

**047** **The Utilization and Accessibility to Accretion Lands by Displaced Population: A River Bank Erosion Impact Study**  
(Published in 1988)

**a) Researchers' Identity**

1. Sk. Zahrul Ferdous, Additional Director  
M.Sc. (Agriculture) Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh  
M.S. (Agriculture Education), University of the Philippines, Los Banos
2. A.T.M. Altaf Husain, Joint Director  
M.A. (Economics), Dhaka University  
M.A. (Development Studies), The Hague, Netherlands

**b) Objectives**

The broad objective of the study was to examine the socio-economic impact of river bank erosion on the displaced population and the problems lie with their settlement and the utilization of the accreted lands. The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To identify the socio-economic status of the displaced population before erosion and after their settlement in the accreted lands;
- ii. To study the frequency of migration;
- iii. To find out the actual state of affairs of the distribution of accreted lands in the field;
- iv. To examine the utilization of accreted lands by the displaced population; and
- v. To study the conflicts, if any, among the displaced people in respect of settlement and utilization of accreted lands.

**c) Executive summary**

● *Location of the Study Area*

For the study two Chars of Shariakandi Union under Shariakandi Upazila of Bogra district were selected. Shariakandi is located on the Western side of the river Jamuna and seriously affected by river erosion. There are 9 Chars in the Union which are already occupied by displaced people. A complete list of the Chars with their ages was collected from the Upazila Revenue Office.

Then two Chars namely, Gazaria which is 9 years old and Daruna which is 4 years old were selected for the study. These two Chars of different ages were taken to get a comparative picture. The Chars were selected purposively based on accessibility.

● *Collection and Analysis of Data*

All the heads of the settled families of the two Chars were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. A total of 68 heads of households; 44 of Gazaria and 24 Daruna were interviewed. Upazila officials such as Upazila Nirbahi Officer and Upazila Revenue Officer, Public representatives such as Upazila Chairman and Union Parishad Chairman and a few local knowledgeable persons were also interviewed for necessary information. Besides, related records and documents were consulted.

The authors along with two investigators collected the data after pre-testing the questionnaire. To reach the Chars everyday, they had to walk on foot and cross the river by country boat from the Upazila Head Quarters.

After collection of data, these were tabulated and analysed in the research section of the Rural Development Academy, Bogra.

**d) Conclusion**

1. People in both Chars were cooperative and eager to giving interview. They took us as officials of relief giving agencies and thought that their exclusion in interview might lead to deprivation of relief goods.
2. The Chars are located at a distance of about 6 Km from the Upazila Head Quarters and separated by the river Jamuna which takes half an hour to cross by country boat. Facilities like marketing, education, medical and recreation are completely absent there. For everything, people have to take the trouble of crossing the river to reach Shariakandi which is sometimes really a difficult task. The river deprives them of the support and services of the government departments. Despite of all the inconveniences, they are seemed to be happy with what they have.
3. The people in the Chars hardly care for any of the government rules in respect of distribution and possession of lands. They perform the survey work calling the local surveyer and abide by the decisions of the Matbars.

4. There is no permanance of the Chars. These two Chars have already started eroding. Non-permanence character of the Chars is one of reasons of cheapness of land.
5. Except large number of banana trees, there is no other type of trees in the chars. People do not plant trees mainly because of non-permanence of the Char and secondly, because of flood occur in almost every year. However, plenty of kans are found which they use as fuel and fencing materials of their houses. They also earn some money by selling these at Shariakandi bazar.
6. People do not practise HYVs in the lands. This is mainly due to lack of irrigation facilities and extension work.
7. Chars are not formed in a year. These have to pass through several stages and take a few years to be ready for cultivation purposes. However, Char Gazaria took only two years to be ready for cultivation. Char Daruna has emerged from the river in 1983 and it is not still ready for cultivation in true sense.
8. In the initial stages, the Char lands are mostly sandy. Crops like millet, grass pea which do not require much water are grown in these lands. These are profitable crops considering their cost of production. People just broadcast and harvest these crops, and no cost in between is required.
9. The lands in the Gazaria Char are very fertile. Mixed and relay cropping is highly practised in this Char. These are also practiced in Damuna. However, crops are damaged by floods in some year.
10. The people in the chars are peace-loving. They have no connection with the national as well as local politics. They grow vegetables in their lands, catch fish in the river and procure fuel sticks (naturally grown) from the fields and lead an anxiety free life.
11. There are lots of pasture lands in the Char. These pasture lands provide people an opportunity for rearing cattle and goat.
12. The concerned Upazila Officials do not keep any records of the Chars. They have even failed to provide current information about the age of the two chars; when the villages went into the river and when they have emerged as Chars.
13. The people in the Chars maintain a very good relationship among themselves. Till today there is no conflict among the people in respect of settlement, utilization of lands and harvesting of crops. They are very much loyal to the decisions of the Matbars.

### **e) Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings and observations the following suggestions can be made:

1. The government should undertake immediate survey work to ascertain the actual areas of accreted lands and to avoid loss of revenue. This can be also helped in distribution of the lands according to the government rules.
2. Extension Services should be strengthened to motivate people in introducing high yielding varieties. For this purpose, number of visits of officials of Agricultural Department should be increased.
3. Irrigation facilities should be created in the Chars. Emphasis should be given on Low Lift Pump (LLP) since the Chars are bounded by the river Jamuna and easy to lift water from the river.
4. The soil in the Char is suitable for vegetable cultivation and the people can earn more income by bringing more land under vegetable cultivation.
5. The pasture lands in the Chars provide ample opportunity for rearing cattle and goats. Projects on cattle and goat rearing can be undertaken.
6. The people in the Chars should be provided at least minimum facilities of marketing, medical and education.