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Farmers' perception about causes and remedies of *Monga* in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat district

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to analyze the farmers' perception about causes and remedies of *Monga* in some selected areas of Lalmonirhat district of Bangladesh. In order to achieve the objectives, survey was conducted in three villages and one Char area in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat district. In total 90 samples were purposively taken of which 45 were from Char area, 25 from rural area, and 20 from urban area. The family size of the respondents revealed that medium family domination in Char area (the poorest area) is an indication of the consciousness of the poor people about population problem. *Monga* stricken people in terms of less consumption were higher in Char and rural areas compared to urban area. Lack of cultivable land, natural calamities, non-availability of working facilities at non-agricultural sector, lack of working facilities at agricultural sector due to natural calamities and lack of credit availability and high interest rate were opined by the researcher as their causes of *Monga*. On the other hand, beef fattening, petty business, plant nursery and poultry farming were addressed as the mitigating activities of *Monga* undertaken by NGOs. old-age allowance, Hundred-days job scheme and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme were observed as *Monga* mitigating activities undertaken by GOs in the study area. The difference between the performance of GO and NGO in *Monga* mitigation was wider in Char area than that of in rural and urban areas. The higher performance of NGOs was due to their better identification, selection and supervision strategy with perfect information. Drawbacks like, corruption, lack of proper management, lack of adequate financial support, etc., might be responsible for the poor performance of GO mitigating activities of *Monga* in the study area.

Keywords: *Monga*, Perception, Causes of *Monga* and Remedies of *Monga*

Introduction

The total population of the country is about 164 million with the annual growth rate of 1.57 percent. Population density of the country is about 1142 persons per square kilometer. The country is supplying to meet the basic need to its population from its net cultivable land which is estimated around 7.80 million hectares of which about 2.84 million hectares of cultivable land are single cropped, 3.98 million hectares are double cropped area and .98 million hectares are triple cropped areas with a cropping intensity of around 176 percent (BBS, 2008). The country has been struggling hard to feed its increasing population as food shortage is its salient feature. To feed the burgeoning population is a dire necessity to increase crop production. In Bangladesh, about 25 percent (of 140 million) people are hardcore/ultra poor and they face severe food insecurity every year. Of the total population, about 40.4 percent on people are living below the poverty line and 19.5 percent are estimated to belong to be hardcore poor (MoF, 2010).

People of Northern Bangladesh mainly in greater Rangpur are poor and underdeveloped than other parts of this country. It is restricted to the lean season preceding the Aman harvest in the Bangla months of Ashwin and Kartick. Also there is a second lean season before Boro harvest. As this lean season is usually less severe, it might be called little *Monga*. According to GOB (2005), about half of the populations live below the poverty line in terms of consumption base. A person having daily calorie intake of less than 2122 kilo-calorie is considered to be in absolute (HES) poverty and 1805 kilo-calorie in hardcore poverty (MoF, 2010). The number of poor was over 53 million but a minimum condition of living to ensure human dignity requires that in addition to food, housing, clothing, medicine, sanitation and education were taken into account in defining the poverty line.

Monga is not itself the cause of the problems, but the word used to describe the impact at household level of a combination of factors such as the reduction in day labour opportunities after the rice crop is sown and before the harvest, seasonal higher prices of basic food commodities, and the after-effects of monsoon flooding. According to Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) "*Monga* is a local term used to indicate acute deprivation caused due to the erosion of purchasing power from lack of gainful employment opportunities".

Monga is seasonal food insecurity in ecologically vulnerable and economically weak parts of Northwestern Bangladesh, primarily caused by an employment and income deficit before Aman is harvested. In every year, severe food crisis popularly known as *Monga* occurs in the Northern part of Bangladesh; whereas in other parts of the country *Akal* is a more known term; both bearing the same meaning i.e., severe scarcity of food, mainly rice. This periodic food insecurity occurs during the pre-harvest period known as lean season for agricultural production. The agricultural lean period occurs twice a year lasting one to two months. This periodic food insecurity is more related to the traditional system of subsistence agricultural, feudal land tenure arrangements and exploitative loan and mortgage system in the rural credit market. Natural calamities like river erosion, cyclone, flood and drought just add to worsen such food crisis.

The WFP (World Food Programme) has identified the *Monga* prone area in Northern part of Bangladesh. The districts of Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Bogra and Serajganj are identified as most suffering area of food shortage during the lean seasons as shown in the Fig. 1.

The typical Characteristics of the food insecurity prone districts are: (i) Crops are in the field waiting to be harvested having no employments in the agricultural fields, (ii) the household level food stock is mostly consumed a mid inadequate supply of food grain in the market and (iii) the price of rice in the market is very high while the marginal farmers and the labourers run out of food and cash.

To have a clear understanding on the period of occurrence of *Monga*, it is necessary to have a look on the existing cropping patterns in the *Monga* region. Agriculture in the *Monga* region is not so diversified. Usually there are 6 cropping patterns followed in the Northern region of Bangladesh which are shown in Table 1.

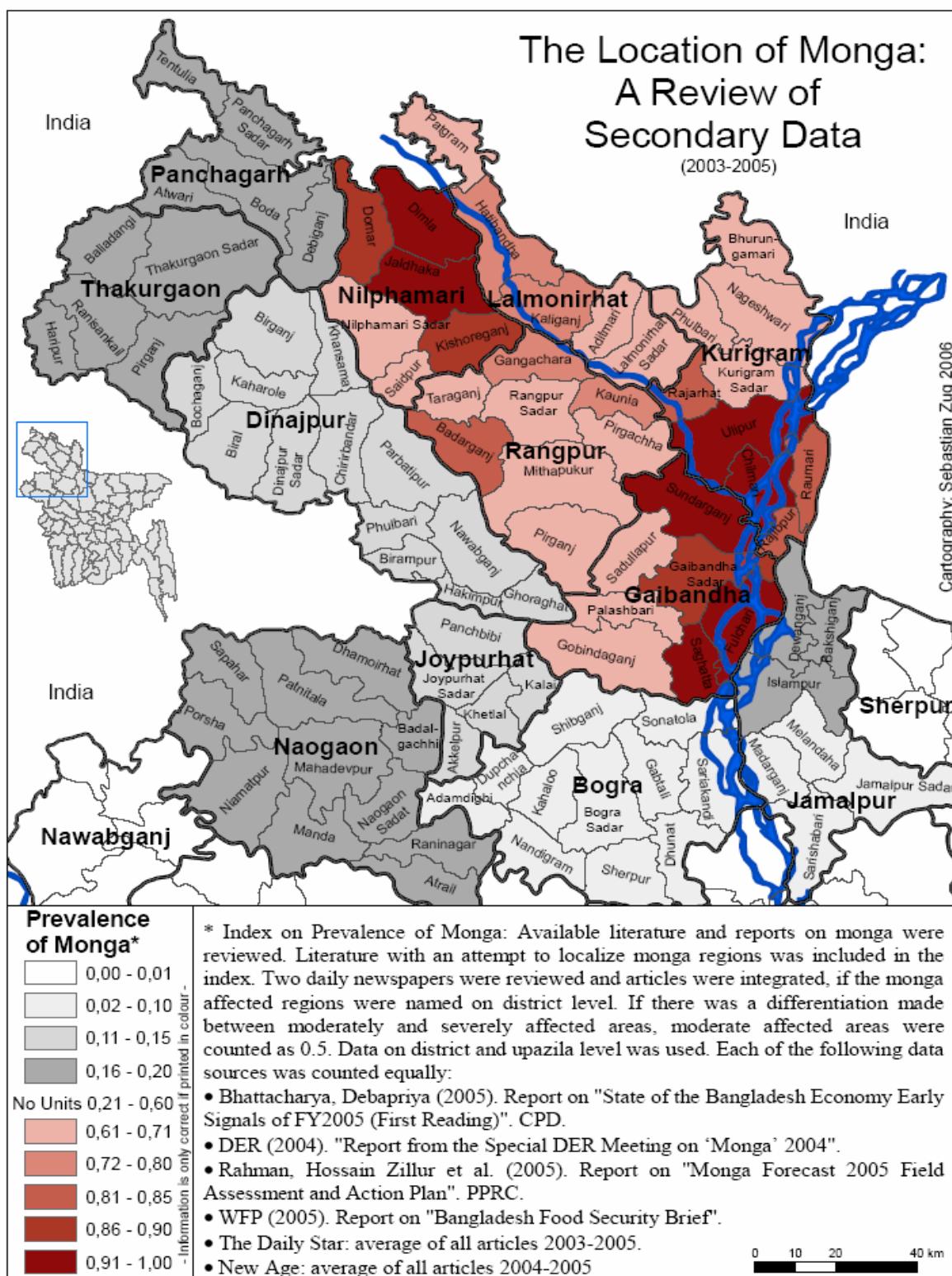
Table 1. Existing six different cropping patterns in Northern Bangladesh

Patterns	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1		Boro				→	←		Aman			→
2		Tobacco			→		←		Aman			→
3		Maize			→		←		Aman			→
4	Potato			↔	Maize	→	↔		Aman			→
5		Wheat			→		↔		Aman			→
6	Potato	W. /Veg		↔		→	↔		Aman			→

Note: Shaded months are *Monga* period.

Source: Bithi, 2006.

The farmers now follow diversified crops in Boro season, but in no way they give up Aman production. This causes joblessness in agricultural field in the month of September, October and November. Pre-harvest acute employment crisis during Aswin and Kartik (October-November) among the poor farmer causes occurrence of *Monga*. From the 3rd week of October to mid November, this famine like situation prevails. This situation continues up to harvesting period in December. This lean period exists for one or two months and ends by December at harvesting Aman. *Monga* also appears during Chaitra-Baishakha before harvesting of Boro, but its severity remains relatively lower.

Seasonal Food Insecurity and *Monga* Affected Areas in Northern BangladeshFig. 1. The Location of *Monga*

As *Monga* badly affects the livelihood of rural poor, it is a matter of humane. It is hopeful that GOs and NGOs like Polli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), Grammen Bank, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) etc., have taken initiatives to make *Monga* situation tolerable. Among the activities, awareness raising about *Monga*, various soft loan schemes during the lean period, introduction of new cropping patterns in *Monga*-prone areas, various saving programmes, introduction of different income generation activities and assistance upon them etc. are markable. The specific objectives of the study are:

- a) To identify the causes of *Monga* and people's perception about it;
- b) To assess the *Monga* mitigating activities in the study area; and
- c) To make suggestions on the basis of the findings of the study.

Materials and Methods

Methodology is of paramount importance in any scientific inquiry as the validity and reliability of the facts primarily depend upon the system of investigation. For this study, survey method was followed to collect data from the respondents. In this method, the researcher mostly relied on the memory of the respondents. This study endeavored to document the livelihood status of landless people of *Monga* stricken areas of Bangladesh. The recognized *Monga* hit districts are Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh. Out of them Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Nilphamari are severely affected ones. In Hatibandha upazila, agriculture is the main occupation of most of the residents of the villages. About 80 percent of the dwelling households depend on agriculture as the main source of income where other sources of income are non-agricultural labour, business and employment in GO and NGOs. Main occupations include agriculture 52.94 percent, commerce 6.02 percent, wage labourer 3.66 percent, service 3.56 percent, agricultural labourer 25.66 percent and others 8.16 percent (Banglapedia, 2003). There were various NGOs working in the study area to address the livelihood of *Monga*-affected people. Among them three organization namely BRAC, Grammen Bank and ASA were the leading NGOs. Out of these three organizations Grammeen Bank alone has details about information of *Monga*-affected livelihoods. A total of 320 farmers of the 4 selected villages contributed the population of the study. Thirty three percent of the populations were selected purposively to make the sample and therefore, some 90 people were selected. The above selected respondents were classified into three categories according to region because *Monga* affects the people in different regions by different ways. The categories of the respondents' are- Char area, Rural area and Urban area.

The researcher herself collected necessary data through personal interview method from the individual respondents during 15 February 2009 to 30 March 2009. In the study, tabular method was followed to classify the collected data and to derive the meaningful findings. The local units were converted into standard units. The qualitative data were transformed into quantitative data by appropriate scoring techniques.

Results and Discussion

Causes of and perception about *Monga* in the study area

Respondents were asked why they suffered from *Monga* every year. They also requested to express their identified causes as low, medium and high manner. According to their answers five major causes were found. These were: lack of cultivable land, natural calamities, non-availability of working facilities at off farm sector, lack of working facilities at agricultural sector due to natural calamities and lack of credit availability and also high interest rate of credit. Table 2 reveals that respondents perceived lack of cultivable land as a high cause of *Monga* by 11.11 percent in Char area followed by 36.00 percent in rural area. Maximum of the respondents' perception about lack of cultivable land as a cause of *Monga* was low in Char area and urban area (55.56 and 55.00 percent, respectively). No one was found to mention lack of cultivable land as a low cause of perception of *Monga* in rural area while it was the case as high cause of perception in urban area. On an average, 15.56 percent respondents opined that lack of cultivable land was the most important (high) cause of *Monga* in the study area. It is quite evident from the table that the

respondents under rural area were in efforts to increase the size of cultivable land through various tenurial arrangements with a view to having more productions, while the Char and urban area didn't do that because of lack of cultivable land in those areas. Moreover it was comparatively a very important cause in rural area as none of the respondent thought it with low perception.

Respondents' medium perception about decrease of agricultural production due to natural calamities as a cause of occurring *Monga* occupied the highest percentage irrespective of areas under study. Considering all respondents together medium perception ranked the highest (70.00 percent) followed by low perception 22.22 percent and high perception 7.78 percent in the *Monga* area under study (Table 2). Natural calamity was not felt as very important cause of *Monga* in rural and urban areas under study. So, majority of the respondents in the study area thought above mentioned cause with medium perception.

Table 2. Causes of and perception about *Monga*

Causes	Categories	Perception			Total
		High	Medium	Low	
1. Lack of cultivable land	Char area	5 (11.11)	15 (33.33)	25 (55.56)	45 (100)
	Rural area	9 (36.00)	16 (64.00)	-	25 (100)
	Urban area	-	9 (45.00)	11 (55.00)	20 (100)
	Total	14 (15.56)	40 (44.44)	36 (40.00)	90 (100)
2. Natural calamities	Char area	7 (15.56)	30 (66.67)	8 (17.78)	45 (100)
	Rural area	-	18 (72.00)	7 (28.00)	25 (100)
	Urban area	-	15 (75.00)	5 (25.00)	20 (100)
	Total	7 (7.78)	63 (70.00)	20 (22.22)	90 (100)
3. Non-availability of working facilities at non-agricultural sector	Char area	19 (42.22)	18 (40.00)	8 (17.78)	45 (100)
	Rural area	11 (44.00)	10 (40.00)	4 (16.00)	25 (100)
	Urban area	14 (70.00)	6 (30.00)	-	20 (100)
	Total	41 (45.56)	37 (41.11)	12 (13.33)	90 (100)
4. Lack of working facilities at agricultural sector due to natural calamities	Char area	19 (42.22)	15 (33.33)	11 (24.45)	45 (100)
	Rural area	5 (20.00)	13 (52.00)	7 (28.00)	25 (100)
	Urban area	-	12 (60.00)	8 (40.00)	20 (100)
	Total	18 (20.00)	50 (55.56)	22 (24.44)	90 (100)
5. Lack of credit availability and also high interest rate of credit	Char area	4 (8.89)	35 (77.78)	6 (13.33)	45 (100)
	Rural area	5 (20.00)	18 (72.00)	2 (8.00)	25 (100)
	Urban area	6 (30.00)	14 (70.00)	-	20 (100)
	Total	15 (16.67)	67 (74.44)	8 (8.89)	90 (100)

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Service, business, day labour and van/rickshaw pulling were found to be the important sources of non-farm income in the study area. Rural industries and services are of many kinds. But the usual types of it found in rural Bangladesh are as follows:

- (i) Production of low quality and cheap varieties of goods meeting certain kinds of needs using locally available raw materials (for example, beedi-making, bamboo work and earthenware production)
- (ii) Agro-processing such as rice milling and production of puffed rice
- (iii) Transitional location of modern industry in rural areas that leads over time to these areas being absorbed as urban centres.

Availability of working facilities at non-agricultural sector was not adequate in the study area. Table 2 represents that a major portion of respondents (42.22 percent of Char, 44.00 percent of rural and 70.00 percent of urban) had high perception about non-availability of working facilities at non-agricultural sector as a cause of *Monga*. Considering all respondents together, lack of non-agricultural working facilities was perceived as high by 45.56 percent followed by medium (41.11 percent) and low (13.33 percent) perception. Moreover it was comparatively a very important cause in urban area as none of the respondent thought it with low perception.

Natural calamity is any natural event which has an adverse socio-economic impact on the human being and its contracts earning opportunities in agricultural sector. Alternatively, it is a natural extreme event, like a cyclone, an earthquake or a flood, that is not caused by human being. These are naturally occurring phenomena that become hazardous due to the intervention of human infrastructure. Flood plays a vital role in creating *Monga* in the study area.

High perception about lack of working facilities at agricultural sector as a cause of *Monga* dominated the respondents of Char area while this was of medium perception in urban and rural areas (52.00 and 60.00 percent), respectively. Considering all respondents together, medium perception occupied the highest position (55.56 percent) followed by low (24.44 percent) and high (20.00 percent) perception (Table 2).

As different natural calamities occur in Char area more frequently, majority of the respondents of this area reported the problem as high. Therefore, to overcome this vulnerable situation especially in Char area, rehabilitation program should be undertaken and effectively implemented just after each natural calamity to maintain required working facilities in agricultural sector.

Lack of availability along with high interest of credit was also a cause of occurring *Monga*. Most of the respondents of the study area were not financially solvent. They had to borrow money from different NGOs like Grameen Bank, ASA, BRAC, etc. In the study area, the farmers reported that the interest rate on credit as compared to the bank loan was higher. Moreover credit was not available to them when it is needed. This problem as a cause of *Monga* which was found as medium perception in all respondents irrespective of areas under study (Table 2). Moreover, it was not of low perception in urban area. Overall, 74.44 percent of respondents thought that unavailability of credit and its high interest rate was a medium cause of occurring *Monga* followed by high (16.67 percent) and low (8.89 percent) perception.

Ranking of the causes of *Monga*

An effort was made to rank the causes of *Monga* in the study area where highly perceived responses were considered. Table 3 shows that non-availability of working facilities in non-agricultural sector was appeared to be the most important cause of *Monga* and ranked 1 as it was perceived highly by 48.89 percent of respondents. It was followed by lack of working facilities in agricultural sector, lack of cultivable land and unavailable credit and its high interest rate having rank of 2, 3 and 4, respectively. Decrease of agricultural production due to natural calamities ranked the last (5th) among the most important causes of *Monga* in the study area.

Table 3. Ranking of the responses regarding perception about causes of *Monga*

Respondents, (%)

Causes of <i>Monga</i>	Categories			Total	Rank order
	Char area (no.)	Rural area (no.)	Urban area (no.)		
Lack of cultivable land	5 (11.11)	9 (36.00)	-	14 (15.56)	3
Decrease of agricultural production due to natural calamities	7 (15.56)	-	-	7 (7.78)	5
Non-availability of working facilities at non-agricultural sector	19 (42.22)	11 (44.00)	14 (70.00)	44 (48.89)	1
Lack of working facilities at agricultural sector	19 (42.22)	5 (20.00)	-	24 (26.67)	2
Lack of credit availability and high interest rate of credit	-	5 (20.00)	6 (30.00)	11 (12.22)	4

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Perception of *Monga* in terms of consumption

Monga is usually a phenomenon of hungry stomach due to less consumption because of severe scarcity of basic food items. So, an endeavor was made to explore how respondents perceived *Monga* in terms of less consumption. Respondents were asked how many times they failed to eat in full stomach (always, at times and rare) and responses thus collected are furnished in Table 3.

It is evident from table that majority of the population of Char area did not eat in full stomach for all times due to *Monga* which was the case of at times and rare in rural and urban areas (66.67, 44.00 and 65.00 percent) respectively. No one was found in urban area who suffered from lack of full consumption due to *Monga* for all times. On an average, majority of the respondents (43.33 percent) did not eat full stomach due to *Monga* for all times followed by at times (32.22 percent) and rare (24.44 percent). Moreover, *Monga* stricken people in terms of less consumption were higher in Char area and rural areas compared to urban area under study. So, the targeted *Monga* affected people ate less amount of food (i.e. rice, flour, pulses, fish, meat, milk and fruits) than required in crisis period.

Table 4. Less food consumption during *Monga*

Categories	Perception			Respondents, (%)
	Char area (45)	Rural area (25)	Urban area (20)	Total (90)
Always	30 (66.67)	9 (36.00)	-	39 (43.33)
At times	11 (24.44)	11 (44.00)	7 (35.00)	29 (32.22)
Rare	4 (8.89)	5 (20.00)	13 (65.00)	22 (24.44)
Total	45 (100)	25 (100)	20 (100)	90 (100)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Mitigating activities undertaken by NGOs

Different NGOs like BRAC, ASA, Grameen Bank, etc., were found to implement different programmes to mitigate *Monga* in the area under study. The researcher tried to assess the effectiveness of these mitigating activities by interviewing the respondents. The responses given by the respondents were recorded as satisfactory, moderate and unsatisfactory manner. According to their opinions four major mitigating activities were identified for discussions which are: beef fattening, petty business, plant nursery and poultry rearing.

Beef fattening was one of the important programme of BRAC and ASA with objectives to generate income and create employment opportunities for the *Monga* affected people and to provide regular vaccination. Table 5 indicates that beef fattening was assessed as satisfactory by the majority of respondents of rural area while this was unsatisfactory in Char and urban areas (73.33 and 50.00 percent, respectively). Moreover, this programme was not considered as satisfactory in Char area. Considering all respondents together, 51.11 percent of respondents thought that the above programme was an unsatisfactory strategy to mitigate *Monga* and only 21.11 percent of them opined that it as an effective weapon to relieve from *Monga* in the study area. Most of the respondents were found to be considered beef fattening as unsatisfactory because of un-availability of feed and its high price. Besides, beef fattening programme run by BRAC and ASA was more or less satisfactory in rural area but it did not fulfil its objectives in Char and urban areas.

Table 5. Mitigating activities undertaken by NGOs

Mitigating Activities Undertaken by NGOs	Categories	Assessment			Assessment	Respondents, (%)
		Satisfactory	Moderate	Unsatisfactory		
1 Beef fattening	Char area	-	12 (26.67)	33 (73.33)	45 (100)	
	Rural area	17 (68.00)	5 (20.00)	3 (12.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	2 (10.00)	8 (40.00)	10 (50.00)	20 (100)	
	Total	19 (21.11)	25 (27.78)	46 (51.11)	90 (100)	
2 Petty business	Char area	35 (77.78)	10 (22.22)	-	45 (100)	
	Rural area	-	18 (72.00)	7 (28.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	18 (90.00)	2 (10.00)	-	20 (100)	
	Total	53 (58.89)	30 (33.33)	7 (7.78)	90 (100)	
3. Plant nursery	Char area	5 (11.11)	30 (66.67)	10 (22.22)	45 (100)	
	Rural area	5 (20.00)	8 (32.00)	13 (52.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	12 (60.00)	8 (20.00)	-	20 (100)	
	Total	22 (24.44)	68 (51.11)	23 (25.56)	90 (100)	
4. Poultry farming	Char area	16 (35.55)	23 (51.11)	6 (13.33)	45 (100)	
	Rural area	15 (60.00)	7 (28.00)	3 (12.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	8 (40.00)	12 (60.00)	-	20 (100)	
	Total	31 (34.44)	50 (55.56)	9 (10.00)	90 (100)	

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Petty business was an important source of earning at non-agricultural sector in the study area. BRAC, ASA and Grameen Bank provided credit to the people to create employment opportunities and to increase their earning facilities. Table 5 represents that the maximum of respondents of Char and urban areas (77.78 and 90.00 percent, respectively) assessed this programme as satisfactory. No one was found to mention this programme as satisfactory in rural area while it was the case (unsatisfactory strategy) in Char and urban areas. As most of the respondents of rural area practiced agricultural activities, they did not give importance on petty business. Overall, 58.89 percent of total respondents thought that petty business was a satisfactory activity to remedy *Monga* followed by 33.33 percent of moderate and 8.89 percent of unsatisfactory. Moreover, this mitigating activity was comparatively played a crucial role in Char and urban areas as none of the respondent thought it as unsatisfactory.

Plant nursery is an important enterprise to generate income and employment opportunities for the landless poor, particularly the *Monga* affected people in Northern Bangladesh. For this purpose, BRAC has launched credit programme to the *Monga* affected people. It also helps in reducing nutritional deficiencies among the landless people.

It is apparent from Table 5 that respondents assessed plant nursery as satisfactory as a remedy of *Monga* occupied the highest percentage (60.00 percent) in urban area compared to rural (20.00 percent) and Char (11.11 percent) areas under study. On an average, this programme was assessed as of moderate performance which ranked the highest (51.11 percent) followed by unsatisfactory 25.56 percent and satisfactory 24.44 percent of the respondents. Moreover, plant nursery was comparatively an effective *Monga* mitigating activity in urban area because none of the respondent of this area mentioned it as unsatisfactory.

The poultry industry in Bangladesh is crucial to agricultural growth and improvement of diet of the people. This sub-sector is particularly important in the sense that it is a significant source for the supply of protein and nutrition in a household's nutritional intake. It is an attractive economic activity as well, especially to women and the poorer sections. Poultry farms in Bangladesh have witnessed a rapid growth in recent times. With a high population and income growth, urbanization and high-income elasticity of demand, the

demand for poultry products is expected to increase appreciably in the future (Selim Raihan and Nahid Mahmud, 2008). Furthermore, experts argue that the poultry sector in Bangladesh is very important for the reduction of poverty and creation of employment opportunities. Many people are directly dependent on this industry for their livelihood. The study was conducted in the rural areas under traditional method of rearing that is scavenging within the farm household. BRAC, ASA and Grameen Bank play a vital role in the case of poultry farming with objectives to generate income and employment opportunities for the *Monga* affected people and to ensure protein supply for the poor people.

Table 5 displays that poultry farming assessed as satisfactory by the majority of respondents of rural area while this was moderate in Char and urban areas (51.11 and 60.00 percent, respectively). It is apparent from Table 4 that on an average 55.56 percent of total respondents thought that poultry farming was a moderate strategy to mitigate *Monga* whereas 34.44 percent of them considered it as a very effective way to alleviate from *Monga* from the study area. Moreover, it was comparatively a very important *Monga* mitigating activity in urban area as none of the respondent thought it with unsatisfactory performance.

Ranking of non-government *Monga* mitigating activities

An attempt was made to rank the activities to mitigate *Monga* undertaken by different NGOs in the study area. In ranking, only satisfactory assessment was considered. Table 6 shows that petty business appeared to be the most effective mitigating activities of *Monga* and ranked 1 as it was assessed satisfactory by majority (58.89 percent) of the respondents. It was followed by poultry farming and plant nursery having rank of 2 and 3, respectively. Beef fattening ranked the last (4th) among the most important mitigating activities of *Monga* in the study area because of unavailability of feed and its high price. So, the finding clears that though several activities showed satisfactory performance to mitigate *Monga*, all of them were not of equal importance to the respondents of all areas under study.

Table 6. Ranking of non-government *Monga* mitigating activities

Mitigating Activities of <i>Monga</i>	Categories			Total	Rank order
	Char area (no.)	Rural area (no.)	Urban area (no.)		
Beef fattening	-	17 (18.89)	2 (2.22)	19 (21.11)	4
Petty business	35 (38.89)	-	18 (20.00)	53 (58.89)	1
Plant nursery	5 (5.56)	5 (5.56)	12 (13.33)	22 (24.44)	3
Poultry farming	16 (17.78)	15 (16.67)	18 (20.00)	49 (54.44)	2
Total	56 (62.22)	37 (41.11)	50 (55.56)		

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Mitigating Activities Undertaken by GOs

People of the study area were found to come under different programmes undertaken by the government to alleviate *Monga* from the study area. The basic objective of these programmes was to reap benefit from government services to reduce seasonal hunger among the *Monga* affected people. There found several programmes but important three of them were selected for discussion on the basis of respondents' opinion and coverage of the programmes: old-age allowance programme, hundred-day job scheme and vulnerable group development (VGD) Programme.

The Ministry of Social Welfare is implementing this programme. In the fiscal year 2008-09, the budget allocation for this programme was Tk 448.80 crore. Under this programme, 20 lakh old and destitute people are getting monthly allowance at the rate of Tk 250.

Table 7 reveals that respondents perceived old-age allowance programme as satisfactory by 28.00 percent in rural area and 20.00 percent in urban area. Maximum of the respondents assessed this programme as unsatisfactory in Char area. Moreover, it was a moderate programme in rural and urban areas under study. Considering all respondents together, 51.11 percent opined that this programme was a moderate strategy to mitigate *Monga* in the area.

Besides, the above mentioned programme was not so effective way to mitigate *Monga* from the study area because of such governments' weakness like delay in supply, bribe for receiving, malpractice done by mostly local public representatives, etc.

Table 7. Mitigating activities undertaken by GOs

Mitigating Activities Undertaken by GOs	Categories	Assessment			Assessment	Respondents, (%)
		Satisfactory	Moderate	Unsatisfactory		
1 Old-age allowance programme	Char area	-	19 (42.22)	26 (57.78)	45 (100)	
	Rural area	7 (28.00)	15 (60.00)	3 (12.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	4 (20.00)	12 (60.00)	4 (20.00)	20 (100)	
	Total	11 (12.22)	46 (51.11)	33 (36.67)	90 (100)	
2 Hundred-days job scheme	Char area	4 (8.89)	26 (57.78)	15 (16.67)	45 (100)	
	Rural area	14 (56.00)	6 (24.00)	5 (20.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	12 (60.00)	3 (15.00)	5 (25.00)	20 (100)	
	Total	34 (37.78)	28 (31.11)	28 (31.11)	90 (100)	
3. Vulnerable group development (VGD) programme	Char area	-	15 (33.33)	30 (66.67)	45 (100)	
	Rural area	-	15 (60.00)	10 (40.00)	25 (100)	
	Urban area	4 (20.00)	12 (60.00)	4 (20.00)	20 (100)	
	Total	4 (4.44)	42 (46.67)	44 (48.89)	90 (100)	

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Caretaker Government of Bangladesh launched a 100-day employment generation scheme for 20 lakh hardcore poor across the country to mitigate their sufferings during lean season. Under the programme, one person of a family is getting Tk 100 per working day against his/ her labour to be utilized in different types of projects like canal digging, embankment building, earth filling, pond cleaning, compost making, etc. Table 7 indicates that majority of respondents assessed 100-days job scheme as satisfactory as a mitigating activity in both rural and urban areas (56.00 and 60.00 percent, respectively) while it was the case of moderate performance in Char area (57.78 percent). On an average, this programme was assessed as satisfactory only by 37.78 percent of the respondents. So, the performance of this programme was not good though the government undertook it as a quick reaping strategy. It might be the cause of nepotism in making list of the names of the members which was thought by the respondents of the study area in which malpractice done by the chairman, members and other influencing persons.

Under VGD, the government targeted to distribute 30 kg rice or wheat per head among 750,000 women in the country in FY2008-09. Besides, it also provided a monthly allowance of Tk. 400 per head to an additional 40,000 underprivileged women of eight districts. Only 20.00 percent of the urban respondents reported the VGD programme as satisfactory and no one was found to mention it as satisfactory in Char and rural areas. Moreover, on an average, peoples' assessment about the performance of VGD was unsatisfactory by majority of them (48.89 percent) followed by moderate (16.67 percent) and satisfactory (4.44 percent) performance. Most of the respondents of the study area were not satisfied about VGD because of misallocation of the benefits among the beneficiaries of the program.

Ranking of government *Monga* mitigating activities

An endeavor was made to rank the mitigating activities of *Monga* run by government in the study area. In ranking, only satisfactory responses were considered. Table 8 shows that 100 days job scheme was the most effective mitigating activities of *Monga* taken by the government and ranked 1 as it was assessed satisfactory by majority (33.33 percent) of the respondents because this programme was undertaken by the Caretaker Government who tried to avoid corruption. It was followed by old- age allowance which scored the second position. Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) ranked the last (3th) among the most important mitigating activities of *Monga* in the study area.

Table 8. Ranking of the government *Monga* mitigating activities

Mitigating Activities of <i>Monga</i>	Categories			Total	Rank order	Respondents, (%)
	Char area (no.)	Rural area (no.)	Urban area (no.)			
Old- age allowance	-	7 (7.78)	4 (4.44)	11 (12.22)	2	
100 days job scheme	4 (4.44)	14 (15.56)	12 (13.33)	30 (33.33)	1	
Vulnerable group development (VGD)	-	-	4 (4.44)	4 (4.44)	3	

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Relative performance of GO and NGO mitigating activities

It was efforted to make a comparison between the performance of *Monga* mitigating activities undertaken by different GOs and NGOs in the study area. Table 9 clears that performance of NGO activities in the line of *Monga* mitigation was more satisfactory compared to GO ones as mentioned by majority of the respondents. The Table also indicates that the difference between the performance of GO and NGO was wider in Char area than the other two areas. The higher performance of NGOs was due to their better identification, selection and supervision strategy with perfect information. Drawbacks like corruption, lack of proper management, lack of adequate financial support, etc., might be responsible for the poor performance of GO mitigating activities of *Monga*.

Table 9 Relative performance of GO and NGO mitigating activities

Activities	Categories			Total	Rank order	Respondents, (%)
	Char area (no.)	Rural area (no.)	Urban area (no.)			
GO activities	4 (4.44)	21 (23.33)	20 (22.22)			
NGO activities	56 (62.22)	37 (41.11)	50 (55.56)			

Note: Figures within the parentheses indicate percentages of total.

Source: Field Survey, 2009.

Conclusion

It may be argued that the difference between the performance of GO and NGO in *Monga* mitigation was wider in Char area than the other two areas. The higher performance of NGOs was due to their better identification, selection and supervision strategy with perfect information. Drawbacks like corruption, lack of proper management, lack of adequate financial support, etc., might be responsible for the poor performance of GO mitigating activities of *Monga*. Food insecurity was a common phenomenon in the study area. So, the targeted *Monga* affected people ate less food than required in crisis period. The performance of NGO activities in the line of *Monga* mitigation was more satisfactory compared to GO ones as mentioned by majority of the respondents irrespective of areas under study.

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