



**Economic Situation of Indigenous People in Bangladesh:
A study on the Chittagong Hill Tracts**

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Course: Bachelor's Thesis (level C)

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Semester: Spring 2021

Abstract

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh was full of natural resources like water, river, forest, agriculture, land. Various agencies like government and non-government (local, national, and international) have undertaken and implemented development programs in the CHT at different times encompassing those natural resources to develop the CHT economy and contribute to the overall economic situation. Even though, the economic situation of the indigenous people in CHT remains unchanged and more than eight hundred thousand indigenous people in CHT are presently living with an imbalanced economy; poverty and hunger, low income, unemployment. A political agreement and the peace treaty has been signed in 1997 to end human life, restore the CHT indigenous people's economy as well as establish peace in CHT. This study has collected both qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources to see and analyze the present economic situation of the indigenous people in CHT after this peace accord.

Key Words: Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, Indigenous People, Economy, Peace Accord.

List of Abbreviations

ADB	: Asian Development Bank
ASA	: Association for Social Advancement
BBS	: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BGB	: Boarder Guard Bangladesh
BRAC	: Bangladesh Rural Agricultural Committee
BDT	: Bangladeshi Taka
CHT	: Chittagong Hill Tracts
CIDA	: Canada International Development
COVID	: Corona Virus Disease
DF	: District Forest
FAO	: Food and Agricultural Organization
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
FTFI	: Face to Face Interview
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
Govt.	: Government
KII	: Key Informant Interview
KPM	: Karnafuli Paper Mill
NGO	: Non-Government organization
PCJSS	: Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (Chittagong Hill Tracts United People' Party)
RF	: Reserved Forest
RC	: Regional Council
UNICEF	: United Nation Children Found
USF	: Un-classed State Forest
USD	: United States Dollar
VDP	: Village Defence Party

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Chapter One: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) is situated in the southeast part of Bangladesh.¹ According to the census of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2011, here more than 1.5 million inhabitants are living among where 51% are indigenous and 49% are Bengali people.² The CHT was full of natural resources; water, land, crops, vegetation, forest (wood, timber, bamboo), minerals (sandstone, limestone, natural gas, petroleum, coal, uranium), etc. have decreased severely.³ Historically, those resources have been used by the British (1757-1947), Pakistan (1947-1971), and Bangladesh (1971-present) ruling governments for economic development purposes. The economy of the indigenous people is mainly land-based which has been grabbed, invaded by evicting those people.⁴ Almost all the hilly people⁵ were involved with the Jhum⁶ cultivation as part of their economy and livelihood. So, the CHT was once self-sufficient in food⁷ but different development programs have provoked them into poverty processes.

However, the State's exploitation of natural resources (river and water, land, forest) by the name of progress is a common phenomenon throughout the world that adversely impacted the indigenous people's livelihood, and economy. The greediness of the State toward resources around the world forced to destruct the indigenous way of life⁸ such as the Bengali settlement program in the CHT occurred to balance the overall country's population which created vulnerability among indigenous people in this area. Moreover, water and river resource exploitation has displaced a huge number of indigenous people in the CHT. Due to militarization in CHT, it has been cleaned-up huge areas of land for camp building, road construction to increase connection as well as to smooth movement and transportation as of their preference of

¹ UNPO, 2018

² Iftekharul Bashar, 2011bu

³ PCJSS, 2020

⁴ Roy. R.C, 2000.

⁵ Hill people refer to as mountain people, is a general term for people who live in the hills and mountains

⁶ It is known as shifting cultivation, is a local name for slash and burns agriculture practiced by the indigenous communities in mountainous areas.

⁷ Roy. R.C, 2000.

⁸ Bodley, J, 1975.

bare hills for lowest security threats. However, for being grabbing the indigenous land the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)⁹ has been criticized.

In addition, the Non-Government Organization (NGO)¹⁰ oriented development strategies along with government policies and initiatives were full of corruption that resulted in conflict among indigenous people in CHT. Bodley has stated that resource exploitation in the sense of ‘exploitation policies’ is the principal cause of the destruction of indigenous people, cultures, and natural resources. From 1851 to 1900, about 35 million of the indigenous people have been exported from Europe as of failure to fulfill their basic needs as those people depended on natural resources which were destructed for industrial as well as the State’s economic development. The indigenous people of CHT had been displaced from their inhabitants due to inundation of living, forest, and agricultural land by the Kaptai Dam¹¹ project. Here, the commercial rubber plantation has replaced the local as well as many indigenous medicinal plants. The commercialization of foreign tress-like rubber plantations was profitable here but spoiled the quality of soils, imbalanced nearby environment as well as the living pattern of the local communities. By the name of progress, development occurred in a political nature to expand the commercial world and many countries of the world destroyed the natural environment to collect raw materials for economic development. Due to this, indigenous people around the world have been forced to assimilate, invasion of tribal land, and disruption of the indigenous social and economic system.¹²

The exploitation of CHT natural resources like land, water, and forest has been started in the British period exacerbated in Pakistan and Bangladesh period for progress and economic growth. The CHT indigenous people forcibly migrated due to the exploitation of water, forest, and land resources by the States. Consequently, indigenous people lost their main source of income which impacted livelihood and the economy. The civilization’s ‘progress’ policy provoked the indigenous people to disappear, destroying income and livelihoods sources. The exploitation of

⁹ The paramilitary force responsible for the border security of Bangladesh.

¹⁰ Means a non-profit group that functions independently of any government.

¹¹ It is an earth-fill embankment dam with a reservoir water storage capacity of 6,477 million cubic meters which purpose was to generate hydroelectric power.

¹² Bodley, J, 1975.

natural resources by the States has alienated indigenous people and 200 million indigenous people are struggling to regain their livelihood and natural resources.¹³

Moreover, previous research revealed that the CHT lost its majestic look and the forest resources have been reduced profoundly that negatively impacted on the economy.¹⁴ Different government and non-government agencies implemented various projects to change the CHT people's living standards without measuring social impacts. Due to the Kaptai Dam construction, a huge number of indigenous people were alienated from their traditional land¹⁵ did not receive any compensation. The Kaptai Dam project damaged the ecology which adversely impacted the CHT economy.¹⁶ To restore indigenous people's land, natural resources, and economy along with bringing peace, the CHT Peace Accord¹⁷ was signed in 1997. After twenty-four years of signing this accord, only 5% has been implemented that has been publicized by the different media. However, the overall GDP of Bangladesh has been increased in 49 years of independence and has been turned into a middle-income country. In this regard, this present study has tried to analyze the present economic condition of CHT indigenous people through collecting both qualitative and quantitative information.

1.2 Background

Once, the CHT was controlled by the British and considered an important area distinct from the rest of the country. The lands of the CHT were under the customary community management system before the British ruling.¹⁸ But later, the British ruler introduced the Forest Reserve Act in 1865 to control land and natural forests. According to that, indigenous people's access to the forests became restricted and thus huge landmass was occupied by this ruling government as part of their property.¹⁹ The British protected the land and economy of the CHT to emphasize the market economy.²⁰

¹³ Bodley, J, 1975.

¹⁴ Phillip Gain, 2013

¹⁵ Amina Mohsin, 1997

¹⁶ Schendel, V.W, Mey, W, and Kumar, D, 2001

¹⁷ A political agreement and peace treaty for the recognition of the rights of the people and tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region was signed between the Government forces and the Shanti-Bahini armed force of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS)

¹⁸ Misbahuzzaman, Khaled, 2014

¹⁹ Adnan, S 2004

²⁰ Roy. R.C, 2000.

After then from 1947, the Pakistan government used those restricted forests introduced by the British government as the source of raw materials for the newly developed mills, factories, and various industries.²¹ Later in 1971, Bangladesh become independent and the then government passed a forest act in 1974 that mentioned indigenous people were restricted in entering into the unclassified²² and vested department of the forest. After this Act, the then government earned yearly US\$ 7 million in revenues from those types of forests.²³ The purpose of the reserve forest was an economic benefit that was received by the forest department only.²⁴

However, British administrative rules of 200 years did not favor the Chakma²⁵ as they started reserving the natural forests as well as indigenous living places for their benefit.²⁶ The British Govt. also emphasized on market economy rather than the planned economy that affected the Chakma's ordinary way of life. Later, in the Pakistan period, most industrial developments took place. Under the signboard of national development and by the name of modernization, Pakistan Govt. established Kaptai Dam in 1969 and several types of heavy industries like Karnafuli Paper Mill (KPM)²⁷ and Rayon Mills, Wooden and Timber Factory, Boat Building Industrial Corporation, Dockyards, Aziz cigarette Industries, etc. to expand their (West and East Pakistan) economy with only 5% integration of CHT indigenous people.²⁸ The Kaptai Dam was constructed by the Pakistan government to facilitate the economic development of the CHT but it has inundated 54,000 hectares of land; 100,000 indigenous people, 10,000 families used that land as plow cultivation. Moreover, 8,000 Jumma families lost their main economic source. The indigenous people were forced to engage with commercial fruit gardening as the alternative and available income sources had not been created. However, the reservoir deeply affected the pattern of human life in the hills. Moreover, the native Marma (an indigenous group) people were removed from their forested territory due to the KPM construction.²⁹

²¹ Ishaq, 1971

²² The unclassified forests are those in which there is no restriction on the cutting of trees and grazing of cattle.

²³ Bangladesh Forest Department, 2016

²⁴ It is a government agency responsible for the protection and maintenance of forests and wildlife in Bangladesh

²⁵ The Chakma people are a native group from the easternmost regions of the Indian subcontinent, they are the largest ethnic group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region in southeastern Bangladesh, and in Mizoram of India.

²⁶ Chowdhury 2001: 12, Blie, Tone 2005: 6

²⁷ It is a Government-owned paper pulp and paper manufacturer in Chittagong, Bangladesh established in 1953 by Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation.

²⁸ Talukder, M 2005: 102

²⁹ Schendel, Van 2001: 140

Although Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971 the indigenous people of the CHT did not get benefit from it. The people lost their freedom of movement in the CHT regions. For their safety and security, the Chakma formed a political group named PCJSS³⁰ in 1973. Later in 1975, the armed wing of the PCJSS protested against economic exploitation and deprivation. To suppress this force, the government of Bangladesh militarized the CHT. According to Amnesty International, a total of 100,000 military personnel were vigilant in the CHT. The militarization was unfavorable and hostile to the indigenous people³¹ as a huge landmass was occupied. In addition, Bengali settlements started in CHT in 1979. A huge number of Bengali families settled down to increase the population density in this area till 1984. Consequently, many indigenous families have become forced to leave, displaced, and landless. Many were forced into low-income wage labor (e.g., on new rubber plantations). Moreover, ethnic conflicts took place due to the Bengali settlement.

However, Bangladesh was desperately poor (per capita income was \$182, 1972) and overpopulated, riddled with acute food shortages and famines, low per capita income, which indicates the low levels of various social development indicators. According to different authors, Bangladesh was designated as a ‘test case’ for development, while Henry Alfred Kissinger (then foreign minister of United States of America) mentioned ‘an international bottomless basket case’ in the year 1974.³² After 49 years of independence, sustainable growth in food production, good record of disaster management, and famines have become a phenomenon of the past in the country. Life expectancy has risen from 50 to 72 years, population growth rates of 3% a year have been decreased to 1.37%, the child mortality rate decreased by 35 in every 1,000, the literacy rate increased to 57.9%, and remarkable progress has been made in providing universal basic education.³³ This country has already eliminated gender disparity in primary and secondary school enrolment.³⁴ Govt. effort to integrate poor rural households into the formal school system was geared up since the early 1990s with the introduction of the ‘Food for Education Program’ by the World Food Programme (WFP). Female school enrollment has been increased through the

³⁰ The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti is a political party formed to represent the people and indigenous tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.

³¹ The Daily Star, 2009

³² Indian Journal of Human Development, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2008

³³ Economic Survey, 2014

³⁴ Indian Journal of Human Development, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2008

introduction of a universal stipend program to secondary level education, and also to the distribution of books at primary and secondary levels for free of cost.

Considerable progress has been made in poverty reduction. Moreover, the population has access to improve sanitation (48%).³⁵ A Huge budgeted program like the Padma Bridge (US\$1.1 billion), Karnaphuli Tunnel (US\$103.74 billion), Bus Rapid Transit (\$10.24 million), Dhaka Mass Rapid Transit (US\$2.8 billion), Mirsarai, Sreehatta, and Moheshkhali Economic Zone (\$17.91 billion), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Shilpa Nagar (US\$500 million), etc. have been visible. These reflect a process of socio-economic transformation in Bangladesh. Moreover, employment and income-earning opportunities both for men and women have been increased. The garment industry currently employs more than 2 million workers, mostly women having some formal education and many of them are recent migrants from rural areas.³⁶ Per capita GDP was \$278³⁷ in 1975 and in 2020 is US\$1,998.³⁸ The annual GDP growth rate of the country in 2020 is 8.20% whereas in 1972 it was -14.0%. Bangladesh's GDP growth rate was 6% from 2004 to 2014 and in 2015-2016 the GDP was 6.5 percent. In 2014, Bangladesh emerged as the lower-middle-income country from the lower-income country with a population of 160 million. Bangladesh's vision was to turn into a middle-income country by 2021 and now in waiting for the moment of the announcement as a middle-income country.

With this development, the Govt. did not integrate the CHT indigenous people. The indigenous children of CHT remain outside of schools as of belonging almost entirely to the poorest households. Due to health discrimination, indigenous children suffer malnutrition, maternal mortality prevalent in the CHT among indigenous people. The quality of schooling suffers from widespread teacher absenteeism and a lack of accountability in the CHT. There is a lack of supply of safe drinking water, gas, and electricity for the indigenous people in CHT. Govt. has overlooked all affairs of the indigenous people of Bangladesh and did not accumulate these people in the country's socio-economic development programs. The overall country's improvement did not impact the indigenous people's economic life.

³⁵ UNDP's Human Development Report 2005

³⁶ Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004

³⁷ Country economy, 2021

³⁸ Statista, 2021

Nowadays, the CHT is the most vulnerable area because of its income and employment opportunity, poverty, housing, health, water, sanitation, education, and inter-community confidence.³⁹ Although agriculture was the main occupation of 64% of indigenous people in the CHT, many of them are now engaged with fishing, small business, service, agriculture labor, tenant farmers.⁴⁰ In addition, the opportunities for diverse kinds of occupations are very limited.⁴¹ The indigenous people seem that the reserve forest, Kaptai Dam and KPM construction, Bengali settlement, and militarization are the main causes of not improving their economic situation.⁴²

1.2.1 Demographical Context of CHT

There are living 1,600,000 populations in the CHT. According to the BBS census 2011, more than half of the population are from 13 ethnic groups who are living in the CHT hereditarily. The different ethnic groups have different languages, cultures, religions, dresses, physical appearances, and agriculture. Due to the unique demography as well as socio-economic situation, the CHT people suffer from many deprivations.⁴³ The miseries and poverty have increased in the CHT due to population growth.⁴⁴ In 1991, the indigenous population size was immensely larger than the Bengali population. The non-tribal population, i.e., Bengali size has been increased after the state's sponsored Bengali settlement program started in 1979. The demographic changes in the CHT are shown below;

Table 1: Trends of Demographic and Ethnic Composition in CHT (1941-2011)

Year	Tribal population		Bengali Population		Total
	Population	%	Population	%	
1941	239,783	97.06	72,20	2.94	274,053
1951	269,177	93.71	18,070	6.29	287,247
1961	339,757	88.23	45,322	11.77	385,679
1974	392,199	77.17	116,000	22.83	508,199
1981	441,744	58.77	313,188	44.48	754,962
1991	501,144	51.40	473,301	48.60	974,445
2001	736,682	54.87	606,058	45.13	1,342,740

³⁹ Barkat et. al, 2009

⁴⁰ Dutta, 2000

⁴¹ Hossain, M.D, 2013

⁴² Misbahuzzaman, Khaled, 2014

⁴³ Unicef, 2021

⁴⁴ Gain, Philip 2000

2011	549,712	34.40	1,048,288	65.60	1,598,000
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Source: Dewan 1990: 48//AIPP: 2007, BBS: 2011

About 34.40% population in the CHT are indigenous people who are mostly followers of Buddhism (44% of the total). However, Bengalis are the largest ethnic group in the CHT.⁴⁵

1.3 Aim of Study

The geographical condition of CHT is endowed with vast natural resources. Henceforth, the CHT's indigenous people depend on the land and its natural resources, including the forests, for their economy.⁴⁶ Moreover, the driving forces of Bangladesh's economy are forest, water resources, hydroelectric, oil, and gas of CHT. But the degradation of natural resources like water, land, and forest in CHT is a serious problem.⁴⁷ The Conflict between Bengali and indigenous people has become a common phenomenon in the CHT region. To stop the conflict, Bangladesh Govt. has gradually developed hundred-thousand regular forces⁴⁸ like militarization that occupied huge areas of indigenous people's regular used land. Reserved forest⁴⁹ programs restricting those people from entering into those areas affect their socio-economic status. Poverty, unemployment has increased due to population growth⁵⁰ through Bengali settlement. The indigenous people have insufficient opportunity of income sources as well as vocational and skills training in the CHT. There is a lack of education due to poverty, girls' insecurity as well as the opportunity for higher study. Development has lagged among indigenous people⁵¹ due to lack of the integration of those people in different development programs at different historical times. To bring peace and restore the economy in addition to the natural resources, land, environment, and religious traditions of the indigenous people in CHT, the peace accord was signed in 1997. Although the country's overall economy has been increased (2020, GDP growth estimated at 7.9% and per capita income estimated \$1,887.97) but only 5% of the treaty has been implemented after twenty-four years of signing this accord. In this regard, the study aims to see and analyze the present economic condition of the CHT indigenous people.

⁴⁵ Iftekharul Bashar, 2011

⁴⁶ PCJSS, 2020

⁴⁷ Rasul Golam and Karki Madhav, 2007

⁴⁸ Moshin Amena, 2002

⁴⁹ An area of forest set aside and preserved by the government as a wilderness, national park, or the like.

⁵⁰ Statista, 2021

⁵¹ Mantel, S., Alam, M., Alberdi, J.R., Khan, F.M. 2019

1.4 Theoretical Understanding

Natural resource exploitation is a common phenomenon around the world. For economic growth, by the external or internal pressure majority of the States exploit natural resources.⁵² As forests contribute to economic and social development immensely, so India exploits forests for fuel, wood, timber, bamboo, food, shelter, paper, rayon, etc. in its economic growth.⁵³ Due to national development, Central Africa, Kenya, Thailand, the Middle East, and China is exploiting natural resources. China, Burma as well as other different foreign countries are investing to exploit the natural resources of South East Asia such as Vietnam, Laos for economic growth.⁵⁴ It has been seen in Latvia to exploit many agricultural lands in the non-agricultural sectors for their economic growth.⁵⁵ The Roman World has exploited land and natural resources for economic growth as well.⁵⁶ Israel occupies and exploits Palestine and Syrian natural resources for social and economic development.

However, protected areas were managed by the centralized government bureaucracy of Taiwan that raised conflict between centralized bureaucracy and local interest.⁵⁷ African forests continue to decline rapidly due to immense dependence on them.⁵⁸ In Nigeria, it has been seen to exploit the natural resources due to increasing urbanization that influenced adversely on the individual household income and environment.⁵⁹ Nigeria has lost 400,000 hectares of land to deforestation due to the exploitation of natural resources.⁶⁰ The State's exploitation of natural resources caused permanent deforestation. Different minority and indigenous groups throughout the world like Batwa of Central Africa, Endorois and Ogiek of Kenya, Bedouin of the Middle East, and Uighurs of China have been adversely affected due to the States' exploitation of the natural resources. Indigenous and minorities people around the world have been adversely affected due to natural resource exploitation not only in sense of livelihoods and welfare but also cultural life, social cohesion, and bodily integrity.⁶¹ Germany entirely depends on the availability of natural resources and unfortunately, this exploitation generates environmental pollution on the other

⁵² Corinne Lennox, 2012.

⁵³ Bethany Berger, 2019

⁵⁴ Babagana Gutti, Mohammed M. Aji And Garba Magaj, 2012

⁵⁵ Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Latvia, 2003

⁵⁶ Paul Erdkamp, Koenraad Verboven, and Arjan Zuiderhoek, 2015

⁵⁷ Dau-Jye Lu, Ho-Chia Chueh, Chien-Wen Kao, 2012

⁵⁸ Yemi Katerere, Peter A. Minang, Heidi Vanhanen, 2005

⁵⁹ Iheke, O.R and Eziuche, A.O, 2016

⁶⁰ International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Nigeria

⁶¹ Corinne Lennox, 2012.

hand decrease income. Bangladesh as an Asian country exploits CHT's natural resources to its national development. Forests, river, water, land of the CHT has been exploited under different national development programs. Encompassing the natural resources, Bangladesh emphasized industrial development without integration of the inhabitants' indigenous people in the CHT that affected their income and economic life.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology

The main objective of this part is to describe the methodology that has been used for this present study. In addition, the literature review, as well as ethical issues, have been described here.

2.1 Methodology of Study

Research methodology systematically solves the research problem. The methodology can be qualitative⁶² or quantitative⁶³. Based on the research nature, it can be used both the qualitative and quantitative methods, which is called the mixed-method. This present study has used this mixed method to gather, investigate and analyze the economic condition of the indigenous people of CHT.

2.2 Mixed Method

The use of mixed methods includes the investigation and collection of various relevant information, analysis, and mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study.⁶⁴ Numerous methodological techniques were applied consisting of observation, survey, investigation, interview, group discussion and negotiations, narratives, official and unofficial dialogues.

To pull qualitative information, mainly the ‘observation’ method has been used. These have helped me to better understand the indigenous and, Bengali people; government service holders and non-service holders, local rich and poor people. Moreover, the ‘survey’ has been conducted among selective indigenous as well as Bengali people in the study areas to analyze the economic situation quantitatively. These mixed methods have been chosen mainly to get a complete perceptive of the economic condition of indigenous people intend to fulfill the aims of the study.

2.2.1 Research and data collection period

To collect data, I have lived three months (October to December 2016) in the CHT regions among indigenous as well as Bengali people. I have stayed in Rangamati (main town) in October; Khagrachari (administrative District) in November and Bandarban (administrative

⁶² It is might be used to understand people' perceptions.

⁶³ It is typically used when the research aims and objectives are confirmatory.

⁶⁴ Blaikie, 2010, p.218

District) in December. I have lived in a Chakma teacher’s house in Rangamati. In Khagrachari and Bandarban, I have lived in government rest houses. I have observed indigenous people’s everyday real-life; poverty, malnutrition, hunger, lack of education, and economic opportunities throughout the three months of living. To see the present economic life of the indigenous people, another fieldwork has been conducted from January to February 2020. During this time, I have stayed in government rest houses. To avail the targeted people, the interview and FGD has been conducted in the afternoon when they were free. As the key informants were government people, the KII data were collected between 9 am to 5 pm Bangladesh local time. This fieldwork information has helped me to update earlier data and portray the economic situation of the indigenous people. However, secondary information has also been collected till March 2021 to get updated data on the economy of the CHT indigenous people.

2.2.2 Data collection Techniques and Tools

As data collection tools and techniques, face-to-face interviews through semi-structured questionnaires, participant observation through unstructured questionnaires, and group discussions, and KII through checklist have been conducted.

Table 2: Tools, Techniques with Sample

Techniques	Tools	Sample
Face-to-Face Interview (FTFI)	Semi-Structure Questionnaire	80
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Checklist	6 (12 in each group)
Key Informant Interview (KII)	Checklist	6
Participant Observation	Checklist	

Face to Face Interview:

This study conducted face-to-face interviews; formal and informal conversations with the indigenous as well as Bengali people; arranged meetings with local leaders of indigenous communities; interviews with elected officials and the chairman of the Upazila. FTFI has been conducted from October to December 2016 and January to February 2020. This interview has assisted to explore and analyze the income and expenditure, occupation, land and property, sources of drinking water, health and illness, support programs, social security, education, loan and in debt, land grabbing, settlers’ intervention, migration, displacement and some other issues of indigenous people. FTFI was conducted among 80 individuals (60 from indigenous and 20 from Bengali) from the study areas. The interview was taken from different age groups (15 to 80

years old) using a semi-structured questionnaire. To cross-check the face-to-face interviewed data, the above-mentioned formal and informal conversations and meetings have been arranged with different stakeholders. Through these interviews, information has been gathered about the natural resources and their degradation, different development programs, and their impact to get the present economic condition of the indigenous people.

Focus Group Discussion:

During FGD, it has been discussed different issues encompassing study objectives. In 2016 and 2020, it has been arranged six FGD in six Upazilas named Rangamati Sadar (AA, 14 October 2016), Kaptai (BB, 10 January 2020), Khagrachari Sadar (CC, 11 November 2016), Dighinala (DD, 16 February 2020), Bandarban Sadar (EE, 20 December 2016) and Ruma (FF, 25 February 2020) of the study areas. Both male-female have participated in those FGDs. Mainly the participants' age groups were above 35 years. The checklist has been used to facilitate the FGDs. FGDs have helped me to get more detailed information on the impact of different development programs; reserved forest, Bengali settlement, militarization, land grabbing and conflict, rubber plantation, KPM, Kaptai Dam construction, and different heavy industries. The present economic situation has been cleared throughout the three-hour-long and open conversation.

Key Informant Interview:

The KII techniques have helped me to verify the face-to-face as well as FGD data. The KII has been conducted with the three Upazila Nirbahi Officers (Chief Executive Officer of the sub-district council who are non-elected Administrator in Upazila) in 2016 from three sub-districts (6 October in Rangamati Sadar, 10 November in Khagrachari Sadar and 8 December in Bandarban Sadar in 2016) and three chairmen (elected local representatives of the lowest tier of local government) in 2020 (16 January in Kaptai, 20 February in Dighinala and 27 February in Ruma. These KII have played a significant role in this present study by providing verifiable information and data.

Participant Observation:

Throughout the fieldwork in 2016 and 2020, the observation has helped me to gather profound insight into indigenous people's economic life. Moreover, it has given me an advanced insight into indigenous people's education structure, schooling, water supply, hygiene, health care, and

other social and economic services. This tool has helped me to understand as well as analyze the economic condition of the studied people.

2.3 Selection of Study Area

During study areas selection, it has been taken into account that the areas must support the study objective. As most of the indigenous people live in the CHT of Bangladesh, so the CHT has been selected as a study area. The CHT consists of three Districts; Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban. Out of twenty-five Upazila (Sub-District, local administrative unit of Bangladesh) of CHT, there are ten Upazila in Rangamati, eight in Khagrachari, and seven in Bandarban District. Purposively, a total of six Upazila has been selected out of twenty-five considering security issues.

Table 3: Selection of study area

District Name	Sub-District/Upazila Name
Rangamati	1. Rangamati Sadar
	2. Kaptai
Khagrachari	1. Khagrachari Sadar
	2. Dighinala
Bandarban	1. Bandarban Sadar
	2. Ruma

2.4 Getting Permission from the Local Administration

My research areas were in six Upazilas (sub-districts) of CHT. It was hard to enter into the indigenous communities for any non-native investigator. Two decades ago, mainly before the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997, the region was informally inhospitable to strangers. This situation is prevalent still now. To enter into indigenous communities for research purposes requires formal permission from the local government. But sometimes, the local management discourages access to those communities for investigation purposes. Although the local government as well as administration de-motivated me and my research team due to the anxiety among indigenous communities, Bengali settlers as government itself but finally given the permission. The permission was received from the District Commissioner (DC) of each District, army and civil management, Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs) as well as local community leaders and representatives.

Building trust among indigenous people was not so easy. I and my research team tried to achieve trust through community leaders. Moreover, received permission from community leaders to effectively carry out the fieldwork.

Moreover, permission was taken from civil and army management. It was impractical to work without their support. It assisted communication with Bengali settlers as well as indigenous people of the closer area of that specific region. The DC office as well as the local management, mainly the administrators in the sub-district, was permitted to enter into the densely hilly regions where the indigenous populations live and ensured my safety and security. But the local police station recommended limiting the mobility of my team members at the sub-district level during village conflicts.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

All possible cautions were maintained during the planning of the study as well as the selection of study areas, methods, tools & techniques, theorization, data collection, processing, and analyzing. Despite it, this study is not free from limitations. Some limitations related to this study could be cited here as follows;

1. Sometimes, it was very difficult to establish trust and linkages with respondents and interviewees. Special precautions were taken during the interview.
2. It was not easy to access the study areas. After discussion with the community leaders, high officials of the local administration, it became easy to access among the community people and reach out to the respondents smoothly. However, it was promised to the respondents and interviewees during information collection that their responses would only be used for research purposes. Also disclosed that their names will be kept secret.
3. It was taken help and reviewed the selected literature to get insight related to the aim of the study.
4. Due to maintain confidentiality, informants' names and other details would not disclose in this paper.

Chapter Three: National Development Programs in CHT

In this chapter, it has been discussed the impact of so-called national development programs and their impacts on indigenous people in the CHT.

3.1 Reserved Forest

The CHT is always valuable for its forest resources. About 61% of the total CHT area is covered with forest which is considered 40% of the national forest. The CHT forest is enriched with good quality timber, softwood, and bamboo, etc. The CHT forest is categorized as; reserved forest, protected forest⁶⁵, sanctuaries⁶⁶ and un-classed state forest (USF)⁶⁷. These forests are managed by the Forest Department and Hill District Council (HDC). It has been observed that another category of the forest is village common forest (VCF)⁶⁸ which is managed by the communities in CHT. Through KII, FDGs as well as FTFI, it has been found that due to this Reserved Forest development program, indigenous people's culture, environment, and economy are affected. Moreover, an interviewee mentioned that the reserved forests restricted their free entry into those forests. Due to this restriction, indigenous people's livelihood has been impacted as it mainly relies on natural resources. It has been revealed that the purpose of the reserved forest was to create employment opportunities for the indigenous people, but poverty and unemployment increased.⁶⁹ An interviewee said that due to this reserved forest, indigenous people lost their freedom of entering into the natural forest to collect livelihood materials; food, medicine, wood, etc., and now they require a Government pass with an amount of fees to enter into this forest.⁷⁰ The other mentionable impact of the reserved forest is the displacement of indigenous people, land grabbing, as well as environmental degradation.⁷¹ It has been found that due to forest reserve policy, the natural forest has been destroyed, and many wild animals,

⁶⁵ A protected forest is a specific term to denote forests with some amount of legal, and/or constitutional protection in certain countries, besides being a generic term to denote forests where the habitat and resident species are legally accorded protection and are protected from any further depletion.

⁶⁶ A sanctuary is a protected area that is reserved for the conservation of only animal and human activities like harvesting timber, collecting minor forest products, and private ownership rights are allowed as long as they do not interfere with the well-being of animals.

⁶⁷ The rest of the forests areas are recorded in government land records as forests are called un-classed forests.

⁶⁸ Village Common Forests (VCF) are used sustainably for water source conservation, livelihoods and other biomass needs of ethnic communities in the hilly areas of Bangladesh.

⁶⁹ FGD in DD, 16 February 2020 and FF, 25 February 2020

⁷⁰ A FTFI in Rangamati Sadar, 5 October 2016

⁷¹ An Interview in Kaptai, 10 January 2020

medicinal trees were distinct.⁷² The barbed fence wire has been observed around the forest during fieldwork. It has also seen the notice board on the barbed fence wire where it mentioned ‘entry restricted’ and ‘unauthorized entry is a criminal offense’ both in 2016 and 2020.

It has been revealed that Bangladesh Government earned about USD 7 million every year by selling timber from the four types of reserved forests.⁷³ Bangladesh government earns revenue from the 1,741,290 acres of Unclassified Reserved Forest by cutting down timber. Moreover, the Bangladesh government earns from the reserved forest by collecting bamboo and selling it out at the rate of USD 50 per ton.⁷⁴

Table 4: Present status of Forestry in the CHT

SL.	District Name	Reserved Forest	Total Forest (In acres)
1.	Bandarban	108,608	110,858
2.	Rangamati	630,394	630,394
3.	Khagrachhari	95,834	100,038
	Total	834,835	1,741,290

Source: Bangladesh Forest Department, 2020

The KII data has supported that the main objective of Reserved Forest is the economic benefits for the State. From all FGDs, it has been found that the reserved forest exploited indigenous people, lost of forest resources, and create risk for indigenous people due to the decrease of cultivable land and its impact on the economy. Although it was mentioned during the announcement of reserved forest that both the state and indigenous people will be benefited in reality, it has been found that the indigenous people are being exploited through their cheap labor; displaced from their land; lost livelihood patterns etc. and the Forest Department being benefited.⁷⁵

3.2 The Kaptai Dam

Due to the construction of Kaptai Dam, 655 square kilometers artificial lake was made which inundated 125 Mouzas⁷⁶ mostly of Rangamti town, a total of 54,000 acres of agricultural land inundated also more than 100,000 people were dislocated, few of them received compensation.

⁷² FGD in AA, 14 October 2016 and BB, 10 January 2020

⁷³ A Key Informant Interview in Rangamati Sadar, 6 October 2016

⁷⁴ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

⁷⁵ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

⁷⁶ a type of administrative district, corresponding to a specific land area within which there may be one or more settlements.

The overall KII data has supported that the rehabilitation program by the Pakistan government was not implemented properly; 280 million rupees were allocated but only 20 million were given for exact rehabilitation. It has been observed that the reservoir deeply affected the pattern of human life, including the economy in the CHT. The indigenous people who were the residents of these areas lost their lands and houses. Finding no other alternative, the indigenous Chakma people, of about 40,000 were forced to migrate into India, and about 20,000 other 'Jumma'⁷⁷ people turned out to be refugees in Myanmar.⁷⁸

It has been observed during fieldwork that the Kaptai Dam damaged the agro-based main economy of the CHT. The interview data has unveiled that business and job opportunities were created only for the Bengali people. The KII data from Kaptai, Dighinala, and Ramu have supported this information. However, it has been discussed regarding the impact of Dam during FGD in Rangamati Sadar and Kaptai and found that the Dam has destroyed the economic backbone of the indigenous Jumma people completely.⁷⁹ It has been seen through secondary sources of information that about 69% of the indigenous people felt food and economic crisis due to the Kaptai Dam; 78% have no job opportunity; moreover, 93% disclosed that before the Kaptai Dam construction, their economic condition was better. Through face-to-face interviews under this present study, it has been found that the Kaptai Dam affected the economy of the indigenous people in the Rangamati district.⁸⁰

Due to the Kaptai Dam construction, the indigenous communities have lost their lands, economy, agriculture, territories, natural environment, etc.⁸¹ It has been found from FTFI and overall KII that the inundation of the fertile Karnafuli valley impacted agricultural production, causing food scarcity as well as insolvency in the economy. Fishing in the Kaptai lake is under the control of the Bengali people.⁸² The affected people have not been compensated by the previous Pakistan or present Bangladesh government.⁸³ Even after 60 years of constructing the Dam, the

⁷⁷ The Jumma people is a term usually referred to the minority tribal group of people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Bangladesh who claim a separate state called Jumma Land.

⁷⁸ FGD in AA, 14 October 2016, BB, 10 January 2020 and CC, 11 November 2016

⁷⁹ FGD in AA, 14 October 2016 and BB, 10 January 2020

⁸⁰ An FTFI in Rangamati Sadar, 5 October 2016

⁸¹ An FTFI in Kaptai, 4 January 2020

⁸² An FTFI in Kaptai, 4 January 2020

⁸³ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

indigenous people did not get free of electricity and 90% of the indigenous people's homes are without electricity⁸⁴ which has also been observed.

3.3 The Karnafuli Paper Mill (KPM)

It has been found through analyzing interview, FGD, and KII data that the construction of KPM in 1953 emerged another category of forest called 'Protected Forests' (PF) which impacted the indigenous people's livelihood and economy. For the uninterrupted supply of raw material, the mill has been given rights for 99 years to extract its raw material from the forest of the CHT. The construction of KPM created job opportunities for 10,000 people, but the indigenous people are only approximately 5% whereas most of them are in the lower ranks in the designation.⁸⁵

Before establishing KPM, the whole region was covered with forest which indigenous people would use as their main economic sources. But the then government had forced them to evacuate the lands without any prior notice or discussion.⁸⁶ An 80-years-old interviewee said that even after the establishment of the industries, a significant area of forest and cultivated land was seized for the accommodation of the employees, to establish schools, colleges and mosques, and so on institutions.⁸⁷ Another 79-year-old interviewee said that though the Pakistani government promised proper compensation and job facilities to the indigenous people, nothing has been done for them. The people have been economically damaged by losing their lands.⁸⁸ Almost all of the interviewees of six Upazials (95% of the respondents) said that before the establishment of the mills, the whole region was covered with forest which they used as an economic resource. But the then government has forced them to evacuate the lands without any prior notice or discussion with them. It has been found from literatures that the native Marma (one of the indigenous group) people were removed from their forested territory and most of the new jobs in the new factories were occupied by West Pakistanis and Bengalis. The Hill people made up only one percent of the labor force and occupied the lower-skilled ranks only. During my field observation, I have visited several mills, talked with different employees informally to get insight regarding the employment of the indigenous people in those industries. It has been

⁸⁴ Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020, Dighinala, 20 February and Ruma, 27 February 2020

⁸⁵ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

⁸⁶ FGD in AA, 14 October 2016 and in BB, 10 January 2020

⁸⁷ A FTFI in Rangamati sadar, 20 October 2016

⁸⁸ A FTFI in Kaptai, 8 January 2020

observed that most of the employees of those mills and industries are Bengali people which have been supported by the local representatives as well as UNOs during KIIs in Rangamati Sadar and Kaptai.

3.4 Horticulture and Rubber Plantation

It has been found through primary data that the then Pakistan government launched the Chittagong Hill Tracts Horticulture Development Project in the late 1960s to emphasize fruit gardening. In 1964, the Pakistan government communicated with a Canadian company named 'Forestal Forestry and Engineering International Limited' (Forestal) to survey the soil of the CHT aimed to launch horticulture widely. It has been found during KII that the CHT land was economically sound for fruit gardening and forestation. It has been found through FTFI that many indigenous people are involved with this gardening, leaving their traditional 'Jhum' cultivation for their economic development. The KII data also revealed that due to lack of proper communication, marketing and credit, fruit gardening declined since the 1970s and late 1980s, as well as this project created land degradation and soil erosion.

Moreover, the primary data has revealed that rubber horticulture become a major economic source in CHT. In 1978, the rubber industry emerged as a growing sector in Bangladesh. Asian Development Bank (ADB) has provided BDT 52.5 crore in phases from 1979 to 1995 to the rubber plantation, whereas the Bangladesh government allocated 13.5 crores after signing the peace accord in 1997. About 20,000 acres of land are brought under rubber cultivation in CHT. The rubber plantation causes a serious threat to the Chakma as well as other smaller ethnic communities of the CHT. The KII data has revealed that the local communities have lost their communal land where they practiced their traditional agriculture. In addition, rubber production is a long-term process, that also requires high investment. However, the FGD data has disclosed that the hard labor, farmer has not been benefited much from it while they can easily be benefited from short-term fruit gardening. In addition, it has been observed that 85% of Bengali people are the owner of rubber gardens. Due to this horticulture and rubber plantation, the indigenous people' economy has been impacted adversely.

3.5 Bengali Settlement

The CHT was just beginning to recover from the impact of the Kaptai Dam but at that time Bangladesh government sponsored a new project called ‘Bengali settlement’ into the hills which was started in 1980 and the motive of this project was the demographic shift in the CHT (see table:1) that has been exposed through KII in Rangamati Sadar and Kaptai.

It has opened that Bangladesh Government settled about 25,000 families in CHT as the first phase of this resettlement program giving total of 125,000 acres’ hilly land, 100,000 acres of mixed land, and 62,500 acres’ paddy land.⁸⁹ In the second phase (1981), between 200,00 to 300,000, and in the third phase (1982) 250,00 Bengali people have been settled. As a result, the indigenous people have been forced to leave their homesteads, involved with low-income activities.⁹⁰ It has been found during KII that the government claimed Bengali settlement was done in the ‘khas’ (government owned fallow land) land, but this is the hill people’ traditional ‘jhum’ land and forest land. The forcible removal of indigenous people from their land made them landless and provoked them to become economically uncertain.⁹¹

The literature has revealed that no economic improvement occurred in 1984 in the CHT. Due to the Bengali settlement, the private ownership of land issue was raised and conflict emerged as a common phenomenon. The Bengali as a powerful group (military, army, and police are in their favor) gradually established their control over the market.⁹² Nowadays, the CHT economy is controlled by the Bengali elite class⁹³, which has also been observed during fieldwork. The primary and secondary data have supported that the indigenous people have been turned into marginalized groups economically, socially, politically and culturally. During fieldwork, an adverse relationship has been observed between Bengali and indigenous people in the study areas. UNOs during KII in Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban Sadar in 2016 has mentioned that the conflict is a common phenomenon between them. The three chairman of Kaptai, Dighinala, and Ruma have uttered the same during KII in 2020.

⁸⁹ FGD in AA, 14 October 2016, in CC, 11 November 2016 and in EE, 20 December 2016

⁹⁰ A 78 years old interview of Rangamati Sadar, 10 October 2016

⁹¹ A Key Informant Interview in Rangamati Sadar, 6 October 2016

⁹² A FTFI in Kaptai, 20 January 2020

⁹³ A Key Informant Interview in Ruma, 27 February 2020

3.6 Militarization in CHT

From the primary sources, it has been found that in the early British ruling period, militarization was initiated in the CHT. There was an armed force for ninety-six residents of the hill in the 1870s. Moreover, in the Pakistan period, Baluch Regiment (Pakistan Army) was installed. In continuation of this, the CHT has been militarized after the liberation war of Bangladesh to suppress the Jumma people which impacted over economic, political, and social affairs of the indigenous people as the deployment of around one-third of the Bangladeshi Army in the CHT resulted the occupation of indigenous people' huge area of land. These people have been evicted from their lands, moreover, lost their livelihood and income sources. The military's present role has been observed as the supervisor of the development projects or NGO activities as well as Bengali settlement. Moreover, it has been observed to support Bengali people during the conflict between Bengali and indigenous people. The militarization is always economically unfavorable and politically hostile to indigenous people.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

Chapter Four: Economic Life of Indigenous People in CHT

This chapter has described the economic situation of the indigenous people in CHT by analyzing FTFI data along with FGD, KII, and observation as supportive information. There are many economic indicators like the unemployment rate, income-expenditure, etc. The indigenous people's economic condition has been tried to understand through the housing pattern, occupational diversity, income & expenditure, food security and habit, health, water & sanitation, education, and employment after signing the peace accord.

4.1 Housing Pattern and Household Materials

Housing is an important indicator of the economic condition of a community. The indigenous people in CHT are living in 'jhupri'⁹⁵ houses. Around 63% of the houses of indigenous communities are 'kancha'⁹⁶. There are no valuable materials inside their household. These people are living on a damp floor. Inside the house, it has been found to keep a rag made of patched cotton cloth, dirty pillows felt hard stone. More than 70% of the indigenous households in CHT do not have electricity connections in their houses. The following is the housing condition of the indigenous people as well as Bengali settlers in CHT;

Table 5: Housing Pattern of indigenous people

Ethnic Groups (%)				
Types	Chakma	Marma	Tripura	Bengali Settlers
Jhupri	10.0	10.0	20.0	10.0
Chon	10.0	30.0	20.0	10.0
Tin shed house	35.0	50.0	30.0	20.0
Building	45.0	10.0	30.0	60.0
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total counted	20	20	20	20

Source: Fieldwork 2016, 2020

In comparing the housing pattern of CHT indigenous people with Bengali, it has been found that the housing pattern of indigenous people is much weaker than the Bengali settlers, although both

⁹⁵ The 'jhupri' houses are made of earthen or mud-built floors, mud or wooden walls, roof thatched with 'chon' (a tied of sun grass) or occasionally they use the tin as shed.

⁹⁶ Made of straw, jute stick, chan.

of the ethnic groups are living in the same areas. The different financial capacities may lead to different housing patterns among the CHT indigenous people.



Figure 1: Housing condition of indigenous people in Rangamati (Source: fieldwork, 2016)

4.2 Occupational Diversity of Indigenous People

Table 6: Occupational Diversity of indigenous people

Types	Ethnic Groups (%)			
	Chakma	Marma	Tripura	Bengali Settlers
Agriculture/Jhum	30.0	40.0	45.0	10.0
Business	20.0	10.0	10.0	30.0
Service	30.0	20.0	10.0	45.0
Day Laborer	15.0	20.0	20.0	15
No profession	5.0	10.0	15.0	0.0
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total Counted	20	20	20	20

Source: Fieldwork 2016, 2020

Several occupational categories have been found like agriculture, business, service, day laborer, and no profession. The above table has revealed that indigenous people are mostly involved with agriculture. Indigenous people' participation in trade and business as well as public-private service. Though there are many industries that are under the control of Bengali people. The indigenous people are not able to enter into non-agricultural occupations due to the market controlled by the Bengali people. A significant number of indigenous people are day laborers with low wages. Moreover, it has also been found that a certain percentage of indigenous people

are now living with no work. After twenty-four years of signing the peace accord, the occupational conditions remained unchanged among the indigenous people in CHT.⁹⁷

4.3 Household Income-Expenditure and Savings

Income is related to occupation, which is also another indicator of analyzing economic life. The community's higher level of income can meet the basic needs of their livelihood. The indigenous people mainly depend on agriculture (see table 7). The household income, expenditure, and savings are as follows;

Table 7: Income-Expenditure and Savings of indigenous people

Ethnic Group	Income (Average)	Expenditure (Average)	Savings (Average)
Chakma	30,000	27,000	3,000
Marma	20,000	18,000	2,000
Tripura	15,000	14,000	1,000
Bengali	90,000	75,000	15,000

Source: Fieldwork 2016, 2020

Expenditure and savings depend on income. Indigenous people's expenditures and savings are lower as their income is poor. The per capita income of Bangladesh has touched \$1,887.97. But, the average household income of the indigenous people is BDT 21,666 (\$255) whereas expenditure is BDT 19,666 (\$231.36) and savings BDT 2,000 (\$24). The indigenous people have lost their agricultural lands for many reasons; in debt, grabbing, forced migration, and displacement, etc. The indigenous people are living under the poverty line.⁹⁸

4.4 Food Security and Food Habits

Poverty, low income, lack of diversified occupation as well as resource scarcity are some major challenges for the CHT indigenous people. Through face-to-face interviews and fieldwork methods, data has been collected on indigenous people's livelihood, food habits as well as food security. During fieldwork, it has been observed that different donor agencies are working in the CHT to enhance access to food as well as food security for the CHT people. But through KII and secondary data, it has been found that there is 44% food insecurity in the CHT. To remove the

⁹⁷ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

⁹⁸ Key Informant Interview in Rangamati Sadar, 6 October 2016 and Kaptai, 16 January 2020

food crisis, 60% of the indigenous people have received loans from different NGOs like ASA, BRAC as well as banks to remove food crisis. During fieldwork, it has been observed that Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) is working to increase productivity, but the Bengali people have been mostly benefited.

Food habits are related to income as well as the availability of resources. In considering food habits, it has been disclosed that 80% of the indigenous people take meals twice a day. The remaining 20% take meals thrice, but the food menu is not dietary. It has been seen that the CHT indigenous people are highly vulnerable as their main source of livelihood '*jhum*' cultivation has been decreased. During face-to-face interviews, it has been mentioned by 75% that they did not eat fish, meat, egg, and milk monthly, which indicates that their food is lacking in nutrition and protein. However, during fieldwork, it has been seen that 80% of the indigenous people eat rice with vegetables. About 12% of the indigenous people take fish and meat when they can afford to buy from the market. It has been observed during fieldwork in 2016 as well as 2020 that most of the indigenous people are not affordable to buy fish and meat so eat rice with vegetables, sometimes eat with salt only to remove hunger. The secondary data have revealed that the CHT was full of natural resources, especially forest which was enriched with different animals. There was no lack of protein, nutrition as well as food for the indigenous people. But this present study has shown that only 35% of the indigenous people eat pig's meat, snakes, and chickens occasionally to meet protein demand. During FGDs, the indigenous people have claimed that their houses as well as the CHT once were full of pigs, goats, dogs, snakes, forest chickens, etc. but it has been decreased.⁹⁹ The Chairman during KIIs has also disclosed the same information.¹⁰⁰

This present study has shown that indigenous people's lives in the CHT are vulnerable in sense of access to food. They are now living poor life, a lack of protein, and hunger. Over-phone conversations with the community leaders of the indigenous people of CHT in early 2021, it has been understood that the COVID-19 situation has made the situation more vulnerable. The indigenous people required an average 120 kilograms of rice monthly, and the standard price of it is BDT 6,000. But the indigenous people bought low-quality and cheap price foods and

⁹⁹ FGD in AA, 14 October 2016, in BB, 10 January 2020, and in EE, 20 December 2016

¹⁰⁰ Key Informant Interview in Kaptai on 16 January 2020, in Dighinala on 20 February 2020, and in Ruma on 27 February 2020

vegetables from the market considering their income. The Government distributed ration among the Bengali people during two months (26th March 2020 to 25th May 2020) locked down situation in Bangladesh due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bengali people have collected rations and stored them in their households. But the indigenous people sometimes lived with eating once a day, as no rations were received by them.

4.5 Education and Unemployment

The aged 15 and older who can read and write are literate. BBS has set a standard definition that a person is considered literate if s/he has ability in reading and writing. The literacy rate for Bangladesh is 56.5% which is a significant rise from 29.2% in 1981 (Bangladesh Literacy Rate, 2011). According to a study that was conducted by UNICEF in 2000-2004, access to education of indigenous girls is comparatively lower than most of the regions of Bangladesh. In 2001, BBS¹⁰¹ estimated that the literacy rate to be 89% in Chakma community while the Primary and Public Education Department (2001) revealed the literacy rate to be 65% in Bangladesh.¹⁰²

After analyzing FTFI data, it has been found that the literacy rate has been lessened among the indigenous people. Besides, there is a high dropout rate (59%) at the primary level. Enrollment at the secondary level is 20%. Only 10% of the indigenous people studied in the university level. During FGD, it has been disclosed that education has been spread in the CHT (primary education). The primary schools are situated in a distance of 3 kilometers. Although 3 kilometers is not problematic for the plain land people, it is hard to walk for the people who live at the top of the hills. Moreover, in the schools, 2-3 positions remained vacant where only 50% of the total positions were active in teaching.

Moreover, it has been observed that colleges and universities are not available in the CHT for indigenous people. Therefore, in most cases, it has been found that the Bengali people are receiving higher education. The indigenous people have mentioned that besides life insecurity, financial insolvency is the other significant challenge to receive higher education. Unemployment is related to education. The following table shows the unemployment rate of indigenous people:

¹⁰¹ BBS 2001

¹⁰² Mondol, Khan, et al. 2009

Table 8: An Unemployment rate of the indigenous people

Name of Indigenous Group	Unemployment Rate
Chakma	35%
Marma	85%
Tripura	45%

Source: Fieldwork, 2016, 2020

The average unemployment rate is 55%. It has been seen that most of the employed people engaged with informal work (works except private-government services). The formal employed (engaged with private and government services) rate is very poor among indigenous people. Moreover, it has been seen that the skills development, technical as well as vocational training facilities are limited in CHT for the indigenous people. The agricultural and non-agricultural self-employment among indigenous people has been found. Among Chakma people, the employment rate in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors is higher than the Marma and Tripura.¹⁰³ The Bengali people are mostly engaged with the small and medium trade, business.¹⁰⁴

4.6 Water, Sanitation and Health

Water is very important for life's existence on this earth. But it has been found that there is a lack of this basic need in CHT especially, for indigenous people. It has been found that pure and fresh drinking water is absent in the CHT. The sources of water are as follows;

Table 9: Status of water, sanitation, and health of indigenous people

Ethnic Groups (%)				
Sources	Chakma	Marma	Tripura	Bengali
Tape	20	5	5	40
Tube-well	25	5	5	35
Deep dug-well (Kua)	0	15	20	5
Chhara¹⁰⁵	15	25	35	10
Rain	5	15	15	5
Pound, River, Canal water	35	35	40	5
Total %	100	100	100	100
Total Counted	20	20	20	20

Source: Fieldwork, 2016, 2020

The above-mentioned sources of water have been categorized into reliable (safe) and unreliable

¹⁰³ A Key Informant Interview in Kaptai, 16 January 2020

¹⁰⁴ Key Informant interview in Rangamati Sadar on 6 October 2016, Bandarban Sadar on 10 November 2016, Kaptai on 16 January 2020

¹⁰⁵ It means the streams originating from the mountain

(unsafe). The reliable water includes tape, tube-well, and boiled water where the unreliable sources of water are river, ponds, chhara, canal, kua, etc. It has been found that the CHT people used safe water for drinking. The above table has disclosed that the majority of the indigenous people (81.67%) have no access to safe water.

The face-to-face interview data has revealed that the number of dug wells has decreased and the people are facing a water crisis. The people have to go long distances from their homes to find and collect drinking water. Almost 80% of the respondents of FTFI have mentioned that the deep-dug water is filled with germs, which is harmful to their health.

Moreover, no hygienic sanitation has been found among the indigenous people in the hills. This hill people are used to open places for excretion which washed away rivers, ponds, and canals. Indigenous people use this water for cooking, bathing, and washing. Due to this, these people suffered much from different kinds of diseases like dysentery, diarrhea, and skin diseases. The FGD data has shown that most of the time people suffer stomach pain.¹⁰⁶ As there are not enough health amenities so, 35% Chakma, 40% Marma, and more than half (55%) of Tripura depend on self-treatment.

¹⁰⁶ FGD in AA, 14 October 2016, in CC, 11 November 2016 and in FF, 25 February 2020

Chapter Five: Conclusion

An entitled “Economic Situation of Indigenous People in Bangladesh: A study on Chittagong Hill Tracts” has been conducted to get economic insights into the development dynamics of indigenous people in the CHT. Both qualitative and quantitative method has been used to complete this study. Information has been gathered from Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban District, which is known as CHT. FTFI, FGD, observation, and KII techniques have been used and conducted two times; three months in 2016 (October to December) and two months in 2020 (January-February). Moreover, different literature has been reviewed from January 2016 to March 2021 to provide updated information in this paper.

The indigenous people in CHT once were living independently with enriched natural resources and an economy. However, the natural resources especially forest resources have been reduced profoundly due to different national development programs i.e., reserve forest, Bengali settlement, Kaptai Dam and KPM construction, horticulture and rubber plantation, militarization in the CHT which made for the sake of State economic progress. State’s national development programs and natural resources exploitation adversely impacted the economy and living standards of the CHT indigenous people since those people’ livelihood and economy were based on those natural resources.

Analyzing primary data, it has been found that most of the industrial development occurred during the Pakistan period (1947-1971). Besides, reserved forest act, the Pakistan government constructed the Karnafuli paper mill to exploit forest as well as Kaptai Dam by exploiting water resources that were unfavorable for the economy of the indigenous people. Due to Kaptai Dam, a total of 54,000 acres’ land and natural resources have been submerged into water. Moreover, 60,000 indigenous people have been migrated. Also, the government restricted the entry of the indigenous people into the reserved forest due to raw materials collection for the Karnafuli paper mills. These development policies grabbed indigenous people’ land as well as sources of livelihood which impacted income and economy.

From 1979 to 1984, around 400,000 Bengalis have been settled in the CHT that increased the population ratio gradually. Now, 65.60% of Bengali people are living in the CHT is controlling the local market economy. Militarization is another policy of the Bangladesh government to

suppress and control the indigenous people in the CHT as well as the exploitation of natural resources and land. However, to restore the economy, a peace accord was signed in 1997 between Bangladesh government and the PCJSS. Although it has been passed twenty-four years, the economic condition of the indigenous people in the CHT has remained unchanged.

Connecting to the national development programs adopted through exploiting natural resources, the present economic condition of the CHT indigenous people has been analyzed. The living condition is considered as the most important factor to analyze the economic situation of people's lives. Moreover, housing patterns sometimes represent the household economy. Different financial capacities may lead to different housing conditions that represent inequalities. Through this study, it has been revealed that the indigenous people have been living in substandard houses, which indicates the weaker financial condition.

To analyze the present economic activities of the indigenous people, the occupation, income-expenditures and savings have been discussed. It has been found that indigenous people are now living on a low income, notably, BDT 21,666 (\$255) whereas expenditure is BDT 19,666 (\$231.36) and savings BDT 2,000 (\$24). This income, expenditure, and savings indicate that indigenous people are going through economic hardship. Moreover, it has been seen as a very limited income-generating activities. Trade and business are pre-dominated by the Bengali people.

This study has revealed that the education rate is not so high among indigenous people. The enrollment rate at the primary level is high, but the dropout rate is also very high. It has been revealed through this study that the higher education receiving rate among indigenous people is lower due to their economic insolvency, the people mentioned. Moreover, it has found an average 55% unemployment rate among indigenous people. Among the 45% employed people, 89% are engaged in informal activities. Moreover, skills development, technical as well as vocational training facilities are very limited.

Food security depends on the economic condition. Also, food security ensures proper food habits. This present study has disclosed that there is a food crisis in the CHT among indigenous people. Due to low income, indigenous people are unable to buy sufficient food, protein, and nutrition from the market. The food that indigenous people use to eat is excluding protein items.

The economic conditions also influence on the safe water, sanitation system as well as health-seeking behavior. As like as housing patterns, the economic solvency provokes to ensure safe drinking water as well as hygiene sanitation, and treatment privately. This study has revealed that 81.67% of indigenous people have no access to safe water. Water supply is not available to indigenous people. Due to drinking and using unsafe water, people suffer from different diseases. The health amenities are not well enough and the indigenous people depend on their treatment at home. Water, sanitation, and health amenities are not affordable for indigenous people due to the insolvent economic condition.

The indigenous people's main economic source and way of life is related to natural resources and forests. Due to exploitation of forests and natural resources through different national development programs for State's economic growth only since the CHT indigenous people's economic standard has not been developed simultaneously after twenty-four years of signing the peace accord.

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