

Forced Migration in the Borderland: Living in Displacement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh

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My field research funded by *Sylff Research Abroad* (SRA) has given me opportunity to conduct multi-sited ethnography for the period of 5 months in the hilly borderland region Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. CHT is ethnic community inhabited region. They claim rights of the indigenous peoples with the political nationalism Jumma in Bangladesh based on pre-colonial and colonial history. People of CHT had to paid cotton tribute to the Mughal empire. Lately, they are annexing into British colony and their region is named as CHT in 1860, which made it frontier and subsequently borderland of post-colonial states.

Employing multi-sited ethnographic methodology mainly in-depth interview, participant observation and focus group discussion (FGDs) collected data primarily shows how the living space of the communities of CHT has been obliterating, which force them to live in displacement with the interaction of state and neoliberal market economy in CHT. Firstly, securitization is heavily presence in the borderland CHT compare of another region of Bangladesh. There is enough justification of state for this arrangement in favor of modern state sovereignty and pacification of the region. It was started by British colonial state with territorialization strategy. While securitization ensures state's interest and sovereignty, it displaces immediately indigenous community from their land and livelihood, who has been already living losing their entitlement of land, identity, security and rights from state. The displacement exacerbates their position of marginality. State encroached a vast of amount of community land for the purpose of infrastructures building for securitization. It had coerced to leave community from home and land. There are also other neighbor community who faced similar experience, so it has dispersed the communities of that location. That experience of fear, frustration and uncertainty is still now lively in their thought and conversation.

I also explored their present position of their life in relation to state and market or development. It is found that displaced community did not move to unknown location. They live in same locality; they have settled close to their earlier land. Similarly, they remain in same marginal position of socio-political space in even in the new life. However, there are new dimension of struggle and fear in their daily life. Also, displacement forced community to enter a new form of relation with neighbor community, state, land and nature. Community now experiences competition over land ownership with neighbor community despite having same ethnic background. They are exploiting land as much as possible intensifying and diversifying production for market. people still now claim that land and look forward to getting return it, despite knowing it is impossible because of ambiguity and conflicting notion of land ownership and its perpetuation. Displacement did not able to completely cut off their relationship with their land. Community has established another form relationship with state. Generally, public entrance is restricted in such area. Apparently, they have managed the authority of restricted area to enter, use of patch of land for agriculture. However, it is not free of cost. They have to pay certain amount of rent, which is determined by what agricultural crops to be produced there. The land which community was owned, ensured their tangible and intangible aspects of food, shelter and cultural life, now it has altered. Community struggles to ensure food, though there are many aspects need for life, because they possess

only little amount of land at present. To overcome their impoverishment, there are only options in their hand is becoming labor and exploit the available hill land because peoples of that community are not prepared and qualified for neither other livelihood option nor market-based occupation. Even there are limited services such as education, health for them. The experiences of people show that there is little change all of actors' perspective toward this region and its peoples rather it has been strengthening, which is reflected in displacement of the communities.

Secondly, while community struggle for their lives, there are also great concern emerged in their life in the context of market expansion. The natural resources including forest and hill land are being exploited by commercial private company and individual businessman. The hilly land has been converted into tourist place and resort, which not only increased the number of tourist but also pressured over natural resource-water. As a result, it directly contributes to the water scarcity of community because hill spring is only main source of water of that community. It's flow solely depends on the forest of surrounding area. My observation and also member of the community states that there is water scarcity in the community during dry season and it has been increasing. Member of community also states that the water scarcity could displace them again and the exploitation of resources is part of their purpose of eviction from land. So, the scenario clearly shows that communities' living space have been shrinking and obliterating and they are also paying high price is living with the fear of being displacement and uncertainty of livelihood generation to generation. The interlinked between securitization and market need to be analyzed further.

The consequences of collective experience of such displacement is not clearly surfaced for its structural feature in daily life but deep conversation with individuals and observation clear their concern, fear and insecurity from state. Prevalled day to day experiences have been pushing community to the edge of market altering their independent egalitarian life, which has thrown them in a position of struggle with two option, first living struggling with emerging market and existing mechanism of state, second, alternatively fleeing within or beyond state boundary. The case that I have explored with intension that it could contribute in the debates of forced migration as emerging field of sociology that often focus on violent process of displacement for instance refugees due to violence of war and its bureaucratic categorization, which overlooks the socio-political dimension of displacement and their living experience. I anticipate that my research results will play a vital role in the scientific community to reconceptualize displacement that there are interconnection between dislocation from land and socio-political space; and displaced people remain within the community even after they have lost their land, but their marginal position expands and deepen.