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FORCED TO WORK: RIVERBANK EROSION DISPLACEMENT AND THE RISE OF CHILD LABOR IN JAMUNA CHARLAND BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how a large number of *char*land children in the Jamuna riverine habitat are compelled to enter the labor force. Using interviews with purposively selected households and children, along with observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), case studies, and informal discussions, the study combines qualitative and quantitative data to provide a clear picture of the issue. Findings show that children in Char Chhinna village of Sirajganj District are displaced repeatedly every year due to riverbank erosion. After losing their original habitat, some families (*uthuli*) stay with others without payment, while others (*chukani*) pay for temporary shelter. Continuous displacement causes severe losses, including standing crops, agricultural land, household belongings, social networks, livestock, and other essential assets, pushing *char*land parents to send their children into both paid and unpaid labor involving odd and unpredictable jobs, to survive their households within the harsh Jamuna riverbed environment. In this isolated and disaster-prone *char*land, where there are poor roads, no electricity, limited media access, and no institutional support, awareness about children's potential remains low. As a result, child labor limits access to education, recreation, and increases the risk of early marriage, ultimately harming their physical, psychological, social, educational, and recreational development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is globally acknowledged as one of the countries most at risk from climate change, consistently ranking high in assessments of vulnerability to global warming and its impacts. This risk is further intensified by the shifting geomorphology of its unstable river systems, making environmental conditions highly uncertain and severe. The riverbank erosion displacement is such an impediment that it displaces millions of people and is bound to push them into a world of insecurity in Bangladesh (Baki, 2014; Hasan et al., 2024; Shamim et al., 2025). The riverbank erosion displaces are affected by this depredation and undergo severe danger that incurs losses to their physical appurtenance, that the social structure is ruthlessly disrupted (Ali et al., 2021; Blaikie et al., 2003; Brammer, 1990; Ferdos et al., 2024; Few, 2003; Islam & Rashid, 2011; Smith, 1996). For persistence,

the riverbank erosion displaces have to undertake various types of strategies to reduce economic and social insecurities, and hardship induced by the catastrophic extreme event of bank erosion displacement (Alam et al., 2025; Ali et al., 2021; Islam et al., 2022; Mitra & Das, 2024). They are professionally agrarian but all these insecurities enforced the *choura* (related to *char*land) agrarian respondents to accept alternative farming and non-farming work with low payment for keeping their subsistence. To maintain familial livelihood in such precarious habitats, the *uthuli* and *chukani* agrarian professionals are engaged in odd non-farming and farming jobs for earning a daily livelihood and also have to force their children to work in both domestic and production sectors (Islam et al., 2022; Islam, 2017; S. Islam & Nurullah, 2021; Karim, 2014; Siddik et al., 2017).

The children of Char Chhinna village are found to be extremely vulnerable to the alarming and adverse livelihood conditions caused by recurrent flooding and riverbank erosion (Mahedi et al., 2025). During displacement, many children experience intense fear, and some display temporary changes in their daily behavior (Islam, 2017; Siddik et al., 2017). A portion of these children exhibit more severe and prolonged reactions, which may be attributed to their limited access to schooling as rural and *char*land inhabitants. Moreover, poverty often forces parents to sacrifice their children's education so they can contribute to family income through child labor (Alam et al., 2025). It noted that over 85 percent of displaced households engaged their children in unpaid domestic work, while nearly 40 percent involved their children in wage labor (Ali et al., 2021; Podder et al., 2021). Thus, displaced children become part of familial survival strategies, compelled to support household subsistence in whatever ways they can (Billah et al., 2023; Ferdos et al., 2024).

In Char Chhinna, *uthuli* and *chukani* children commonly engage in unpaid family activities, including assisting their fathers in shopkeeping, working in crop fields, carrying logs, or helping their mothers with nut frying and other domestic chores (Brammer, 1990; Islam & Nurullah, 2021; Karim, 2014). Many also participate in wage-earning activities, often working 3–4 hours a day in agricultural tasks during peak seasons. At times, they work the entire day in labor-intensive activities such as brick grinding, selling nuts, pulling rickshaws, roadside planting, and gathering straw, or collecting cow dung. Despite their hard work, these children frequently face exploitation in terms of payment and working conditions (Hasan et al., 2024; Hossain & Fahad, 2023).

As a result, *uthuli* and *chukani* children are deprived of opportunities to enjoy the full stages of childhood development. Although they biologically progress through each life stage, they remain deprived of adequate familial, social, and psychological support (Keya & Harun, 2007). Consequently, they are not properly socialized according to societal norms and expectations. Ultimately, the livelihoods of these children are deeply shaped by the eco-political and structural inequalities of society (Evans & English, 2002; Mahbub & Nazrul, 1991; Zaman, 1988). They must struggle in an extremely competitive and exploitative labor market to secure any form of employment, leading to a life marked by hardship and uncertainty (Islam & Rashid, 2011; Rasid, 1993; Shahriar, 2021; Shamim et al., 2025). Although child labor is legally prohibited, economic distress drives their participation in such activities, which adversely affects their schooling and overall socialization in the long run. The study examines how a large number of *char*land children (*Uthuli* and *Chukani*) are impelled to join the existing labor force of Char Chhinna village, annually affected and displaced by the riverbank erosion attack of the Jamuna River.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Char Chhinna is a medium-sized *char*land village in Monsurnagar Union under Kazipur Upazila of Sirajganj District in north-western Bangladesh. The upazila is bordered by Sarishabari of Jamalpur in the east and northeast, Sariakandi of Bogra in the north, Dhunat of Bogra in the west, and Sirajganj Sadar in the south and southwest. As one of the most erosion-prone areas along the Jamuna River, Kazipur contains several vulnerable *char*lands, and Char Chhinna was purposively selected as the study area. The village is divided into four parts by three channels of the Jamuna, giving it the name Chhinna, meaning "fragmented" in Bangla. Frequent and severe erosion makes many households homeless and landless. Public services are very limited: a small community clinic operates only two days a week, transportation is poor, and residents rely on bicycles and country boats. It takes about 3–4 hours to reach the upazila headquarters and around two hours to reach the union parishad. As both *uthuli* and *chukani* displaced households are widely present in this village, Char Chhinna provides an appropriate setting for investigating the research problem.

The total number of the village is 490, of which 110 have been displaced by riverbank erosion. These displaced households fall into two categories: *uthuli* (n = 41) and *chukani* (n = 69). All 110 displaced households, along with 95 *uthuli* children and 135 *chukani* children (230 children in total), were included as units of analysis in this study. Both the *uthuli* and *chukani* households and their children served as the primary sampling units. Data were gathered through direct interviews with the children and their parents.

The majority of the data gathered and examined for this study is quantitative in nature. To gain a deeper knowledge of the social reality, qualitative interpretations are included. Only primary and empirical data from the study's fieldwork are used in the analysis. This research are properly cited and includes relevant literature when analyzing, contrasting, or disputing the findings of other scholars to support its claims and place the findings within the larger body of knowledge.

Structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were the two main instruments of the social survey method used in this study to collect primary and empirical data. In order to have a thorough grasp of their lived experiences, 230 displaced children from 110 households were directly interviewed along with their parents. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), methodical field observations, and five in-depth case studies with purposively chosen participants were used to gather additional qualitative data to supplement the survey results. Participants for the FGDs and case studies were selected purposively based on clearly defined criteria relevant to the study objectives. These criteria included direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation, length of residence in the study area, involvement or exposure to the relevant events, and the ability to provide in-depth information. For FGDs, participants were selected to ensure diversity in age, gender, and socio-economic background to capture a range of perspectives. Case study participants were chosen based on the intensity and uniqueness of their experiences, willingness to participate, and their capacity to articulate detailed personal narratives relevant to the research focus. In order to obtain more contextual information, four informal interviews with Monsurnagar Union Parishad leaders and other community members were conducted. Structured and semi-structured interview schedules, each lasting roughly thirty minutes, were used in the data gathering process. This period gave respondents enough time to fully express their opinions while keeping the study's major questions front and centre. Checklist-based methods took about 20 to 25 minutes for each adult participant in order to collect qualitative data. Children, on the other hand, took a little longer about 30 to 35 minutes because of their poorer reading skills, varying comprehension levels, and requirement for more explanation.

IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) and Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Corp., Redmond, WA, USA) were used to process and analyze the quantitative data gathered during fieldwork. A descriptive analytical approach was used to decipher the patterns present in the dataset. The quantitative results were arranged into straightforward cross-tabulations for increased analytical depth, displaying percentages and frequencies with pertinent graphs and photographs. Clearer comparisons and a better comprehension of the interactions between important variables were made possible by these tabular and graphic presentations. Conversely, thematic analysis, a well-known method that enables methodical coding, theme classification, and careful interpretation of participant narratives, was used to analyze the qualitative data. This approach ensured that the perspectives of the participants were accurately and meaningfully reflected while enabling the identification of dominating themes and recurrent issues.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Catastrophic Effects on the Displaced Children

A significant body of sociological writings (Anderson, 1991; Durkheim, 1912; Lipset & Bendix, 1959; Sorokin, 1927) highlights the robust relationship between socioeconomic background and patterns of social transformation within society. In the context of Char Chhinna village, several riparian households originating from Maznabari and Saldoho in the Sirajganj District have been forced to evacuate due to riverbank erosion. They can be divided into four groups based on how often they were displaced: once, twice, three times, and more than three times. The present study's findings align with those of Wiest (1991), who observed that 64 percent of surveyed homes had been moved at least once owing of erosion. Similarly, Mahbub & Nazrul (1991) reported that 40 percent of impacted households suffered one to three times of displacement, 24 percent endured four to six times of displacements, 15 percent encountered seven to nine times of displacements, and 25 percent had been uprooted ten times or more (Islam & Rashid, 2011; Islam & Nurullah, 2021; Rana, 2017; Shamim et al., 2025).

The results in Table 1 show that the lives of displaced children in Char Chhinna have been severely disrupted by riverbank erosion, with a number of devastating consequences felt entirely. Homelessness, displacement, income erosion, loss of family assets, lack of organizational assistance, inadequate road network, and lack of energy are six key impacts that 100% of the child respondents from *uthuli* (n = 95) and *chukani* (n = 135) mentioned. These effects highlight the severe vulnerability of all impacted households and are the most direct and widespread effects of erosion-induced displacement (Brammer, 1990; Hossain & Fahad, 2023). A significant percentage of children were impacted by a number of other disastrous consequences. Widespread harm to material belongings, housing, and vital sources of food and income is shown by the loss of household utensils (97.39%), demolition of dwelling homes (97.39%), and destruction of standing crops (95.22%) (Few, 2003; Paul, 1997; Paul & Routray, 2011). In a similar way, the loss of domestic accessories (90%), cultivable land (91.30%), and culinary supplies (93.49%) demonstrate the depletion of common family resources and productive assets. The elimination of the *bairburi* or harvesting yard (89.57%) and restricted media access (90%) further highlight the disruption of livelihoods and communication channels.

Table 1: Catastrophic Effects on the Displaced Households

Catastrophic Effects	Displacee Children							
	Uthuli N=95		*Chukani* N=135		Total N=230		Majority	
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Homelessness	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Displacement	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Income erosion	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Losing familial assets	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Lack of organisational support	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Poor road network	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Lack of electricity	95	41.30	135	58.70	230	100		1st
Losing household utensils	91	40.63	133	59.38	224	97.39		2nd
Destroying dwelling houses	93	41.52	131	58.48	224	97.39		2nd
Destroying standing crops	91	41.55	128	58.45	219	95.22		3rd
Losing kitchen materials	93	43.26	122	56.74	215	93.49		4th
Losing cultivable Land	87	41.43	123	58.57	210	91.30		5th
Losing domestic accessories	78	37.68	129	62.32	207	90.00		6th
Limited media access	78	37.68	129	62.32	207	90.00		6th
Losing *Bairburi* (Harvesting Yard)	85	41.26	121	58.74	206	89.57		7th
Landlessness	74	37.00	126	63.00	200	86.96		8th
Destroying social contracts	78	82.11	118	87.41	196	85.22		9th
Destroying somaj networks	82	86.32	110	81.48	192	83.48		10th
Destroying Trees	73	38.42	117	98.32	190	82.61		11th
Forced Engagement in Odd Jobs	72	41.62	101	58.38	173	75.22		12th
Selling Assets	69	41.32	98	58.68	167	72.61		13th
Destroying garden	61	39.87	92	60.13	153	66.52		14th
Losing furniture	53	41.73	74	58.27	127	55.22		15th
Child Marriage	21	39.62	32	60.38	53	23.04		16th
Dropout from Schooling	18	38.30	29	61.70	47	20.43		17th
Livestock	18	38.30	29	61.70	47	20.43		17th

Note: Multiple responses considered.

Another significant problem that indicates long-term livelihood insecurity is landlessness (86.96%). Social disruptions were also very high: the breakdown of *somaj* networks (83.48%) and social contracts (85.22%) indicates a deterioration of social cohesiveness and community bonds, which are typically used as safety nets in times of crisis. Environmental and livelihood-related losses such as trees (82.61%) and the need for forced engagement in odd jobs (75.22%) reveal how children's families are compelled to adopt distress strategies for survival. Other coping responses include selling assets (72.61%) and losing garden spaces (66.52%). Moderate losses such as damage to furniture (55.22%) show the broad spectrum of material deprivation experienced. Less frequent but critically significant impacts include child marriage (23.04%), school dropout (20.43%), and loss of livestock (20.43%). Although these affect a smaller proportion of children, they represent serious long-term consequences, particularly in terms of education, childhood protection, and future economic prospects. A consistent pattern across the table shows that *chukani* children report higher frequencies of almost every catastrophic effect compared to *uthuli* children. This may indicate greater exposure, deeper vulnerability, or more precarious living conditions among *chukani* households.

3.2 *Uthuli* and *Chukani* Children in Familial Subsistence Activities

To reduce vulnerabilities, the riparian people tried to prevent catastrophic erosion attack in their indigenous ways and it is nothing but a corrective rather than preventive measure in the devoid of technological and engineering supports (Haque et al., 2023; Islam & Mitra, 2025; Karim, 2014; Mollah & Ferdaush, 2015). After the failure in preventing erosion attack, the households of *uthuli* and *chukani* children are impelled to formulate and undertake multiple strategies in confronting with their economic hardship induced by the bank erosion of Jamuna River. The parents are coerced to employ children in odd economic activities that supplement their familial subsistence at the cost of their schooling and primary socialization (Islam & Mitra, 2025; Islam, 2017).

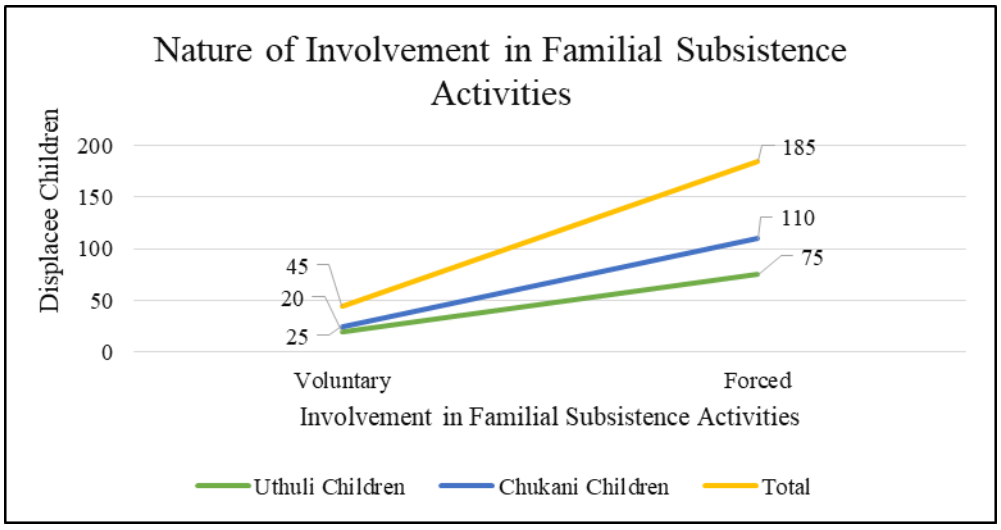

Figure 1: Nature of Involvement in Familial Subsistence Activities

The figure 1 illustrates the nature of involvement of displaced children in familial subsistence activities, highlighting both voluntary and forced participation among children from *uthuli* and *chukani* households. The graph makes it clear that more children are forced to participate in these activities than choose to. There is a threefold rise in forced involvement among *uthuli* children, with 25 participating voluntarily and 75 participating under pressure. In a same way, the number of *chukani*

youngsters participating in forced subsistence labor has significantly increased from 20 to 110. When added together, the total number of children taking part increases dramatically from 45 voluntarily to 185 under pressure, highlighting the extreme need that motivates children to participate in household survival activities. This pattern suggests that children are disproportionately burdened by displacement and livelihood insecurity, which forces them into involuntary labour that may jeopardise their education, leisure, and general development. The distinction between forced and voluntary participation highlights the intense social and economic constraints these families experience, when children are forced to participate in survival strategies rather than voluntarily.

3.2.1 Engagement in Unpaid Manual Labor: Inside and Beyond Their Own Household

Chart 1a Age-wise Participation of *Uthuli* Children in Their Household Chores

Age Group		***Uthuli* Children in Household Chores**	
		Male	Female
Child	>05 - ≤09	Collecting Green and Dried Straw	Collecting Green and Dried Straw
		Collecting Dried Branches	Collecting Dried Branches
		Gathering Cow-dung	Gathering Cow-dung
		Cattle Grazing	Cattle Grazing
		Tending Animal at Homestead	Tending Animal at Homestead
		Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers	Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers
		Carrying Food for Parent at Workplace	Carrying Food for Parent at Workplace
		Caring Siblings	Caring Siblings
		Selling Goods	
		Buying Food	
		Planting Trees and Vegetables	
			Washing Clothes
			Caring Elderly, and Sick Members
	>09 - <13	Collecting Green and Dried Straw	Collecting Green and Dried Straw
		Collecting Dried Branches	
		Gathering Cow-dung	Gathering Cow-dung
		Cattle Grazing	Cattle Grazing
		Tending Animal at Homestead	Tending Animal at Homestead
		Poultry Rearing	Poultry Rearing
		Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers	
		Carrying Food for Parent at Workplace	
		Caring Elderly and Sick Members	Caring Elderly and Sick Members
			Caring Siblings
		Washing Clothes	Washing Clothes
			Cleaning Dwelling Rooms and

			Courtyard
			Cooking Daily Meals
		Selling Goods	
		Buying Food	
		Planting Trees and Vegetables	Planting Trees and Vegetables
		Collecting Crops From Field	Collecting Crops From Field
Teen	≥13 - ≤15	Cattle Grazing	Cattle Grazing
		Planting Trees and Vegetables	Planting Trees and Vegetables
		Collecting Dried Branches	
		Collecting Green and Dried Straw	
		Collecting Crops From Field	
		Selling Goods	
		Buying Food	
			Cooking Daily Meals
			Cleaning Dwelling Rooms and Courtyard
			Caring Elderly, And Sick Members
			Caring Siblings
			Livestock and Poultry Rearing
			Tending Animal at Homestead
			Washing Clothes
			Gathering Cow-dung

It is reported that more or less all the *uthuli* and *chukani* children are engaged in unpaid familial activities at and outside their own dwelling house. Field data attest the fact that male *uthuli* and *chukani* children (>05 - ≤09) are involved in unpaid manual labor (Chart 1a; Chart 1b) such as collecting green and dried straw, collecting dried branches, gathering cow-dung, cattle grazing, tending animal at homestead, cutting and collecting grass and creepers etc and female *uthuli* and *chukani* children (>05 - ≤09) are involved in collecting green and dried straw, collecting dried branches, gathering cow-dung, cattle grazing, tending animal at homestead, caring siblings, washing clothes, caring elderly, and sick members, etc activities.

Chart 1b Age-wise Participation of *Chukani* Children in Their Household Chores

Age Group		***Chukani* Children in Household Chores**	
		Male	Female
Child	>05 - ≤09	Collecting Green and Dried Straw	Collecting Green and Dried Straw
		Collecting Dried Branches	Collecting Dried Branches
		Gathering Cow-dung	Gathering Cow-dung
		Cattle Grazing	Cattle Grazing
		Tending Animal at Homestead	Tending Animal at Homestead
		Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers	Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers
		Carrying Food for Parent at	Carrying Food for Parent at

		Workplace	Workplace
		Caring Siblings	Caring Siblings
		Selling Goods	
		Buying Food	
		Collecting Crops From the Field	
			Planting Trees and Vegetables
			Washing Clothes
			Caring Elderly, and Sick Members
	>09 - <13	Collecting Green and Dried Straw	Collecting Green and Dried Straw
		Collecting Dried Branches	
		Gathering Cow-dung	
		Cattle Grazing	Cattle Grazing
		Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers	Tending Animal at Homestead
		Carrying Food for Parent at Workplace	Poultry Rearing
			Caring Elderly and Sick Members
			Caring Siblings
		Washing Clothes	Washing Clothes
			Cleaning Dwelling Rooms and Courtyard
			Cooking Daily Meals
		Selling Goods	
		Buying Food	
		Planting Trees and Vegetables	Planting Trees and Vegetables
		Collecting Crops from the Field	Collecting Crops from the Field
Teen	≥13 - ≤15	Cattle Grazing	Cattle Grazing
		Planting Trees and Vegetables	Planting Trees and Vegetables
		Collecting Dried Branches	
		Collecting Green and Dried Straw	
		Collecting Crops from the Field	Collecting Crops from the Field
		Selling Goods	
		Buying Food	
			Cooking Daily Meals
			Cleaning Dwelling Rooms and Courtyard
			Caring for Elderly and Sick Members
			Caring Siblings
			Poultry Rearing
			Tending Animal at Homestead
		Washing Clothes	Washing Clothes

			Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers

In Char Chhinna village male *uthuli* and *chukani* child (>9 - <13) age group are involved in cattle grazing, collecting green and dried straw, collecting crops from field, planting trees and vegetables, gathering cow-dung, tending animal at homestead, washing clothes, caring elderly and sick members, carrying food for parent at workplace, selling goods, buying food, cutting and collecting grass and creepers, collecting dried branches, gathering cow-dung and female *uthuli* and *chukani* child (>9 - <13) age group are involved in cattle grazing, collecting green and dried straw, collecting crops from field, planting trees and vegetables, gathering cow-dung, tending animal at homestead, washing clothes, caring elderly and sick members, collecting dried branches, carrying food for parent at workplace, caring elderly, and sick members, cooking daily meals livestock and poultry rearing, cleaning dwelling rooms and courtyard, caring siblings, tending animal at homestead.

Table 2: Participation of *Uthuli* and *Chukani* Children in Their Household Chores

Household Chores		Uthuli Children			Chukani Children			Total N=230
		Male N=53	Female N=42	Total N=95	Male N=72	Female N=63	Total N=135	
Collecting Green and Dried Straw	n	52	28	80	62	37	99	179
	%	65.00	35.00	44.69	62.63	37.37	55.31	**77.83**
Collecting Dried Branches	n	45	18	63	65	32	97	160
	%	71.83	28.57	39.38	67.01	32.99	60.63	**69.57**
Planting Trees and Vegetables	n	47	35	82	35	39	74	156
	%	57.32	42.68	52.56	47.30	52.70	54.81	**67.82**
Carrying Food for Parent at Workplace	n	35	29	64	57	35	92	156
	%	54.69	45.31	41.03	61.96	38.04	58.97	**67.83**
Selling Goods, and Buying Food	n	51	16	67	68	19	87	154
	%	76.12	23.88	43.51	78.16	21.84	56.49	**66.96**
Tending Animal at Homestead	n	21	37	58	49	43	92	150
	%	36.21	63.79	38.67	53.26	46.74	61.33	**65.22**
Washing Clothes	n	19	34	53	37	55	92	145
	%	35.85	64.15	36.55	40.22	59.78	63.45	**63.04**
Gathering Cow-dung	n	37	19	56	55	28	83	139
	%	66.07	33.93	40.29	66.27	33.73	59.71	**60.43**
Collecting Crops From Field	n	31	12	43	61	17	78	121

	%	72.09	27.91	35.52	78.21	21.79	64.46	**52.61**
Cutting and Collecting Grass and Creepers	n	32	11	43	49	16	65	108
	%	74.42	25.58	39.82	75.38	24.62	60.19	**46.96**
Caring Siblings	n	15	29	44	25	31	56	100
	%	34.09	65.91	44	44.65	55.36	56	**43.48**
Caring Elderly, And Sick Members	n	12	25	37	28	27	55	92
	%	32.43	67.57	40.22	50.91	49.09	59.78	**40.00**
Goat Grazing	n	28	12	40	34	16	50	90
	%	70	30	44.44	34.50	32	55.56	**39.13**
Cleaning Dwelling Rooms and Courtyard	n	-	35	35	-	51	51	86
	%		100	40.70		100	59.30	**37.39**
Cooking Daily Meals	n	-	29	29	-	48	48	77
	%		100	37.67		100	62.34	**33.48**
Cow Grazing	n	17	9	26	27	10	37	63
	%	65.38	34.62	41.27	72.97	17.54	58.73	**27.39**

Note: Multiple responses considered.

On the other hand male *uthuli* and *chukani* teen (≥13 - ≤15) age group are engaged in cattle grazing, planting trees and vegetables, collecting dried branches, collecting crops from field, selling goods, and buying food, collecting green and dried straw, washing clothes and female *uthuli* and *chukani* teen (≥13 - ≤15) age group are in washing clothes, cooking daily meals, planting trees and vegetables, livestock poultry rearing, caring elderly, and sick members, gathering cow-dung, goat grazing, planting trees and vegetables, tending animal at homestead, cleaning dwelling rooms and courtyard, washing clothes, caring siblings, cutting and collecting grass and creepers, goat grazing.

Case # 1

Moriom Khatun is 13 years old chukani child. She reads in class three. She continues schooling depending on the inadequate income of her father. In their family, she has to Cleaning dwelling rooms and the courtyard, wash clothes and also care for parent. Her father is an agricultural laborer, and their displacement status is once.

Photo 1: Maloti (6) is grazing her goats. She is an *uthuli* child.

Photo 2: Dulal (5) assists his mother in cutting creepers for cattle. He is an *uthuli* child.

In Char Chhinna village, the field data reveals that the first majority of the displacee children (77.83%; n=179 of 230) are involved in collecting green and dried straw (Table 2). And second majority of the children (69.57%; n=160 of 230) have to collect dried branches. At the same time third majority of the children have to carry food for parents working in the field (67.82%; n=156 of 230), and planting trees and vegetables (67.82%; n=156 of 230). On the other hand, more than two-third (66.96%; n=154 of 230; fourth majority) percent children sell and buy food and other necessaries things, more than 65 percent (65.22%; n=150 of 230; fifth majority) tender animal at homestead, and more than 63 percent (63.04%; n=145 of 230; sixth majority) wash clothes at their homestead. Additionally, the *uthuli* and *chukani* children participate in their household chores: collect cow-dung (60.43%; n=139 of 230; 7th majority), collect crops from field (52.61%; n=121 of 230; 8th majority), cut and collect grass and creepers (46.96%; n=108 of 230; 9th majority) (see Photo 2), caring siblings (43.48%; n=100 of 230; 10th majority), caring elderly, and sick members (40.00%; n=92 of 230; 11th majority), goat grazing (39.13%; n=90 of 230; 12th majority) (see Photo 1), cleaning dwelling rooms and courtyard (37.39%; n=86 of 230; 13th majority), cooking daily meals (33.48%; n=77 of 230; 14th majority), and cow grazing (27.39%; n=63 of 230; 15th majority).

The field reality indicates an alarming situation that the *uthuli* and *chukani* parents of Char Chhinna engage their children in their daily household chores to confront the adversity caused by their recurrent displacement. This type of continuous household work leads them to unpaid child labors that affects their potential detrimentally. Such involvement in daily household work deprives the *uthuli* and *chukani* children of their infancy, childhood, and adolescence. It harms their physical and mental development and lowers their social status. The constant and regular involvement in such tiresome household chores and farm activities cause mental, physical, social and/or moral danger and harm to the *uthuli* and *chukani* children. Their daily schooling is interfered with such engagement. In some cases, it deprives them of the opportunity to attend school, impels them to leave school prematurely; or requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work (ILO, 2016; UNICEF, 2010). Such child labor prevents the *uthuli* and *chukani* children from schooling, recreation, and enjoying the life cycle of childhood. It is harmful for their proper socialization and also detriment their child development which is very important for their life.

3.2.2 *Selling Manual Labor: Household, Farm, and Non-farm Levels*

Table 3: Engagement in Daily Earning Activities

Daily Earning Activities		*Uthuli* Children N=95			*Chukani* Children N=135			Total
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Crop Harvesting	n	9	9	18	12	16	28	**46**
	%	50.00	50.00	18.95	42.46	57.14	20.74	**20.00**
Cattle Grazing	n	10	5	15	11	8	19	**34**
	%	66.67	33.33	15.89	57.89	42.11	14.07	**14.78**
Livestock and Poultry Rearing	n	-	10	10	-	15	15	**25**
	%		100	10.53		100	11.11	**10.87**
Drying Fish	n	-	7	7	2	10	12	**19**
	%		100	7.37	16.67	83.33	8.89	**8.26**
Fish Collection	n	7	-	7	10	-	10	**17**
	%	100		7.37	100		7.41	**7.39**
Servant	n	3	4	7	4	5	9	**16**
	%	42.86	57.14	7.37	44.44	55.67	6.67	**6.96**
Detach Nut Cobs	n	-	5	5	-	9	9	**14**
	%		100	5.26		100	6.67	**6.09**
Day Labor	n	5	-	5	7	-	7	**12**
	%	100		5.26	100		5.19	**5.22**
Rickshaw Pulling	n	4	-	4	6	-	6	**10**
	%	100		4.21	100		4.44	**4.35**
Shopkeeping	n	4	-	4	5	-	5	**9**
	%	100		4.21	100		3.70	**3.92**
Nut Selling	n	4	-	4	5	-	5	**9**
	%	100		4.21	100		3.71	**3.91**
Banana Selling	n	3	-	3	4	-	4	**7**
	%	100		3.16	100		2.96	**3.04**
Tailoring	n	2	2	4	3	-	3	**7**
	%	50.00	50.00	4.21	100		2.22	**3.04**
Knitting of Fishing Net	n	2	-	2	3	-	3	**5**
	%	100		2.11	100		2.22	**2.17**
Total	n	**53**	**42**	**95**	**72**	**63**	**135**	**230**
	%	**55.79**	**44.21**	**100**	**53.33**	**46.67**	**100**	**100**

Note: Multiple responses considered.

Photo 3: M Haidar Ali (13) goes to market for selling his manual labor. He is a *chukani* child

Photo 4: Hosen (13) as day laborer lifts goods on boat. He is a *chukani* child.

The displaced parents of Char Chhinna have lost both land and livelihood opportunities due to recurrent riverbank erosion. As a result, the overwhelming economic pressures created by displacement compel them to rely on their children's labor in a range of informal and physically demanding activities. For *uthuli* and *chukani* children, opportunities to develop skills for future livelihoods are extremely limited, if not absent. Many children reported that when their parents are unable to provide sufficient meals, they are sent out to work to supplement the household income (Galli, 2001). As a result, these displaced children use their manual labour to help their families survive daily while facing extreme financial difficulty. In Bangladesh, a developing nation where poverty still makes it difficult to protect children's rights, this scenario is still a serious worry. Numerous studies, such as Salmon (2005) have demonstrated that many low-income parents force their children to work to support the household economy by withdrawing them from school due to the high cost of education. In Char Chhinna, the present study found that all 230 surveyed *uthuli* and *chukani* children are involved in some form of income-earning activity. Among them, *chukani* children constitute the largest share, with 58.69% (n = 135 of 230) engaged in work, while 41.30% (n = 95 of 230) of *uthuli* children are similarly employed (Table 3). Notably, more than 44% of *uthuli* girls (44.21%; n = 42 of 95) and nearly 47% of *chukani* girls (46.67%; n = 63 of 135) participate in various informal and strenuous tasks. Likewise, 55.79% of *uthuli* boys (n = 53 of 95) and 53.33% of *chukani* boys (n = 72 of 135) are compelled to take part in different odd jobs to help meet household needs.

The first majority of the *uthuli* and *chukani* displacee children (20.00%; n=46 of 230) have to spend their manual labor in crop harvesting. Furthermore, they are engaged in cattle grazing, livestock and poultry rearing, drying fish, fish collection, servant, detaching nut cobs, day labor (see Photo 3), rickshaw pulling, shop keeping, nut selling, banana selling, tailoring, and knitting of fishing net for supplementing their familial survival. All researchers and practitioners agree that poverty is the main determinant of child labor supply, and that child labor significantly increases the income for survival and sustenance of the *uthuli* and *chukani* families. The unpaid *uthuli* and *chukani* child workers contribute to their own household's income and to familial survival by assisting their parents in both paid and self-employment activities. Moreover, children (especially girls) are often engaged in unpaid family activities in order to free their parents from housework and allow them to undertake paid work

(Elder, 1998; Galli, 2001; Salmon, 2005; UNICEF, 2010). Although parents may act rationally by sending their children to work to increase their probability of survival, they may not perceive the long-term negative implications of child labor for their own family.

3.2.3 *Amount of Daily Working Hours*

The social norms and economic realities indicate that child labor is widely accepted and very common in disaster-devastated Char Chhinna. In this country, many families rely on the income generated by their children for survival, so child labor is highly valued. There are 7.4 million working children of 5-17 years in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2010). While important achievements in the fight against child labor continue to be made in Bangladesh, about 1.2 million children are still trapped in its worst forms, according to the latest National Child Labor Survey report, published in 2015 (ILO, 2016).

Table 4: Daily Working Hour of Income Earning *Uthuli* and *Chukani* Children

Daily Working Hour	*Uthuli* Children N=95		*Chukani* Children N=135		Total N=230		Majority
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
1 - 3	9	21.43	21	23.08	30	22.56	3rd
4 - 7	20	47.62	42	46.15	62	46.62	1st
8 - 10	13	30.95	28	30.77	41	30.83	2nd
Total	**42**	**100**	**91**	**100**	**133**	**100**	

It is reported that the first majority of the *uthuli* and *chukani* children (46.62%; n=62 of 133) spend 4-7 hours earning money daily on average (Table 4). The second majority of them (30.83%; n=41 of 133) spend 8-10 hours earning money per day on average. And third majority of displacee children (22.56%; n=30 of 133) spend 1-3 hours earning money daily.

3.3 Consequences of forced engagement in child labor in the *char*land livelihood

3.3.1 *Educational Status of the Uthuli and Chukani Children*

The educational situation of the *uthuli* and *chukani* displaced children of Char Chhinna presents a deeply concerning picture. Due to continuous riverbank erosion and repeated displacement, most families have lost their homes, lands, and sources of income. As a result, the urgent necessity for financial survival takes precedence over education as a secondary concern. Children in the research area have very low levels of literacy and educational attainment, which reflects this upsetting reality. Table 5a presents the status of school enrolment among displacee children from *uthuli* and *chukani,* comprising a total of 230 respondents. Among them, 7 children (3.04%) were identified as children with retardation, with a higher proportion from *chukani* (71.43%) compared to *uthuli* (28.57%). Additionally, 13 children (5.65%) were non-schooling aged, of whom 61.54% were from *chukani* and 38.46% from *uthuli*. A substantial majority of the respondents, 210 children (91.30%), were eligible for schooling. Of these, 122 children (58.10%) were from *chukani* and 88 children (41.90%) from *uthuli,* indicating a relatively higher concentration of school-eligible children in *chukani*. However, despite high eligibility, a large proportion of children remained unenrolled. Overall, 133 children (63.33%) were not enrolled and were illiterate, with 76 children (57.14%) from *chukani* and 57

children (42.86%) from *uthuli*. In contrast, only 77 children (36.67%) were enrolled and literate. Among them, 46 children (59.74%) belonged to *chukani*, while 31 children (40.26%) were from *uthuli*. This indicates that although most children are eligible for schooling, enrolment levels remain relatively low, particularly among displacee households.

Table 5a Status of School Enrolment of the Respondent

Status of School Enrolment	Displacee Children					
	Uthuli Children N=95		*Chukani* Children N=135		Total N=230	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Retarded Children	2	28.57	5	71.43	7	03.04
Non-Schooling Aged	5	38.46	8	61.54	13	05.65
Eligible for Schooling	88	41.90	122	58.10	210	91.30
No Enrolment (illiterate)	57	42.86	76	57.14	133	63.33
Enrolled (literate)	31	40.26	46	59.74	77	36.67

Table 5b Status of School Attendance of the Respondent

Status of School Attendance	Enrolled (literate) Displacee Children					
	Uthuli Children N=31		*Chukani* Children N=46		Total N=77	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Drop Out	18	58.06	29	63.04	47	61.04
Irregular Attendance	8	25.81	10	21.74	18	23.38
Regular Attendance	5	16.13	7	15.22	12	15.58

Table 5b depicts the school attendance status of the 77 enrolled (literate) displacee children. The findings show a high dropout rate among enrolled children. Overall, 47 children (61.04%) had dropped out of school, with dropout being slightly higher among *chukani* children (63.04%) than *uthuli* children (58.06%). Irregular attendance was observed among 18 children (23.38%) in total, comprising 10 children (21.74%) from *chukani* and 8 children (25.81%) from *uthuli.* Regular school attendance was reported for only 12 children (15.58%) overall, with 7 children (15.22%) from *chukani* and 5 children (16.13%) from *uthuli*.

Case # 2

Sihab Uddin of Char Chhinna is a chukani young of 11. He is a student of Class IV. His father is a day laborer. He is a member of more than thrice displacee family. After displacement, his father was compelled to engage him at his earlier age in income earning jobs for their survival. He goes to school irregularly. He worked in a hotel as table boy and he earned money per month Taka 1200.

The deeper socioeconomic vulnerability of *chukani* households, who frequently experience extreme poverty, increased instability, and repeated displacement, is reflected in this pattern. Overall, Char Chhinna's educational system demonstrates a circle of deprivation: child labour limits children's opportunities for formal education, poverty forces children into the workforce, and displacement causes poverty. In the end, this loop limits social mobility and maintains these families' long-term marginalisation. (Hossain & Fahad, 2023b; Islam & Rashid, 2011; Podder et al., 2021).

3.3.2 *Opportunities of Playing Games for the Displaced Children*

The results show that Char Chhinna's displaced children have very little possibilities to engage in sports and leisure activities, which are crucial for a child's healthy growth. Families struggle every day to obtain food and other basics due to the significant economic problems caused by riverbank erosion. Children are under societal pressure to work in a variety of jobs to support the household, which leaves them with little to no free time. Based on field data, 70% of *uthuli* and *chukani* youngsters (n = 161 out of 230) said they had little or no chance to play games with their friends. Of these underprivileged children, 58.39 percent (n = 94 of 161) are *chukani* and 41.61 percent (n = 67 of 161) are *uthuli* (Figure 2). This suggests that access to recreational activities is even more limited for *chukani* children, who typically come from more economically vulnerable and frequently moved households. Playtime deprivation has serious consequences.

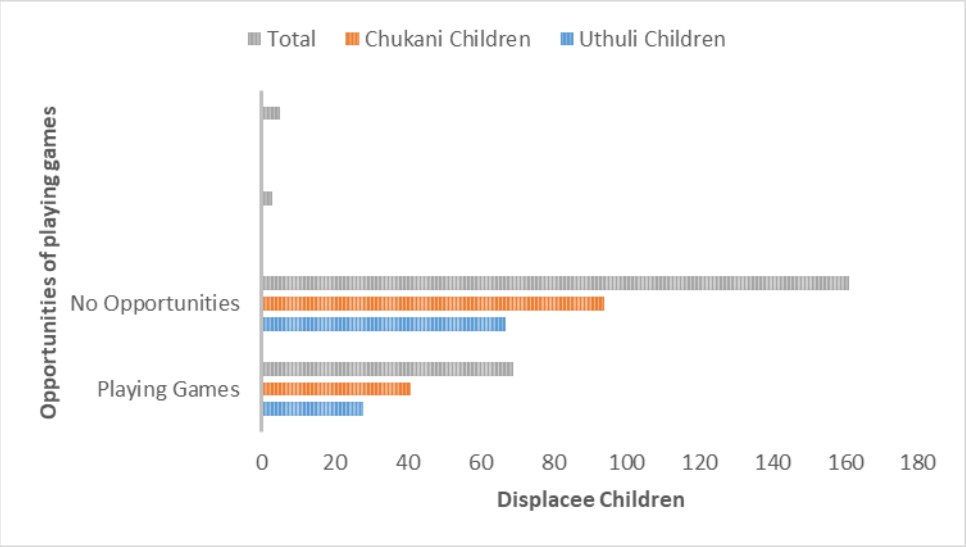

Figure 2: Opportunities for Playing Games for the Displacee Children

Children's physical, mental, emotional, and social development all greatly benefit from play (Galli, 2001; Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012; Salmon, 2005). However, for most of the displaced children in this neighbourhood, childhood is less important than survival daily. Parents are forced to rely on their children's labour for domestic tasks, caregiving duties, and income-generating jobs due to the "prodigious needs" produced by relocation (Haque et al., 2023; Keya & Harun, 2007; Salmon, 2005; Zaman, 1988). As a result, obligations that prematurely load kids with adult roles take the place of participating in sports, which is a normal and essential part of childhood. As a result, the absence of recreational possibilities not only reflects financial difficulties but also plays a role in the children's stunted growth. These children aren't able to enjoy the flexibility, creativity, and social interaction that play often offers because of limited access to secure play areas and ongoing pressure to support household survival. Long-term emotional, psychological, and physical effects from this deprivation could worsen their vulnerability as displaced children.

3.4 Precarious Development of *uthuli* and *chukani* children

In Char Chhinna village, children from *uthuli* and *chukani* households are raised in a setting characterised by ongoing battle for survival, frequent loss, and persistent uncertainty. Children are

among the most severely impacted when homesteads, farmland, and the char's fundamental social infrastructure are constantly destroyed by riverbank erosion. Two interrelated factors—riverbank erosion, relocation, and forced participation in family subsistence activities have moulded their precarious development. These unpleasant realities hamper their physical growth, undermine their psychological resilience, disrupt their education, and limit their social and recreational possibilities, ultimately constraining their entire developmental trajectory (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Hazardous development of *char*land children in Char Chhinna village

Effects on Physical Development

- Physical injuries
- Weakened immune system
- Recurrent illnesses
- Reduced stamina and overall energy levels
- Malnutrition due to inadequate food intake and nutrient deficiency
- Stunted physical growth
- Low body weight
- Frequent respiratory infections due to poor housing and damp living conditions
- Poor hygiene practices leading to diarrheal diseases
- Increased vulnerability to infectious diseases during floods
- Underdeveloped physical strength
- Overall compromised physical well-being

Effects on Psychological Development

- Psychological complaints resulting from the shock of erosion
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Prolonged and persistent stress
- Reduced ability to concentrate in school
- Heightened fearfulness
- Increased cautiousness
- Emotional fragility
- Prolonged or complicated grief
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Other anxiety-related disorders
- Sleep disturbances, including nightmares and insomnia
- Behavioural problems such as irritability or aggression
- Low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness
- Fear of future disasters or erosion events
- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Sense of hopelessness about the future

Effects on educational development

- Irregular schooling
- Early dropout from school
- No enrolment in school
- Disruption to regular schooling
- Loss of educational materials
- Extended breaks from school
- Loss of educational resources
- Collapsed roads forcing children to walk long distances to reach school
- Unstable, sandy pathways crossed by multiple streams
- Physical barriers limiting access to school
- Barriers to remaining in school
- Reduced class attendance during extreme weather
- Interruption of daily lessons and loss of concentration on studies
- Limited access to quality education
- Declining motivation to pursue studies
- Restricted future developmental and livelihood opportunities
- Low concentration and increased cognitive stress

Effects on social development

- Reduced opportunities for social interaction due to engagement in work
- Social isolation caused by unstable living conditions
- Interrupted participation in community and school activities
- Feelings of exclusion from peers due to work, poverty and displacement
- Limited access to play spaces and group activities
- Challenges in adapting to new social environments
- Increased dependence on family members for social support
- Reduced participation in cultural or traditional events
- Fear of interacting with unfamiliar people
- Stigmatization and discrimination from host communities
- Poor development of social skills like sharing, cooperation, and teamwork
- Reduced sense of belonging in new or temporary settlements
- Weak social networks and limited community support

Effect on recreational development

- No playground, club, park, and religious organizations
- No opportunities for watching television, movie
- No opportunities for playing
- Limited access to safe and secure play areas due to erosion and displacement
- Destruction or loss of playgrounds, open fields, and natural play environment
- Decreased participation in sports and group recreational activities
- Lack of recreational resources, including toys, sports equipment, and creative materials

- Reduced engagement in cultural and traditional recreational practices
- Social withdrawal impacting participation in group play activities
- Limited school-based recreational programs due to damaged infrastructure
- Emotional distress diminishing interest in leisure and play
- Lack of community initiatives to support children's recreation
- Neglect of recreational needs as families prioritize survival and basic needs

The children suffer from a variety of physical health issues that are directly related to their precarious living circumstances and the hardships of early childbirth. The repeated collapse of dwellings and the instability of improvised shelters expose them to injuries, moist conditions, and recurrent diseases. The continuous exposure to cold, contaminated water, and unsanitary conditions that accompany erosion-induced relocation weakens their immune systems. Inadequate nutrition, resulting by the loss of farmlands and diminishing household food security, leads to low body weight, stunted growth, chronic tiredness, and lower stamina. Children's physical strength is further weakened by the daily jobs they perform, such as lifting loads, helping with fishing, working in agriculture, or doing housework, which puts them at risk for fatigue and long-term health issues (Kabir et al., 2025; Islam et al., 2013). Their physical health is seriously jeopardised as recurrent fevers, diarrhoeal illnesses, and respiratory infections become commonplace.

These children's psychological environment is delicate and profoundly impacted by the stress of displacement in addition to these physical pressures. The shock of watching their homes, schools, and familiar landscapes dissolve into the river generates mental suffering that many youngsters lack the capacity to articulate. Their mental environment is dominated by feelings of anxiety, insecurity, and uncertainty. Anxiety becomes a permanent condition as youngsters worry about future floods, the risk of another displacement, and the vulnerability of their refuge. Many display indicators of persistent stress, including sleep difficulties, nightmares, and emotional disengagement. Their interrupted daily routines, along with the pressure to contribute to family finances, limit time for rest or leisure. Some youngsters acquire symptoms of despair, low self-esteem, and even post-traumatic stress disorder. Their coping skills are further weakened by the lack of psychosocial support networks and the deterioration of community stability, which results in a slow and insufficient psychological rehabilitation. In severe cases, the persistent volatility pushes adolescents into dangerous coping techniques, including substance misuse.

Educational development is equally interrupted. For many of these children, schooling becomes erratic or totally unreachable. Roads collapse, school buildings are destroyed by floods, and the daily commute to school is hazardous and taxing due to the lengthy sandy routes that are interrupted by streams. Displaced families sometimes relocate far from educational facilities, and when they move from one settlement to another, children lose consistency in learning. When the need for their work becomes more pressing than attending lessons, many drop out early. Even when students seek to continue their education, loss of books, uniforms, and learning materials, together with crowded and poorly resourced temporary schools, worsen learning disparities. Children who are physically weak or psychologically distraught find it difficult to focus, which leads to poor academic achievement, low motivation, and lowered future aspirations. With time, these limitations severely restrict their access to quality education and limit their future livelihood options.

The disruption brought about by erosion and displacement also has a negative impact on social development. Children who are heavily involved in familial labour have less opportunity to interact

with peers, participate in group activities, or build stable friendships. Frequent migration breaks peer networks and social relationships, causing a sense of isolation and exclusion. Displaced children may experience stigmatisation or discrimination in host communities, which undermines their self-esteem and keeps them from participating in group activities. Behavioural issues like impatience, violence, or social disengagement are frequently caused by stress and trauma. These kids struggle to acquire critical social skills like cooperation, communication, and teamwork because they have weak social support networks, few community activities, and little involvement in school events. As a result, their social sphere becomes restricted, unstable, and highly constrained by the volatility of migration.

Recreational development is a vital component of childhood which is absent in the lives of *uthuli* and *chukani* children. The continual destruction of playgrounds, open spaces, and communal structures leaves children with almost no possibility for play, sports, or relaxation. Outdoor activities are dangerous due to crowded temporary shelters and hazardous surroundings. Families obsessed with survival often disregard children's recreational needs totally. Children miss out on the opportunity to develop their creativity, coordination, and social or physical abilities through play if they don't have access to toys, sporting goods, or cultural events. Their desire for leisure is further diminished by emotional stress, and many of them stop participating in group activities. School-based leisure programs are also affected due to damaged infrastructure and irregular attendance. This lack of leisure eventually leads to a deterioration in general wellbeing, delayed emotional development, and social isolation. The development of *uthuli* and *chukani* children is influenced by a complex interaction of physical hardship, mental discomfort, educational disruption, social fragmentation, and the near-total absence of recreational possibilities. Riverbank erosion not only ruins land and property but also erodes the roots of childhood. Forced into subsistence occupations, robbed of stable homes, and exposed to situations beyond their years, these children grow up with limited options and lowered prospects. Their precarious development reflects the broader vulnerabilities of *char*land communities and underlines the critical need for comprehensive, child-cantered initiatives to restore stability, improve resilience, and defend the rights and well-being of *char*land children.

4. Conclusions

The most immediate and serious shock that *char*land communities face is displacement brought on by riverbank erosion, which severely disrupts their livelihood systems. *Uthuli* and *chukani* households are forced to relocate quickly after losing their homesteads, frequently with no other options, putting them in severely precarious living situations. Their productive assets, sources of income, savings, and agricultural output are all severely reduced by this forced relocation, causing losses that are frequently irreversible and. Due to the lack of employment prospects in the new settlements, many impacted people are still unemployed. Due to the extensive cumulative effects, a sizable portion of displaced households are unable to recover from the destruction. As a result, they deal with ongoing economic volatility, long-term food insecurity, and a lack of other necessary resources for subsistence. In Char Chhinna, parents often engage their *uthuli* and *chukani* children in paid and unpaid domestic labour as a coping mechanism to deal with the difficulties brought on by frequent displacement, as further revealed by field observations. The children's growth and development are seriously hampered by their constant participation in household chores and farm-related activities. It diminishes their social status, interferes with their physical and mental health, and robs them of their proper upbringing. Their potential is ultimately limited and their susceptibility is prolonged by the constant strain of such labour, which exposes them to physic, social, and mental threats.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct or outcomes of this study.

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