**Utilization of Microcredit by the Recipients in Some Selected Cases in Bangladesh**

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**Abstract**

Since microcredit is considered an ideal tool that helps rural peasants to increase farm income, it is crucial, therefore, for the productive use of this credit to be thoroughly discussed. This research aims to identify how beneficiaries use credit as productive activities such as small businesses, poultry, livestock, vegetables, crop cultivations, etc. The basic demographical features of the credit users, as well as their problems, were identified. The study was conducted in Bangladesh's village of Barigaon, Chapatoli, and Kalikapur of Matlab Dakshin Upazila under Chandpur district. Data is extracted from a pre-tested interview from 100 household members of microcredit from 18 September to 12 October 2018, using a semi-structured interview schedule. In addition, three case studies were conducted for extracting qualitative data. Data indicated that the average age of the borrowers was 44.81. The mean year of schooling was 3.15. An overwhelming majority (81 percent) of credit receivers were women. The family size of the respondents was 4.87. The family farm size was 0.15 hectares. Sixty percent of them received loans from multiple sources. Non-farm activities (i.e. cottage, handicrafts, shops) were the most popular sector for credit allocation (35 percent), and livestock (i.e. milking cows and goat rearing), as well as poultry sectors, remain in a very close second position for credit allocation (31 percent). However, crop and fish farming received 3rd and 4th position for loan distribution; those were preferred by 14 percent and 12 percent of respondents, respectively. Credit borrowers opined that aggressive behavior of loan officers and high-interest rates were challenging, respectively. Even though there were some issues, the economic vulnerability of the credit members was reduced as a whole. Overall, women seem to be responsible at the household level as they are the central receiver of microfinance, who utilize credit in productive functions for the benefits of their family and their livelihood. However, it is a matter of concern that if they overdue money, then become indebted.

**Keywords:** Utilization, microcredit, recipients, rural, farm income, Bangladesh

**1. Introduction**

|  |
| --- |
| *Asma Khatun is 45 years old destitute, having three growing up children. Her husband (namely, Karim Miah) was an amateur construction worker in Dhaka. They had a fair enough income meeting family expenditure. Ten years ago, her husband died falling from the rooftop of 5 storied building. That incident shattered her life. She left her in-law's house with her three children and moved into her parent's house. Her parents are landless subsistence farmers facing challenges to earn end meet for five-member family expenditure. In addition, the family size becomes eight after joining Asma Khatun with her children. Asma Khatun had some savings, and she utilized those buying a nanny goat (variety is black Bengal goat).* This *goat gave birth to three kittens just after rearing six months. She wanted to buy more goats, but she did not have money. Asma Khatun approached a state-owned local commercial bank. However, she did not get an access loan because she is a woman, and, secondly, she did not have collateral for granting the credit. However, she could borrow money from an informal moneylender; the interest rate was exorbitant that she could not dare. Then, she came to know that microfinance organizations, such as GB, BRAC, ASA, and so on offer credit. Then, she joined GB group meeting after becoming a member, and afterward, she received credit to increase the size of goat farming. She is now satisfied with her present condition.[[1]](#footnote-1)* |

Bangladesh is South Asian's most overpopulated country, having 1198 people per square kilometer with 167 million people (worldpopulationreview.com, 2022). It has to struggle to produce food from 14 million hectares of land that 9.3 million hectares are under cultivation where floods, cyclones, and droughts are examples of widespread natural catastrophes (BBS, 2017; Rahman and Manprasert, 2006). However, the average population density in low-income countries is 86 people per square kilometer, but within South Asian countries, it is 313 people per square kilometer. It is important to note that the world has only 50 people per square kilometer. It is also noteworthy to mention that Bangladesh is a rural-based country where more than 60% of the people live in rural areas, and 48% of the employment is generated by agriculture which contributes 20% GDP, where per capita land is 0.06 ha. (AIS, 2012; BBS, 2018). Although per capita income has been increased, inequality is also widespread in rural areas in Bangladesh (Chowdhury et al, 2013).

The main livelihood of rural people is agriculture farming(Keshavarz, 2017). Most farmers (about 65%) are functionally[[2]](#footnote-2) landless; therefore, subsistence farming is the main way of managing agriculture in Bangladesh, rather than commercial enterprise, such as, agribusiness (Chowdhury, 1996). Farm activities comprise cereal and horticultural crop cultivation, livestock and poultry rearing, with non-farming such as cottage, handicrafts, small shop management, fisheries, and mostly for family consumption. It was challenging for them to manage credit, expand their business, or start new ones. However, accessing credit from the existing commercial bank was not possible since most of them have not had enough mortgages, which were the prime conditions for receiving the credit from such financial institutions. Nevertheless, several private individual moneylender agencies were involved, but their interest rate was very exorbitant. Then, microfinance institutions came apparently as a panacea for landless, small, and marginal poor people, especially for women in rural areas in Bangladesh.

Microfinance provides the opportunity to people in poverty to have access to basic financial services, such as credit, micro-insurance, savings, money transfer services, and financial products aimed at poor and marginal income people[[3]](#footnote-3). Microcredit is such a form of lending money that is commonly described as a small amount of loan distributed among marginal people, mostly women, without any collateral (Yunus, 2007). However, beneficiaries need to form a group and save some money by themselves before receiving that credit from agencies. Most of the beneficiaries take credit to raise poultry and livestock, cottage and handicrafts, small businesses such as grocery shops or tea stalls, and vegetables and crop production purposes in rural areas in Bangladesh.

According to the Microcredit Supervisory Authority (2013), there are 698 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and microfinance institutes (MFIs) catering to 25 million clients in Bangladesh with total outstanding credits of BDT 257 billion (USD 3.3 billion) and total securities of BDT 94 billion (USD 1.2 billion). Among them, GB, BRAC, ASA, Proshika, and others are leading NGOs-MFIs, the principal actors in the credit market (Table 1). It is here mentionable that GB is the pioneer in this credit business.

**Table 1** Loan Portfolio and Borrowers in Bangladesh Microfinance Institutions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **MFI size** | **Name** | **Portfolio of gross loans** | **Domestic microfinance market share** | **Active Borrower Number** | **Domestic microfinance market share** |
| Very large: > 500,000 clients (86% of borrowers) | Grameen Bank (GB) | $532,010,669 | 31.12% | 6,707,000 | 28.28% |
|  | BRAC | $528,787,592 | 30.93% | 6,397,635 | 26.97% |
|  | ASA | $305,268,840 | 17.86% | 5,163,279 | 21.77% |
|  | PROSHIKA | $54,319,532 | 3.18% | 1,587,166 | 6.69% |
|  | TMSS | $38,555,615 | 2.26% | 513,055 | 2.16% |
| Large  >100,000 and  >500,000 clients  (8.14% of borrowers) | BURO Bangladesh | $28,460,360 | 1.66% | 354,020 | 1.49% |
|  | JCF | $22,914,310 | 1.34% | 274,899 | 1.16% |
|  | RDRS | $11,440,228 | 0.67% | 257,292 | 1.08% |
|  | SSS | $25,174,774 | 1.47% | 250,992 | 1.06% |
|  | PMUK | $8,729,074 | 0.51% | 171,021 | 0.72% |
|  | Shakti | $16,610,216 | 0.97% | 145,888 | 0.62% |
|  | RRF | $11,511,553 | 0.67% | 138,547 | 0.58% |
|  | UDDIPAN | $11,229,824 | 0.66% | 128,081 | 0.54% |
| Subtotal (top 13) | | 1,420,386,633 | 93.30% | 22,088,875 | 93.12% |
| Total reporting (68) | | $1,709,570,960 | 100.00% | 23,717,187 | 100.00% |

Source: MIX Market, cited by WB (2010), Linking Up and Reaching out in Bangladesh, p 20

Microfinance provides a credit based on forming a group's commitment considered as collateral. It is assumed that credit receivers increase their farm income using the existing skills, improve their leadership skills, and feel encouraged to participate in social programs. Apart from increasing revenues and assets, and savings, credit members, especially women, get an opportunity to improve their decision-making capability for their family and society level (Table 2). In addition, they feel the importance of education and health care facilities.

**Table 2 Operation of micro-credit program in agriculture at village level in Bangladesh**

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R

E

D

I

T

Group based collateral

Agricultural Loans That Work

Income/assets growth

Repayment schedule

Empowerment is the capacity to take advantage of government benefits or start self-help projects.

Quality education and health

Saving

Resilience on existing skills

Village skills

Development

of group cohesion,

Leading,

Program for social inclusion

Source: MRA, Ministry of Finance, The Government of Bangladesh.

However, several pieces of research are available on microcredit programs and their impact. There is a literature gap about subsistence farming through microcredit utilization. Therefore, the researcher undertakes this piece of research. The following were the study's goals: to describe demographical characteristics of the beneficiaries; how beneficiaries use credit for productive activities such as raising poultry, rearing livestock, growing vegetables and crop cultivations as well as nurturing small businesses and so on; and what are the problems faced by the beneficiaries managing the credit? It was assumed that the credit receivers use credit as beneficial activities such as poultry, livestock, vegetables, crop cultivations, a small business, and so on to improve their income and savings. Apart from these, beneficiaries' cosmopoliteness skill grows through social participation and group interactions.

**2. Literature Review**

Past findings and opinions of the respective author regarding credit programs for agriculture farming management are discussed under different sub-headlines.

**2.1 Credit and food security**

About 45 percent of farmers are functionally landless (having less than 0.5 acres of land) (Ahmed et al., 2015), which makes farmers face challenges to produce food for a family for the whole year round (DAE, 2005). "Food security prevails when all populations, at all times, have availability and access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to support their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life," according to the World Food Summit (1996). Sen (1981) stressed the matters of food consumption, demand, and availability are all factors to consider. World Bank report (1986) emphasized the lack of sufficient earnings as the leading cause of food insecurity. Also, Faridi and Wadood (2010), described food security as a case of availability to fulfill the required nutritional demand for individuals, families, and society. According to Barun (2009), various risks, such as food price volatility, economic and financial shocks, the effect of climate change, as well as widespread epidemics, severely influence food security status at the bottom of the society. Elias (1988), Haq (1993), and Rahman (1990), summarized that the technological innovations in the agricultural sector, such as HYVs, chemical fertilizers, irrigation, mechanical plows, and so on, required cash capital to hire them for farming. Barkat *et al.* (2010) mentioned the crucial role of credit for food production. Diagne and Zeller (2001) emphasized the role of credit for rural people to manage food security. Hazarika and Guha-Khasnobis (2008) explored how microcredit enabled women to increase decision-making at the household level, ensuring food safety. Banik (1993) was skeptical about food security through microcredit because farm food production is not sufficiently continuous (for example, most of the time, crop production is once at its lifecycle); however, beneficiaries have to pay back loans continuously (in several installments). Also, Diagne (1998) also stated an insignificant relationship between credit use and food security among marginal farmers in Malawi. However, Bannerman (2006) found mixed results on marginal farmers' microcredit use for food security. He mentioned that some households had increased food security, whereas the rest did not so; instead, they fall into the debt trap.

**2.2 Microcredit, agriculture, and economic growth**

Akhunji (1982) noted that both conventional and modern authors have documented that agriculture has had overall significance to economic development. According to Rostow (1960) cited by Willis (2005:40), agricultural development is the fundamental unit of modernity. Classical economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo also emphasize agricultural development for economic growth (Breman and Mundle, 1991; Sadhu and Singh, 1983, Mathur, 1974). They also opined that industrial development is possible if agriculture production has surplus growth that helps to create capital.

Khanam (1989) stated that agriculture contributes to forming a natural development base in most developing countries. Agro-based industry becomes the usual stepping-satire for national industrialization on a broader scale. According to Schultz (1970), many countries got industrial development by transforming their agriculture and increasing agricultural growth.

Mellor (1970) described the transformation of farm output and better farm incomes that lead to higher living standards, greater purchasing power, improved health, and educational standards; in other words, greater efficiency in the utilization of labor resources in the manufacture of material items.

Bathric (1981) pointed to the Nairobi Conference of the World Bank's Board of Governors in 1973 when a strong focus was placed on increasing small farmers' productive potential. According to Roy (1996), agribusiness development is critical to meet the requirements of a developing economy and population for food, fodder, and raw materials. Agriculture also serves as a foundation for applying capital and expanding market opportunities.

The World Bank's endorsement of loan support for small farmers, according to Padmanabhan (1988), is an essential tool for agricultural success. Multiple investigations, including Elias (1988), Sen (1996), Rahman (1990), and Haq (1993), have examined the agricultural settings of Bangladesh and found that the requirement for bank credit has increased with agricultural technology innovation, particularly in the crop sector.

Kim (1993) stressed utilizing rural loans to boost agricultural productivity and growth. In numerous contexts, Colyer and Jimenez (1971) and Vogel (1981) offered substantial evidence of the positive relationship between appropriate credit availability and increased agricultural yields and farm incomes. In research done in three Bangladesh areas, Khan (1999) found formal credit requirements among smallholder farmers.

**2.3 Agricultural credit and small and marginal farmer**

According to Karim (1992), Roy, and Roy (1993), medium and big farmers have significantly greater financial access than smallholder farmers, who require the most significant assistance. Agricultural credit institutions, it has been noted, indirectly assist the rural wealthy in strengthening their advantaged position by making institutional loans comparatively unavailable to the rural poor.

According to MOF (1991), small and marginal farmers have restricted access to loan advances from NCBs and specialist banks like Bangladesh Krishi Bank and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank. According to Hossain (1984), the credit performance of the GB revealed that 40% of the loans given in 1983 were used for selling and shopkeeping operations, 26% for manufacturing and processing industries, and another 26% for animal husbandry and poultry. This basically left the agriculture sector with fewer than 2% of the GB loans available for disbursement. Trying to identify the reasons why GB was not willing to extend its lenders to support farm production,

Banik (1993) observed that the GB's weekly loan repayment system necessitated the borrower's investment of money obtained on credit to generate a consistent source of income that could support regular loan payments. In agriculture, capital investment at the start of agricultural operations was followed by revenue yields after the cropping season, making the weekly loan repayment mechanism inadequate for the demands of small farmers whose farm income was irregular.

**2.4 Micro-credit and poverty**

Khandker and Samad (2014) found out the microcredit program supports reducing poverty by raising domestic well-being. They also opined that female borrowers are more beneficial than male borrowers. Quibria (2012) stated that microcredit helps increased household income, thus, helps reduced poverty. Berhane and Gardebroek (2012) reported that microcredit positively impacts alleviating poverty, and earlier membership is amicable than later in this case. Develtere and Huybrechts (2005) said that the vulnerability of the receiver of microcredit from GB and BRAC was reduced; however, poverty reduction was unconcluded. Armendariz and Morduch (2010) mentioned that microcredit helps households eradicate poverty in various ways, such as increasing business profit, nutrition, schooling, asset holding, etc.

**3. Methodology**

The heading of the exploration is subsistence farming management through microcredit in Bangladesh. As microcredit is considered a perfect instrument that helps rural peasants to increase farm income, the valuable practice of this credit is, thus, necessary to be described. The primary objective of this research is to ascertain how beneficiaries use credit as productive activities such as small business, poultry, livestock, vegetables, crop cultivations, etc. Also, some selected socio-economic characteristics and the challenges faced by credit users are discussed here.

The study was conducted in three villages, namely Barigaon, Chapatoli, and Kalikapur of Narayanpur Union Parishad belongs to Matlab Dakshin Upazila under Chandpur district in Bangladesh (Fig 3.1 and 3.2). The researcher at first contacted and explained the purposes of the research with an official of the Microfinance Regulatory Authority (MRA), under the Ministry of Finance (MOF), Dhaka office in Bangladesh. Then, they recommended the researcher select the research areas for better communication and convenient places to stay there. Moreover, the researcher was born and brought around the research areas that were known to him. The MRA office helped the researcher contact credit agency officers who closely work with those villages. It is noteworthy that the researcher collects data from GB, BRAC, and ASA credit members. The location of the research field is southeastern side and about 65 kilometers away from the capital city Dhaka.

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| Fig. 3.1 Map showing sampling district in Bangladesh |
| Fig. 3 Map showing research areas in *Upazila* and in the district | | |

At first, the credit receivers' list of three villages was collected from the local MFI-NGO office. Then, 100 beneficiaries were selected following random sampling methods (Neuman, 2012; Kendall and Smith 1954; Barreiro and Albando, 2001). Both male and female beneficiaries were drawn following a random sampling process considering 33 from each village, namely Barigaon, Chapatoli, and 34 samples from Kalikapur villages. Moreover, 25 percent of the total sample from the population, excluding the primary sample, was drawn in a reserved list if any respondent remained absent or did not want to participate in the interview procedure (Table 3.1). Data were collected from 17 September to 12 October 2018.

**Table 3.1 Sampling procedures**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of the Villages** | **Samples** | **No. Respondents in reserved (25 % of samples)** |
| Barigaon | 33 | 8 |
| Chapatoli | 33 | 8 |
| Kalikapur | 34 | 9 |
| Total | 100 | 25 |

**Scale and scoring methods of the indicators**

**Age:** The respondents were categorized into three groups, namely young (<36), middle (≤36-55), and old (>55) age group on the basis of their age ranges (Afrad and Haque, 2009: 63).

**Education:** Four categories, namely illiterate, can sign only, primary, the secondary level of education were considered for the variable of education. The respondents who did not attend school and could not read and write were considered for the illiterate group. However, those who attended any class from 1 to 5 were considered primary education. Similarly, criteria were considered for defining the secondary education of the respondents (Kuhinur and Rokonuzzaman, 2009. 381–386.).

**Gender:** Two categories, namely male and female, were deemed to describe the gender of the interviewees.

**Size of the family:** Three classes, namely, small, medium, and large, were considered based on the number of family members. The family with not more than 3, 4 to 6, and 7 or more members were considered to belong to small, medium, and large family size categories, respectively (HIES, 2010; Rokonuzzaman and Kashem, 2005).

**Farm Size by Ownership:** The respondents were divided into five categories, namely landless, small, medium, and highland holding groups, including homestead, pond, and farmland areas owned by him/herself. In these categories, farmers owning < 0.02 ha. of land fell into the landless category. Similarly, farmers owning >0.02-0.2 ha, >0.2-1.0 ha., 1.0-3.0 ha. and more than 3.0 ha that fell into marginal, small, medium, and large farm size categories, respectively (Kuhinur and Rokonuzzaman, 2009. 381–386)

**Annual income per household:** It was calculated asking respondents to know their income from agricultural and non-agricultural sources of income by all members of the family whole year-round. The amount was mentioned here in Bangladeshi currency (BDTk.[[4]](#footnote-4)).

**How many sources of credit were received:** The respondents were asked if they received credit from more than one source. It was categorized two ways; namely, single sources, and another was multiple sources.

**Use of credit based on sectorial priority:** The beneficiaries were asked the main field of productive use credit they received. Then, the researcher discussed in detail how they use credit efficiently. Consequently, it was noted for analysis in the report.

**Problem confrontation index (PCI) table:** Credit receivers were asked if they faced any problem operating the fund. Consequently, they were asked to rate the problem on a 4 rating scale: high, medium, low, and not at all, where high gets 3 and not at all get 0 point (Taylor-Powell, 2009). Finally, PCI and rank order were determined by multiplying and adding the score.

**Case study**

Three case studies were conducted with three separate respondents from each village following standard procedure (Matthew and Sutton, 2011: 165-178; Choemprayong and Wildemuth, 2009: 51-61). After permission, the researcher stayed with respondents' whole day observing their daily activities. Also, the researcher interviewed visiting three different days staying with them from down to dusk. Their responses were recorded carefully for writing these reports.

**4. Results and Discussion**

**Socio-economic Characteristics of Micro-credit lender**

Data in Table 4.1 shows that the average age of the respondents was 44.81. About half-proportion (48 percent) belong to the middle-aged group, whereas 42 percent and 10 percent are the young and old aged group, respectively (table 4.1 and fig. 1).

The average year of schooling was 3.15. More than half-proportion of respondents (55 percent) attended primary education, whereas 15 percent and 3 percent were secondary and higher secondary educated, accordingly (table 4.1 and fig. 2). Also, 15 percent and 12 percent belong to 'can sign only' and illiterate groups, respectively.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (81 percent) was women, whereas 19 percent was the man (table 4.1 and fig. 3)

Data reveal that the average family size of the respondents was 4.87. More than half of the respondents (54 percent) belonged to the medium-sized family category, whereas 25 percent and 21 percent of respondents were in small and large family categories, respectively (table 4.1 and fig. 4).

The average farm size of the respondents was 0.15 hector. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (68 percent) belonged to landless and marginal categories, whereas 26 percent was a small category. Only 4 percent and 2 percent were fell into medium and large farm size categories, respectively (table 4.1 and fig. 5).

The average annual family income of the respondents was BDT. 121.6 thousand. About seven-tenths (71 percent) of the respondents belonged to the medium annual income category, whereas 18 percent and 11 percent belonged to the low and high family income categories, respectively (table 4.1 and fig. 6).

Data in Table 4.1 and fig.7 reveal that most of the respondents receive credit from more than one agency; however, 40 percent receive only one source of the microcredit agency.

**Table 4.1 Distribution of the microcredit receiver according to their selected characteristics (N=100)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SL. No. | Characteristics | Scoring method | Possible score | Observed score | Categories | Credit Receiver Number and percent (N=100) | Mean | Standard deviation |
| 1 | Age | Number of years | - - | 20-58 | Young (up to 35)  Middle-aged (36-55)  Old aged (above 55) | 42  48  10 | 44.81 | 4.31 |
| 2 | Education | Years of schooling | - - | 0-12 | Illiterate  Can sign only (0.5)  Primary (1-5)  Secondary (6-10)  Higher secondary (> 10) | 12  15  55  15  3 | 3.15 | 1.35 |
| 3. | Gender | Sex | - - | - - | Male  Female | 19  81 | - - | - - |
| 4 | Family size | Number of members | - - | 2-10 | Small family (below 4)  Medium family (4-6)  Large (above 6) | 25  54  21 | 4.87 | 1.52 |
| 5 | Family farm size | Size in hectares | - - | 0.01-1.74 | Landless (< 0.02 ha)  Marginal (>0.02-0.2 ha)  Small(>0.2-1.0ha)  Medium(1.0-3.0ha)  Large (>3.0ha) | 27  41  26  4  2 | 0.15 | 0.04 |
| 6 | Family annual income | In BD Taka[[5]](#footnote-5) (‘000 Tk.) | - - | 50-170 | Low (up to 90)  Medium (91-130)  High (> 130) | 18  71  11 | 121.6 | 7.84 |
| 7 | How many sources of credit received |  | -- | -- | Single source  Multiple source | 40  60 | -- | -- |

Source: Field survey. *Barigaon, Chapatoli and Kalikapur* villages belong to *Narayanpur union Parishad* under *Matlab Dakshin Upazila* in Chandpur district, Dated 17 September to 12 October 2018.

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**Productive use of credit based on sectorial priority**

According to the study area's primary data, microcredit receivers adopt different approaches to use productive ways to get expected benefits. Broadly, they follow four approaches: non-framing activities, livestock rearing, crop production, and fish farming, which are mentioned in chronological order according to their opinion.

Data in Table 4.2 indicates that 35 percent of the loan receiver chooses to spend money on non-farming activities (cottage, handicrafts, small shop, business and so on). The prime priority area of using credit was non-farming activities (cottage, handicrafts, business and so on).Running small businesses, such as tea stalls, grocery shops and so forth, is also a popular way of earning money. Probably farmers would like to use the money on the cottage, handicrafts, and small business because these sectors are more profitable than any other and back money immediately after investment. Also, credit receivers opined that credit agencies preferred investment in these sectors because they need installment (*kisti[[6]](#footnote-6)*) back weekly, fortnightly, or monthly basis, just after disbursing loan to the receivers.

Livestock rearing is also common among the farmer for credit investment remain 2nd position preferred by 31 percent of loan users. According to the opinion of the credit receivers, livestock sectors, wildly milking cows, goat rearing and poultry, and duck farming, offer them instant income. These sectors are also an ideal source of food, such as meat, milk, and eggs. It is noteworthy to mention that women farmers in rural Bangladesh prefer to involve themselves in agricultural operations, staying at home instead of going field. Most women's work in rural areas in Bangladesh is confined to homestead areas. For example, poultry and livestock are reared post-harvest operations around the homestead areas.

Crop farming is also a promising sector for microcredit investment preferred by 14 percent of loan receivers and ranked 3rd (table 4.2). Under crop production category to produce their food, the farmers consider some activities, for example, growing vegetables/ crops on others' land as share cropping, serving as day labor on others' farm, small scale home gardening, using High Yielding Variety (HYV) of crops and lending micro-credit for crop farming. They get a comparatively higher market price from cultivating vegetables. Moreover, the cultivation of vegetables requires a short duration compared to cereal crops. For instance, vegetables like; potato, tomato etc. requires 90 days, whereas cereal crops require at least 120 days of harvesting from sowing.

Since farmers do not have land, or if they have, but the area is minimal (less than 0.2 hectares), they either take lease land or borrow land from local landlords cultivating crops as sharecropping[[7]](#footnote-7). They mentioned that some crops are used for family consumption, and the rest are sold in the nearby market, getting cash to buy necessary commodities. Typically, there is a tremendous demand for labor; therefore, they could earn extra bucks doing work in an extra hour on others' farms. In addition, most of the respondents grow vegetables e.g., spinach, pumpkin, bottle gourd, bean, lady's finger, amaranth etc., in their home yard on a small scale.

Some of the production from home gardening is used for family consumption, and the rest are sold. Also, they prefer to use HYV of crops because cultivating a traditional local variety of crops is not profitable. Usually, female farmers receive micro-credit from different organizations operating in the study area, such as GB and BRAC. ASA and so on, and they manage micro-credit in favor of their husbands from the same organizations. They need credit to buy seeds, fertilizer, preparation of lands, irrigation, intercultural operations, etc. However, in most cases, farmers' wives do post-harvest activities such as threshing, sun drying, winnowing the crops, and women cook the meal and serve the family. Their children or women in the family collect leafy vegetables from the alley of the roads or common land area for cooking.

Credit investments in fish farming remain very close to crop farming based on farmers' choices. Twelve percent of credit users like to invest in fish culture, ranking 4th (Table 4.2). Usually, farmers culture fish in pond considering some rapid growing species, such as *pangas, silver-cup, koi(Anabas cobojius), sorputi(*Olive barb*), magu(*[Gagata youssoufi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gagata_youssoufi)*)*, etc. Commonly, fish become mature to harvest and ready to sell after culturing about three months. Also, this sector is considered as partial fulfillment of food, apart from earnings.

Some other sectors, such as buying food and other necessary commodities, last loan payment, dowry, paying Medicare bill, settlement of the case in court, paying migration cost of son in abroad and so on, are also popular among the credit users in utilizing money. These sectors are considered to be the consumption of credit. It is noteworthy that there is no written basis for these sectors in the contact between loan receivers and agencies. However, loan receivers use surplus money to buy food or collect other necessary commodities, which they require urgently. Maybe they have no other alternative sources to pay those bills except credit.

**Table 4.2 distributions of the respondents according to the principle use of loan**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sl. No. | Activities | Percentage | Rank |
| 1. | Crop farming | 14% | 3 |
| 2. | Non-farming activities (cottage, handicrafts, business and so on) | 35% | 1 |
| 3. | Livestock and poultry farming | 31% | 2 |
| 4. | Fish farming | 12% | 4 |
| 5. | Others (buying food and other necessary commodities, previous loan payment, dowry, paying Medicare bill, settlement of the case in court, paying migration cost of son in abroad, and so on) | 8% | 5 |

Source: Field survey from *Barigaon, Chapatoli, and Kalikapur* villages belonging to *Narayanpur union Parishad* under *Matlab Dakshin Upazila* in Chandpur district, Dated 17 September to 12 October 2018.

**The Challenges facing operating credit**

Five significant challenges were identified from credit users as a whole. Data shows in table 4.3 that the 'aggressive debt recovery technique' ranked first, scoring highest (PCI 184). 'High rate of interest' scored 161, thus ranked second in PCI. 'Religious belief', 'lack of sufficient amount of credit,' and 'delaying of disbursing credit due to less responsibility of concern staffs' scored 155, 129, and 127 ranked 3rd, 4th and 5th position in PCI table

**Table 4.3 Rank order of problem during operation micro-credit**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Statement of the Problem** | **The extent of the problem (%)** | | | | **PCI\*** | **Rank**  **Order** |
| High (3) | Medium (2) | Low (1) | Not at all (0) |
| Lack of sufficient amount of credit | 15 | 26 | 32 | 27 | 129 | **4** |
| Aggressive debt recovery technique | 34 | 32 | 18 | 16 | 184 | **1** |
| Delaying of disbursing credit due to less responsibility of concern staffs | 17 | 25 | 26 | 32 | 127 | **5** |
| High rate of interest | 28 | 25 | 27 | 20 | 161 | **2** |
| Religious belief | 29 | 16 | 36 | 19 | 155 | **3** |

\*PCI= Problem Confrontation Index

Source: Field survey from *Barigaon, Chapatoli and Kalikapur* villages belong to *Narayanpur union Parishad* under *Matlab Dakshin Upazila* in Chandpur district, Dated 17 September to 12 October 2018.

**Case study 1: Barigaoan**

Taslima Khatun is 44 years old having four growing children. Her husband (namely Md. Hasan Miah) pulls a rickshaw. They have a father and mother at their old aged dependent on them. Hasan Miah has never attended school; however, Taslima Khatun read up to class four. Their elder daughter read class eight at a nearby high school, and her tuition was covered by the female secondary school stipend program (FSSP). Then, two boys read levels five and three at a primary school. The youngest daughter is four years aged did not start going to school.

They have 0.62-acre land, including home and pond areas that barely produce food for the whole year for the family. Her husband's income was also reduced. After all, he could not run the full rickshaw time because he got into an accident while pulling a rickshaw on the road. They were bewildered how they could afford their children's family and educational expenses. In the meantime, Taslima Kahatun learned about GB microcredit in November 2010 from her neighbor. Her neighbor got extra income raising duck farm borrowing money from GB. "I discussed this matter with my husband. At first, he did not agree. Then, I told him about the success of our neighbor. However, my husband raised the issues, such as, attending meetings after going out from home without purdah. I assured him of maintaining everything so that we would not be ashamed," Taslima Khatun informed. Afterward, she attended a group meeting in December of the same year and received BDT. 10000.00 ($140.00) in January 2011 for duck rearing. She started raising 50 ducks that everyday morning she collected 40 eggs. She helped her husband open a tea stall with a grocery shop that stopped rickshaw pulling the following year. It is noteworthy that rickshaw pulling is a very labor-intensive and risky job. A rickshaw puller burns his skin while riding in a sunny and wet body while it is raining. Apart from running a shop, her husband helps her duck farming. Presently, she receives BDT. 25,000.00 (equivalent to $ 325.00). She has 250 ducks, some exotic verities of poultry. In addition, they have some vegetables at their homestead and farming land from which they earn some money from selling those in the nearby market. Their children attend school regularly. Taslima Khatun wishes to educate her children as much as possible. She opined, "educated people get honor from the society. We (my husband and me) did not have an education, so we had to pass measurable life. Thanks, God- we got money from GB to run the business. However, we wish our children to do the more prestigious job after being well educated". She wants to renovate their living house, making it some bigger.

**Case study 2: Chapatoli**

Md. Harunur Rashid is 47 years old and has never attended school. His wife (Rokeya Akter) is 40 years old read up to class three in a religious school. He has three children, a widowed mother and a divorced sister with two children dependent on him. It is noteworthy that his sister was divorced because he could not pay dowry to her husband, which Rashid and his mother promised during the marriage. Rashid has 0.30 acre (equivalent to 0.12 ha.) farming land, including homestead and pond. His farm production was insufficient to meet food requirements, education for children, and other expenses apart. "Even two years before, it was difficult to manage two-times meals for my family member, especially at off-season. My daughter (Aesha Akter) stopped attending school and joined a garments industry because of my financial hardships". –Rashid was saying. He had two exotic cows, including one milking. However, he did not get enough milk to earn money to buy necessary commodities for his family. Nevertheless, while he attended a training program organized by the department of livestock (DOL), he learned that the breed's high yielding variety (HYV) produces more milk that could benefit his family. "I did not have enough money to buy such HYV breed; even it was impossible to buy one HYV breed after selling two local varieties. He contacted the branch office of a state-owned commercial bank for credit to buy HYV of milking cows; however, his credit application was turned down his area of land was not sufficient to fulfill the demand of collateral for the loan. Then, he sold his two cows and borrowed some money from a local money lender with a high-interest rate to buy HYV breeds of milking cows.

Rashid met the field officer of BRAC when he was returning from a nearby hat after selling milk. He needed more money to buy another cow. The field officer assured him and asked him to join the credit group meeting. Rashid joined the meeting according to the instruction from the field agent. Accordingly, two weeks later, he received BDT. 80000.00 (equivalent to $ 1039.00). He bought another cow. He received training on how to raise those cows. He has three HYV cows among them; two give milk regularly on average. He receives 20 liters of milk daily. He gets BDTk. 1000.00 (equivalent to $ 13.00) after selling to a nearby market.

Rashid knew how to sign documents after joining group meetings. Also, he has an awareness about the prospects of children's education. He is careful about the education of his two children and the children of his divorced sister. "I feel so sorry for my eldest daughter (namely, Aesha Akter) class seven dropout working in a garment industry in the capital city (Dhaka)." It was known that the main reason for stopping the eldest daughter's education was because she wanted to help her father meet the expenditure of family needs and overcome financial hardships.

In conclusion, Rashid is a happy man who successfully escaped poverty.

**Case study 3: Kalikapur**

Razia Begum, an a 35 years old widow, has two children. She attended up to class two. Her husband died seven years before the fall in sidre[[8]](#footnote-8) in the sea while fishing. The following year she took shelter in her landless parents' house with her children. It was very tough for her parents to manage two times meals. Frequent starvation was not uncommon for their family. She used to do a housekeeping job at a wealthy family nearby their home. One day, she attended two weeks training program on cottage and handicrafts materials, arranged by an NGO that was a significant breakthrough in her life. However, she needed money to start a business. She did not dare to go to the commercial bank. Razia Begum knew her father had no sufficient money, then tried to borrow from the wealthy household she used to give service as a maid. However, her appeal was turned down, and then she borrowed a small amount of money from a local money lender with a much higher interest rate.

However, Razia Begum learned that GB lends money to do cottage industry, poultry, etc. She saw that the interest rate was lower than private money lenders and that installment was flexible. Most importantly, she needs not to show the collateral to receive the loan. She attended group meetings with other women in their village. It was 2009, and she started her small cottage knitting *nakshi katha* and *pati*. She borrowed BDT. 5000.00 to buy raw materials and foods. She started knitting *nakhsi* *katha, pati,* and *mora.* Her mother also helped her. Year after she started her business, she hired some women a wage basis to augment her business to fulfill market demand. She has been paying back installments regular basis to the bank. On average, every month, she, with another helping hand, can make four katha, five pati, and two dozen mora. She sells each katha, pati, and mora amounting BDT. 2000.00, BDT. 1000.00 and BDT. 500.00, respectively.

However, last year Razia borrowed 1.5 lac taka (equivalent to around $ 2000.00) to help her father acquire 2 acres (or 0.82 ha.) of land to cultivate hybrid rice and potatoes. However, he lost his investment due to the lower market price of his produce, even less than its production cost. She received micro-credit from four credit agencies and handed over the money to her father for crop cultivation. Her family is now in debt, a vast amount of money borrowed from various sources such as four microcredit lenders and relatives. Now, she is anxious about their future, especially their debt.

However, she did not lose her passion. "In business, profit and loss come by turn. I am not sure at every effort I get profit. It is sure to agriculture products because it is unpredictable. When we get much production, then we see lower market price. This is common here." Razia Begum has a plan to increase the volume of her business. Apart from this, she is looking forward to building her house besides her parent's house. She wants to educate her children as much as possible.

She knew the duties and responsibilities and the right of women after attending the meeting. She can give an in-group speech meeting. "Sometimes NGO people hired me to provide training to women on cottage and handicrafts making. I could not think before that I could be able to give instructions to participants. I did not have the esteem since I was a housemaid. However, after joining the microcredit group meeting, I got that confidence." She smiled while saying.

Although she had a disaster last year for not getting profit from crops and vegetable investment, she is more or less successful in her cottage and handicrafts business.

**5. Conclusion**

Although personal behaviors of the loan officer were reported to be rigorous, and the interest rate was higher, the ordinary farmer had no alternative options other than to lend money from microcredit agencies. Women get a priority receiving loans because it is easy to get payback from women. Women are considered more liable than men to pay back the money. Usually, most women in rural areas stay in and around the home at around the clock; therefore, loan officers can contact them quickly, even if they fail to pay any installment. Also, women are considered as shy, fearing social and cultural stigma if failure to back the money; thus, it was a bit easy to reimburse from women. Credit recipients prefer to receive a loan from multiple sources because some want to pay back installment to one source by receiving the credit from another source.

Credit agencies' priority areas of providing loans were from where the regular return comes because receivers have to pay back weekly or within any short interval. For example, cottage industry, business, shops, livestock, and poultry rearing get priority then crop cultivation and fish farming sectors, because later needs much more time taking production to convert money after selling. Also, Agro-based cottage industries, businesses, and livestock provide long-term continuous income and crop cultivations. Therefore, these sectors prioritize receiving credit then crop cultivation and the fish farming industry.

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1. A successful microcredit receiver from the village of *Barigaon* under Narayanpu *union parishad* *Matlab Dakshin Upazila* under Chandpur district, Bangladesh. Dated: 28 September 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Having less than 0.2 ha. land that is not sufficient enough to produce food required for the whole family for year round. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP). Homepage: http://www.cgap.org/p/site/c/template.rc/1.1.947/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. $1.00 equivalent to BDT. 86.00 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. $ 1.00 = BDT 86.00 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Kisti:* it is the installment of money back against credit received by microcredit users, popularly known *kisti* among them. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Traditional system of cropping by borrowing the land from owner, growing crop then share the yield between owner of the land and cultivator after harvesting [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sidre: Cyclone namely sidre hit the southern coastal areas in Bangladesh that about 3500 people were killed. Also, crops, livestock destroyed enormously as well as water bodies and farmlands became saline that caused no existence of sweet water fishes and unable to raise crops. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)