idea derived from Paulo Freire⁸² which reinstates that people must be aware of their social reality (developing consciousness) and understand their basic rights in order to transform it (Taylor, 1993, p. 52). With regard to the two researched Indigenous communities, the community-based approaches and interventions may act as conscientization to lead people in organizing themselves and to take action with a view to change their social realities (Nyirenda, 1994, p. 6).

This research strongly argues that integration, assimilation, and emancipation of the Indigenous people in the mainstream policy domain without distorting their distinctive traditions and culture are significantly indispensable in Bangladesh. Social integration is an inclusionary goal that implies equal opportunities, rights for all human beings irrespective of religion and ethnicity, and improving of life chances. According to Cruz-Saco (2008, p. 2) “social integration is the process of creating unity, inclusion and participation at all levels of society within the diversity of personal attributes to enjoy equal opportunities, rights and services that are available to the so-called mainstream group”. In other words, social integration can be considered the antonym to social exclusion, which is broader than poverty and deprivation, and which neglects people’s rights. Describing the goals and objectives of social integration in terms of social, political and cultural perspectives, Cruz-Saco (2008, p. 7) suggests that socially there is a need to acknowledge and conform to diverse identities, politically there is a need to create space for voices and

⁸² Paulo Freire (1921-1997), the Brazilian educationalist, has left a significant mark on thinking about progressive practice. He has been called “the greatest living educator, a master and a teacher” (Taylor, 1993, p. 1). His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is currently one of the most quoted educational texts in terms of his theory of conscientization and dialogue, liberating education, a criticism of banking education, and a criticism of the concepts of extension as cultural invasion in especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia (Nyirenda, 1994, p. 1).

participation in the decision making process, and diverse cultural and traditional values of the excluded need to be recognized and respected.

Finally, in emphasising the need for inclusion and integration in social, political and economic in every spheres of life, I would like to sum up the thesis with a seminal speech on *Political Economy of Indigenous People in Bangladesh* delivered by Professor Abul Barkat at the Institute of Bangladesh Studies (IBS) at Rajshahi University on 17 February 2014:

“The Indigenous people of Bangladesh are the victims of disintegration [By this term, the author explains that Indigenous people are not a part of Bangladeshi society]. The relentless dissolution has produced and re-produced uncertainties, disbeliefs, contempt, and disgust amongst {actually towards [sic]} the Indigenous people. We have failed to reflect about their life-aspects from the lenses of their way of life. If the disintegration further continues, there would be a catastrophic disaster in the future. The whole issue is embedded on political and economic context. So, the state has to take up the responsibilities of the Indigenous people in Bangladesh” (The Daily Ittefaq, 18 February, 2014).

The state has a major responsibility to accommodate cultural diversity, communal and religious harmony, tolerance and acceptance for sustaining a peaceful co-existence of all citizens including Indigenous people with equal rights in Bangladesh.

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List of Appendixes

Appendix 1: Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
Application form for Approval of Social and Behavioural Research Involving Human
Subjects

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY and SOUTHERN ADELAIDE HEALTH SERVICE
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee*

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF APPLICATION
for approval of social or behavioural research involving human subjects

** Applications for ethical approval of research conducted by Flinders University staff or students and SAHS staff which is **clinical in nature**, regardless of where the research will be conducted should be submitted to Flinders Clinical Research Ethics Committee (FCREC). The kinds of studies considered by FCREC are those which involve:*

- *testing a health intervention;*
- *collecting information about health in a population;*
- *physically invasive procedures;*
- *diet and exercise studies;*
- *human tissue (including blood and bodily fluids);*
- *genetic testing;*
- *scans (including MRIs, x-rays and ultrasound);*
- *administration of ionising radiation to human volunteers;*
- *administration of drugs, whether or not they are approved for use in Australia;*
- *administration of food supplements intended for therapeutic use;*
- *Complementary medicines.*

The Secretary of the FCREC can be contacted on 8204 4507.

1. Before completing this application, researchers should refer to the [Ethical Guidelines for Researchers and Supervisors](#). Researchers should be mindful of Section 1, Values and Principles of Ethical Conduct of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* which is intended to apply to the interpretation and use of all other parts of the Statement.
2. This application form and any supporting documentation must be completed electronically using the most current versions which are available from the [SBREC website](#).

3. As this form is designed for electronic completion the space indicated for each question does not necessarily indicate the suggested length of responses. Please ensure that an appropriate response is made to each item.
4. The application should be worded in plain language for the benefit of lay members of the Committee, in particular. Resist the temptation to use language specific to your discipline and be guided by the clarity and simplicity of the language used in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If it is necessary to use acronyms/initials please ensure that an explanation is included for the benefit of Committee members who may not be familiar with them.
5. The Committee's concerns are specific to the duties of researchers to their participants, and to other persons that may be affected by the research. It is those matters that must be addressed by researchers in completing the form and accompanying documents prepared for forwarding to participants. It should be borne in mind that details of procedures and researcher activities, which may not necessarily be important to research design, could be significant from the viewpoint of the SBREC.
6. The Committee will only consider applications that include the version of letters and consent forms that will actually be forwarded to participants. In the case of the [Letter of Introduction](#), this should include the signature of the Supervisor/Researcher and appropriate University letterhead. If an email is to be used in place of a Letter of Introduction the same pro forma should be followed.
7. Researchers and SUPERVISORS, in the case of student projects, are asked to carefully check the entire application for errors, especially clumsy expression and spelling errors contained in Letters, Information Sheets, Questionnaires and Consent Forms that will be sent to participants. *The Committee does not accept any responsibility for errors of spelling or grammar.*
8. If it is necessary to arrange translations of material, it is the responsibility of the researcher and/or Supervisor to ensure that the translations accurately reflect the English version translations approved by the Committee. The Committee reserves the right to require researchers to provide independent verification of translations.
9. The Committee will not review copies of lengthy research proposals and lists of references, or documents prepared for other Ethics Committees, with the instruction 'see attached'.
10. Appendix A is an Ethics Review Checklist for researchers to self-identify whether their project is low risk and for ethics staff to manage workload. *The processing time for applications for projects identified by the researcher as low risk will not be any shorter than other projects.*
11. Researchers with questions about these or other matters related to preparing applications for ethical approval are invited to contact the [Executive Officer](#),

Mrs Andrea Jacobs (phone: 8201 3116) or the Chairperson, A/Prof Anthony Langlois (phone: 8201 5595).

12. **Checklist** for submission of application

- Is the application on the most recent form downloaded from the <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>.
- Has the application been signed by the Principal Researcher (for student projects applications from student researchers that have not been signed by the responsible staff member, as well as the researcher, will not be considered)?
- Is the research being conducted in a school(s)? If so, has the form related to Criminal History Checks been completed and signed?
- Did you answer yes to item C2(a)? If so, has Part A of the Privacy Legislation Matters form been completed?
- Did you answer yes to item C2(b)? If so, has Part B of the Privacy Legislation Matters form been completed?
- Has the Low Risk Checklist (Appendix A) been completed?

Requirements for Submission:

- an **electronic copy** (not PDF format) of the application and all accompanying documentation emailed to the [Executive Officer](#); and
- one **hard copy** of the signed application and all accompanying documentation printed on one side of the page only and clipped, not stapled, forwarded to

Mrs Andrea Jacobs
Executive Officer
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
Research Services Office, Union Building
(Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide SA 5001)

Applications received after the closing date for submission will be held over to the following meeting. The Meeting Schedule including deadlines for submission is available from the <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>

If research involves or impacts upon **Indigenous Australians** a copy must be forwarded to the Director, Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Training at the same time it is lodged with the Executive Officer.

Generally we attempt to provide a response to applications approximately one week after the Committee meeting. In the case of research involving or impacting upon Indigenous Australians it may take a week or two longer before a response is received.

Applicants whose research involves access to staff or students of the **Graduate Entry Medical Program (GEMP)**, or to databases of GEMP course or GEMP student information, are requested to send a copy of their application to: The Convenor, Research & Evaluation Reference Group, Department of Medical Education, School of Medicine, Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, South Australia 5001; or contact the Head of the Department of Medical Education on (08) 8204 5794.

**FLINDERS UNIVERSITY and SOUTHERN
ADELAIDE HEALTH SERVICE
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee**

Office Use Only Project Number:
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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

FOR RESEARCHERS INTENDING TO UNDERTAKE

RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN OR VULNERABLE ADULTS

NOTE: *This information replaces that provided previously regarding research in South Australian Schools.*

If you are intending to conduct research involving children or vulnerable adults you are required to have undergone a Criminal History Check. A set of procedures has been agreed between the University and the Department of Families and Communities' (DFC) Screening and Licensing Branch. For specific information about these procedures please refer to the following web page: <http://www.flinders.edu.au/about/police.html>. **Staff** members should follow the instructions provided on the website for staff and **Students** should follow the same instructions however should list their supervisor as both the Requesting and Verifying Officer.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) has directed that Flinders' Human Research Ethics Committees obtain confirmation from researchers who intend to undertake research activities involving children or vulnerable adults that current Criminal History Checks are in place before the application is considered by the Committee. Accordingly, if your application involves children or vulnerable adults, please complete and sign the certification below.

Does your proposed research involve you, or any member of your research team, in undertaking any activities involving children or vulnerable adults?

Office Use Only	
Item No.	
Mtg No.	

	Yes
X	No

Place the letter 'X' in the relevant box

If yes, have you, and/or any member(s) of the research team who will be conducting these activities, applied for and been notified that you and/or they have cleared a criminal history check, and that this clearance is current for the life of the proposed study?

	Yes
	No

Place the letter 'X' in the relevant box

Signed..... Date.....

PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR CLEARANCE

NB: If you will be conducting research in schools and have not yet received a Criminal History Check, your application will be returned to you unassessed and without ethics approval

**Flinders University and
Southern Adelaide Health Service
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Office Use Only	
Code:	Project Number:
Yung orendi	Y N

**APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF SOCIAL OR
BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

Please Note: The questions on this form have instructions and links to relevant documents and guidelines on how to answer that particular question. [To view the instructions and links click the symbol “” \(Show/Hide\) on the toolbar.](#)

Office Use Only	
Item No.	
Mtg No.	

New Ethics Application	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Response to Deferral Notice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Project Number	<input type="text"/>

A. PROJECT TITLE and TIMEFRAME

A1. Project Title

A critical review of democracy and governance challenges in Bangladesh with special reference to a human rights-based approach for the development of marginalised communities including Indigenous people, women and children.

A2. Plain language, or lay, title

Human Rights and Poverty in Bangladesh

A3. Period for which approval is sought.

Projects may not commence without the prior written approval of the Committee.

Date data collection is due to commence:	March 2011
Date data collection is expected to be completed:	June 2011
Date project is expected to be completed:	December 2013

B. RESEARCHER/SUPERVISOR INFORMATION

Correspondence regarding ethics approval will be emailed to the Principal Researcher with copies to all other researchers/supervisors listed on the application unless otherwise indicated.

B1. Principal Researcher

Principal Researcher

Title:	First Name:		Family Name		
Mr.	Lawrence		Besra		
Status:	Staff:		Student:		Associate:
School/Department/Organisation:	School of Politics and Public Policy				
Postal Address:	42 King Street, Mile End, SA-5031				
Phone:	0411328747	Fax:		Email:	besr0001@flinders.edu.au

Researcher 2/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:		Family Name:		
Associate Professor	Janet		McIntyre		
Status:	Staff:		Student:		Associate:
Copies of correspondence required				Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
				No	<input type="checkbox"/>
School/Department/Organisation:	School of Politics and Public Policy				
Postal Address:	Room 385, SSS, Flinders University				
Phone:	82012075	Fax:		Email:	janet.mcintyre@flinders.edu.au

Researcher 3/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:			Family Name:		
Dr	Noore Alam			Siddique		
Status:	Staff:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of correspondence required					Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:		School of Politics and Public Policy				
Postal Address:						
Phone:	82012302	Fax:		Email:	noore.siddiquee@flinders.edu.au	

Researcher 4/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:			Family Name:		
Status:	Staff:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of correspondence required					Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:						
Postal Address:						
Phone:		Fax:		Email:		

Researcher 5/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:			Family Name:		
Status:	Staff:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Associate:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of correspondence required					Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:						
Postal Address:						

Phone:		Fax:		Email:	
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Researcher 6/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:		Family Name:			
Status:	Staff:		Student:		Associate:	
Copies of correspondence required					Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:						
Postal Address:						
Phone:		Fax:		Email:		

If there are more than six researchers/supervisors involved in the project please use [Appendix B](#) for adding more researchers.

B2. Student Projects Only (staff members who are conducting research as part of their course of study leading to a degree must also complete this section)

Student No.:	Record	2020935	Degree enrolled in:	PhD
Supervisor/s:		Associate Professor Janet McIntyre		
		Dr. Noore Alam Siddiquee		

<p><u>ALL</u> QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ANSWERED IN THE SPACES PROVIDED. ATTACHMENTS IN LIEU OF RESPONSE (WITH NOTATIONS TO ‘SEE ATTACHED’) ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE.</p>
--

C. PROJECT DETAILS

C1. Brief outline of:

(a) The project;

The project will be conducted through a Qualitative Research Approach (Case Study, Focus Group Discussion and Interviews) of the two marginalised communities namely the Santal and Oraons Indigenous communities of North-Bengal of Bangladesh. These are located in rural and urban areas of Dinajpur district in Bangladesh. The research project will focus on the most marginalized Indigenous poor women and their children in Bangladesh. The area of my concern is human rights and social justice of the most marginalized people in Bangladesh.

The project aims to:

- **Explore** the extent to which the North-Bengal Indigenous communities are being marginalized and deprived of their rights.
- **Develop and contribute** to the Human Rights - Based policies that will enhance the livelihood and rights entitlements of the North-Bengal Indigenous and marginalized communities in Bangladesh.
- **Critically investigate** the key factors that play a role in the marginalization of the North-Bengal Indigenous communities in the present socio-economic context of Bangladesh.
- **Compare and contrast** the Human Rights - Based Approaches in different countries like as in the developing countries and Australia as well that could be an applicable /replicable lesson for the marginalized communities in Bangladesh.

(b) Significance;

The issue of marginalization and exclusion is a grave concern in the present socio-economic context of Bangladesh. The Indigenous poor women are the most marginalized in Bangladesh as they are deprived of any kind of social service which keeps them excluded from the mainstream society. In fact, in Bangladesh the marginalisation of poor Indigenous women and their children is a significant problem.

The research project will explore the interconnected issues across democracy, governance, social services and development of marginalized communities in Bangladesh. Socially just democracy and governance usually includes the vulnerable communities and protects them under the social safety net programs. The continual failure of so called pluralistic democracy and governance and the ineffective basic social services made the life of marginalized communities vulnerable. Especially, the women and their children from the marginalized communities suffer the worst form of marginalization. The Indigenous people belong to a different socio - cultural background as they have their distinctive life styles. They are severely excluded from the government-run social services and development interventions. Under this circumstance, this research project

has envisaged to find out the way out how to be served the poor Indigenous women and the marginalized communities in Bangladesh, in order to enjoy their entitlements to rights with dignity and respect and comprehensive human development with especial reference to secure sustainable livelihood.

(c) Research objectives.

The research project aims to meet the following objectives;

- Understand the problems that affecting human rights and livelihood of the North-Bengal Indigenous people
- Derive lessons for the development of other marginalised groups with specific reference to the needs of women and their children
- Explore the governance systems and rights- based policies that could be improved through including the poor, Indigenous and marginalized communities in Bangladesh
- Explore the roles and responsibilities of the community people for accessing their rights and empowerment of women

C2. Medical or health research involving the *Privacy Act 1988*

Is the research related to medical or health matters?

Yes		<i>Place letter 'X' in the relevant box</i>
No	X	

If YES, go to question (a) below. If NO, go to item C4.

(a) Will personal information be sought from the records of a **Commonwealth Agency**?

Yes	
No	X

If YES, complete Part A of the Appendix ‘Privacy Legislation Matters’ that relates to compliance with the Guidelines under Section 95 of the Privacy Act 1988 available from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>.

If NO, go to question (b) below.

- (b) Will health information be sought from a **Private Sector Organisation or a health service provider funded by the State Department of Health**?

Yes	
No	X

If YES, complete Part B of the Appendix ‘Privacy Legislation Matters’ that relates to compliance with the Guidelines under Section 95 of the Privacy Act 1988 available from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>.

If you answered ‘NO’ to both (a) and (b) above go to item [C4](#).

- C3.** Does your project comprise **health** research involving **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples**?

Yes	
No	X

C4. Data

Are data to be obtained primarily	Quantitative		Qualitative	X
Is information to be sought by	Questionnaire		Interview	X
	Experiment		Computer	
	Focus Group	X	Other	X
			Please state:	Case Study

Will participants be video or audio recorded or photographed?	Yes	X
	No	
If YES, please place a letter 'x' in the relevant response box or boxes	Video	
	Audio	X
	Photographed	X

C5. Outline of the **research method, including what participants will be asked to do.**

This research project will apply a complementary method that will include a case study, interviews and focus group discussions. In this research project, complementary methods will be adopted by blending qualitative and quantitative approaches to operationalise the research questions. A larger portion of the research will use qualitative methods to elaborate particular situations, experiences and understanding of the most marginalized people. In addition to that an iterative process will be adopted in the research to analyse the data as the sample progresses and means that the researcher can add to or change the emphasis of the sample design. Below are the specific methods that will be engaged in this project:

In-depth Interviews: The in-depth interviews will be used for collecting robust data, individual's personal histories, perspectives and experiences. The participants will be asked using semi-structured questionnaires on their perceptions of development and the extent to which they consider they are included or excluded from the wider community. How does their position in society affect their daily life and livelihood? How are their rights protected or violated? What are their needs which also include strategic and basic needs? To what extent is the wealth distributed amongst them and who controls the earnings at household level? What are the major criteria and procedures for budgeting at the household level? What kinds of social services are available to the poor and marginalized communities and what are the key factors that act as barriers to their achieving those services as rights? What are the barriers for women's empowerment in society? What opportunities exist for their empowerment?

How could the governance and administrative services be improved to reach the marginalized communities living in a) remote areas, b) coastal areas, c) river basin areas and d) hard to reach areas?

The semi-structured interview method will be used to encourage open responses that allow respondents to choose their own terms in explaining their understanding of and perceptions of marginalization, rights violation and vulnerability. During the interviews all the documents will be preserved for report writing and research purpose.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): The FGD will be conducted to gather and accumulate robust data from the targeted participants. In this regard, the voluntary nature of participation in the research studies should always be emphasized. The researcher will act as moderator and lead the discussion by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions. In this process the researcher will also ensure equal participation of all the participants and avoid influencing respondents. An open ended discussion will be held through the facilitation by the researcher which will bring out hidden and unnoticed claims and problems they face in their daily life which would be articulated through a policy frame work to protect and defend their rights. The drawings, audio and photographs of focus group discussion will also be preserved for evidence to support the field work under taken in those particular areas of Bangladesh. The researcher will explain his role and the purpose of the research to the participants of the Focus Group Discussants.

In addition the **Case Study and Ethnography** will be used to gain background information based on the life experiences of the Indigenous poor women, marginalized and vulnerable communities. Available written documents from public sectors, private sectors, and local newspapers, diaries of a community leader, teachers and religious leaders will be accessed to formulate case study and ethnography in line with research questions and objectives.

- C6.** Briefly describe how the information which is being requested from participants **addresses research objectives**.

To address the research objectives required data will be sought from the participants through a semi structured questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion will be held on an open ended discussion to address the research questionnaires. The participants will also be involved in shaping case study and ethnography for the research purpose that will address the rights-based policy and development interventions.

D. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

- D1.** (a) **Who** will be the participants? What is the **basis for their recruitment** to the study?

The field work will be conducted among the two different Indigenous communities one in urban areas and one in rural areas those are living in Dinajpur district in Bangladesh. The participants will be villagers' especially older Indigenous people, women and their children. The Indigenous people are the most marginalized in Bangladesh, so their voices to be heard and problems to be identified to connect them with the current development trend of Bangladesh. I will network with the members of the Indigenous community that are the most marginalized.

- (b) **How many** people will be approached? Please specify the **number** (or an approximation if the exact number is unknown) and the **size of the population pool** from which participants will be drawn.

The purposive sample will be drawn from the sample population located in the two Indigenous communities in Dinajpur district of Bangladesh. The rationale for choosing these communities is because statistically from official records and literature it represents a high rate of poverty, vulnerability, marginalization and other socio-economic problems associated with their daily life. By selecting a case study area that is representative of the problem. I will be able to undertake a purposive, saturation sample of participants spanning older Indigenous people, Indigenous poor women and their children. In addition, snow ball sampling will be used to identify hidden populations to whom the research participants refer as potential participants to contribute to the study.

(c) From what **source**?

The local newspapers, statistics of the local government administrative body, NGOs working in that particular areas and other private and government official records will provide the basis for establishing where the greatest incidence of marginalization, vulnerability, poverty, rights violation and severe level of social problems occur.

(d) What, if any, is the **researcher's role** with, or in relation to, the source organisation?

Comment on any potential for **conflict of interest**.

The researcher was a former employee of Caritas Bangladesh in the head office in Dhaka. During his working period, the researcher has visited these selected two areas of Dinajpur where the research is to be conducted. Caritas Bangladesh runs several development projects under the assistance of foreign donors in these particular areas. The potential for conflict of interest is minimal, because the researcher is not directly associated with Caritas Bangladesh and other organizations any more that he is researching.

(e) Are participants **under 18 years** of age?

Yes	
No	X

If yes, what is the age range?

Has the participant information been presented in a manner and format appropriate to the age group of participants?

Yes

(f) Do participants have the ability to give **informed consent**?

Yes	X
No	

If not, please explain why not?

--

D2. Indicate whether the participant group is comprised of people from a specific **cultural or religious background** or if any such categories are likely to form a significant proportion of the population to be sampled.

The research sample is drawn from the marginalized section of the population. They have distinctive and different cultural and religious back ground.

D3. Are there particular issues with **language**?

Yes	X
No	

If yes, please provide more information.

The national language Bengali as well local languages will be used as the above-mentioned two Indigenous groups have different languages and the researcher is well proficient with these two languages. The Bengali language will also be used in the research work. The researcher will seek support and cooperation from the educated persons from these two communities for language interpretation and better understanding and deliberation for the participants.

Do the forms or participant information need to be presented in a language other than English?

Yes	X
No	

Note: If YES, the translated documents should be submitted to the SBREC with a footnote, signed by the researcher/supervisor stating that it is an accurate translation.

If anyone other than the researcher will be involved in translating participants' responses, how will anonymity/confidentiality matters be managed?

The above-mentioned two Indigenous groups have different languages and the researcher is able to converse with these two languages. There would not be any difficulties for languages as people know the national Bengali language as well apart from their own community languages.

D4. Please provide a **detailed** explanation of how participants are to be **contacted and recruited**? For example, if making direct contact how will contact details be obtained, how will participants indicate willingness to be involved in the project?

The participants will be contacted via a network sampling process over a period of 3 months whilst I will be living in the community. Before starting the interviews and Focus Group Discussion, the participants will be contacted and will be informed about the objectives of the research. After their consent, dates and time will be discussed. I will collect the required data whilst living in the community.

D5. What **information** will be given to **participants**?

The participants will be informed about the objectives of the research through a letter explaining details of the project. All the comments and information received from them will remain confidential.

D6. Does recruitment involve a **direct personal approach** to potential participants by the researchers?

Yes	X
No	

If yes, how will the researchers address any real, or perceived, coercion felt by potential participants?

The researcher will preserve all the data, comments and recommendations received from the participants that will not be disclosed to anyone.

- D7.** Indicate **confidentiality and anonymity assurances** to be given and procedures for obtaining free and informed consent of participants.

The participants will be assured by the researcher and the host organization that all the information will remain confidential for the research purpose and which will not affect their daily life and livelihood. Before initiating interviews and Focus Group Discussion, verbal and written consent of the participants will be taken and even their actual names will not be disclosed in this research process.

- D8.** Indicate any **permissions** required from, or involvement of, other people (employers, school principals, teachers, parents, guardians, carers, etc) and attach letters requesting permission as well as copies of permission letters. Permissions should be sought, in the first instance, from the Chief Officer or Head of the peak organisation or governing body unless adequate justification can be provided that contextual circumstances require a different approach.

A letter asking for permission from Caritas Dinajpur Regional Administration has been attached to this form.

- D9.** Indicate any involvement of **incidental people**. (For example, in certain professional studies consideration may need to be given to how such people will be informed about the research and how consent may be obtained for their incidental involvement. An oral statement to the group incidental to the observation immediately prior to the commencement of the observation may be sufficient.)

There will not be involvement by any incidental people in undertaking the research project.

- D10.** Indicate the expected **time commitment** by participants, and proposed location, if being interviewed or required to complete a survey (This information should be included in the Letter of Introduction to participants.)

During my field research, I will be living in the community. I will also hold focus group discussions initially for about 1-2 hours in these selected areas. This will be an opportunity to share information and to find out some of the key areas of concern. I will also be able to gather in-depth data during the three (3) months. I will aim for in-depth household interviews for about 25-30 minutes. Then, I will invite some to have one to one conversations with me about specific issues which they do not wish to discuss in groups.

E. RESEARCH CONDUCTED OVERSEAS

E1. Is the research being conducted **outside Australia**?

Yes	X
No	

If 'YES', go to item E2. If 'NO' go to section F.

E2. In which country?

Bangladesh

E3. In that country are there **ethics approval processes** that are relevant to the research?

Yes	
No	X

If 'NO' go to item E4.

Are the processes **mandatory**?

Yes	
No	X

Give a brief explanation of how the **ethics approval process functions**, the values and principles on which they rely and whether they require reporting of approval of SBREC:

--

E4. If the researcher is a student please explain how their academic supervision will be maintained while they are in the field, with particular reference to the wellbeing of research participants.

There will be regular contact with the principle supervisor and assistance of local experts on Indigenous issues, teachers and human rights advocates will be sought to enhance the research project.

E5. Will **co-researchers** be recruited in the country in which the research is being conducted?

Yes	X
No	

If 'YES' continue with item E5. If 'NO' go to section F.

How will their **expertise** and capacity to conduct the part research in which they are involved be determined?

The research assistants will be recruited for a shorter period (1-2 weeks) as volunteers to get introduce and rapport building with the targeted communities from the above-mentioned two communities not to be paid as traditional research participants . Preferably, they will be university students who are studying developing studies, sociology, social work and other discipline of social science at post graduates level and who are also voluntarily willing to work in the grass roots community level for a certain period of the research project.

F. SPECIFIC ETHICAL MATTERS

F1. Outline the **value and benefits** of the project to the participants, the discipline, the community, etc.

To make a case for extending development based on human rights, women's rights and children's rights because in Bangladesh the very poor and marginalized people are not adequately protected by the citizenship rights. It

will also critically analyse the power, politics and attitudes towards women experienced by the most marginalized communities in Bangladesh.

- F2.** Notwithstanding the value and benefits of the project, outline any **burdens and/or risks** of the project to the participants and/or other people.

Not applicable

- F3.** If any issues are raised in item F2, detail how the researcher will respond to such risks. If deemed necessary, researchers should be prepared to offer advice and information about appropriate professional counselling that is available and/or to encourage participants to report negative experiences to the appropriate authorities.

Not applicable

- F4.** Will the true purpose of the research be **concealed** from participants?

Yes	
No	X

If YES, outline the rationale for, and provide details of, the concealment.

- F5.** Describe any **feedback or debriefing** to be provided to participants that may be relevant to the research, including how participants will be informed of any deliberate deception.

The participants will be debriefed on their perceptions to validate their responses.

- F6.** If participants are required to complete a **questionnaire**, what are the arrangements for ensuring secure and confidential return of the questionnaire to the researcher (sealable, addressed envelope; personal collection by the researcher; other)? How will participants be informed of the arrangement (e.g. verbal instruction; written instruction in the participant documentation; or at the end of the questionnaire; other)?

The researcher will carry out the interviews and documentation.

F7. Is it the intention of the researcher to **reimburse** participants?

Yes	
No	X

If YES, how much? Please provide justification for the amount of the reimbursement.

--

F8. Indicate any relevant **data transcription** issues.

Interviews and Focus Group Discussions will be audiotape recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participants.
--

F9. Indicate any issues of **participant control of data use** in the immediate reporting and in future use of the data, e.g. will participants have the opportunity to view transcripts of their interview and/or the final report for comment/amendment? Explain the method to be used in the documentation for participants.

At this initial stage, the researcher does not intend to give any options to the informants/respondents to check or justify the transcripts of their responses.

F10. DATA STORAGE AND RETENTION

Note that the data should be retained in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and [Flinders University policy](#).

Please check all boxes which apply to this research project.

(a) On completion of the project, data will be stored

In writing	X	On computer disk	X
------------	----------	------------------	----------

On audio tape/CD	X	On video tape/DVD	
Other (please indicate):			

(b) Data will be stored in a de-identified form

Yes	X
No	

If no, explain how any relevant anonymity and confidentiality standards will be met for data storage.

--

(c) Data will be stored securely at Flinders University/Southern Adelaide Health Service for:

X	At least <u>five years</u> from the date of publication
	At least <u>seven years</u> if the research involves a South Australian Government Department

If NO, explain what the data storage arrangements will be and why the data will not be stored at Flinders University or Southern Adelaide Health Service.

--

G. OTHER MATTERS

G1. Indicate any other centres involved in the research and any **other Ethics Committee(s)** being approached for approval of this project (if applicable), including the approval status of each. The SBREC must receive details of any amendments requested by other Ethics Committees along with copies of final approval notices.

Not Applicable

G2. Has funding been received/applied for?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If so, how much?

\$

Name of funding body

--

Please declare any affiliation or financial interest.

--

G3. Attachment Checklist

Copies of the following supporting materials applicable to this research project must be attached to this application. Some sample templates of some documents are available from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>.

Attached Not Applicable

Letter of Introduction (<i>from the principal researcher or, in the case of student projects, the supervisor, on University letterhead</i>)		X	
Information Sheets for participants		X	
Consent Form(s) for Participation in Research by:	- Interview	X	
	- Focus Group	X	
	- Experiment		
	- Other (please specify).....		
Consent Form for Children			
Consent Form for Observation of Professional Activity			
Questionnaire or survey instruments			
Interview questions, or list of topics to be discussed, as appropriate		X	
Advertisement for recruitment of participants			
Debriefing material		X	
Appendix: Privacy Legislation Matters			
Video/DVD to be viewed by participants			

G4. Research Involving or Impacting on Indigenous Australians

Has a copy of this application been forwarded to the Director, [Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research](#)?

Yes	X
No	

H. CERTIFICATION and SIGNATURES

The Researcher and/or Supervisor whose signature appears below certifies that they have read the *Ethical Guidelines for Social and Behavioural Research* available from the [SBREC website](#), and the guidelines of any other relevant authority referred to therein, and accept responsibility for the conduct of this research in respect of those guidelines and any other conditions specified by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee.

As a condition of subsequent approval of this protocol, I/we, whose signature(s) appear(s) below, undertake to:

- (i) Inform the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- (ii) report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol including:
 - serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
 - proposed changes in the protocol; and
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- (iii) provide progress reports annually, and/or a final report on completion of the study, outlining:
 - progress to date, or outcome in the case of completed research;
 - maintenance and security of data;
 - compliance with the approved protocol; and
 - Compliance with any conditions of approval.

A pro forma is available from the [SBREC website](#).

Principal Researcher's Signature: Lawrence Besra	Date : 12 February 2011
Supervisor's Signature: Dr. Janet McIntyre (for <u>all</u> student projects)	Date 12 February : 2011

Please forward an electronic copy to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au and one copy of the completed, signed application and attachments, printed on one side of the page only and fastened with clips, not staples to the Executive Officer, Mrs Andrea Jacobs, Research Services Office, Union Building (entry at South Eastern Corner), (GPO Box 2100, Adelaide SA 5001) to arrive by the close date indicated on the current Meeting Schedule available from the [SBREC website](#). **PLEASE NOTE** that applications received after the deadline will be held over to the following meeting unless prior arrangement has been made with the Executive Officer.

LOW RISK CHECKLIST

Please complete the checklist below to determine whether your research project is low risk research. Whether the research is determined to be low risk, or not, will have no effect on the length of time taken to review the application.

Student researchers must review the completed checklist with their supervisors.

This checklist is to assist in processing applications. Identifying a project as “low risk” will not make any difference to the time taken to process the application.

Definition – “Research is ‘low risk’ where the only foreseeable risk is one of discomfort. Where the risk, even if unlikely, is more serious than discomfort the research is not low risk” (item 2.1.6 under Section 2: Themes in Research Ethics: Risk and Benefit, Consent in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*).

(a) External Requirements

Is the research being funded by an agency outside the University which requires Human Research Ethics Committee approval?

Yes	
No	

(b) Risk Assessment

1. This section covers information about the focus of your research, i.e. whether it involves issues which are sensitive, personal, have potential to cause embarrassment or distress, or potential to reveal illegal activity. Please indicate whether any of the following topics will be covered in part or in whole?

No	Yes	
• research about parenting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• research investigating sensitive personal issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• research investigating sensitive cultural issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• explorations of grief, death or serious/traumatic loss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• depression, mood states, anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• gambling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• eating disorders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• illicit drug taking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• substance abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• self-report of criminal behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• any other psychological disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• suicide	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• gender identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- race or ethnic identity
- any disease or health problem
- fertility
- termination of pregnancy
- Other, please specify.....

	X
	X
	X
	X
	X

2. This section deals with research methods involving deception, potential for risk or harm. Are any of the following procedures to be employed?

No Yes

- use of data, obtained from Commonwealth or State Government
Department/Agency, from which individuals can be identified
- use of data, obtained from any other source,
from which individuals can be identified
- deception of participants
- concealing the purposes of the research
- covert observation
- audio or visual recording without consent
- recruitment via a third party or agency
- withholding from one group specific treatments or methods of learning,
from which they may “benefit” (e.g. in medicine or teaching)
- any psychological interventions or treatments
- administration of physical stimulation
- infliction of pain
- administration of ionising radiation
- collecting body fluid

	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X
	X

- use of medical records from which participants can be identified

3. Other Risks

Are there any risks to the researcher, (e.g. research undertaken in unsafe environments or trouble spots)? If so, please explain.

Not Applicable

(c) Participant Vulnerability Assessment

Do any of the participants fall within the following targeted categories?

	No	Yes
• suffering a psychological disorder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• suffering a physical vulnerability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• people highly dependent on medical care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• minors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• people whose ability to give consent is impaired	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• resident of a custodial institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• unable to give free informed consent because of difficulties in understanding information statement (e.g. language difficulties)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• members of a socially identifiable group with special cultural or religious needs or political vulnerabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• those in dependent relationship with the researchers (e.g. lecturer/student, doctor/patient, teacher/pupil, professional/client, employer/employee, manager/subordinate)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• participants able to be identified in any final report when specific consent for this has not been given	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

- Indigenous Australians

(d) Research in Overseas Settings Assessment

Does the research involve any of the following?

No

Yes

- research being undertaken in a politically unstable area
- research involving sensitive cultural issues
- research in countries where criticism of government and institutions might put participants and/or researchers at risk

(e) Opportunity to Comment on ‘Yes’ Response

If you have answered ‘YES’ to an item in the checklist but you believe that because of the particular nature of the project and the participants your project may still be considered ‘low risk’ please provide details below.

The above checklist is based on that developed by the University of Melbourne amended for use by Flinders University.

RESEARCHERS ADDITIONAL TO THOSE LISTED AT ITEM B.

Researcher 7/Supervisor

Title:		First Name:			Family Name:		
Status:		Staff:	Student:	Associate:			
Copies of correspondence required					Yes	No	
School/Department/Organisation:							
Postal Address:							
Phone:		Fax:		Email:			

Researcher 8/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:	Family Name:			
Status:	Staff:		Student:	Associate:	
Copies of correspondence required				Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:					
Postal Address:					
Phone:		Fax:		Email:	

Researcher 9/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:	Family Name:			
Status:	Staff:		Student:	Associate:	
Copies of correspondence required				Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:					
Postal Address:					
Phone:		Fax:		Email:	

Researcher 10/Supervisor

Title:	First Name:	Family Name:			
Status:	Staff:		Student:	Associate:	
Copies of correspondence required				Yes	No
School/Department/Organisation:					
Postal Address:					
Phone:		Fax:		Email:	

Appendix 2: Ethics Committee Final Approval Letter from Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee to Conduct Research Project Involving Human Subjects

Flinders University and Southern Area Health Service

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Research Services Office, Union Building, Flinders University
GPO Box 2100, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Phone: (08) 8201 3116
Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Principal Researcher:	<input type="text" value="Mr Lawrence Besra"/>				
Email:	<input type="text" value="besr0001@flinders.edu.au"/>				
Address:	<input type="text" value="42 King Street, Mile End SA 5031"/>				
Project Title:	<input type="text" value="A critical review of democracy and governance challenges in Bangladesh with special reference to a human rights-based approach for the development of marginalised communities including indigenous people, women and children"/>				
Project No.:	<input type="text" value="5104"/>	Final Approval Date:	<input type="text" value="11 March 2011"/>	Approval Expiry Date:	<input type="text" value="31 December 2013"/>

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

If you have any outstanding permission letters (item D8), that may have been previously requested, please ensure that they are forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible. Additionally, for projects where approval has also been sought from another Human Research Ethics Committee (item G1), please be reminded that a copy of the ethics approval notice will need to be sent to the Committee on receipt.

In accordance with the undertaking you provided in your application for ethics approval for the project, please inform the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You are also required to report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol. Such matters include:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol (modifications);
- any changes to the research team; and
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

To modify/amend a previously approved project please either mail or email a completed copy of the Modification Request Form to the Executive Officer, which is available for download from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-and-behavioural-research-ethics-committee/notification-of-committee-decision.cfm>. Please ensure that any new or amended participant documents are attached to the modification request.

In order to comply with monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress and/or final report must be submitted. A copy of the pro forma is available from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>.

Your first report is due on **11 March 2012** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.* If an extension of time is required, please email a request for an extension of time, to a date you specify, to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au before the expiry date.



Andrea Mather (formerly Jacobs)
Executive Officer
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
15 March 2011

c.c. A/Prof Janet McIntyre-Mills, janet.mcintyre@flinders.edu.au
Dr Noore Alam Siddiquee, noore.siddiquee@flinders.edu.au

Appendix 3: Introductory Letter from Supervisor- Flinders University



Dr, Janet McIntyre
Associate Professor
School of Political and International
Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences

Social Sciences South
Sturt Road
Bedford Park SA
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: +61 8 8201 2075
Fax: +61 8 82015111
Janet.mcintyre@flinders.edu.au

15 February, 2011

To whom it may concern

I am writing to you to request your co-operation in the doctoral research of Lawrence Besra who is based in the School of Social and Policy Studies at Flinders University.

I am the Higher Degrees Co-ordinator and Lawrence Besra's principal supervisor.

We would be most grateful if you would spend about an hour of your valuable time answering a few questions on democracy and governance challenges in Bangladesh with special reference to your life chances in your local community.

We have enclosed a copy of the interview framework including the questions so that you can decide whether you would like to participate. Your comments and ideas will be confidential and the research will comply with the Human Ethics Committee's requirements. This means that if at any stage you would like to withdraw from the study, we will honour your decision. The members of the community who will be asked to assist Lawrence by introducing him to members of the community and mentoring him in local customs will not be involved in any of the confidential interviews. A trained female interviewer will provide some limited assistance to ensure that sensitive topics can be shared. She will be carefully compliant with the rules of the ethics committee. Lawrence will be responsible for all the data collected and will carefully ensure that his field notes and materials are located in a locked room when he is not undertaking research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at the email or phone address below if you have any further questions about a) how you were invited to participate in the research or b) how the information will make a practical and research contribution. I will be happy to assist you.

Thankyou for your participation, we appreciate it greatly and we will ensure that members of your community will be invited to comment on the research findings which will be presented to the community prior to finalising the research.

Yours faithfully

Dr Janet McIntyre
Associate Professor School of Politics and International Studies
Higher Degrees Co-ordinator
janet.mcintyre@flinders.edu.au

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 5104). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

inspiring
achievement

Appendix 4: Letter of Permission to Conduct Research under the Caritas Dinajpur working areas in Bangladesh

**Caritas Bangladesh
Dinajpur Region**

A National Organisation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference
of Bangladesh for Social Welfare and Human Development.



**কারিতাস বাংলাদেশ
দিনাজপুর অঞ্চল**

সমাজ কল্যাণ ও মানব উন্নয়নের জন্য বাংলাদেশের
ক্যাথলিক বিশপ সন্মেলনীর একটি জাতীয় প্রতিষ্ঠান।

Regional Office : West Shibrampur, Post Box No.8, Dinajpur - 5200, Bangladesh

Ref. CBD/298(Gen)2011/178

Date: 22/02/2011

To
Mr. Lawrence Besra
PhD Researcher
Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia.
E-mail: lawrencebesra@gmail.com

CC: ed@caritasbd.org, ad@caritasbd.org

Sub: Permission for Conducting Research Work

Dear Lawrence,
Cordial greetings from Caritas Bangladesh, Dinajpur Region !

We received an application dated February 14, 2011 from you seeking permission to conduct a research study in our Region for your PhD course. We are happy to know that you have selected the location for your field study in our Region and your research proposal has been approved by the authority. We have no objection in doing the research work in these areas from our part.

Hope your research work will bring a fruitful awareness in the areas as well.

With best wishes,

Thanking you,

Jogen Julian Besra
Regional Director
Caritas Dinajpur Region
E-mail: rddinajpur10@yahoo.com

Regd. under Societies Act XXI of 1860

No. 3760-B-1972-73, Dated 13-07-1972

II

Regd. with NGO Affairs Bureau under the Foreign Donation

(Voluntary Activities) Regulation Ordinance, 1978

No. 009, Dated 22-4-1981

Regd. with Micro Credit Regulatory Authority

No. 00032-00286-00184

Dated 16-03-2008

Office : (0531) 65673

E-mail : cbdinaaj@btcl.net.bd

caritas.dinajpur@gmail.com

Caritas Bangladesh : National Office, 2 Outer Circular Road, Shantibagh, Dhaka-1217, Bangladesh, GPO Box-994, Dhaka-1000

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(For Interview)

I am being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction for the research project on a critical review of democracy and governance challenges in Bangladesh with special reference to a human rights based approach for the development of marginalised communities including Indigenous people, women and their children.

- i. I have read the information provided
- ii. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction
- iii. I agree to my information and participation being recorded on audio recording
- iv. I understand that:
 - There is no direct benefit for me to take part in this research
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions
 - I agree/do not agree* to my name to be used in the resulting thesis, thesis, and any other publication based on the research project
 - I may ask that the recording/observation be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage

Participant's Signature: Date:

I certify that I have explained the study to the participant and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation

Researcher's Name: Lawrence Besra

Researcher's Signature:Date:

Appendix 6: Consent form Participation in Research- in Bengali

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণকারীদের জন্য সম্মতি ফর্ম

(সাক্ষাৎকার ও ফোকাস গ্রুপ ডিস্কাসনের জন্য)

আমি ১৮ বছরের উর্ধ্ব হওয়ায় পরিচিতি পত্রের অনুরোধ মোতাবেক নিম্ন লিখিত শিরোনাম শীর্ষক গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য সম্মতি প্রকাশ করছি: বাংলাদেশের শাসন ব্যবস্থা ও গনতন্ত্রের চ্যালেঞ্জ সমূহ পর্যবেক্ষণ করে প্রামাণিক জনগোষ্ঠী অর্থাৎ আদিবাসী নারী ও শিশুদের উন্নয়নের জন্য মানবাধিকার ভিত্তিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি।

১. গবেষণার জন্য প্রদত্ত তথ্য আমি ভালোভাবে পড়েছি এবং বুঝতে পেরেছি
২. গবেষণার বিস্তারিত পদ্ধতি এবং প্রক্রিয়ায় যে কোন ঝুঁকি আমার কাছে পরিষ্কার ভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করা হয়েছে
৩. আমি আমার তথ্য গুলোকে রেকর্ডিং ও লিপিবদ্ধ করার জন্য সম্মতি প্রকাশ করছি
৪. আমি বুঝতে পারছি যে;
 - এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য আমার কোন প্রত্যক্ষ লাভ নেই
 - আমি এই গবেষণায় যে কোন সময় নিজে থেকে প্রত্যাহার করতে পারি এবং যে কোন জটিল প্রশ্নের উত্তর নাও দিতে পারি
 - এই গবেষণা প্রকল্পের যে কোন প্রকাশনায় আমার নাম ব্যবহারের জন্য আমি সম্মতি প্রকাশ করছি/ আমি সম্মত নই
 - আমি এই গবেষণার যে কোন পর্যায়ে আমার তথ্যের রেকর্ডিং/পর্যবেক্ষণ বন্ধ করে দিতে পারি এবং আমি গবেষণার যে কোন পর্যায়ে কোন রকম ক্ষতি না করে নিজে থেকে প্রত্যাহার করে নিতে পারি

অংশগ্রহণকারীর স্বাক্ষর: -----

তারিখ: -----

আমি এখানে প্রত্যয়ন করছি যে, আমি এই গবেষণা প্রকল্পের যাবতীয় বিষয় অংশগ্রহণকারীর কাছে পরিষ্কার ভাবে ব্যাখ্যা করেছি এবং আমি মনে করি যে সে/তিনি ভালোভাবে বুঝতে পেরেছেন এবং স্বাধীনভাবে এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য সম্মতি প্রকাশ করেছেন।

গবেষকের নাম: লরেন্স বেসরা

গবেষকের স্বাক্ষর: -----

তারিখ: -----

Appendix 7: Participation Information Sheet- in English

Participant Information Sheet

I am Lawrence Besra a PhD student under school of Social and Policy Studies at Flinders University of Australia would like to request your co-operation in my research topic on: A critical review of democracy and governance challenges in Bangladesh with special reference to a human rights-based approach for the development of marginalised communities including Indigenous people, women and children.

I would be most grateful if you would spend about an hour of your valuable time answering a few questions on the above mentioned topic.

I have enclosed a copy of the interview framework including the questions so that you can decide whether you would like to participate. Your comments and ideas will be confidential and the research will comply with the Human Ethics Committee's requirements. This means that if at any stage you would like to withdraw from the study, I will honour your decision.

Thank you for your assistance, we appreciate it greatly and I will ensure your confidentiality in conducting the research.

Yours faithfully,

Lawrence Besra

E-mail: besr0001@flinders.edu.au

School of Social and Policy Studies

Flinders University, Australia.

Appendix 8: Participation Information Sheet- in Bengali

গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণকারীদের জন্য তথ্য

আমি লরেন্স বেসরা অস্ট্রেলিয়ার ফ্লিন্ডার্স বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সামাজিক ও নীতি অধ্যয়ন বিভাগের এক জন পিএইচডি ছাত্র । আমার গবেষণার শিরোনাম হচ্ছে: বাংলাদেশের শাসন ব্যবস্থা ও গনতন্ত্রের চ্যালেঞ্জ সমূহ পর্যবেক্ষণ করে প্রাঙ্গিক জনগোষ্ঠী অর্থাৎ আদিবাসী নারী ও শিশুদের উন্নয়নের জন্য মানবাধিকার ভিত্তিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি । আমি আপনাকে গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করছি ।

আপনি যদি আমার এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করে কিছু প্রশ্নের উত্তর দেয়ার জন্য এক ঘণ্টা সময় দেন তাহলে আমি কৃতজ্ঞ থাকব ।

গবেষণার সাক্ষাৎকারের জন্য প্রশ্নাবলী আপনার অবগতির জন্য এখানে উপস্থাপন করা হল । আপনি এই গবেষণায় যে কোন সময় নিজে থেকে প্রত্যাহার করতে পারেন এবং যে কোন জটিল প্রশ্নের উত্তর নাও দিতে পারেন । আপনার নাম, প্রশ্নের উত্তর ও যে কোন মতামত সম্পূর্ণ রূপে গোপন থাকবে ।

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য আপনাকে ধন্যবাদ । আমি গবেষণার জন্য প্রদত্ত তথ্য সম্পূর্ণ রূপে গোপন রাখার অঙ্গীকার করছি ।

গবেষকের নাম: লরেন্স বেসরা

স্বাক্ষর: -----

তারিখ: -----

Interview Schedule

Part A: General Information

Case Number:		Address	
Age		Upazilla	
Gender		District	
Ethnicity		Country: Bangladesh	

Q 1: Please provide information about your household members, education and their occupations

Sl. No.	Name ⁸³	Age	Gender		Marital Status ⁸⁴	Education (highest class attended)	Occupation	
			M	F			Primary ⁸⁵	secondary ⁸⁶

⁸³ The name will start with the head of the household (either male or female) then proceeds to the youngest member

⁸⁴ In the box it could be written according to the Household diagrams as mentioned below

⁸⁵ Main Occupation that one person does for living

⁸⁶ Apart from main occupation, something what a person does

Household Diagram and Notes

Male	♂	Divorced	=
Female	♀	Living together	~
Unmarried	±	Dead	∅
Married	≠		

Part B: Land Rights and Ownership

Q 2: How much land do you own? (In acres)⁸⁷

Q 3: Is your homesteads on your own land?

Criteria for Homesteads	Comments ⁸⁸
Own your own land	
Other people's land	
On <i>Khas</i> ⁸⁹ land	
Others	

Q 4: How did you own the land?

Process of land Ownership	Comments
Inherited form your parents	
By purchase	
Rules on <i>Khas</i> Land	
Others	

Q 5: Did you sell any amount of land in the last one year? If you have done it, so how much and what are the causes behind it?

Amount of Land:(In acres)

⁸⁷ If some one does not own any lands so, there has to be written no lands or land less

⁸⁸ In this column, there should be ticked or written yes or no (any description could be written)

⁸⁹ Government's land

Reasons for land selling	Comments
Poverty and economic hardships	
Education for children	
Medical treatment for family members	
Alcoholism /gambling	
Debt Repayment	
Under pressure or threat by the influential people	
Others	

Systemic Map of Connection

Q 6: Did you lose any amount of land in the last one year? If yes, so what are the causes for land loosing?

Amount of Land:(In acres)

Reasons for land loss	Comments
Land grabbing by local influential people	
Through Forged documents	
Fear of threat	
Occupied by settlers	
Forestation	
Forcible eviction from homesteads	
Land grabbed by own community members	
Others	

Systemic Map of Connection

Q 7: Did you get any kinds of legal support or cooperation from local government institutions in terms of land recovery? (Please provide details if yes or not)

Land Recovery supporting institutions	Comments
Union Parishad	
Upazilla/TNO Office ⁹⁰	
District Council	
Court	
NGOs	
Indigenous community based organizations	
Others	

PART C: Rights to Education

Q 8: How many of your children go to school?

Male: Female:

Q 9: Do your children receive free school text books and school stipends? If yes please mention it and If not what are the reasons for not receiving it?

- i.
- ii.
- iii.

Q 10: What are the reasons and barriers for not reaching to schools and drop out rates for Indigenous children?

Criteria for not attending schools and drop out	Comments
Distance of schools from households	
Financial incapacity	

⁹⁰ Thana Nirbahi Officer's Office

Medium of education; language barriers	
Helping parents in household chores	
Lack of security for girls	
Discrimination in schools	
Unavailability of stipend for boys and girls	
Others	

PART D: Livelihood

Q 11: What are the sources of income for your household livelihood?

i.

ii.

Q 12: Do you have any savings scheme for the future need of your family in the last one year?

Criteria of Savings	Amount in TK./Comments
Savings with Banks	
Savings with NGOs	
Savings with Non-NGOs (Samiti ⁹¹ or cooperatives)	
Savings through land mortgaging	
Others	

Q 13: From where do you borrow money in the time of need for your family and how much interest do you have to pay for it?

Nature of Borrowings	Amount in TK.	Interest rate
Borrow from Banks		
Borrow from NGOs		
Borrow from Non-NGOs (Samiti or		

⁹¹ A co-operative organization in the community that facilitates lending money to its members

cooperatives)		
Borrow from Money lenders		
Others		

PART E: Right to Health Care Facilities

Q 14: What are the sources of drinking water?

Sources of drinking water	Comments
Arsenic free / Hand tube well	
Hand tube well untested for Arsenic	
Arsenic contaminated	
Rain water/canals/ rivers/ponds	
After boiling water from rivers/ponds	
Unboiled water from rivers/ponds	
Others	

Q 15: What kind of sanitation facilities do you have?

Q 16: What are the available healths Care Services during sickness?

Health Care Services	Comments
Local village doctors	
Union health Complex	
Upazilla/District Hospitals	
Private Hospitals/NGOs services	
Traditional/herbal medicines	
No medicines at all	

Others	
--------	--

Q 17: Do you receive proper health care services or immunization services from the local government institutions? If yes please mention it and if not mentions the reasons behind it?

Criteria for Lack of Health Care Services	Comments
Lack of awareness	
Expensive(cannot afford it)	
Discrimination	
Absence of doctors and nurses	
No medicines at all	
Others	

Q 18: What are the natures of food intake in the family even during the critical period of the year? (Food intake habits, calorie, & household level food consumption rate)

Part F: Women's Empowerment

Q 19: Do indigenous women have right to inherit property or ownership of land?

Q 20: Do indigenous women receive equal wages as men?

Q 21: Do indigenous women take part in the traditional social power structure such as *Manjhi Parishad*⁹² or *Dighori*?⁹³

Q 22: Do women take part in the decision making in the family for girl's education, marriage etc?

⁹² A traditional social structure and administrative system of the Santal community

⁹³ A traditional social structure and administrative system of the Oraons community

Q 23: Are indigenous women are allowed to get involved in any income generating activities or in any organizations/NGOs or Samiti's?

Q 24: Are the indigenous women are the victims of violence? What sort of discrimination and violence they face in the daily life? (Domestic violence, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, trafficking, work place harassment, acid throwing and other forms of violence)

Q 25: Do the indigenous women have access to social recreational activities such as going to relatives' house, local markets, going to cinemas, and attending function at NGOs or Samiti's?

Q 26: Do the indigenous women take decisions independently in family planning methods or medical treatment in time of need during sickness or at births?

Q 27: Are the indigenous women aware about girls free education and stipends programs, basic health care and immunization services from government?

Part G: Citizenship Rights & Social Services

Q 28: Do the indigenous people get social security services from the government? (VGF, VGD, Relief during disasters, crop seed from local agriculture officer, etc.)

Q 29: Are the indigenous people entitled to citizenship rights such as right to vote, right to get allocation Khas land, right to employment and education quota and right to get services from local law-enforcing agencies (Police, BDR, Ansar VDP and Army)?

Q 30: Are there any organizations/NGOs working on policy advocacy or promoting indigenous peoples rights?

Q 31: Do the indigenous people enjoy cultural and religious freedom in terms of celebrating cultural and religious festivals?

Q 32: Do the indigenous people have any contact with indigenous community based organizations? If yes how do they maintain contact with those organizations? If not what are the reasons behind for not contacting grass roots indigenous people?

Q 33: As a right holder do you think that government should take care of your rights; if government does not do so what will be your role?

Q 34: What are the existing problems that you face in your daily life to claim and entitle your rights?

Q 35: What are the steps required from the community level to address the rights and entitlement of rights to the indigenous community?

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule – in Bengali

Appendix- A

সাক্ষাৎকারের জন্য প্রশ্নাবলী

প্রথম অংশ : সাধারণ তথ্য

কেইস নাম্বার:		ঠিকানা	
বয়স		উপজেলা	
জেন্ডার		জেলা	
নৃতাত্ত্বিক পরিচয়		দেশ: বাংলাদেশ	

প্রশ্ন ১: আপনার পরিবারের সদস্যদের নাম, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও পেশা সম্পর্কে তথ্য দিন।

ক্রমিক নং	নাম ^১	বয়স	জেন্ডার		বৈবাহিক ^২ অবস্থা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	পেশা	
			পু:	ম			প্রধান ^৩	দ্বিতীয় ^৪

^১পরিবারের প্রধানের (মহিলা/পুরুষ) নাম দিয়ে শুরু করে সবচেয়ে কনিষ্ঠ সদস্যের নাম পর্যন্ত

^২পরিবারের ডায়গ্রাম অনুসারে পূরণ করতে হবে

^৩প্রধান পেশা যার উপর একজন জীবিকা নির্বাহ করে থাকে

^৪দ্বিতীয় পেশা

প্রশ্ন ২: আপনার জমির পরিমাণ কত? ----- (একরে)^৫

প্রশ্ন ৩: আপনার বসত বাড়ি কি আপনার নিজস্ব জমির উপর?

বসতবাড়ির বিবরণ	মন্তব্য ^৬
নিজস্ব জমির উপর	
অন্যের জমির উপর	
খাস ^৭ /সরকারী জমির উপর	
অন্যান্য	

প্রশ্ন ৪: আপনি কি ভাবে জমির অংশীদার হয়েছেন ?

অংশীদারিত্বের প্রক্রিয়া	মন্তব্য
উত্তরাধিকার সূত্রে	
ক্রয় করার মাধ্যমে	
খাস জমি বন্দোবস্তের মাধ্যমে	
অন্যান্য	

প্রশ্ন ৫: গত এক বছরে আপনি কি কোন জমি বিক্রি করেছেন? যদি বিক্রি করে থাকেন তবে তার পরিমাণ কত এবং জমি বিক্রি করার পিছনে কারণ কি?

বিক্রিত জমির পরিমাণ কত? ----- (একরে)

^৫ কারও যদি কোন জমি না থাকে তবে সেখানে লিখতে হবে কোন জমি নাই বা জমিহীন

^৬ মন্তব্যের কলামে লিখতে হবে হ্যাঁ অথবা না (যে কোন মন্তব্যও লেখা যেতে পারে)

^৭ সরকারী জমি

জমি বিক্রির কারণ	মন্তব্য
দারিদ্রতা ও অর্থনৈতিক অস্থিচ্ছলতা	
ছেলেমেয়েদের শিক্ষার ব্যয়ভার বহন	
পরিবারের সদস্যদের চিকিৎসা	
মদ্যপান/ জুয়াখেলা	
ঋণ শোধ	
প্রভাবশালীদের চাপের মুখে পড়ে	
অন্যান্য	

যোগসূত্রের ম্যাপ (সিস্টেমেটিক)

প্রশ্ন ৬: গত একবছরে আপনি কি কোন জমি হারিয়েছেন? যদি হারিয়ে থাকেন তবে জমি হারানোর কারণগুলো কি কি?

জমি হারানোর পরিমাণ ----- (একরে)

জমি হারানোর কারণ	মন্তব্য
প্রভাবশালীদের দ্বারা জমি অধিগ্রহণ/ দখল	
জাল দলিলের মাধ্যমে	
ভয়/ হুমকির মুখে পড়ে	
সেটেলারদের দ্বারা দখল	
সামাজিক বনায়ন	
বসতভিটা থেকে জোরপূর্বক উচ্ছেদ	

নিজস্ব কমিউনিটির লোকদের দ্বারা দখল	
অন্যান্য	

যোগসূত্রের ম্যাপ (সিস্টেমিক)

প্রশ্ন ৭: জমি উদ্ধারের জন্য আপনি কি স্থানীয় সরকার / প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে কোন প্রকার আইনী সহায়তা পেয়েছেন? (যদি পেয়ে থাকেন কিংবা না পেয়ে থাকেন তবে তার বিবরণ দিন।

সহায়তাকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে জমি উদ্ধার	মন্তব্য
ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ	
উপজেলা/ টিএনও ^৪ অফিস	
জেলা পরিষদ	
কোর্ট	
এনজিও	
আদিবাসী কমিউনিটি ভিত্তিক প্রতিষ্ঠান	
অন্যান্য	

^৪ থানা নির্বাহী অফিসার

তৃতীয় অংশ: শিক্ষার অধিকার

প্রশ্ন ৮: আপনার কতজন ছেলেমেয়ে স্কুলে যায়?

ছেলে : -----

মেয়ে: -----

প্রশ্ন ৯: আপনার ছেলেমেয়েরা কি বিনামূল্যে পাঠ্যপুস্ক ও বৃত্তি পেয়ে থাকে? যদি পেয়ে থাকে তবে তার বিবরণ দিন কিংবা না পেয়ে থাকলে তার কারণগুলো উল্লেখ করুন?

১.

২.

৩.

প্রশ্ন ১০: আদিবাসী শিশুদের স্কুলে না যাওয়া ও স্কুল থেকে ঝরে পড়ার পিছনে কারণ ও বাঁধা গুলো কি কি ?

স্কুলে না যাওয়া ও ঝরে পড়ার পিছনের কারণগুলো	মন্তব্য
বাড়ি থেকে স্কুলের দূরত্ব	
আর্থিক অস্বচ্ছলতা/ অপারগতা	
শিক্ষার মাধ্যম/ ভাষার ব্যবধান	
পিতামাতাকে সাহায্য করা	
মেয়েদের নিরাপত্তার অভাব	
স্কুলে বৈষম্য	
ছেলেমেয়েদের বৃত্তি না পাওয়া	
অন্যান্য	

চতুর্থ অংশ: জীবন - জীবিকা

প্রশ্ন ১১: আপনার পরিবারের জীবন-জীবিকার জন্য আয়ের উৎস কি কি?

- ১.
- ২.
- ৩.
- ৪.

প্রশ্ন ১২: আপনার পরিবারের সদস্যদের ভবিষ্যৎ চাহিদার জন্য গত একবছরে আপনার কি কোন সঞ্চয়ী ব্যবস্থাপত্র আছে?

সঞ্চয়ীব্যবস্থাপত্রের বিবরণ	মূল্য
ব্যাংকে সঞ্চয়	
এনজিও তে সঞ্চয়	
নন-এনজিওতে সঞ্চয় (সমিতি বা কো-অপারেটিভ ^৯)	
জমি বন্ধকীর মাধ্যমে সঞ্চয়	
অন্যান্য	

প্রশ্ন ১৩: আপনার পরিবারের অভাবের সময় আপনি কোথায় থেকে টাকা সংগ্রহ/ধার করেন এবং এর জন্য আপনি কি পরিমাণ সুদ প্রদান করেন?

টাকা সংগ্রহের উৎস সমূহ	টাকার পরিমাণ	সুদের হার
ব্যাংক থেকে		
এনজিও থেকে		
নন-এনজিও(সমিতি/ কো-অপারেটিভ থেকে)		
অন্যান্য		

^৯ কমিউনিটি ভিত্তিক একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান যা তার সদস্যদেরকে টাকা ধার দিয়ে থাকে

পঞ্চম অংশ: স্বাস্থ্যসেবার অধিকার

প্রশ্ন ১৪: আপনার পরিবারের জন্য পানির উৎসগুলো কি কি?

পানির উৎস	মন্তব্য
আর্সেনিক মুক্ত হ্যান্ড টিউবওয়েল	
আর্সেনিক পরীক্ষা করা হয়নি এমন হ্যান্ড টিউবওয়েল	
আর্সেনিকযুক্ত হ্যান্ড টিউবওয়েল	
বৃষ্টির পানি/ খাল/ পুকুরের পানি	
নদী/ পুকুর থেকে পানি না ফুটিয়ে	
অন্যান্য	

প্রশ্ন ১৫: আপনার পরিবারের জন্য পয়ঃপ্রণালীর ব্যবস্থা কি ধরনের?

প্রশ্ন ১৬ : অসুস্থতার সময় আপনি কি ধরনের স্বাস্থ্যসেবা গ্রহণ করে থাকেন?

স্বাস্থ্যসেবা সমূহ	মন্তব্য
	৭

স্থানীয় গ্রাম্য ডাক্তার	
ইউনিয়ন স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্স	
উপজেলা/ জেলা হাসপাতাল	
বেসরকারী হাসপাতাল/ এনজিও	
কোন প্রকার ঔষধগ্রহণ না করা	
ঐতিহ্যবাহী হার্বাল ঔষধি	
অন্যান্য	

প্রশ্ন ১৭ : আপনি কি স্থানীয় সরকার প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে উপযুক্ত স্বাস্থ্যসেবা ও টিকাসমূহ গ্রহণ করে থাকেন? যদি সেবা গ্রহণ করে থাকেন তবে তার বিবরণ দিন এবং যদি স্বাস্থ্যসেবা না পেয়ে থাকেন তবে তার কারণগুলো উল্লেখ করুন:

স্বাস্থ্যসেবা না পাওয়ার কারণ	মন্তব্য
সচেতনতার অভাব	
ব্যয়বহুল (ব্যয় বহন করতে না পারা)	
স্বাস্থ্যসেবায় বৈষম্য	
ডাক্তার ও নার্সের অভাব	
কোন প্রকার ঔষধ গ্রহণ না করা	
অন্যান্য	

প্রশ্ন ১৮: আপনার পরিবারের খাদ্যাভ্যাসের রকম কি? এমনি বহুরের অভাবের সময়ও? (খাদ্যগ্রহণের অভ্যাস, ক্যালোরি, পরিবারের খাদ্য গ্রহণের হার)

৬ষ্ঠ অংশ: নারীর ক্ষমতায়ন

প্রশ্ন ১৯: আদিবাসী নারীদের কি সম্পত্তির অধিকার/ ভূমির অধিকার আছে?

প্রশ্ন ২০: আদিবাসী নারীরা কি পুরুষদের মত সমান পারিশ্রমিক পেয়ে থাকে?

প্রশ্ন ২১: আদিবাসী নারীরা কি ঐতিহ্যবাহী সামাজিক কাঠামো যেমন: মাঞ্জিহি পরিষদ^{১০} বা দিঘরীতে^{১১} সক্রিয় ভাবে অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকে?

প্রশ্ন ২২: মেয়েদের শিক্ষা বা বিবাহের ক্ষেত্রে নারীরা কি সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ প্রক্রিয়ায় অংশগ্রহণ করে থাকে?

প্রশ্ন ২৩: আদিবাসী নারীদের কি উপার্জনমুখী কর্মকাণ্ডে বা যে কোন সংস্থা/প্রতিষ্ঠান ও এনজিওতে সম্পৃক্ত হওয়ার জন্য অনুমতি প্রদান করা হয়ে থাকে ?

প্রশ্ন ২৪: আদিবাসী নারীরা কি নির্যাতনের শিকার? তারা দৈন্দন্যদিন জীবনে কি ধরণের নির্যাতনের শিকার হয়? (পারিবারিক নির্যাতন, মৈথিক ভাবে নির্যাতন, সেক্সুয়াল এবিউজ, নারী পাচার, কর্ম ক্ষেত্রে হয়রানি, এসিড নিক্ষেপ ও অন্যান্য প্রকার নির্যাতন) ।

প্রশ্ন ২৫: আদিবাসী নারীদের কি সামাজিক বিনোদন মূলক কর্মকাণ্ড যেমন: আত্মীয়দের বাড়িতে বেড়াতে যাওয়া, বাজার করা, সিনেমা দেখা, এনজিও ও সমিতিতে অংশগ্রহণ করার সুযোগ আছে?

প্রশ্ন ২৬: আদিবাসী নারীদের কি পরিবার পরিকল্পনা, অসুস্থতা ও সশ্রম জন্ম দেওয়ার সময় স্বাস্থ্য সেবা গ্রহণ করার জন্য স্বাধীনভাবে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার সুযোগ আছে?

প্রশ্ন ২৭: আদিবাসী নারীরা সরকার থেকে মেয়েদের অবৈতনিক শিক্ষা, বৃত্তি, প্রাথমিক স্বাস্থ্য সেবা, ও টাকা (ভ্যান্ডিনেশন) ইত্যাদি সম্পর্কে কতটুকু সচেতন?

^{১০} সশ্রম আদিবাসীদের একটি সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠান

^{১১} উরাঁও আদিবাসীদের একটি সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠান

সপ্তম অংশ: নাগরিক অধিকার ও সামাজিক সেবা

প্রশ্ন ২৮: আদিবাসীরা কি সরকার থেকে সামাজিক নিরাপত্তামূলক সেবা সমূহ পেয়ে থাকে? (ভিজিএফ, ভিজিডি, দুর্যোগ সময়ে ত্রাণ, স্থানীয় কৃষি অফিস থেকে বীজ ইত্যাদি)

প্রশ্ন ২৯: আদিবাসীরা কি নাগরিক অধিকার ভোগ করে থাকে যেমন; ভোটের অধিকার, খাস জমি পাওয়ার অধিকার, চাকুরী ও কোটায় শিক্ষার অধিকার এবং আইন প্রয়োগকারী সংস্থা (পুলিশ, বিডিআর, আনসার, ভিডিপি ও আর্মি) থেকে সেবা পেয়ে থাকে?

প্রশ্ন ৩০: আদিবাসীদের অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য কি কোন সংস্থা বা এনজিও পলিসি এ্যাডভোকেসির উপর কাজ করছে?

প্রশ্ন ৩১: আদিবাসীরা কি সাংস্কৃতিক ও ধর্মীয় স্বাধীনতা যেমন; উৎসব উদ্‌যাপন ও ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ঠান পালনের কি স্বাধীনতা ভোগ করে থাকে?

প্রশ্ন ৩২: স্থানীয় আদিবাসীদের কি কোন ধরনের আদিবাসী কমিউনিটি ভিত্তিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের সাথে যোগাযোগ আছে? যদি থেকে থাকে তবে তারা কি ভাবে যোগাযোগ রক্ষা করে থাকে? যদি না থাকে, তবে তৃণমূল পর্যায়ে আদিবাসীদের সাথে যোগাযোগ না রাখার কারণ কি?

প্রশ্ন ৩৩: একজন অধিকার সেবী হিসাবে আপনি কি মনে করেন সরকারের অধিকার রক্ষা করার দায়িত্ব আছে? যদি সরকার কোন ধরনের পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ না করে তবে এ ক্ষেত্রে আপনার ভূমিকা কি?

প্রশ্ন ৩৪: আপনার অধিকার ভোগ ও অধিকার দাবী করার জন্য আপনি দৈন্দদিন জীবনে কি ধরনের সমস্যা মোকাবেলা করে থাকেন?

প্রশ্ন ৩৫: আদিবাসীদের অধিকার ভোগের জন্য আদিবাসী কমিউনিটি থেকে কি ধরনের পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

Appendix 11: Focus Group Discussion Schedule – in English

Appendix- B

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Name of the Indigenous Community:

Name of Village :	Union:	Upazilla:	District:
Moderator's Name:			
Date:	Time:	Venue:	

List of Participants:

Sl. No.	Age	Gender (M/F)	Marital Status	Education	Occupation
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

FGD Questionnaires/Issues

A. Land Rights	
1	What are the driving factors of land loss in the community?
2	Did you get any kinds of legal support or cooperation from local government institutions in terms of land recovery? If yes what sort of and if not explain why not?
3	What are the steps that should be taken to prevent land losing in the community?
4	Have your community's traditional practices of land inheritance and ownership undergone changes? If so what are the changes?
B. Rights to Education	
5	What are the reasons and barriers for not reaching to schools and dropout rates for Indigenous children?
6	How language barriers could be dissolved for promoting quality education for the Indigenous children?
C. Rights to health Care Services	
7	What are the available health care services exist or practiced during morbidity in the community?
8	Do the community people receive proper health care services or immunization services from the local government institutions? If yes mention it and if not mentions the reasons behind it?
D. Women Empowerment	
9	Does violence Occur? If so, Please explain.
10	What steps can be adopted to enhance women's participation in social development and ensure their entitlement of rights?

Appendix 12: Focus Group Discussion Schedule – in Bengali

Appendix- B

ফোকাস গ্রুপ ডিসকাসন (এফজিডি)

আদিবাসী কমিউনিটির নাম: -----

গ্রামের নাম:	ইউনিয়ন:	উপজেলা:	জেলা:
সঞ্চালকের নাম:			
তারিখ:	সময়:	স্থান:	

অংশগ্রহণকারীদের তালিকা:

ক্রমিক নং	বয়স	জেন্ডার	বৈবাহিক অবস্থা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	পেশা
১					
২					
৩					
৪					
৫					
৬					
৭					
৮					
৯					
১০					

এফজিডির প্রশ্নাবলী/বিষয়সমূহ

ভূমির অধিকার

১. আপনার কমিউনিটিতে জমি হারানোর পিছনে কারণগুলো কি কি?
২. জমি উদ্ধারের জন্য আপনি কি স্থানীয় সরকার / প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে কি ধরনের আইনী সহায়তা পেয়েছেন? (যদি পেয়ে থাকেন তবে তা কি ধরনের? আর যদি না পেয়ে থাকেন তবে তার কারণগুলো বর্ণনা করুন।
৩. আপনার কমিউনিটিতে জমি হারানো রোধের জন্য আপনি কি ধরনের গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে বা নেয়া উচিত বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
৪. আপনার কমিউনিটিতে কি জমির উত্তরাধিকার ও অংশীদারিত্বের ঐতিহ্যবাহী প্রথায় কোন পরিবর্তন আসছে বলে মনে করেন? যদি কোন পরিবর্তন এসে থাকে তবে সেগুলো কি রকম?

শিক্ষার অধিকার

৫. আদিবাসী শিশুদের স্কুলে না যাওয়া ও স্কুল থেকে বারে পড়ার পিছনে কি ধরনের বাঁধা ও সমস্যা আছে বলে আপনি মনে করেন ?
৬. আদিবাসী শিশুদেও মানসম্মত শিক্ষা প্রদানের জন্য ভাষাগত সমস্যার সমাধান কি কি ভাবে করা যেতে পারে?

স্বাস্থ্য সেবার অধিকার

৭. আপনার কমিউনিটিতে অসুস্থতার সময় কি ধরনের স্বাস্থ্য সেবার প্রচলন আছে বা কি ধরনের স্বাস্থ্য সেবা পেয়ে থাকেন?
৮. আপনার কমিউনিটির লোকজন কি স্থানীয় সরকার প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে উপযুক্ত স্বাস্থ্য সেবা ও টিকাসমূহ গ্রহণ করে থাকেন? যদি সেবা গ্রহণ করে থাকেন তবে তার বিবরণ দিন এবং যদি স্বাস্থ্য সেবা না পেয়ে থাকেন তবে তার কারণগুলো উল্লেখ করুন।

নারীর ক্ষমতায়ন

৯. আপনার কমিউনিটিতে কি নারী নির্যাতনের ঘটনা ঘটে থাকে? যদি ঘটে থাকে তবে তা কি ধরনের এবং তার বর্ণনা দিন।
১০. সামাজিক উন্নয়নে নারীর অংশগ্রহণের জন্য এবং তাদের অধিকার ভোগের জন্য কি ধরনের পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করা যেতে পারে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?