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ESCAPING, CLIMBING & SURVIVING:

ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION AND
CONSEQUENCES FOR BANGLADESHIS

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is known to be the country worst hit by environmental changes at the same time as it is a densely populated country in South Asia. Questions of climate change have been debated during the last decades and the voices of the affected have now also been heard. Bangladesh will lose land as the sea level rises and floods occur more often. People have to escape these challenges and move to a new place for what they believe will be a better life. However, is that the case? This Bachelor study explored different consequences a Bangladeshi can come across when escaping environmental changes. This was done through a literature review of three migration patterns in Bangladesh (rural-rural, rural-urban and foreign migration). The purpose of this study is to show some of the consequences of environmental migration. The study will show awareness of environmental migration and implications of these problems unless it is planned for.

Key words: *climate change, migration, Bangladesh, consequences, conflict*

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ABBREVIATIONS

CHT – Chittagong Hill Tracts

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

GOB – Government of Bangladesh

IOM – International Organization of Migration

PCJSS – Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (Chittagong Hill Tracts United Peoples' Party)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CLIMATE CHANGE

“Climate change is clearly relevant to priority development objectives such as combating poverty, food security, access to basic services such as clean water, sanitary living conditions and energy, and education” (Beg et al. 2002:134).

From droughts in Sub-Saharan Africa to flooding in South Asia, climate change affects people around the world in many different ways. Climate change and global warming has been on the political and scientific agendas for many years. One of the major problems with climate change is a rise in temperature which will create a melting of ice in Greenland and Antarctica which will lead to a sea level rise. Some of the effects that global warming will have are food and water shortages, stronger hurricanes, more frequent and longer lasting droughts, heat waves and wildfires, but also extinction of species and an easier spread of diseases (National Geographic 2007). This might end up affecting landscapes and livelihoods, but also has the potential to become a threat to a country’s national security (CNA Corporation - National Security and the Threat of Climate Change 2007).

Scientists and researchers believe that the developing countries will be most vulnerable and least able to adapt to the changes (Beg et al. 2002:132, Hope 2009:451). Developing countries already face social and economic challenges and will have difficulties to adapt to climate changes because they lack basic health services and infrastructure. They cannot cope after a natural disaster or long-term changes because they lack economic resources (Hope 2009:451). One of the most important challenges we will have to manage will be the mass migration flows because of the new environmental challenges; islands in the South Pacific are disappearing and islanders have to find a new home. Throughout the world, migration patterns show that people often migrate from low-lying areas to further in-land location to avoid a rise in sea level, flooding and an unstable future (Johnson & Krishnamurthy 2010:650).

This thesis project will look at challenges from environmental migration in the case of Bangladesh through three different migration patterns known for Bangladeshis.

1.2 BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has a population of around 150 million people, making it the world's seventh biggest populated country. It is a low income country and around 75% of the population live under the USD2 per day (WB Indicators 2010 – poverty headcount ratio at \$2 a day (PPP) (% of population). “[...] most of the country is situated on deltas of large rivers flowing from the Himalayas: the Ganges unites with the Jamuna (main channel of the Brahmaputra) and later joins the Meghna” (CIA - the World Factbook). Therefore the farmers are often victims of floods, which have the potential not only to wash away crops, destroy buildings and pollute groundwater stock. It also affects the means of livelihood for thousands, but also carry the potential to take the lives of many Bangladeshi citizens (Mclean and Moore 2005:224). The typical Bangladeshi house, according to Mclean and Moore, is a small, single-celled structure, mainly built of materials from the area, such as earth, bamboo, reed and palm leaf. These unstable houses are seen as one of the major problems for Bangladeshi citizens. Their houses are seen as temporary “due to the inability of the materials used to withstand damage by floodwater” (Mclean and Moore 2005:225).

A warmer temperature and a change in climate will also lead to an easier spread of diseases. The extreme events such as drought and flooding will in turn lead to an increase in malnutrition due to water and food shortages. If the sea level would rise by half a metre, 10 per cent of Bangladesh's land mass would be lost, as well as neighbourhoods and livelihoods of six million people. A metre of sea level rise in Bangladesh would mean that 13 to 40 million people have to search for a new home (Walsham 2010:17)

Lester R. Brown believes that China will be most vulnerable to the effects of climate change with 144 million potential refugees. Whereas India and Bangladesh follow afterwards with 63 and 62 million respectively (Brown 2008:60). According to the IOM (International Organization for Migration), Bangladesh's emigrants are growing in numbers and the level of remittances are increasing. The IOM also mentions the challenges migrants are facing: human trafficking, irregular migration (illegal status), informal channels of remittances and the physical environment continue to be a challenge for Bangladesh and result in violations of the migrant's rights. Environmental factors as a driver for migration have become a major problem. One million people have become internal migrants due to frequent natural disasters, drought, floods and riverbank erosion (IOM – Bangladesh). In 1987 and -88, Bangladesh experienced a disastrous flood which covered 66 percent of the land and took 1,200 lives. Up

to 15 percent of the grain production was lost both years. On the other hand, researchers also mention that some rice crops actually performed better with the floods because the extra amount of water was beneficial to the growth of the crop (Newson 2009:192).

An article by Professor Tasneem Siddiqui highlights Bangladeshis and their connection to the environment and migration. He showed that in 1988 and 1998 around 45 to 50 million people, respectively, were displaced because of flooding. He also mentioned that a recent survey showed that in “595 households [...] 28% had at least one migrant. 83% reported unemployment due to frequent floods was the main reason behind migration. 6% went to another village, 895 to nearby city and 5% migrated to another country” (The Daily Star, Siddiqui, 15th of November 2011). He mentions another study undertaken in the north-west of Bangladesh which says that on average a household may have been displaced 4.46 times. A third study found that 80% to 95% of the households living on the char land (river beds) in north-west Bangladesh are migrant households, however, these households mostly migrate temporarily and seasonally (The Daily Star, Siddiqui, 15th of November 2011).

1.3 PURPOSE & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the consequences of environmental migration in Bangladesh?
2. What can be expected effects of future environmental migration?

The purpose of the thesis is to discuss the effects of mass migration which might happen due to environmental changes. It will focus on the consequences and what this could lead to, including conflict, poverty, diseases and competition in a densely populated country. Bangladesh will be a good case for this study because it is a developing country with a large number of people living in extreme poverty. It will also become one of the most affected by the changes because of the low-lying landscape and deltas.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 DEFINITIONS

2.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRANT OR REFUGEE?

The question whether migrants of climate change should be defined as environmental migrants or refugees is still a discussed issue. As Johnson and Krishnamurthy write, “[...] the 1951 [Refugee] Convention defines ‘refugees’ on the bases of political persecution, which in practice excludes populations displaced as a result of natural disasters and long-term

environmental change” (2010:651). The term “environmental refugees” was introduced by El Hinnawi in 1985 to describe people who had to leave their homes because of environmental problems which were a risk to their life or quality of life (Reuveny 2005:2). Reuveny goes on separating environmental migrants into two categories; environmental refugees (as described above) and environmental migrants for people who migrate voluntarily because of environmental challenges.

Migrants could be separated in categories such as seasonal migration, resettlement or displacement. Environmental migrants are looking for a new long-term liveable place and community. Much of the literature about environmental migration/refugees tries to define the difference between these two terms. Throughout this thesis, the term environmental migration will be used to explain migrants who move because of environmental challenges.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION

Migrants “set out in search of economic opportunity or a new beginning; others migrate because they are forced from their homes by violence or disaster and their lives are in grave danger. Migration issues have become more increasingly heated in many countries and regions as new population influxes have challenged and at times threatened their new communities and nations” (Gibbs 2009:53).

This study will use push and pull factors of migration. In this study, specifically, the push factors will be known as environmental reasons whereas the pull factors could be such as employment opportunities, social networks and security.

Environmental migration has been a familiar pattern in past migration and has occurred for many centuries. However, the world today brings new challenges as the population has grown and borders have more clearly been defined. Once climate change became a new topic on the political agenda, environmental migration and resettlement has received new attention. Environmental migrants and disaster displaced people are persons who have become displaced or are in need of a new home due to environmental factors such as floods, droughts and cyclones.

Environmental consequences can be seen in Bangladesh already. In India, anti-immigrant groups have created tension and the border control between the countries has become stricter.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts have received many farmers from the low-lying areas which have led to higher competition for land between natives and immigrants. Many Bangladeshi's also escape into megacities in hope of better opportunities but are instead met with poverty and unhealthy circumstances.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon mentions that “a failure to act quickly on climate change could lead to a worsening of tensions, social unrest and even violence” (Elliott 2010:180). This thesis will look at consequences which might emerge through migration; it will especially look at cases of what is happening in Bangladesh. I will look at three different consequences from three different migration patterns; poverty and health in urban areas, land competition and exclusion in rural areas and culture clashes and border control in foreign migration (India).

2.3 CONFLICT

Problems connected with environmental migration will be discussed and described through the three cases. These challenges and consequences could possibly lead to conflict. Many authors, scientists and researchers believe, as Lorraine Elliott writes, that “migration can be a major risk factor in the chain of effects that link climate change and violent conflict” (Elliott 2010:175). Reuveny discusses how conflict can erupt from mass migration. His theory is that “people can adapt to adverse environmental changes either by defending against them, or by leaving affected areas. The choice between these options depends on the extent of change and the technical capabilities of the society. Developed countries (DCs) are likely to defend against the changes. Less Developed Countries (LDCs) are less able to do so since this effort requires high levels of investment and technological expertise, which they lack” (Reuveny 2005:1).

Reuveny believes that environmental migration is more likely to cause conflict when two of the four channels are happening. These four channels are:

1. Through pressure on economic and natural resources, e.g. food production. With people migrating to other places, there will be a higher population which could lead to tension between people or groups when securing their own resources;
2. Belonging to different ethnic groups which may upset an ethnic balance. “Environmental migration situations involving long-standing ethnic disputes are likely to be more prone to conflict than other situations” (Reuveny 2005:5);

3. It provides an opportunity to exploit the situation which might stir up distrust between the new arrivals and host communities. The receiving government might see the migrants as trying to destabilize the country's rule while the country of origin might feel like the country is mistreating their immigrants;
4. Through existing fault lines. Native and migrant competing over jobs and land in a high density population. This might lead to conflict between population and government when they are challenging the state. This could also lead to the government responding with force. Reuveny also writes that if the state creates more opportunities for the immigrants then the likelihood of conflict will be reduced (2005:5).

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper will be a literature review on consequences and challenges arising from environmental migration in Bangladesh. It will use a mixed study, using both quantitative and qualitative measures. It will also be a mixture between the critical- and comparative case studies. The case study is known for studying either a location, event, family or organization in detail and with an intensive analysis (Bryman 2001:48). I specifically chose to do a mixture because the critical study holds a strong hypothesis where the research proves/disproves the hypothesis. The comparative study compares the cases which will be my study and guide when analyzing the literature and data I find. My overall aim is to show what happens in mass migration and how it could affect many aspects of a country. I want to conclude my Bachelor thesis by stating the importance of climate change and how there will be consequences for both the state and the people if nothing is planned ahead.

To find answers for my study, I will specifically look at three different migration patterns that are known in Bangladesh. I will search for consequences of environmental migration and how they might emerge in the future. I will look at three different migration patterns:

- Rural-urban migrations within Bangladesh since many Bangladeshis from the coastal areas are slowly moving towards Dhaka and other big cities.
- Rural-rural migration in the example of the Chittagong Hill Tracts because of competition over land and the exclusion of tribes in the Hills.
- Foreign migration in the case of India. Here I will also look at the role of the border security.

3.1 METHODS OF SELECTION & LIMITATIONS

I chose my three cases because of the history of migration and also because of the differences. The patterns stated above tend to be three of the more popular migration patterns for Bangladeshis. From these examples I made a selection of consequences to bring due to the limited space. I decided to focus on two to three consequences per pattern since this would give me enough data in preparation for a comparison and analyze. I chose these because I found that they were the major challenges throughout my data collection.

- In the rural – urban case I chose to focus on the migrants struggle with housing, health and employment options because these are big concerns.
- In the rural – rural pattern I chose Chittagong Hill Tract since it is the area in Bangladesh which holds most ethnic minorities but also has a big problem of the marginalisation of tribes.
- In foreign migration (India) I decided to look at the difference in culture and what feelings can emerge from culture clashes between the neighbouring countries.

3.2 SOURCE EVALUATION

The thesis is based on a literature review and source evaluation is an important aspect for presenting valid and trustworthy results. When looking at a specific academic article, I find it important to have it included in a journal which means that it has been peer-reviewed and accepted for publishing. Through my research I will also look at news agencies for data on the challenges met by a migrant. I will use news agencies with good reputation such as BBC, CNN, and The Independent etc. However it is important to clearly state that they are from a journalistic point of view and might therefore miss information as they often have a short period of time to interview and gather facts. I will use these sources through gathering information since the reporter often is in the field when writing articles and mostly made out of interviews. This is necessary for my Bachelor thesis since the plan is to look at consequences for Bangladeshis. I also find the source to be more reliable if the information has been posted at multiple places. For example, in many of these case studies about environmental migrants the basic information tends to be the same.

4. THE CASE STUDIES

4.1 MEGACITIES (RURAL – URBAN)

In this section of the paper, I will describe the challenges in the urban areas. Many Bangladeshi's move to the megacities in hope of a better life and higher wage because of the good reputation the urban areas have. However, I will look at the challenges of urbanization and the struggles the immigrants face once arriving to the cities. The push factors are environmental challenges and hazards, whereas the pull factors are “the urban dream” such as higher wages, better employment opportunities and security. Below, this paper will look at the challenges concerning the hopes of a better life in the urban areas.

Urbanization is a growing phenomenon in Bangladesh and the rest of the developing world. Most often people set out to bigger cities (e.g. Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi) in search of better life opportunities. The majority of Bangladeshi's does not have the capacity or money to move long distances. Instead, they move to urban areas in search of better security and employment options. Bangladeshis have often migrated seasonally to the cities for earning more money and through that way they have hopes for better lives. The key push factors of migrating to the cities are lack of employment in the rural areas, uneven development, regional policies and natural hazards. The World Bank mentions that around 300,000 to 400,000 migrants arrive in Dhaka per year (Rana 2008:241). Dhaka holds one third of the urban population in Bangladesh.

Kartiki did a study on the relation between climate change and migration through interviewing people after the 2009 Aila cyclone on migration. She finds that:

...“in the case of rural-urban migration, migrants experienced a substantial increase in their living expenses (rent for their houses, school fees for children, price of daily ration) and difficulty in finding jobs owing to their limited skills and lack of training, and difficulty in paying off previous debts. While many secured work through their networks they were found to be living in shabby, disease-infested slum areas in illegal structures under a constant feeling of insecurity” (Kartiki 2011:34)

Rana also mention that Bangladesh has seen remarkable development because of urbanization, however, it has been a great challenge environmentally, socially and economically (Rana 2008:241).

4.1.1 CHALLENGES OF URBANIZATION

The Millennium Development Goals state in target 11 of goal 7 that by 2020 they will have achieved an improvement of life for 100 million people living in the slums. The rapid urbanization has led to poor housing options and according to Rana nearly half of the population in megacities lives in slums and squatters (Rana 2010:244). Paradoxically, the flooding continues to be an issue in megacities. Braun states that “the floods limit the access to fundamental needs, like food, drinking water, clothes and shelter. When floodwater enters a slum area, finding dry places to sleep, drying clothes, getting drinking water, earning money, and cooking food gets difficult if not impossible” (Braun 2011:775).

Table 1 Affectedness of households in Dhaka slums during major flood events

Characteristics during or immediately after the flood	Results of the survey
House/dwelling has been damaged	70% of the households
People had to leave the house	51% of the households
Cutback in nutrition	90% of the households were forced to eat less or far less than during normal times
Preparation of food	85% had difficulties to prepare food
Diseases	At least one family member got severely ill in 57% of the households
Ability to continue work	75% of the households were not able to continue work (out of these 70% did not work for 14 days or longer)
Reasons for not being able to work	Not able to reach the workplace: 48% Working area flooded: 35% Severe diseases: 11% Necessity to take care of household/children: 5%
Family income	70% of the households faced a significant decrease of the family income
Loss of savings	74% lost all their savings
Loss of valuables	70% of the households lost valuable assets

Source: Braun (2011) Table 1, pp. 776.

The slum areas of Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka, are the small areas of land that people are able to live on. Around 70% of the population of Bangladesh lives on small areas, whereas 30% of Bangladeshi's holds 80% of the land (Rashid 2009:577). Because Dhaka is a fast growing city most of the new population, especially environmental migrants who have lost most of their things, have to live in the slums which are situated by the delta and prone to flooding (Braun 2011:772). Braun makes a study with 625 households (table shown above) where he questions Bangladeshis about the affects of floods. His table shows that 70% of the

households he interviewed got their houses damaged, at least one person became severely ill in 51% of the households and 90% had to cut back on nutrition and food (Braun 2011:776).

4.1.1.1 INCOME

When the immigrants arrive in the urban areas they are often met with a difficulty in finding a regular job and will settle with a temporary job to receive an income. Hossain discusses poverty and vulnerability in Dhaka's slum areas and states; "They involve themselves in a series of occupations at different stages of their stay in the city and they often become unemployed. As it is difficult to survive in the city without any employment, they usually undertake jobs for short-periods of time" (Hossain 2007:53).

An article from the New York Times shows a family who had to leave their home and move to Dhaka because they lost everything in the 2007 Cyclone Sidr. Both parents work long hours to support their two children by paying rent and buying food but they do not have the money to save up in order to move back to their home village. They have now been living in the slums for two years and they state themselves that they are trapped in the slums (NY Times Kakassis 2010). These slum settlements are "illegal" which also means that the people who live there do not have an official address and therefore are denied access to diverse things. It is also the reason for not being able to find a proper job.

4.1.1.2 SPREAD OF DISEASES

This uncontrolled phenomenon of rural-urban migration has led to an unhealthy environment for the people living in the slums. The cities are getting overpopulated resulting in more than 60% not having access to basic services such as water and sanitation, drainage, roads, gas, electricity supplies or housing. Also, almost 50% of the slums do not have a fixed place to throw garbage and 35% does not have anyone collecting them. A study shows that "the Dhaka City Corporation area generates 3,000–3,500 metric tons of municipal solid waste daily, of which 42% is collected by the management authorities, but rest of them remains on roads, open drains, and low-lying areas," (Rana 2010:244) creating an unhealthy environment and an easier spread of diseases.

One of the largest slum settlements (Korali in Banani) is populated with 12,000 households but does not have access to neither a public latrine nor a health clinic. Rashid continues with writing:

“In the Phulbari slum settlement, open sewers would overflow during the rainy seasons as there was minimal drainage through the muddy congested lanes of the slum settlement. Uncollected garbage, along with excreta, was dumped in drainage ditches, which quickly became clogged during storms and the rainy seasons, leading to flooding—which spread wastes widely throughout the surrounding area. Children and adults commonly have skin infections. Rats and cockroaches scurry across the floors of the tiny, damp, dark, and poorly-ventilated rooms. As latrines were few, young children used the local alleyways as a toilet. In the poorer sections of the slum settlement, some young women also spoke of not going to the public toilets at night as they were located far from their homes, and they feared rape or sexual harassments” (Rashid 2009:580)

So, at what cost do migrants move to the megacities? As stated, environmental migrants lose everything and most likely end up in the worst situated settlements. From another point of view, Braun’s analysis states that “even during times of suffering poor people are able to react and adapt, because they can rely on their social resources”. He continues, “[p]eople do not only live and work in slums because they have no other options, but rather because the big cities and even the slum environments offer them opportunities” (Braun 2011:785).

4.2 CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS (RURAL – RURAL)

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) will be my second case since land rights and ethnic marginalisation has led to conflict and controversies with the government of Bangladesh (GOB). The CHT is a hill track along the borders of India and Burma, but is also the part of Bangladesh which holds most ethnic minorities (Rahman 2011:19). The CHT is known for its beautiful area and recieveds many visitors each year. However, it also has strong pull factors for migrants because of its natural resources and prospect of new economic activities. For example, the timber of CHT has the best quality in Bangladesh, as well as holding cash crops in rise, cotton, pepper, vegetables and fruits. However, the natives of CHT have been forced from their homes as the government want to settle more Bengalis into the region.

4.2.1 CHALLENGES OF CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

“[T]he government sees CHT as a strategic region both economically and militarily. [...] the population suffers both “human rights, imminent ethnic conflict and political unrest, legal and illegal expropriation of land and a steady influx of Bengali settlers in the region” (Rahman 2011:19).

Chakma starts her article with stating:

“For decades human rights violations, persecution, extra-judicial killings, massacres, eviction and land grabbing, and a slow-motion process of ethnocide have been going on in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh” (Chakma 2010a:281).

The ethnic minority in CHT holds a number of religions. However, the majority of Bangladeshis (including the GOB) tends to be of Islamic beliefs. A challenge with migration to CHT is that the government tends to support the migrants and force the tribes into giving up land for these new settlers. This has led to tension and conflict which have made the government send armed forces to help the migrants. In the challenges below this will be brought up in further detail. I will start talking about marginalisation and then talk about the GOB and the armed forces role in land grabbing and violations.

4.2.1.1 MARGINALISATION

As mentioned above, the CHT holds a large group of ethnic minorities who speak different languages and has a wide spread of beliefs which includes Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and animisms. There are a big cultural difference between the tribes of CHT and the rest of Bangladeshi people when it comes to cultural ideologies including norms of birth, marriage, death and methods of agriculture (Chakma 2010a:283).

A pattern of social exclusion can be seen since before Bangladesh’s independence when CHT and their indigenous people had self control over the region. The CHT regulation 1900 (also known as Hill Tracts Manual) was introduced by the Brits in the beginning of the twentieth century and divided the Hill Tracts into three circles. The three circles included one circle chief per circle who managed the social order. At that time, it also meant that migrants had to gain permission from the circle chief to allow settlement in the region. This was done to keep large numbers of Bengalis away from settling and for protecting the CHT and its limited

cultivable farmland (which is discussed below). In 1920 and again in 1935, the Manual was updated and CHT was declared “excluded area” and “totally excluded area” (Chakma 2010a:284). When Bangladesh received independence in 1971 the CHT slowly started seeing degradation of its ethnic cultures and a rise in Bangladeshi/Bengali immigrants.

In the National Assembly 1972s the first prime minister of Bangladesh, Tajuddin Ahmed, stated:

“Our ideology is clear. This ideology has inspired us to attain independence and this ideology shall constitute the basis of this state. Nationalism – Bengali nationalism – shall be the main pillar of this state. Bengali nationalism encompasses Bengal’s culture, Bengal’s heritage, its land and above all the sacrifice made by the Bengalis” (Chakma 2010a:286).

The Hill people have responded in non-violent forms, such as creating an organization, Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (Chittagong Hill Tracts United Peoples' Party – PCJSS) to give voice to the people of CHT. But they have also gone for violent forms as a guerrilla force which emerged from PCJSS, Shanti Bahini (Peace Force), in order to mobilise resistance to the GOB (Chakma 2010b:20). These conflicts went on until signing a Peace Accord at the end of 1997.

4.2.1.2 LAND GRABBING

Both groups signed the Peace Accord in 1997, but conflict has still occurred, even as recent as in 2010. Chakma writes:

“On 19 and 20 February 2010, Bengali settlers backed by the Bangladesh armed forces attacked 14 indigenous villages in the Baghaichat region of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh. Land grab was the motive of the attacks” (Chakma 2010b:20).

As mentioned before, the CHT has limited cultivable farmland. But still, when Bangladesh received its independence the new government resettled Bengalis in the Hill Tract and give them the indigenous’ land. They did this for two reasons;

“to enhance popular support for the armed forces to contain insurgency and create ‘strategic hamlets’” and “to pursue a policy of gradual extermination

of the indigenous communities through a demographic change in the CHT”
(Chakma 2010a:290).

The GOB wants to change the demography of CHT, move the indigenous people and make it a Bengali settlement. Once they settled Bengali families in CHT they realized that there was not enough cultivable land for them. With this realization, the Bengalis began grabbing the indigenous people’s land with the support of the Bangladesh armed forces and leaving the hill people to become refugees. Previously, the tribes lived along the plain areas or by the rivers and canals. However since the immigrants and the GOB took their land they had to escape to the hilly areas where the immigrants most likely would have to struggle to survive because of the landscape (Rahman 2011:115). Rahman interviews a group in which an indigenous person states the following:

“What can we say? Settlers have occupied land that legally belongs to us. There were many people who had official papers to prove their ownership of land. In spite of these papers, many settlers illegally occupied *Pahari* land. They just held and captured the land after their arrival wherever they found land, forest and plain spaces” (Rahman 2011:116).

Eviction, terrorization and massacres were tactics of the Bengalis and the armed forces. 50,000 indigenous people left the Hill Tracts as refugee in India during the 1980s (Chakma 2010b:21) and many other have become internal refugees during these decades of land grabbing and social exclusion.

4.3 BANGLADESH TO INDIA (INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION)

This section will look upon Bangladeshis and their relationship with India. India has during the last decades received many Bangladeshis and the consequences have been seen through violence and a stricter border control. Both have resulted in loss of lives.

The border between Bangladesh and India is around 4,000 km long and goes through the Indian regions of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. The pull factors of India are employment opportunities, the availability of land, medical care, education and the natural resources (Das 2008:371). Whereas the push factors are Bangladesh’s growing population, scarcity of land and environmental hazards such as floods. Emigration from

Bangladesh to India is a pattern with a high ethnic conflict which evidently can be seen from historic events. Alam writes that...

...“millions of Hindus fled from East Pakistan to India due to communal violence following the partition of India in 1947. Similarly, about 10 million Bengalis took refuge in India during the liberation war of Bangladesh (March-December 1971). These people left East Pakistan for shelter in the neighbouring Indian states of West Bengal and Assam due to political and religious suppression” (Alam 2003:423).

4.3.1 CHALLENGES OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

There are many obstacles for a Bangladeshi who decides to migrate to India, mostly because of the relationships between the countries and the number of migrants who illegally enters India. The border security has become a “top priority” for India because of the illegal migration and smuggling. Once over the border, international migration will imply the same challenges as brought up in the urbanization and the rural case of CHT. Therefore, I will look more closely at the interrelationships between the neighbouring countries and the possible culture clashes that emerge.

4.3.1.1 BORDER CONTROL

The Indian-Bangladeshi border have almost always been an area of conflict which now have resulted in India building a fence to keep illegal migrants, smuggling and anti-government militants from entering. There has never been a clear border between the countries since Bangladesh’s independence in 1971. India, however, have in recent years made it a “top priority” to stop illegal migration beginning with building a 4,000 km long fence on the border. The tense events surrounding the border have lead to a “shoot-to-kill” policy according to reporter Adams from The Guardian: “Over the past 10 years Indian security forces have killed almost 1,000 people, mostly Bangladeshis, turning the border area into a south Asian killing fields” (Adams, The Guardian, 23rd of January 2011). McDuire-Ra (2012:168) writes that the number of villagers, smugglers and “would-be migrants” is 533 deaths between 1998 and 2002, but also 1204 wounded and 691 abducted. He also writes about the border security in the Meghalaya region were four women between 18 and 72 was taken to a camp and got tortured by the local commander for illegally crossing the border (McDuire-Ra 2012:179).

Another news report related to the border line was by the BBC News which covers the condition of Bangladeshis who are surviving by selling Indian wood on the market. They are aware of the dangers with soldiers securing the forests to keep Bangladeshis away, but the Bangladeshis say that they have no choice. The two dollars they earn per day is their only source of income. Abdul Razaq who daily crosses the border to collect Indian wood states the following: "If we are seen by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) we risk being arrested at best or in the worst case could even find ourselves being shot at" (Lawson, BBC News, 13th of January 2010).

4.3.1.2 ANTI-IMMIGRANT GROUPS

Tensions with cultural differences can also lead to the feeling of exclusion. There has also emerged anti-immigrant groups which already can be noticed in India through the latest decades. It has created conflicts which have resulted in the loss of lives through anti-immigrant feelings. It is now a political debate through many regions of India as politicians have supported immigrants now change views in order to receive more votes for elections. The politicians have also realized that the immigration are not under control and many of them are entering India illegally which is the reason of the new border control and building of the border fence.

In the region of Assam, an early migration pattern for Bangladeshis, has so far seen most anti-immigrant tension. The region has had disastrous conflicts resulting in deaths of 10,000 or more. Swain discusses immigrants in India, stating that Assam was the start of the anti-immigrant conflict, but that it has now grown to other regions of India. He also writes about an example of a conflict in Assam during the elections of 1983.

“Congress won an easy majority and formed the government in Assam, but the price was frightening. The violence between the native Assamese and migrant Bangladeshis cost more than 3,000 lives. A few days before the election, more than 8,000 native Hindu Assamese surrounded a village called Nellie and systematically killed the Bangladeshi Muslim migrants. The toll of that five-hour rampage was more than 1,700” (Swain 1996:198).

In the last decade, Assam continues to show their anti-immigrant opinion by starting campaigns against illegal Bangladeshis. In the beginning of the anti-immigrant view,

Assameses saw Bangladeshis as a threat to their language and culture. Today, the tension has moved towards the competition for land. As mentioned in the beginning, many of the challenges and consequences in the urban and rural case, can be noticed in India too. For example, the natives in regions of India are feeling like the migrants are taking their land. According to Kumar, this tension has led to clashes between native tribes (Bodos and Rabhas) and Muslims from Bangladesh. In which the tribes state that migrants are taking up 37% of the Bodos land (Kumar 2010:110).

4.3.1.3 TERRORISM

Religions tend to be a heavy question in the post-9/11 drama of the terrorism attack on the United States in 2001. The same tension lies in between India and Bangladesh too. For example, many Indians believe that Bangladeshi's will bring terrorism with them and already have become a threat to India's national security. According to McDuire-Ra (2012:171), many officials have stated the same:

“[T]he former head of India's Intelligence Bureau writes, ‘Islamic terrorism in India is essentially of an imported variety’, and that ‘effective border management’ and the border fence are ‘integral’ to combating it. The former head of the BSF [Border Security Forces] makes a similar point, arguing that since 2001 ‘Bangladesh has emerged as the new hub of terrorist activities’”.

Many Islamic Bangladeshis have migrated to regions of India and which possibly can be seen through the rise of Muslim radical organizations. In 2010, there were seven organizations listed and four of them were highly active. But also that in many regions of India there are more people living of Bangladeshi origin than Indian. According to Kumar (2010:112), some extreme groups of Islam are spreading their beliefs, but also states that “[m]embers of these organisations illegally cross the border, network with radical Islamic groups in Bangladesh and sometime even pledge them funds and arms”. One of these groups, Harkat-ul-Jihadi-Islami (HuJI), is known to be engaged in terrorist activities that are part in a “loose terror network” (Kumar 2010:112). These groups have claimed more than ten attacks in India since the end of the 1990s. He also states that there is a growing involvement with illegal Bangladeshi's in terror activities, especially in India (Kumar 2010:113).

5. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In the beginning of my Bachelor thesis project, I posted two research questions which would guide me through my study. These were:

1. What are the consequences of environmental migration in Bangladesh?
2. What can be the expected effects of future environmental migration?

The purpose of the study is to discuss the effects of mass migration due to environmental changes in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is, as previously mentioned, the country which will be most affected by climate change due to the low lying landscape and frequently occurring floods and cyclones. The study have focused on the consequences of these changes and where they could lead, including conflict, poverty, diseases and competition for land in an already densely populated country. I limited my research to two or three consequences per migration pattern and discussed the ones that I felt was the major problem.

5.1 SUMMARY OF COLLECTED DATA

In 1987, 40% of Bangladesh was flooded, affecting 30 million affected and losing around 1,800 lives. A year later, 60% of the land was covered, 45 million were affected and around 2,300 people died. A decade later similar numbers were seen. As recently as 2004, two thirds of the country was flooded, 36 million people were affected and 700 deaths. The recurrent floods are a significant underlying cause for homelessness, landlessness and migration for thousands of people every year (Rayhan & Grote 2007:82-83).

As shown throughout my study, environmental hazards will challenge Bangladesh and possibly other regions of the world. It will affect migration patterns, communities, development projects and politics. The push and pull factors of migration leads to where and when a person migrates. Examples of push factors could be war, unemployment and poor institutions but has been environmental effects in my study. Pull factors include high employment rates, higher income and better life opportunities. Countries and islands around the world risk losing land as the sea level rises in which the population will be forced to relocate. The low-lying coastal side in Bangladesh is inhabited by millions of people. Should the sea rise by one meter they will have to be evacuated and search for a new home in an already highly populated country or cross the border to a different culture. From the data

collected during this study we can see that challenges have already occurred and tension is rising in some of these patterns.

5.2 THE CONSEQUENCES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRATION

1. What are the consequences of environmental migration in Bangladesh?

It is important to note that developing countries will be hit the hardest with climate changes due to their inability to adapt quickly (Beg et al. 2002:132, Hope 2009:451). The consequences can therefore not be compared with, for example, the Netherlands which also is a low-lying country but further ahead in their development. Another point to make is that Bangladesh is not only prone to sea level rise, but also to cyclones, floods and poverty. The data collected in my three cases (urbanization, Chittagong Hill Tracts and emigration to India) show that migrants in Bangladesh do meet and create new challenges. On the other hand, consequences and challenges also depend much on the standpoint of government but also natural and economical resources.

Looking on the cases of CHT and India we can acknowledge that Bangladesh's government tends to support Bengalis even though it means excluding Bangladeshis in the hill tracts of Chittagong. This has been the case since Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 when the first Prime Minister, Tajuddin Ahmed, suggested that everyone should join Bengali nationalism.

This study will continue by comparing the cases through ethnic and class differences and how it affects Bangladeshis.

5.2.1 ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Ethnicity defines a difference in culture, heritage, religion, language etc. If following the theory from Reuveny's four channels (2005) we can see that this is the case. One of the channels to emerging conflict is: "Environmental migration situations involving long-standing ethnic disputes are likely to be more prone to conflict than other situations" (Reuveny 2005:5). In both the Chittagong Hill Tracts and India, there is ethnic tension between the natives and immigrants. CHT has a broad ethnic base since it holds different tribes, whereas Bangladeshis and the government are of the same religion and language. In both cases we can see conflict between ethnic groups. Tension began after Bangladesh became independent and the GOB wanted all Bangladeshis to give up their cultures and 'become one' with the

Bengalis. The case of CHT is also connected to Reuveny's fourth channel which sees tension through existing fault lines. As stated before, natives and migrants compete over jobs and land in a high density population. The government in Bangladesh has already shown its support towards the Bengali immigrants in CHT and takes land of the local tribes. CHT is therefore connected to two of these channels, and as described in the case study, conflict already exists between natives and immigrants.

As for the case in India, many Indians see Bangladeshi culture as a threat to national security. There we saw conflict and loss of lives by the borders, as well as, the growth in anti-immigrant groups throughout India. However, looking at Reuveny's theory he states that if two of these four channels are emerging the risk of conflict is higher. Not only is ethnicity differences the consequence of migrating to India, it also has competition between natural resources and land. There is also distrust between the countries because of illegal and legal migrants. This can be seen from the border security and anti-immigrant groups in India.

From these we can see that both cases of Chittagong Hill Tract and emigration to India already are connected to more than two channels and therefore more prone to conflict according to Reuveny's theory. This can evidentially be seen as discussed in the two case studies earlier.

In the case of urbanization, not many ethnic differences have been noted. However, it is important to note that neither crime nor kidnapping have been brought up in the urban case. This may have altered this stance had they been included. On the other hand, since India and CHT has seen conflict already could this happen in the urban areas as well? Perhaps class difference is a bigger problem for environmental migrants in urban areas.

5.2.2 CLASS DIFFERENCES

Class differences have a lot of influence on the well-being of Bangladeshis in migration. Most of the migrants are likely to live in the lower class before they move as well since the majority of Bangladeshis live in poverty (75% live under the USD2 per day (WB Indicators 2010 – poverty headcount ratio at \$2 a day (PPP) (% of population)). This can be seen in the patterns that have been presented. The immigrants tend to end up in illegal slums without having an address or without an income because of their lack of education.

In the megacities we can see class not only from competition for economic and natural resources but also for employment. This was discussed in the case study as there is less

availability for the immigrants in employment, housing etc. It is worth mentioning that the immigrants often do not have an education which makes it difficult to receive a good job. This leads them to the issue of not having enough money and therefore unable to find a proper housing. Even in the urban areas there are floods near the delta where most of the immigrants live. Since they do not have an official address they are denied access to public health facilities.

Class differences are also apparent when looking at the case of natives and immigrants of CHT. The GOB supports the Bengalis, people with higher class. Whereas the Hill people are put in the lower class as they are excluded and marginalized from the society. In which case they become internally displaced, more excluded and forced to move further into the Hill Tracts.

5.3 WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

2. What can be the expected effects of future environmental migration?

This Bachelor thesis have looked at the theory of Reuveny's four channels to conflict in the case of environmental migrants, the study and its three cases can conclude that his theory is noticeable throughout the migration patterns. It is quite clear that there will be controversies with environmental migration as there is in migration in general today. We have seen that tension is built up through ethnic and class differences at the same time as it have to do with interactions of the governments. Even though it is difficult to see what the future holds, we can speculate about the future through looking at the past. Environmental migration is something which must be discussed and well planned in order to make it easier and to address growing tension between natives and immigrant in the future.

There are many speculations on the challenges mass migration of environmental causes can create. Some of them are brought up in this paper, but because of the limitations of the study some have not been brought up in detail. Will natives become more excluded as seen in CHT? Will civil wars occur more frequently as land-grabbing and competition for natural and economic resources becomes more intense?

5.3.1 CAN WE EXPECT CONFLICT?

Many authors and researchers have speculated on the idea that the effects of climate change and environmental migration might lead to conflict. As noticed throughout this study conflict

is already a big part of migration, whether it is environmental migration or otherwise. In the theoretical framework of this study, Reuveny's four channels of conflict from environmental migration was brought up. His theory states that if two of these four channels are occurring there are higher risks of conflict. These channels can be seen throughout my cases.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in March 2007 put forward the issue of conflict due to climate change in a conference speech:

“Global warming has profound implications for jobs, growth and poverty. It affects agricultural output, the spread of disease and migration patterns. It determines the ferocity and frequency of natural disasters. It can prompt water shortages, degrade land and lead to the loss of biodiversity. And, in coming decades, changes in our environment and the resulting upheavals -- from droughts to inundated coastal areas to loss of arable lands -- are likely to become a major driver of war and conflict” (Ban Ki-moon, UN speeches 2007).

6. CONCLUSION

Natural hazards have started occurring more often in parts of the world. Bangladesh has more occurring floods and cyclones which have resulted in death and destruction. This has resulted in the creation of environmental migrants escaping for the chance of a better life. This thesis has brought up the subject of environmental migrants in Bangladesh and the consequences which are already happening. It has also looked at what we can expect of the future changes.

The study was done through a literature review and a mixture of critical- and comparative case studies. It found that in three migration patterns (urbanization, rural-rural and emigration to India) have challenges for the Bangladeshis. These consequences have been such as poverty, diseases, land grabbing and exclusion. It found that challenges depend much on ethnicity and class differences as it was a problem in all of the cases. I analysed these challenges through Reuveny's theory of four channels to emerging conflict and found that conflict was emerging in two of the three cases.

This thesis has only looked upon consequences of environmental migration and has not been looking at adaptations for a change in climate. It has neither been looking at solutions, merely shown the importance of climate change and the effects it brings for people. This subject and

especially how to face these challenges will have to be debated. It is a big topic and as the challenges are already noticeable. The subject has to be addressed.

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