

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF FLOOD AFFECTED HOUSELESS POPULATION: A CASE STUDY OF PANCHANANDAPUR VILLAGE

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Abstract: *'Houseless Population' refers to those people who are not living in Census houses. Houseless is the situation of having no home or permanent abode. Those in this situation include people living on the streets, in hostel, squats, or in temporary accommodation with no permanent right of tenure. They constitute a significant proportion of a village population and are steadily growing in number creating a serious imbalance in the functions and morphology of a village. Due to the occurrence of flood in each and every year along the embankment of Pagla river caused a pitiable condition in the study area. On this backdrop, the present study endeavours to explore the socio-economic conditions of flood affected houseless population living in Panchanandapur village of Kaliachak- II block of Malda district. They lead a very poor life with in fact no possessions.*

Key words: Flood, Houseless Population, Pitiable condition, Socio-economic condition

Introduction

Floods generally refer to a situation of water accumulation in places that are normally submerged. Heavy rainfall is the main cause of inland flooding. Another hand, natural hazards that cause inland flooding are melting snow, glacial outbursts, and dam break flows. Flood in river valley region is a disaster which can destroy the total environmental set up of the area. It causes river bank erosion, depression of land, shifting of river course, river channel widening etc. due to its high discharge, elevation, volume and longer duration. The increase in the frequency of floods has generally been caused to climatic change. Flood situation arises in India almost every year and hence it is important to prepare for a disaster in advance. Floods displace a number of people and cause heavy loss of life and property which leads to increase large number of poverty, agricultural deficiency, unemployment, and even starvation death. The economy also gets affected due to damage of crops direct or indirect affecting the agriculture sector. The country needs a better, emergency and effective flood mitigation system to ensure the safety of its people and economy. According to Carter, "Floods have the following characteristics (1991): long, short and no warning, depending on the type of floods (for example, flooding within parts of a major river may develop over a number of days or even weeks), speed or onset may be gradual or sudden; and there may be seasonal patterns of flooding". Flood is one of the most important disasters which can destroy the total physical and socio-economic environmental set up of the area and occurred almost in all part of the world. Flood may be occurred seasonally in same portion in the world and sometimes suddenly

occurred in the world due to physical phenomena and human factors. Several villages under Kaliachak-II were submerged as water gushed in a wide breach in the study area, a district official said. Most parts of Panchanandapur village were flooded as Ganga and Pagla river merge nearby areas and create the situation from 'extreme danger' to 'danger' mark along the areas.

The Census of India defines "houseless population" as the person who are not living in Census houses. Houseless is the situation of having no home or permanent abode. Those in this situation include people living on the streets, in hostel, squats, or in temporary accommodation with no permanent right of tenure. Census enumerators are instructed to take note of the possible places where the houseless population is likely to live such on the roadside, pavements, in Hume pipes, under staircases or in the open, temples, mandaps, platforms and the likes. They are described variously as homeless, houseless roofless, shelter less people and pavement dwellers. Problems of reliable estimation and clear definition of houseless population are encountered in the surveys conducted for Indian cities. The lack of universally agreed definition of houseless in most countries allows policy makers to forget about houseless people, who live desperately hard lives with no shelter or social security's protection, and sustaining cities with their cheap labour. They lead a very poor life with in fact no possessions. Often, the homelessness is caused by multiple and interrelated physical, social, economic, political and environmental factors. With a population of well over 1.2 billion people, India is the second most populous nation in the world. The total houseless population in 2001 is 1,943,476 (0.19 per cent) which is decreased by 1,772,889 (0.15 per cent) in 2011. India's per capita income, although rising, rank's 124 in the world.

West Bengal share 7.56 per cent of houseless population among the states and union territories of India. Left bank erosion of the Ganges upstream of Farakka Barrage has rendered nearly 4.5 lakh people homeless in Manikchak, Kaliachak I, II and III and Ratua blocks over the last three decades of the past century. The worst hit area is between Bhutnidiara and Panchanandapur in Kaliachak II block. According to the Ganga Bhangon Pratirodh Action Nagarik Committee 750 sq. km area was lost in 30 years in the Manikchak and Kaliachak areas. Panchanandapur village was worst affected as Ganga and Pagla river merged which compels the people of this village to become houseless.

Objectives

The major objectives of this study are:

- To analyse the impact of flood in the socio-economic condition of houseless population.
- To suggest some remedial measures.

Database and Methodology

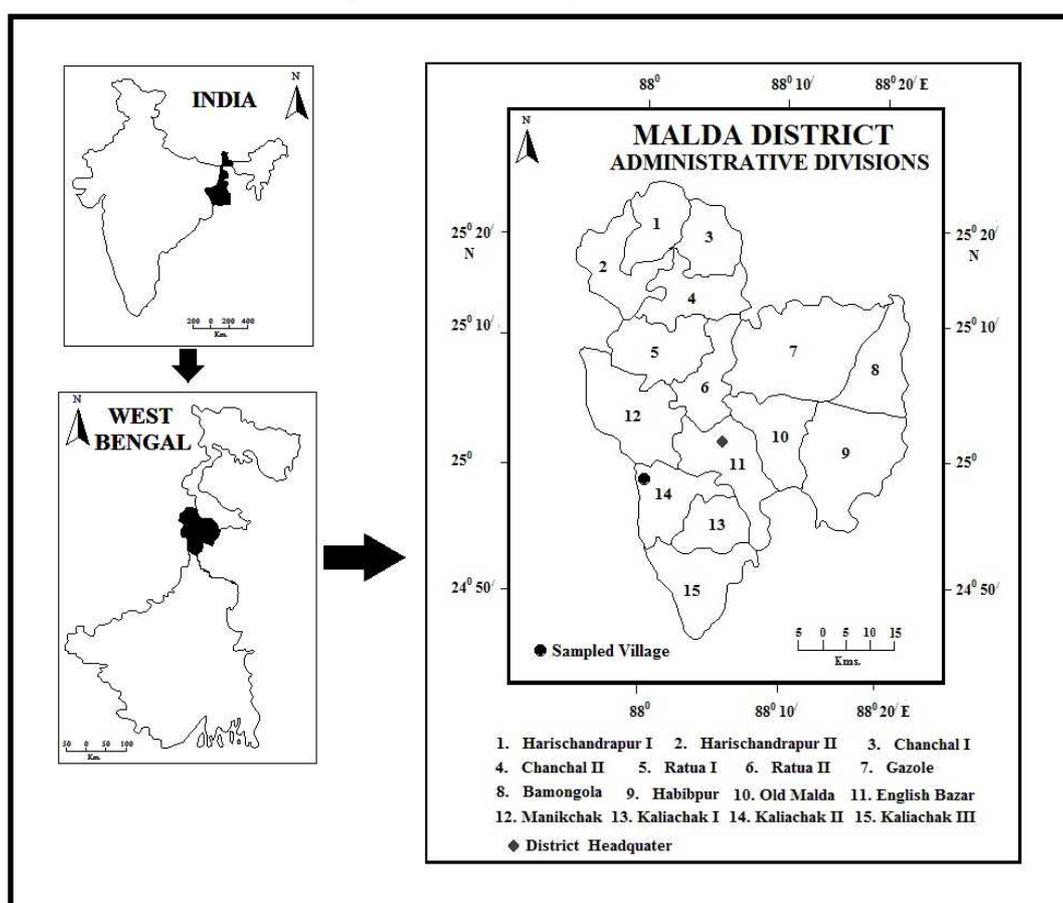
The present work is based on empirical study. It examines the socio-economic condition of the houseless population. Respondents have been selected from the different location of the Panchanandapur village of Kaliachak-II block of Malda district. The survey was carried out during the months of June-July, 2015. Data was collected through interview schedule. For this 100 houseless respondent were interviewed in the different parts of the village. After collection

of data, for the purpose of data analysis the frequencies of the responses of the houseless population were conducted and percentages were calculated through simple statistical methods. After that the data were converted into tabular form. With the help of this table the statistical diagrams have been drawn. While selecting the sample, two points were kept in mind firstly, they have different occupations, and secondly, their income level varies.

Study Area

Panchanandapur village is popularly known among the villages of Kaliachak –II block of Malda district of West Bengal. According to the census of village have 26358 of total population, in which the total male population is 13512 and female population is 12846. In this village the total literate population is 13578, in which 7694 and 5884 male and female persons are literate respectively. In Panchanandapur village the total number of illiterate persons are quite high i.e. 12780, in which the male illiterate is 6962 and female illiterate is 5818. The total worker persons in Panchanandapur village is 11167, in this 6827 and 4340 are the male and female worker population respectively (Census 2011).

Fig.1: Location Map of Study Area



Discussion:

Socio-Economic Condition

The present study examines the status of flood affected houseless population in Panchanandapur village of Kaliachak- II block of Malda district. This is an important matter as it reflects condition under which houseless have live in this village. Firstly, we sketch a profile of houseless covering their age, sex, and literacy standard. This is followed by a study of their nature of work, income etc.

Age - Structure

Table 1 reveals the houseless population of Panchanandapur village has been classified into five categories on the basis of age group. This table shows that 20 per cent of the respondents lie below the age-group of 20 years, 18 per cent of the respondents fall in the category of 21-30 years, 27 per cent and 15 per cent respondents fall in the category of 31-40 years and 41-50 years respectively. On the other hand 20 per cent of the respondents fall in the age-group of more than 50.

Table 1 Age, Sex and Marital Status

Age Group	Percentage	Sex-Composition	Percentage
<20	20	Male	71
21-30	18	Female	29
31-40	27	Marital Status	Percentage
41-50	15	Married	73
>50	20	Unmarried	27

Source: Based on Primary Survey, June-July, 2015

Table 1 depicts the percentage distribution of sex composition of respondent in this village. It is clear from this table that about 71 per cent male respondents found during survey, but the percentage of female respondents were 29 per cent which is less than half of the percentage of male respondents.

Marital Status of the Respondents

Table 1 and figure 4 shows the distribution of marital status of respondents. About 73 per cent respondents are married and 27 per cent are unmarried. The persons who were married migrated to the town in search of employment because they have lots of responsibility towards their family members. Unmarried persons only earn for themselves and spend it only on their food, entertainment, bidi, cigarette etc.

Educational Status of the Respondents

From table 2. it is clear that the educational attainments among the sampled homeless dwellers are extremely poor on an average, only 20 per cent of them are literate as they avail very less amount of Government facility to get educate as we find that 80 per cent of respondent are illiterate. Due to illiteracy, houseless does not find better employment. They engaged in bidi making, rickshaw pulling, tea selling, lumbering etc.

Table 2 Educational Status

Educational Status	Percentage
Illiterate	80
Literate	20

Source: Based on Primary Survey, June-July, 2015

Occupational Structure of the Respondents

Table 3 shows occupational structure and migratory status of the respondents. Highest proportions of respondent i.e. 35 per cent of respondents are cultivators. About 25 per cent of them are wage labour, while 23 per cent of them are engaged in bid making. Only 7 per cent of the respondent has the services. Only 5 per cent respondents earn their livelihood by boating in river and business respectively.

Table: 3 Occupational Structures, Daily Income and Migratory Status

Occupation	Percentage	Daily Income	Percentage
Cultivation	35	<100	25
Wage Labour	25	100-200	55
Bidi Making	23	>200	20
Boat man	5	Migratory Status	Percentage
Business	5	Within Block	64
Service	7	Outside Block	36

Source: Based on Primary Survey, June-July, 2015

Daily Income of the Respondents

The average income of the respondents is low as most of them were engaged in primary activities as well as informal sectors. Their daily earnings range between less than Rs. 100 and more than Rs. 200. Their income depends on the nature of their occupation. 25 per cent of the respondent earned less than RS. 100 per day while 55 per cent of the sampled dweller earned in between RS. 100- 200 per day. Remaining 20 per cent of them earned more than Rs. 200 in a day.

Migratory Status of the Respondents

Most of the respondent i.e. 64 per cent respondents were migrated within the block due to loss of their properties in flood, whereas only 36 per cent were migrated outside the block. It is observed that the people of Panchanandapur village migrated to neighbouring villages like Babla, Motahabari, Uttar Lakshmipur, Gangarampur etc. as those villages have the better facility in terms of accessibility. They temporary construct their houses in the vacant land of the Government or along the road side. The losses and erosion caused by the frequent floods have compelled the rural people to displace from their birth place to the other safer places outside the block like Kaliachak-I block, Kaliachak-III block, Malda Town, Malda Railway Station etc., as it offers the safest refugee areas and reflect more new resettlement and it offers more earning opportunities to the resettled families.

Losses of Resources Caused by Flood

Flood is a natural phenomenon. But it is widely evident that the flood experience and increased the destitution of resources. During survey it is found that 44 per cent respondents lost their agricultural land, 38 per cent of lost their houses and 18 per cent respondent lost their other resources like life, livestock, properties etc (Table 4).

Table 4 Losses of Resources Caused by Flood

Losses by flood	Percentage
Agricultural Land Loss	44
House Loss	38
Other Loss	18

Source: Based on Primary Survey, June-July, 2015

Conclusion

Panchanandapur village is situated along the bank of Ganga River, so that flood is a frequent phenomenon in this village. Flood has its virtuous as well as cruel affect which compel them to become houseless. During this situation the basic amenities are totally lacking, family income is low, most of the family members illiterate and because of these have different outlook towards life. Problem faced by houseless people are poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, health problem, lack of food availability etc. Thus, the fact emerges that the flood affected houseless population in the study area are socio as well as economically very poor and backward. The study explains that juvenile and senile dependency was a common feature of houseless population. Most of the households are very poor had hardly have any savings and given the amount of relief being so small and their land, in most cases, which is the main source of their livelihood being lost, they find it difficult to maintain their basic food security. From the above discussion it is clear that only 20 per cent of them are literates, sex composition is roughly balanced, they are employed mostly in low-income informal activities. It is also observed that they have very poor income having daily income of less than Rs. 100 and only 20 per cent of them have Rs. 200 and above. Thus, they can save a little and often suffer from malnutrition. So we think it is the right time to think about them and need immediate attention for Government as well as Researchers.

Recommendations

The homeless population in the study area are evidently socially and economically poor and backward. Their life can be changed and upgraded with the following recommendations:

- Construction of dams should be considered to trap the excess water. This could also be used for irrigation purpose.
- The relevant authorities should delineate flood affected areas, and temporarily shelter should be timely provided to the flood affected people.
- Government and key stakeholders should be engaged the communities and local authorities in making them aware about flood risk in view of the climate variability.
- Construction of canals into the main Ganga and Pagla River.
- There should be a deliberate policy to compel people of Panchanandapur to build houses using durable materials and away from the flood prone areas.

- Active participation of the people to maintain losses, e.g. construction of advance flood shelters for people as well as livestock.
- Storage of sufficient food, drinking water and other essential goods before occurrence of floods.
- Rescue and relief operations should be quickly taken by government as well as NGO.
- People must follow the existing rules and regulations for prevention and mitigation of floods.
- Lastly, government should control the corruption in government bodies and to improve the ability of administrative workers. So that the condition of houseless population might be improved.

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