

JobedaParvin; A leader who Inspires Confidence

Flood and Riverbank Erosion is the common natural hazards of Bangladesh. Every year, huge portion of people are seriously affected by riverbank erosion that destroys standing crops, farmland and homestead land. Sirajganj district is one of the most disaster (Flood and Riverbank Erosion) prone areas of Bangladesh, lies on the bank of the most treacherous river Brahmaputra. It is an area of perennial floods and its image is that of an area which is always flooded. Every upazila of this district is not equally vulnerable to flood and riverbank erosion. Kazipur Upazila is more vulnerable than other upazila due to its geographical location. Mansunnagor union is one of the most vulnerable union of Kazipur upazila, affected by flood and riverbank erosion at a regular interval.



JobedaParvin, a self-employed women has been living in East Majnabari Village of Mansurnagor Union under Kazipur Upazila of Sirajganj District for the last 40 years. She was born in 1962 and now she is around 55 years. She got married with Moslem Sheikh in 1975, when she was only 13 years old. Moslem Sheikh was a farmer and he had 3 capita agricultural land. After her marriage, JobedaParvin moved to Char Shaldaho village with his husband. They had four sons and all of them were studied in nearby local school. She shifted her house 4 times from one part to another part of Char Shaldahobecause of destructive riverbank erosion. Because of continuous river erosion, her houses, crop lands and assets gone into the mighty Brahmaputra River. At that time they became helpless and found no way for maintaining their life and livelihoods.

In 1977, her family shifted to Majnabari village in search of better livelihoods. Majnabari is one of the village of Mansurnagor Union under Sirajganj District. The age of Majnabari village is around 45 years. Around 30000 people are living in this village. Most of the villagers are engaged in agricultural works and almost every one of them live below the poverty line. In previous 15 to 20 years, the village was within the part of mighty river Brahmaputra (Januma).

In 1974 people started living in this village. In that time the total area was char land and there was no cultivation before. Her husband and two sons again produced several crops and vegetables on their 4 capita tenant land. Their family was going well at that time. The massive flood occurred in 1988, brought blessings for them. Through this flood, a huge amount of sediment were deposited on this ground. Then people started cultivation in this area and they cultivated several types of crops and vegetables. She also mentioned that flood occurred several times in this area but only the massive flood of 1988 brought blessings for them.

The most concerning matter is that the village is not far away from the mighty river (2 to 3 minutes walking distance) that's why people of this area are more vulnerable to be victim of river erosion. She said that Government took an initiative (Sand Dam construction project named as Village protection Dam) for controlling river erosion but unfortunately the dam was destroyed. Now villagers with the assistance of all community members, respected persons and students took an initiative for preparing a large village protection dam (Length 1800 meter, Width 200 meter and Height 25 feet From Majnabari High School to Jamuna River) for controlling the adverse impact of river erosion. Villagers provide their labor voluntarily and all of them are will to get their own land for dam construction.

Her husband Moslem Sheikh was died in 2003. Now all of her children are adult and got married. They live separately from her mothers. She said that in Mansurnagor Union, she has shifted her house 9 times and last time she did it in 2003. For massive river erosion all of her assets, houses and crops gone into the river in that year. Then she moved one of her suns land and started her own farm there. She directly engage in agricultural works. She is a tenant farmer and produced Maize, Paddy, Jute and chili in her farmland. She said that agriculture is the main occupation as well as earning source for their livelihoods. People are generally engaged in Agricultural works. Most of them are tenant farmers and only few of them have their own land for cultivation. Major crops for production are Maize, pepper, mustard, paddy, jute, pulse, paddy, nuts, onions, Kalijira and some sorts of vegetables. In ten years ago people were also cultivated wheat and potato crops. In the month of Chaitra (Bengali month), they harvest Maize and In Jaistha (Bengali month), they harvest IRRI Paddy. Most of the farmers are

now produced Maize in the replacement of Paddy. Because it needs minimum labor and provides much profit.

Ground water is the main source of Irrigation in this area. She said that shallow pumping (90 feet) generally used in Mansurnagor union for irrigation purposes. 3 to 4 times irrigation is needed for both Maize and Pepper cultivation. There is no need for irrigation water in mustard cultivation. In case of Paddy cultivation, irrigation water is also essential but now a day people are more focused on cultivating Maize, Pepper and Mustard crops. Participants said that 1 liter diesel oil is needed for 1 hour irrigation (approximately 65 taka per liter). They also mentioned that due to excessive price of diesel oil, they have to face an acute problem for maintaining continuous irrigation. Another important issues are char areas soil absorb much water that's why they have to irrigate their crop land continuously.

Some people especially whose are living on the bank of the river (10 to 15 families) are engaged in fishing but unfortunately they couldn't harvest/catch fish regularly from river because of government restriction on fishing during breeding time. People generally use tube-well water for drinking purposes. Few safe water options are available in this area and those are far away from their place of residence and female have to spend a lot of time for availing waters from those distance water sources. Especially women and girls suffered a lot on this purposes. In the time of natural disasters all the drinking water options are gone under water and they faced an acute crisis of safe drinking water. At that time they mix Fitkiri with the river water for purification and then use for drinking. Generally people use river water for bathing and washing their cattle's and household chores. People who are living beside the bank of the river they use river water for irrigation purposes. During flood, women face a lot of problems and it is hard to bring up their children, cook and collect drinking water for their family because they have to collect water from other villages by boat. She also told that during flood several waterborne diseases breakout in an epidemic form such as diarrhea.

Poverty is the major problem in Majnabari village and most of the people of this village live below the poverty line. Disasters like flood and river erosion destroy their livelihoods and they have to remain unemployed around half of a year. As a result people changes their occupation

and they have to move other areas in search of better livelihoods. Seasonal or temporary migration rate is relatively high in this village because of the geographical location of this village (three districts (Jamalpur, Bogra and Sirajganj are situated from the boundary line of the village). People of this areas migrate to other places (Jamalpur, Barishal, Sylhet, Dhaka and Mymensing) in search of employment and generally engaged with day laboring works like rickshaw pulling, garments, jute mills, road and building construction.

Women in this area have the rights for taking decision both at household and society level. Jobeda Parvin herself engaged in several social development works. Since 2007 she is actively engaged in village level child marriage protection committee. She is one of the eldest female leader in East Majnabari village. As a result she took part in all sorts of village level decision making process like women torturing, hassle, illegal land grabbing and so on. She also encouraged other women for participating social works and several income generating activities. She also mentioned some of the major problems of East Majnabari village. Those are: Extreme Poverty, difficult internal and external transportation system, unemployment, land ownership determination in new chars, illiteracy, high rate of child and early marriage, insufficient drinking water options, less accessibility of agricultural instruments (power tiller), no cyclone center and poor sanitation facilities.

Jobeda Parvin mentioned that people of this village heard several water policies and treaty for trans-boundary Brahmaputra river water management issues. But unfortunately they have no clear perception on this issues. Most of them said that still we don't get any sorts of benefits or facilities through these government water laws, policies and water treaty. She said that riverine people of Mansurnagor Union are always deprived for their basic rights. They always struggle for their basic rights and most important one is that for their existence. They urging from all the related government authorities and NGOs for a sustainable solution for their afflicted situation. She also added that the main causes of flood at Sirajganj district including its unions and upazilas are: Geographical Location and Climatic Condition; Lack of Flood Protection Embankment; River Erosion, which Erodes Temporary Flood Protection Embankment; Siltation of the Local Rivers; Soil erosion and Unplanned internal and external communication system.

In the period of natural disaster, Union Parishad provide some emergency support but unfortunately deprived and victim people couldn't get those support. Political influence, unequal distribution, extreme communication and corruption are responsible for that. On behalf of villagers, JobedaParvin urged immediate Government support for preparing large Dams for controlling destructive riverbank erosion. She also mentioned that Government should conduct regular dredging of river which would be helpful for controlling flood water.

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