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Md Mahedi^{1*}, Shabrin Jahan Shaili¹, Arafatur Rahman Shihab²

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Livelihood Diversification as a Reduce to Rural Vulnerability in Bangladesh: A Review

Md Mahedi^{1*}, Shabrin Jahan Shaili¹, Arafatur Rahman Shihab²

¹Dept. of Agronomy and Agricultural Extension, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh.

²Dept. of Physics, Tejgaon College, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh.

*Corresponding author Email: s2010766130@ru.ac.bd

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the many aspects of livelihood diversification in rural Bangladesh, particularly emphasizing its causes, consequences, and policy implications. Because natural catastrophes, economic shocks, and restricted possibilities are commonplace in rural Bangladesh, diversifying one's income stream is crucial to fostering resilience and lowering poverty. Secondary sources like academic journals, government documents, online repositories, foreign reports, and local case studies were used to inform and corroborate the recommended integrated farming approaches. The study looks at the theoretical underpinnings, relevance, and conceptual framework of livelihood diversification in Bangladesh. It also evaluates the impact of various methods on social capital, food security, and stable income. It highlights how diversification may disperse risk and provide new revenue streams to boost rural resilience. This research adds to the current conversation on rural development and poverty reduction by analyzing the dynamics of livelihood diversification in Bangladesh. The findings will be helpful to development experts and policymakers who want to help rural families achieve resilient and sustainable livelihoods in Bangladesh and also to find out the research gap in this area.

1. Introduction

Rural communities in Bangladesh have always been vulnerable to natural disasters due to their geographic position, socioeconomic conditions, and frequency (Alam, 2017). Once the backbone of the country's economic expansion, the agricultural sector is now more susceptible to shocks from the environment, the market, and policy changes. These difficulties have increased the instability of rural livelihoods, making it harder for individuals to maintain their standard of living and income (Ruel et al., 2010).

Historically, most people in rural Bangladeshi villages have made farming their primary source of income and a daily need (Sen et al., 2021). However, several socioeconomic and environmental

problems threatened this reliance as time passed, necessitating increasing diversification. Due to population expansion and rising demands on land and resources, rural communities have had to adapt to new conditions (Wassie, 2020). Due to the adaptation, Rural families' means of subsistence have significantly changed, as non-farm jobs have progressively been included alongside traditional agricultural practices.

In the modern world, Rural Bangladesh is more vulnerable due to environmental degradation, persistent poverty, and a rise in the frequency of natural disasters, including floods, cyclones, and riverbank erosion (Chumky et al., 2022). Many rural communities face even more difficult situations due to persistent problems caused by climate change, falling agricultural production, and restricted access to markets and resources.

Given these vulnerabilities, diversifying one's income stream is now more crucial than ever to increasing the resilience of Bangladesh's rural people (Khan et al., 2022). Households may reduce their dependence on any one source of income—whether from small businesses, migration, or off-farm employment—and distribute risk by diversifying their sources. This diversity increases the resilience of rural communities to environmental and economic shocks while stabilizing family incomes (Rahmanto et al., 2021).

However, there are challenges associated with diversifying one's revenue stream. Numerous rural families also have formidable obstacles due to restricted access to money, education, and infrastructure, in addition to societal limitations that may hinder their ability to seize new chances. Families may find it more difficult to fully benefit from diversification initiatives when appropriate legislative frameworks and solid institutional support are lacking (Sunghye Moon, n.d.).

This research investigates the complex interactions in Bangladesh between rural vulnerability, livelihood diversification, and development. By analyzing the historical context, current challenges, and strategic solutions of rural families, this study aims to improve understanding of the factors influencing patterns of diversification and their consequences for mitigating poverty, guaranteeing food security, and promoting general welfare. Through a comprehensive analysis, the research seeks to provide insights into developing effective policies and programs that support rural families in achieving sustainable lives.

2. Methodology

Academic journals, government documents, and online repositories were examples of secondary sources employed in the study. These sources obtained important information and corroborating records for the recommended integrated farming approaches to guarantee an exhaustive investigation. Data was combined with reports from foreign organizations and local case studies.

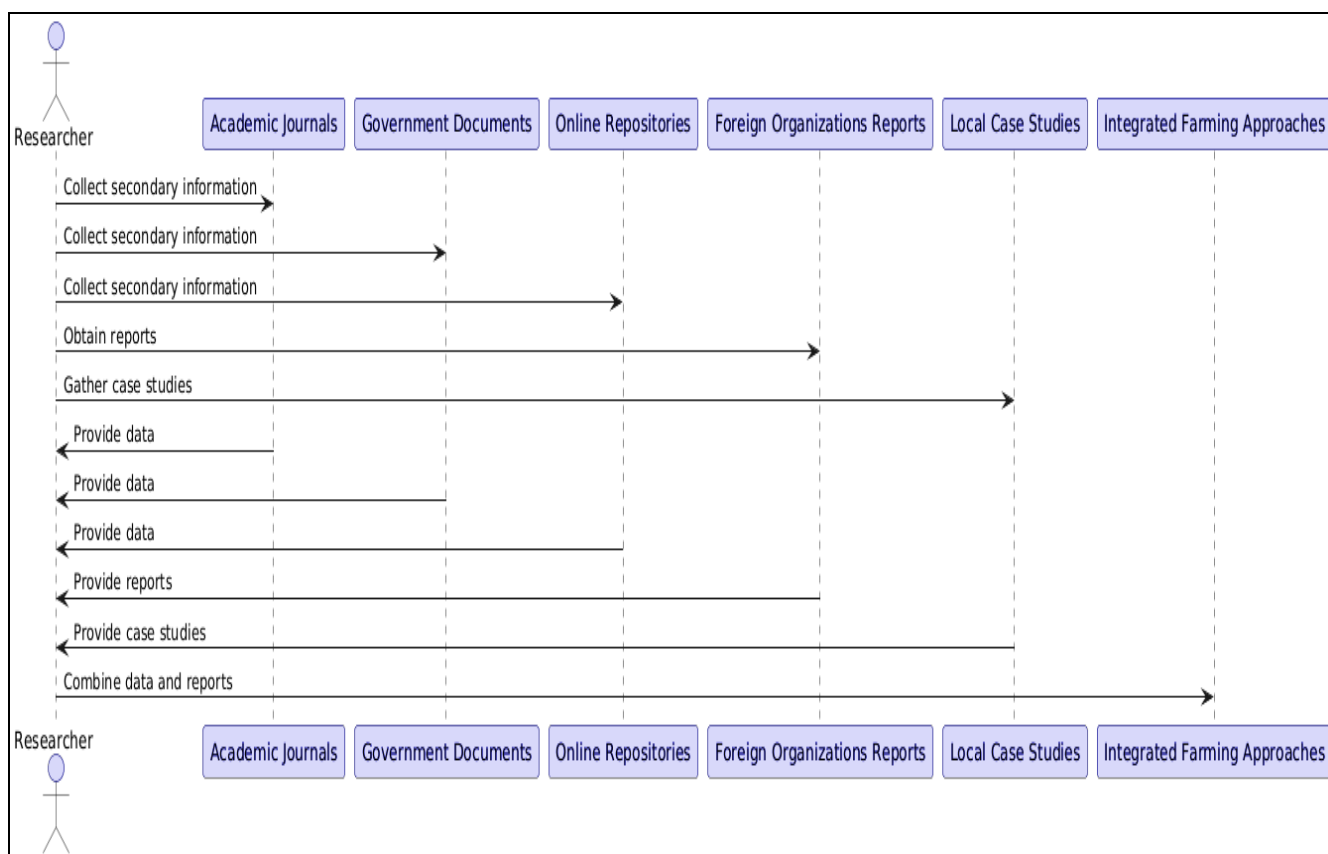


Figure: Methodology of Livelihood Diversification as a Reduce to Rural Vulnerability in Bangladesh.

3. Rural Livelihood Status in Bangladesh

3.1. Rural Livelihood Diversification in Bangladesh

Addressing Bangladesh's social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities requires diversifying rural livelihoods (Rahman & Hickey, 2020). Rural communities, which have historically prioritized agriculture, are embracing a variety of on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm activities to lower risks and boost resilience. On-farm diversity helps spread the risk involved in agriculture by raising various crops, including livestock and aquaculture (Bernzen et al., 2022). Agriculture, processing, and trading labor are off-farm ventures that provide additional income. Small enterprises, wage labor, and services are examples of significant non-farm diversification in areas with little agricultural potential. Local and international migration is substantial because remittances support families and offer funds for further diversity (Pervez et al., 2024). Using an adaptive approach, Rural families may reduce risks, preserve steady incomes, and bolster their resilience to ongoing challenges (Davies et al., 2009).

3.2. Rural Livelihood Vulnerability in Bangladesh

Bangladeshi rural families are very vulnerable because of the intricate interactions between social, economic, and environmental elements that determine how vulnerable their rural life is (Al Mamun

et al., 2023). The country's location makes it particularly susceptible to natural disasters, including floods, cyclones, riverbank erosion, and droughts, which regularly damage infrastructure and reduce agricultural production (Al Mamun et al., 2023). The consequences of climate change, by making these environmental issues more frequent and severe, put conventional agricultural practices at even greater risk (Uddin et al., 2022).

Widespread poverty, limited access to financial resources, and unpredictable agricultural markets characterize Bangladesh's rural economy (Lázár et al., 2020). Small-scale farmers usually face declining production because they have less access to modern agricultural techniques, depend too much on a limited number of vital crops, and their land is deteriorating. Households in the agriculture sector are more sensitive to price shocks and crop failures because they lack emergency income sources and diversification. Rural communities are less resilient to economic hardship because they have less access to banks, markets, and other necessities.

Social factors, including high population density, land fragmentation, and uneven access to healthcare and education, exacerbate the vulnerability of rural areas (Vieira et al., 2020). Population expansion intensifies competition for limited resources and land, leading to smaller farms and decreased agricultural viability. Another factor weakening the social cohesion of rural communities is migration; a growing number of individuals leave rural areas for cities or other countries to pursue better opportunities, leaving behind an elderly population that is less adaptable to change (Srivastava, 2020).

4. Livelihood diversification and its factors

In rural Bangladesh, the drivers of livelihood diversification are shaped by a complex interaction of environmental, economic, social, and demographic variables (Hossain et al., 2023). The distinct topography of Bangladesh and its vulnerability to calamities like floods, cyclones, and erosion of riverbanks have had a substantial impact on livelihood approaches. These persistent environmental problems force rural communities to adopt alternative sources of income to lessen the risks associated with agriculture (Anukwonke et al., 2022). Furthermore, climate change's effects, including altered rainfall patterns, salt intrusion, and rising sea levels, worsen these vulnerabilities. As a result, people are forced to search for other sources of income, and agricultural activities become increasingly unstable.

Economic factors have a significant impact on income diversification strategies as well. The rural economy is often beset by poverty, inequality, unstable markets, declining agricultural productivity, limited access to markets and funding, and a significant reliance on small-scale farming. Bangladesh's economic connection to the global economy includes remittances from migrant workers, which help with diversification (Chowdhury et al., 2023). However, there are drawbacks, such as increased market rivalry and unstable prices for agricultural products. In response to these economic risks, families in rural areas diversify their sources of income by working in wage jobs, starting small businesses, and moving (Al-Maruf et al., 2022). This lessens dependency on a single source of income and stabilizes revenues. Demographic and societal factors further influence patterns of livelihood diversification. Families' choice of diversification tactics is greatly influenced by social networks, age, gender, education, and information availability (Georgiadou & Syed, 2021). For example, people with more social and educational standing are usually better positioned to consider career opportunities outside agriculture. Moreover, population growth, terrain fragmentation, and migration affect labor availability and the requirement for various livelihood options. These factors interact intricately to

create the livelihood diversification choices of rural households in Bangladesh, requiring them to overcome weaknesses and build resilience (Aravindakshan et al., 2020). These factors must be understood to create interventions and policies that promote sustainable rural development.

5. Differentiating Livelihoods in Various Ways

In Bangladesh, diversifying one's income stream can take many forms as rural residents seek to increase their ability to withstand economic and environmental risks (Jamal et al., 2023). Diversification on and off the farm offers distinct approaches to risk mitigation and improved living standards. "On-farm diversification" is the process of increasing or enhancing agricultural activities inside the existing farm operations of a household (Chmieliński et al., 2023). This might include growing various crops, using aquaculture, or using mixed farming methods that combine animal husbandry with agricultural production. Reducing reliance on a single crop or livestock and broadening their on-farm pursuits might help households mitigate the impact of disease outbreaks and crop loss. Additionally, this kind of diversification encourages more ecologically friendly farming practices by empowering people to use the resources and land they can access.

Off-farm diversification is the term for ventures related to agriculture that bring money away from the farm (Salvioni et al., 2020). A few examples are sharecropping, wage work in agriculture, and services, including transportation of agricultural products, irrigation, and specialized plowing. Off-farm activities provide a hedge against the volatility of direct farming while also functioning as an additional revenue stream associated with the agricultural sector. This type of diversification is significant since it allows people to continue farming while searching for other forms of income in locations where arable land is scarce or destroyed.

Non-farm diversification includes profitable ventures that have no connection to agriculture whatsoever. This includes trade, construction, small-scale enterprises, handicrafts, and migration for employment in cities or abroad. For rural families looking to reduce their reliance on agriculture, non-farm diversification is crucial, given the declining agricultural productivity and growing dangers posed by climate change. Non-farm activities, which often provide more steady and sometimes more considerable earnings, enhance a household's capacity to invest in better living conditions, healthcare, and education and raise their overall financial stability.

To adequately address the issues brought about by rural vulnerability and create more durable and resilient means of subsistence, Bangladeshi rural households must include three different types of livelihood diversification: off-farm, non-farm, and on-farm (Siankwilimba et al., 2023).

6. Diversification of Livelihoods' Effect on Rural Resilience

For Bangladeshi rural communities, income diversification has become increasingly crucial to lessen their vulnerability to natural disasters, environmental degradation, and economic shocks (Hoq et al., 2022). Rural residents want to become more resilient and less dependent on agriculture by diversifying other sources of income. Because it increases social capital and community cohesion, enhances food security and nutrition, and supports economic stability—all of which are critical for surviving the dangers and uncertainties these communities face—this variety significantly impacts rural resilience.

Diversifying one's sources of income offers significant benefits that significantly boost community resilience in rural Bangladesh (Islam & Walkerden, 2022). A steady source of income is one of the most obvious advantages. Rural families may reduce their financial risk from factors like crop failures, market fluctuations, seasonal jobs, and dependence on a single source of income by mixing agricultural and non-agricultural activities. People may ensure more steady incomes using this technique, which spreads risk and generates income year-round. This is essential to budgeting, saving for the future, and managing financial shocks.

Diversifying income sources promotes financial stability and enhances nutrition and food security (García-Díez et al., 2021). Families that diversify their agricultural practices by raising livestock and aquaculture or cultivating various crops may be more readily able to satisfy food needs, and nutritional diversity can be improved. Such varied farming practices promote food self-sufficiency and reduce reliance on market purchases. The additional money gained from non-farm and off-farm activities also contributes to better health outcomes for the family by enabling them to purchase a broader range of nutrient-dense meals.

Diversifying one's economic stream also promotes social capital and communal cohesiveness. In addition to offering fresh chances for cooperation, knowledge exchange, and support among family members, households involved in various economic pursuits often see an increase in their social networks. These social ties are significant in crises because they make sharing resources, information, and group support easier. By allowing food-secure and financially stable families to engage in events and collective problem-solving actively, diverse livelihoods contribute to community resilience (Batung et al., 2021).

Increasing the diversity of one's revenue streams may improve social capital, food security, and economic stability in rural Bangladesh. All these elements are crucial in enhancing resilience in currently vulnerable areas.

7. Barriers to Effective Livelihood Diversification

Although livelihood diversification is essential in Bangladesh to boost rural resilience, several significant obstacles impede its effectiveness (Kundu et al., 2020). Restricted access to financial resources is a significant barrier since many rural people cannot get the credit or investment capital needed to start or grow a range of revenue-generating companies. The lack of access to education and skill development exacerbates this financial disparity by preparing individuals less well for non-farm or off-farm employment opportunities.

Inadequate infrastructure also hampered initiatives to diversify. Due to limited market accessibility, unstable energy sources, and poor transportation networks, rural populations find engaging in and maintaining various activities challenging (Diwakar & Shepherd, 2022). These infrastructure shortcomings diminish diversification's economic potential, obstructing product transportation, market access, and involvement in small-scale businesses.

Social and cultural obstacles exacerbate the dilemma. In certain areas, conventional gender roles and societal conventions restrict women's engagement in non-agricultural occupations, depriving households of critical alternative revenue streams (Jabeen et al., 2020). Furthermore, a lack of social networks and knowledge frequently disconnects rural families from prospective prospects, as they may be uninformed of other livelihood alternatives or unable to connect with others for help and direction.

Other significant risks include environmental problems, such as the depletion of natural resources and the growing consequences of climate change (Kumar et al., 2021). As land quality deteriorates and agricultural harvests become more uncertain, rural people's capacity to maintain traditional and diverse livelihoods is seriously harmed.

Diversification projects in rural Bangladesh are hampered even more by a lack of institutional support and weak policy frameworks (Thomas, 2020). Lack of substantial government assistance, effective rural development programs, and policies designed to encourage and maintain diversity make it difficult for many rural families to overcome these issues. Therefore, these intricate limitations significantly restrict the efficacy of livelihood diversification in rural Bangladesh to reduce vulnerability and promote resilience (Ha-Mim et al., 2020).

8. Policy Recommendations

The policy environment in Bangladesh significantly affects the effectiveness with which rural people may diversify their sources of income to reduce vulnerability and boost resilience (Nath et al., 2020). Present regulations often do not go far enough to promote diversity. Conventional agricultural practices continue to receive much governmental attention, with little emphasis on developing non-farm or off-farm revenue-generating sectors. This limited focus may make it harder for rural residents to diversify their sources of income, leaving them more susceptible to changes in the economy and environmental challenges.

More comprehensive and integrated policies that actively promote and support livelihood diversification must be implemented to address these gaps. Enhancing rural residents' access to credit and financial services so they may invest in various revenue-generating businesses should be the top priority for essential policy measures. Furthermore, maintaining the economic viability of multiple livelihoods depends on enhancing infrastructure, including market access, energy supply, and transportation networks.

It is also essential to prioritize rural-specific education and skill-training programs. These programs would allow people to explore employment possibilities other than traditional agriculture (Maïga et al., 2020). Governments should also address social and cultural hurdles, especially those that prevent women and other marginalized groups from participating in diversification projects. Promoting gender equality and social participation in economic activities is imperative to guarantee that diversification initiatives benefit every member of society.

Enhancing institutional support and establishing targeted programs for rural development are essential to sustaining efforts to diversify livelihoods in Bangladesh (Salam & Bauer, 2022). Promoting collaboration between the corporate sector and governmental and non-governmental groups is necessary to create an atmosphere favorable to diversification. Furthermore, policy frameworks must include climate adaptation approaches to help rural residents cope with environmental issues that threaten their livelihoods.

To summaries, a thorough policy reform is needed to support diverse income streams, enhance infrastructure, raise education and skill development, and resolve social inequalities. This reorientation is essential to using livelihood diversification to lower vulnerability and increase resilience in Bangladesh's rural areas.

9. Conclusion

For Bangladeshi rural families, diversifying their sources of income has become essential to addressing the multifaceted issues of social injustice, environmental change, and unstable economies. Rural communities may increase their resilience, lower poverty rates, and enhance food security by participating in various revenue-generating activities on or off the farm. Nevertheless, there are significant obstacles to this approach. Rural families may find it difficult to fully use the potential for diversification due to various factors, including entrenched sociocultural barriers, inadequate infrastructure, restricted access to financial resources, and a lack of skills.

Addressing these obstacles with targeted measures is essential to realizing the full potential of livelihood diversification. To create an atmosphere that promotes diversity, policymakers, development professionals, and researchers must work together. This entails investing in rural infrastructure, boosting social safety nets, promoting skill development, and extending access to financial services. Furthermore, the success of these projects depends on an all-encompassing and integrated policy plan that addresses the unique needs of vulnerable groups, such as women and youth, while simultaneously promoting gender equality.

A refocusing policy is necessary for Bangladesh to reap the full benefits of diversifying sources of income. In addition to tackling pressing environmental and economic concerns, this entails developing a supportive institutional structure enabling rural families to flourish in the face of hardship. Using a varied approach, Bangladesh may enable its rural residents to create resilient and sustainable livelihoods, lessen poverty, and promote long-term development in the face of current and future problems. The experiences of specific vulnerable groups, the long-term effects of diversity, and the role of technology must all be considered in future studies.

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