



LISTENING TO THE PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY: ORAL TESTIMONY OF DHAKA SLUM-DWELLERS

DRAFT
Work in Progress

July, 2004



House: 40/A, Road: 10/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh
Tel: 880-2-815 82 74, Fax: 880-2- 815 9135
E-mail: info@unnayan.org; Website: www.unnayan.org

STUDY TEAM

Coordinator and Editor

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir

Research Team

Principal Authors

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir

Jakir Hossain

Research Associate

Md. Aminur Rahman,

Oral Testimony Collectors

Beuty Begam

Monir Hossain

Yasmin Begam

Mamun Mia

Oral Testimony English Translators

Muntasir Tanvir

Hasan Al Farooque

Research Assistant

Syeda Hasinatul Jannat

Advisor

Afsan Chowdhury

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE	INTRODUCTION	1 - 2
CHAPTER TWO	LISTENING TO PEOPLE: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	3 - 11
2.1	Rationale for Listening to People	3
	<i>The Multi-faced nature of Poverty</i>	
	<i>The Democratisation of Knowledge</i>	
	<i>The Importance of Individual Testimonies</i>	
2.2	Oral Testimony: Methodology for Listening to People	5
2.3	Methods of Testimony Collection	5
2.4	Identification of Themes	6
	<i>Exclusion</i>	
	<i>Identity</i>	
	<i>Services</i>	
	<i>Rights</i>	
2.5	Issues in Oral Testimony Collection	7
2.6	Preparations for Collecting Testimony	7
	<i>Drawing up an Open ended Interview Checklist</i>	
	<i>Brainstorming Session on Methodology</i>	
	<i>Selection of Study Area</i>	
	<i>Selection of Research Team</i>	
	<i>Preparation of Training Manual and Interview Checklist</i>	
	<i>Training of the OT Collectors</i>	
	<i>Selection of Narrators</i>	
2.7	Collection of Oral Testimony	10
2.8	Interpretation, Analysis and Presentation of the Discourse	10
CHAPTER THREE	ORAL TESTIMONY OF SLUM DWELLERS OF DHAKA	12 - 79
	<i>Oral Testimony of Mohakhali Slum-dwellers</i>	12
	<i>Oral Testimony of Modhubazar Slum- Dwellers</i>	25
	<i>Oral Testimony of Tejgaon Slum-dwellers</i>	44
	<i>Oral Testimony of Katashur Slum- Dwellers</i>	61
CHAPTER FOUR	EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION ON POVERTY: EXTRAPOLATION FROM ORAL TESTIMONIES	80- 100
4.1	Nature and Concepts of Poverty	80
	<i>Concept and indicators of poverty</i>	
	<i>Causes and process of poverty</i>	
	<i>Process of Adaptation</i>	
	<i>Ways to Eradicate Poverty</i>	
4.2	Relationship between State and Citizen	85
	Orientation	85
	<i>Concepts and consciousness as citizens</i>	
	<i>Relationship with other classes of the city</i>	
	<i>Views of the poor slum dwellers on their acceptability to the other classes of the city</i>	
	<i>Difference of power structure</i>	
	Rights	88
	<i>Right to Education</i>	
	<i>Right to health</i>	
	<i>Right to Shelter</i>	
	<i>Right to water, sanitary latrine, sewerage and garbage disposal</i>	
	<i>Right to livelihood</i>	

	<i>Right to information</i>	
	<i>Equal Opportunity</i>	
	<i>Right to establish relationship with people outside the slums</i>	
	<i>Fundamental rights</i>	
	<i>Opinion on Government Obligation to fulfilling rights</i>	
	Service	92
	<i>Demands from the City Corporation</i>	
	<i>Facilities provided by the City Authority and Government</i>	
	<i>Service Charges</i>	
4.3	Deprivation	94
	<i>Perception on Deprivation</i>	
	<i>Process of Deprivation</i>	
	<i>Process of Adaptation</i>	
4.4	Poverty Alleviation Strategy	96
	<i>Plans for poverty alleviation</i>	
	<i>Imitable poverty alleviation strategy</i>	
	<i>Ways to be free from poverty</i>	
4.5	Macro-level context of the Oral Testimonies and its implications	98
CHAPTER FIVE	REFLECTIONS ON CONTEXUALISING ORAL TESTIMONY	
	METHODOLOGY	101-107
	<i>Testimony Collectors' Reflections on Oral Testimony methodology</i>	101
	<i>OT Collectors Reflections on the Process – 1 (Katasur Slum)</i>	
	<i>OT Collectors Reflections on the Process - 2 (Modhubazar Slum)</i>	
	<i>OT Collectors Reflections on the Process – 3 (Mohakhali)</i>	
	<i>OT Collectors Reflections on the Process - 4 (Tejgaon Slum)</i>	
	<i>Proposals for Contextualising Oral Testimony Methodology</i>	106
Annex – A	<i>List of Participants: Brainstorming Session on Exploring New Methodology of Poverty Research</i>	108
Annex B	<i>List of Narrators</i>	109
Annex C	<i>Oral Testimony Interview Checklist</i>	118

LISTENING TO THE PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY: ORAL TESTIMONY OF DHAKA SLUM-DWELLERS

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The dominant modes of social science epistemology, patterned after the physical sciences, have been grounded mostly in detached, 'objective', 'decontextualised' and chiefly quantitative approaches. Accordingly, poverty research approaches undervalue the knowledge and experience of people living in poverty, which contributed greatly to faulty understanding of poverty and strategies to change it. Poor people are indeed much more than mere 'statistical cannon fodder'.¹ The search for truth calls for an undetached joint interactive process of subjectively reconstructing and learning from the lived experience of people living in poverty involving both the researcher and the researched. Poverty studies conducted with empathy and respect for the people, with ethical concern and personal accountability, has both legitimacy and academic value, particularly when the subjects of the research are human beings living in poverty.

Listening to the voices of those living in poverty provide a range of invaluable, and new insights about the experiences and processes of marginalisation, exclusion, deprivation and injustice people are actually experiencing, seen from the lenses of their own perceptions about identity and rights. These also provide with insights into what are their aspirations in terms of transactional relationship between them as citizens and state, and if and how they feel these aspirations can be actualised. The efforts towards amplifying peoples' voices and make them heard by all in society help them create a space for themselves in the development process.

There is a conviction underlying the study on Listening to the People Living in Poverty: that 'words from the heart', in other words people's own testimonies of their lived experiences, shared with an empathetic researcher, would yield knowledge of great philosophical and practical value. The study does not reject positivist, rationalist, detached and predominantly quantitative research on poverty and on poor people in Bangladesh, rather recognising its limitations, seeks to enrich its insights with radical alternative methodology of oral testimony².

The main objective of the study is to listen to the experiences and perceptions of urban slum-dwellers to understand: (a) the processes and factors leading to the situation; (b) the perception on and experiences of transactional relationship between citizens and state; and (c) conditions viewed by them as necessary to move out of the situation. An important secondary objective is to analyse the application of the methodology of Oral Testimony in order to make it more context specific, user friendly and appropriate.

Focusing on the urban poverty, the study elaborates on the processes which the urban slum-dwellers feel or perceive are responsible for the state of affairs, their state and reasons of exclusion, their views on the relationship between them and the state in terms of identity, services and rights. Study outcome would also be the words from the heart in terms of the identity, services, exclusion and rights seen from the poor peoples own perspectives.

¹ Quoted in Beck. T, 1989:24, Survival strategies and power amongst the poorest in a West Bengal village, IDS Bulletin: Vulnerability: How the Poor Cope, Vol 20. No2, April 1989

² According to Slim and Thomson (1993:1), oral testimony is the broad range of techniques, which are based primarily on listening in depth to individual people.

Another important outcome of the study is the development of more context specific, user friendly and appropriate methodology of Oral testimony as tool for social science research.

The study is presented in main three parts. The first focuses on perceptions of slum dwellers organised and analysed by the slum dwellers. The second part incorporates an analysis of the testimonies by research team. The third part of the study analyses the application of the Oral Testimony as a methodology in order to make it more context specific, appropriate and user friendly.

Following the introductory chapter, a methodological framework based on the Oral Testimony methodology is outlined in chapter two. The third chapter provides testimonies of slum-dwellers of Dhaka. Based on the oral testimonies, an analysis in terms of (a) the processes and factors leading to the situation; (b) the perception on and experiences of transactional relationship between citizens and state; and (c) conditions viewed by them as necessary to move out of the situation is presented in chapter four. The final chapter brings in an analysis of the methodology of Oral Testimony in order to make it more context specific, user friendly and appropriate.

CHAPTER TWO LISTENING TO PEOPLE: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Rationale for Listening to People

There are many reasons why methodologies based on hearing beyond statistics, of 'listening to people living in poverty' are vital for full understanding not only of the phenomena but also of the root causes of the phenomena themselves.

The Multi-faced nature of Poverty

The poverty concept has been thought and re-thought, expanded, complemented, but after so much effort and flux we are in fact caught in fixity. The debate goes on, whether poverty is largely about material needs or it is about a much broader set of needs that permit well-being. The income poverty approach has been heavily criticised for its excessive emphasis on reductionism and bias to the measurable. Field researchers indicate that the poor have their own perceptions of poverty and well-being which may be quite different from outsiders³. Participatory approaches have distinguished other dimensions of poverty including vulnerability to any kind of emergency and contingency, physical weakness due to malnutrition, sickness or disability, isolation physically and /or socially due to peripheral location, lack of access to goods and services, ignorance, illiteracy, powerlessness within existing social, economic, political and cultural structures, that are not also captured by the income poverty measures.

Listening with empathy to the 'words from the heart' of people living in poverty, through which they reconstruct their own lived experiences, and their analysis, knowledge and aspirations, is of significant epistemological validity and value. This is more so, since poverty embodies values that reflect historical, political, social and economical forces prevalent at the context in which it is put. Listening with empathy, primarily from the experiences and perceptions of the people living in poverty, builds an understanding of the multidimensional issues of poverty including factors, process, dimension and distribution of identity, entitlements and rights.

The Democratisation of Knowledge

Another of the important reasons why we should listen to people living in poverty is that it leads to the democratisation of knowledge itself. There is something essentially democratic about the spoken rather than the written word. It is a resource available to all people, regardless of race, class, gender, caste and ethnicity.⁴ It has been used to transmit knowledge spatially and across generations in most cultures. The written word, and even more so when it is expressed in the language and idiom of dominant group, excludes the majority of poor and marginalized people. It discounts, by implication, their wisdom and experience, their analysis and aspirations. In contrast, the participatory techniques of listening to poor make the development debate 'less of a monologue and more of a dialogue, as people's testimony begins to require answers and as their voices force the development establishment to be more accountable for their actions. In short, it is not enough for the development 'expert' to summarise and interpret the views of others – the 'other' must be allowed to speak for themselves' (Slim and Thomson 1993).

³ The classic study by N.S. Jodha (1988), more popularly known as Jodha's paradox (cited in Chambers 1997, *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the Last First*) points out that the people of two villages surveyed in Rajasthan mentioned thirty-eight criteria of well-being. According to their assessment, they were better off whereas the income measure indicated they were worse off. In another investigation, more income was listed as the ninth or tenth criterion in a list of twenty (Chamber, 1997).

⁴ With the exception of speech impaired persons who develop their own language of communication.

The listening to people also democratizes the relationship between the researcher and the subject of the research. Portelli (1991:31)⁵ points out that “An interview is an exchange between two subjects: literally a mutual sighting. One party can not really see the other unless the other can see him or he in turn. The two interacting subjects cannot act together unless some kind of mutuality is established. The field researcher, therefore, has an objective stake in equality, as a condition for a less distorted communication and a less biased collection of data”.

The Importance of Individual Testimonies

The importance of individual testimonies to enable the poorest to gain voice in eloquently summarised by Slim and Thompson (1993:4-5)⁶.

It needs the human skills of patience, humility, within the ranks of disadvantaged, there are individuals and groups who - if they are remembered at all – tend to be ‘spoken for’ and often misrepresented. The collective voice of any community tends towards generalisations, simplifications or half-truths and is dominated by the loudest voices of the wealthy, the political elite, and social and religious leaders. Listening to individuals testimonies acts as a counterpoint to generalisation and provides important touchstones against which to review the collective version. It gives development workers access to the views and experiences of more marginalized groups, such as the elderly, women, ethnic minorities, the disabled and children.

Listening to individual stories, their reconstruction of their lived experience illuminates in depth the processes of impoverishment and exclusion, their coping mechanisms, worldview and aspirations. One key value of individual testimony is that it can amplify the voices of those whose economic, social and/or educational position has excluded them from the circles of influence and power. Many such ordinary people rarely have the opportunity to speak out and contribute to development decisions and change, yet often have much to offer based on first-hand experience of living and working in marginal environments. In order to actually hear and value people who are most invisible, voiceless and powerless in society, it is necessary to seek them out, and to listen to them with empathy, trust and respect, separately in groups, and also individually. Some other benefits of the individual testimony (PANOS 1999⁷; Slim and Thompson 1993) are that it:

- a. Shows the *complexity* of individual experience – people’s lives are not sectorally divided, there are frequently no neat divisions between the different aspects of their lives, and there may be contradictions and conflict, as well as connections.
- b. Brings home the reality of everyday life – the spaces in between significant events which constitute the majority of people’s lives.
- c. Reveals generally *hidden spheres of experience* (for example, family life), and *hidden connections* (between for example social relationships and economic decisions, past experience and future priorities).

⁵ Potelli, A (1991), *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: From and Meaning of Oral History*, Albany: State University of New York Press.

⁶ Hugo Slim and Thompson, Paul (1993), *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Development*, Panos Oral Testimony Programme, London: Panos Institute

⁷ PANOS (1999), *Giving Voice: Practical Guidelines for Implementing Oral Testimony*, Panos Oral Testimony Programme, London: Panos Institute

2.2 Oral Testimony: Methodology for Listening to People

Oral Testimony may be understood as the results of 'free-ranging, open ended interviews around a series of topics, drawing on personal memory and experience' of the individual. Interviewers do not use formal questionnaires and narrators are encouraged to reflect upon the events they describe, and give their views and opinions.

The method does not replace more formal, quantitative research but it complements and illuminates it. The narratives are subjective, anecdotal, selective, partial and individual. The methodology, unless utilised on a massive scale, can not give a complete or fully representative account of a community's views or experiences. It is subjective and may feature unverifiable facts and prejudice. Such flaws in evidence are in fact strengths of the methodology for the way that people remember or describe something tells us what is important about it to them, and for recognising what people believe to be true is crucial to understanding their values and priorities. Oral testimonies tell us less about the fine detail of events and experience than about their meaning for people. It offers clues as to how people interpret events and especially valuable in the context of development – what their priorities and values are. Oral testimony methodology is illustrative, vivid, often challenging, and breathes life into more precise statistics (PANOS 1999).

For listening to people living in poverty, apart from basic skills of research methodology, there is a need to learn in advance about the appropriate social and cultural norms and practices. The researcher should review cultural categories of the area and the category of people being studied. This will give the investigator a finesse touch and delicacy of insights. The researcher should also become familiar in advance with the experiences of the respondent, which would make the entire process much smoother. There are skills close to those acquired by counsellors, are required to learn by researcher. The most important, the researcher must acquire, are skills of active listening, which teach an investigator ways of empathetic, caring, non-judgemental, encouraging, supportive listening.

2.3 Methods of Testimony Collection

There are different kinds of interview. The most wide ranging form is the individual life story. This allows a person to narrate the story of his or her whole life in all its dimensions. Another kind is the single-issue interview which seeks to gain testimony about particular aspect or period of a person's life. In addition to individual interviews, oral testimony can also be collected in focus group discussions, community interviews or by diary interviewing. Although, the group discussions and / or community interviews sometime can serve the additional function of testing and cross-checking information as observers interrupt to challenge or correct the interviewee. However, it can also mean that information is distorted, and in some situations, observers can act as censor. While it is important to conform to the communicative repertoire of the people being interviewed, the research team has been aware that there may be more dubious aspects to observation and extra participation. Keeping this in view and also to yield more detailed personalised information, the research team focused on *issue-focused individual interviews*.

Issue-focused individual interviews are private, one-to-one encounters between interviewer and narrator. Sessions will be held at a time convenient to the interviewee and in a suitable location, preferably somewhere which offers seclusion, comfort and familiarity. There is often no better place than the narrator's home. In some instances, a one-to-one interview may not be acceptable, particularly for women, and one or more observers may need to be present. Since gender can be an inhibiting factor, as a general rule interviewer and narrator should be in the same sex.

2.4 Identification of Themes

The first step in oral testimony study is to identify the phenomena that are being examined. The study aimed to flush out the following themes including but not limited to:

Exclusion:

- whether aware of exclusion
- level of awareness of exclusion
- whether urban poor resign to or accept exclusion
- reasons for such perception of exclusion exist

Identity:

- awareness and self-perception of citizenship or identity status
- perception of exclusion amongst slum-dwellers within and in relation to the rest of the city and its power structure, and whether they resign to or accept such exclusion
- perception about their dominant identity
- perceptions of relationships between all sections of the city including upper class, middle class, working class, and government and slum dwellers
- perception of other groups of the city and how the urban poor believe the city perceives them.

Services:

- expectations from the city on a social, political and economic level
- whether such expectation changed and if so reasons for such changes
- state of services they are getting
- cost of services and expectation and actual return from payment

Rights:

- awareness and perception of rights to
 - services including health, education
 - knowledge
 - water, sanitation, gas, electricity, sewerage, waste disposal etc.
 - social inclusion within and in with residents outside the slum
 - obligation of the government to fulfil rights
 - livelihood opportunities
 - rights of tenure in housing
- whether individuals understand rights are indivisible
- interplay between rights of urban slum dwellers

The themes for investigation were developed and discussed with the participants in the project and the community concerned. One of the activities to prepare for the OT collection, has been a brainstorming session where different stakeholders contributed in finalising the themes. A fundamental part of this stage has been a consideration not just of the social, economic or working worlds of the potential interviewees, but also of the actual context of the urban slum-dwellers in which the interviewing has taken place. In view of the issues in oral testimony collection, decisions were then made about which interviewing methods to use.

2.5 Issues in Oral Testimony Collection

Identifying the cases

- not to go for the unique or extreme cases but look for representative cases

Rapport Building

- with the respondents;
- with the family members and at times even the community members

Memory, Events Sequence

- often people may contradict what they said earlier or remembering some important event in their life which they had forgotten to mention earlier

Language and cultural items

- the people's idiom, coping mechanisms, etc. help in understanding them better

Interpretation of events

- The poor people's reasoning, rationale, understanding of the situation and happening around them

Interfaces during the OT collection

- interfaces by family members during the interview like discussion between family members on past events, etc.

Counselling during times of distress

- while narrating or recounting certain difficult situations/ events in their lives many respondents may require some form of psycho-social counselling.

Silences; fears; traumas; uncertain future

- Often the poor and marginalised express their fears, trauma, uncertain future though silences, the team should be able to read those silences

People and institutions around the poor

- government officials, neighbours, NGOs, community leaders, local level political leaders

Connectivity/ interconnectedness between events in their lives

- social environment, economic situations, welfare institutions, individual philosophy, culture, etc.

2.6 Preparations for Collecting Testimony

Drawing up an Open ended Interview Checklist

The preparation for OT collection involves the drawing up of an open-ended interview checklist, not to be rigidly followed, but suggestive and as a guide. It would be based on the objectives of the study and the social phenomena being investigated. However, as pointed out by Roy Choudhary (2001)⁸, there may be a need to suspend one's theoretical assumption when one embarks on investigating a life history. Each life history is a mystery; one may also add that each life is unique. One does not know what one will get and so one may need to wait and see what emerges. Moreover, one theory or hypotheses may not fit in all the stories. Thus, the open ended interview checklist based on the themes identified above, has been fine tuned in the brainstorming session and finalised in the training sessions of the OT collectors.

⁸ Roy Choudhury, Arundhati, (2001), Brief Notes on Conducting a Life History Interview (*Mimeo*), New Delhi: ActionAid India

Brainstorming Session on Methodology

A brainstorming session on *Listening to the people living in poverty: Exploring New Methodology of Poverty Research* was organised with a view to finalise the focus and the methodology of the study on *Listening to the People Living in Poverty: Oral Testimony of Dhaka Slum-dwellers*. The discussion dwelt on a number of issues including (a) the processes and factors leading to poverty; (b) the transactional relationship between citizens and state; (c) application of oral testimony in poverty research. After a very lively discussion, participants came up with a possible structure for finalising the thematic focus of the study, criteria for selecting study slums and OT narrators. Participants also opined that it would be better not to use any recording instruments since many of the OT narrators might hesitate to narrate their perception and experience on tape. The subsequent activities of the study capture key issues raised in the discussion.

Selection of Study Area

In view of the discussion in the brainstorming session as regards selection of study slums, a number of slum selection criteria were used. Those were: (a) size of the slum; (b) population size; and (c) nature of slums' land ownership. Accordingly, four slums in Dhaka city were selected. These slums are located in (1) Modhubazar (Dhanmondi), (2) Katasur (Muhammadpur), (3) Tajgoan and (4) Mohakhali. The first two slums are located in private land and the other two are in government owned lands.

Selection of Research Team

The study research team comprised of 4 OT facilitators and 4 OT collectors. The OT facilitators have been selected from the Innovators' network of individuals having expertise on poverty issues and expertise / conversant with the OT methodology. OT collectors were selected from the residents of selected slum area. Since, the study area is 4 slum areas in Dhaka city, one OT collector has been selected from each study area. A number of criteria guided the selection of OT collectors. These were (a) OT collectors have to be residents of respective slums for at least three years; (b) OT collectors have to be at least functionally literate. Efforts were directed towards keeping a gender balance in selecting members of research team. The study gathered information from the slum-dwellers without any intermediary intervention as such perceptions are often clouded by the identity and power of the observers.

Preparation of Training Manual and Interview Checklist

The research team prepared *Training Manual* in Bengali for training of OT Collectors. It guided OT Collectors to know how they build up rapport with OT Narrators and collect testimony. It explained the objectives, techniques of collecting interview and all themes and issues relating to poverty study based on the methodology of Oral Testimony. (Bangla Training Manual is annexed as Annex A). A tentative interview checklist, prepared for the training sessions of OT collectors, was subsequently finalised in consultation with the OT collectors during the interview sessions.

Training of the OT Collectors

A training session for oral testimony collectors is an essential part of preparation. OT collectors were trained in study objectives, OT methodology and OT collection techniques and issues associated with empathetic, caring, non-judgemental, encouraging, supportive listening. The session included clarifying the aims of the project, and discussing and refining the issues to be

explored in the light of the local context and OT collectors own knowledge of it. The training sessions were focused on a number of themes including but not limited to (a) poverty concepts; (b) the concept of citizenship; (c) understanding state, and relationship between state and citizen; (d) issues and challenges of conducting oral testimony study. Initially, though, it was thought that the training sessions will be completed in four full working days, however, in view of the level of understanding of the OT collectors on issues related to transactional relationship between state and citizens, training sessions were extended for another two days.

During the six days training session, the tentative OT interview checklist prepared before the training session was finalised. The final interview checklist is not a list of specific questions, but rather a logical grouping of the topics to be covered. The OT collectors understood that the interview checklist is only to act as guide, and they were trained how to raise such questions in their own words. They were trained how to *prompt* and *probe* with short questions which encourage the narrator to expand further in one direction, or to go into detail about a subject. OT collectors were asked to rely mainly on *open questions* and avoid closed, leading and double-barrelled questions. The final OT interview checklist is attached as Annex B.

The training sessions also included some practising of interviewing techniques. Working in pairs and using role-play, participants also gained experience of being interviewed. Each OT collector then did two pilot interviews and wrote testimonies on paper and discussed their experiences in collecting testimonies in detail with fellow OT collectors and OT facilitators team.

Selection of Narrators

The next step was to select the subjects of the study. An initial survey of a segment of the general population with experience of the social phenomenon under investigation was undertaken. From this segment, the final selection was based on a number of factors. Although, it was agreed that in some cases people who did not have the experience may also be able to contribute to insights of both causes and outcomes, the narrator selected have some degree of direct experience of the social phenomenon under investigation. The selection of narrators also took note that respondents must be willing to participate in the oral-testimony interview. In the selection of a sample, the main purpose is not to discover how much, or how many people share a particular characteristics but to gain more in- depth understanding of the subject. But at the same time some selection criteria were kept in mind such as: diversity in age, gender, status, education, and occupation. Based on these, the research team has taken up contrasting cases.

The study aimed to collect 40 oral testimonies, 10 from each 4 slums selected in Dhaka city. Poverty is generally experienced by women, girl children, aged, disabled, unemployed, displaced families. Suggested groups for OT collection were women, rural to urban migrants, second generation migrants. Since interviewing is an adult form of enquiry, the study did not collect testimony from any children, rather focused on adults both male and female. The selection of groups for oral testimony collection based on discussion with different stakeholders particularly representatives of the slum areas – the oral testimony collectors. OT narrators were selected from the map of each slum drawn by each OT collector. Each slum was divided into a number of clusters, and the selection took note of size of population in each cluster, age, sex, profession and time of residence at the slum of possible OT narrators and came up with a possible representative sample of each slum

selected. OT narrators selection process is captured in the maps and list prepared by the OT collectors (The maps are attached as Annex C).

2.7 Collection of Oral Testimony

In order to maintain that the OT collector and OT narrators would be of same sex, OT collectors were grouped. A total of 40 oral testimonies from the slum-dwellers have been collected by 4 OT collectors. During the OT collection phase, OT facilitators team had continuous interaction with the OT collectors to facilitate the OT collection process. OT facilitators had also discussed with the OT narrators when they submitted the oral testimonies to understand the process which have not been captured in the written form of testimonies.

The OT interview is not a conversation. It is primarily an attempt to record the experiences of the social actor who is being interviewed, as constructed by that social actor. However, the outcome is the result of a collaborative process between the researcher and the interviewee, in which both have extremely important roles to play. The researcher should not merely be 'scientific' and detached, but to have empathy, humility and real respect for the person who is being interviewed. There are many elements of distance between the interviewee and the researcher, of class, caste, gender, education, language, idiom and age. As stated earlier, the onus is on the researcher to bridge these chasms, and to build a bond of mutual trust and respect. It is vital also for the interviewer to be completely non-judgemental, sensitive and accepting to take no moral positions overtly or by implication, particularly when dealing with people who follow a different set of social mores from the interviewer.

In conducting the interviews, the major skills of the OT collectors were of active listening, and of treating the subjects with respect, communicating this respect to the person being interviewed, drawing the respondents out, encouraging them to speak freely and at length, supplementing questions to elicit the maximum of details. An interview in which the OT collectors, by words or body language, are completely passive is bound to fail. The interview must instead evince interest, encourage the person to speak freely, and yet where necessary gently guide the discussion through leading question to the subject under study.

An average life story interview needed two or three sessions and took from two to eight hours. It was important to remember that a life story interview often have a profound effect on the interviewee who may never have told anyone their perceptions and aspirations before. For most people, recounting their life story was a positive, if emotional, experience from which they can gain much satisfaction and a renewed sense of perspective, but the listener had to always ensure that the narrator was comfortable at the end of the interview and was surrounded by the support they need, whether from family or friends.

2.8 Interpretation, Analysis and Presentation of the Discourse

The first step after the interview is over was to note down the interview. During this process, notes of the various non-verbal forms of communication and contextual observations referred to at length in the preceding section have been inserted at the appropriate points in the written transcript. Since, such non-verbal forms of communication and contextual observation were expected not to be on the immediate notes the OT collectors took, these had been shared between the OT collectors and facilitators. In the light of all of this, the research team wrote the oral testimony of all interviewee. Efforts were taken to incorporate original text of verbal communication in the final written form.

Before placing the record of the interview in the public sphere, it was felt important to take it back in its draft form to the persons who were interviewed, and to take on board the perceptions and reactions of the interviewee into the final draft. The researchers modified the draft in conformity with the wishes of the interviewee.

The present report is a translation of the report originally written in *Bengali*. The testimonies presented by narrators in Chapter Three are literal (word for word) translation. Other parts are more of direct translation referring sense for sense translation where it is more idiomatic than purely literal.

CHAPTER THREE ORAL TESTIMONY OF SLUM DWELLERS OF DHAKA

Oral Testimony of Mohakhali Slum-dwellers

Interview 1.1

Nature and causes of poverty

Would we have lived in a slum if we were not poor? I used to be quite well off because I owned substantial amount of land. My wife was diagnosed with brain tumour. She could not be treated in the government hospitals. I had to sell my land gradually to bear the expenses of her treatment. It turned out to be futile. She passed away. At that time, I was insured. As I was well off, I was ashamed of working for others. So, I lived off my savings for a year. I was destitute after that. I came to Dhaka with the intention of finding steady work, but that was not to be. I can only blame my fate for that. Dhaka is even worse than my village. Residents of Dhaka look down on us. I can hardly earn enough to sustain myself.

I think my wife's illness was the root cause of my poverty. I was insured in the hope that I would have a better life. But my hopes have remained unfulfilled. I could not pursue higher studies. May be I would have gotten a good job if I were well educated.

Relationship between state and citizen

I know that I am a citizen. But the society does not care about us. Our citizenship is only worth something when election is imminent. At other times, we are not worth anything. The only identity stamped on us is that we are poor.

We don't have any relationship with the upper class and middle class citizens of the society. They are the godfathers of the society. We have to abide by their wishes. Any aberrance from that would compel us to leave the slum. We are not entitled to anything.

We have neither position in society nor money. So we have no power. We have to concede to this situation because we are poor and we have no other options.

No one wants to live like this but we can't break this system. The rich do not allow us to do so.

I believe that both health and education are necessities. These are our rights. But we are not entitled because we are poor. If we were, my wife would not have died. I would not have suffered this loss if she could be treated in the government hospital. Even though it's true that government is delivering free education, to some extent.

We have to make our own provisions for our housing because government does not provide it. It might also be the case that government is making the provisions but we do not have access to it. Government has not taken any steps for water supply and sanitation in this slum. It did not provide any type support. We have to live solely off our income.

We do not have right to information. I think it is of no use knowing about these things. Men and women have the same rights even though the society is not willing to grant it. Furthermore, women are being harassed. We have the right to co-exist peacefully with the rich, but the rich avoid us. We know that we have the right to live. But we are not entitled to anything. Government should try to establish the rights. But it does not let us enforce our rights. The rich are entitled to all the rights and privileges.

We have never received any support from the City Corporation, nor do we hope to receive anything. We vote for the commissioner but we are yet to see him around. Our hopes will remain forever unfulfilled. City Corporation will never give us anything. I don't give anything to the Corporation so I don't expect anything in return.

We are deprived of everything but we can do nothing about it. We have to accept the situation, as we have no other options. I could have started a business if I had received assistance from the government. I do not know about others but I am in distress.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I really like it. I hope others will like it too. I am feeling very happy because I could express myself.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I think I have been able to explain the method adequately. I think it will be helpful for the slum dwellers.

Interview 1.2

Nature and causes of poverty

My father owned substantial amount of land when I was a little boy. We could not work with father as we studied in school. Father gradually sold off all the land as he had no one to assist him. Our financial condition started to worsen from then on. We felt ashamed of working in other people's houses. We thought they would say that there was a time when people worked for us but the tables have turned now. Then we came to Dhaka. I thought that by working in Dhaka I would be able to take care of my parents. But I could not get a decent job as I knew no one in Dhaka. I had to resort to rickshaw pulling, as I did not have any alternative. I had to opt for this because I was not educated enough for government service. Now I have to struggle to sustain my family. I have no savings. I do not have any children. I would be even worse off if I had children. I consider myself to be poor. If I were not poor, I would not have become a rickshaw puller living in a slum. I hold my father responsible for my poverty. I am poor also because I could not study and I don't have any money.

Relationship between state and citizen

I have some education. So I am familiar with the concept of state and citizenship. I am a citizen by birth. My name was included in the voter list when I was eighteen years old. Since then I have cast my vote. I am very much aware of my position. When I was thriving, the society valued me. But the same society does not take note of me because I am poor now. I voted for this government believing that it would contribute to our welfare. But now I realize that the government wants to put us into exile. We pull rickshaw for our subsistence. But the government is limiting the entry of rickshaws to many roads by making those V.I.P. roads. It is limiting our options for subsistence and survival.

We have congenial relationship with other slum dwellers. They stand by us. We are well received by the others- that's my perception. They take from us but also do something in return. So I consider them to be decent. But we do not get along well with people from other classes because they are rich. They look down on us because they have money. They have no similarity with us.

Slum dwellers have no power. The rich live in government places whereas we live in non-governmental places. We have to go to them whenever they call us. They can beat us to death if we do not listen to them. We have no other choice but to yield to their bullying. Who would take them on? Who does not want a life with dignity? I don't want to be a victim of extortion, but it is of no use.

I am moderately aware of health and education. So what, it does not entitle us to these rights. We don't get medicine when we go to hospitals. We hear that government is providing various benefits in education. What can I say about dwelling place? Government evicted people

from this slum just before I came here. Instead of providing places to live in, government is evicting people. Government is supposed to ensure welfare of the poor. But it is extracting from us to benefit the rich. Is it possible to ensure a good environment in a slum? Government should take necessary steps to clean up the environment but it does not do that. We know a little about basic health rules, but we cannot abide by them due to our poverty.

I don't think it is necessary to know a lot. What is the use? No one enquires after us or does anything for us because we are poor.

I think, men and women have been granted equal rights. We have the right to socialize with everyone else, but others are not willing to do it. We have the right to food, clothes and shelter but we do not get those. I don't have clear idea about the inter-relationship among different rights. But this I know- all the rights are necessary. Government should fulfil these rights, but it does not do so.

I did not vote for the commissioner but somehow my vote was cast. We never received any support from the commissioner. We have to adopt unfair means for whatever we do. Our expectations remain unfulfilled. Changes do not benefit us. Instead of helping us, the state takes away whatever we have. We have never received anything, so we cannot appreciate its worth.

We never received anything whatsoever from either the state or the society. So we feel deprived. I am deprived because I am poor. We cannot but submit to the circumstances. The poor will never unite to protest against the injustice. Can anyone live like this? Everyone wants to improve the quality of life. If I had some money, I would have tried to change my fortune by trading in fish. If the government had given me some money, I could have overcome my poverty. I have never seen anyone become free from poverty.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have enjoyed this method. I think everyone will like it. I have never heard of a method like this. I am feeling relieved after disclosing what is on my mind.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

The slum dwellers seem to have understood this method well. I don't think they have faced much inconvenience.

Interview 1.3

Nature and causes of poverty

Of course I am poor. There is no other reason for living in a slum. All of us used to live in a village. My husband was the only earning member of the family of ten members. We were moderately well off then. Then my husband was afflicted with tumour. We could not save him even after selling off all our land to bear his medical expenses. The family came to a stand still after his death. My brothers-in-law did not work then. I came to Dhaka with two of my brother-in-laws. That was the beginning of our life in a slum. The brothers-in-law work now. They don't let me work these days. I just cook at home. I wish I also were working. It would have made life better.

The reasons of being poor

Husband's death, Brothers-in-law don't let me work, I am not solvent, Government does not assist in any way, big family.

Relationship between state and citizen

I don't know what citizenship means. I would have lived in a better place if I earned more. The rich live a happy life and we suffer. Government does not care about us. If they cared, they

would not have evicted us from the slums. The rich do not treat us well. I don't like this disparity. It would have been better if the government helped us, but there is nothing we can do but to yield to our fate.

We are trying hard to overcome our poverty but we are not successful. Many slum dwellers, including my brother-in-law joined a big procession to protest against eviction. It was futile. We had to go back. Then we struggled. When we heard that the slum was being built again we came back.

There is absolutely no assistance from the government. Government increases the price of everything. The price of soap has gone up from 10 taka to 11 taka. Price of kerosene is also going up.

I know that there is vitamin in food. But good food is expensive. I don't know much about health rules. My husband had an eye problem. The government hospital took care of it, but they charged us.

I have three children, all living in the village. They study in the government school. My youngest and oldest daughter get 150 taka and 600 taka respectively from the schools every five/six months.

I pay 800 taka as rent. I know that government should make housing provisions. Instead of doing that, they demolish our houses. We could have a better life if government provided employment opportunities.

We suffer from scarcity of water. The latrines are barely usable. It stinks because of the proximity of the drainage to our rooms. Everyone disposes of the garbage at will because there is no specifically assigned place for waste disposal. The slum was razed by fire some time ago. We heard the government was providing relief in the form of food grain. But we did not receive any.

I know we should be fully aware of what is going on around us, but we are not. Women are an excluded group in the society. They cannot exercise their rights. It causes acute apprehension if the womenfolk are away from home in the night. But the same is not true for men. The rich and us should live in a congenial environment. But, alas, there is such insurmountable gap between us!

All the basic rights are essential for us, like right to health care, nice environment and housing. Even though government is duty-bound to provide these, they don't do it. Instead of providing these, we see them evicting us from slums.

Our commissioner has extorted 200 taka each from us promising that it would ensure the slums will not be touched and we will be able to live here. But they tore down the slum and did not return the extracted money. The commissioner never helps us. He does not even lend us money when we are in dire distress.

We expect that the government will not demolish the slums. We expect basic utilities like electricity and gas. But our expectations are never fulfilled. We don't expect anymore as it is fruitless. Neither the government nor the commissioner helps us. The government charges us, but does not give anything in return.

We regularly pay rent. We don't get rooms for free. But we don't have access to water, electricity, latrines and we have to use firewood for cooking. So, it is clear that we are being denied from exercising our rights. This is an unacceptable situation. We want to break free, but we are not being able. We brought out a procession so that the government does not demolish our slum. We want financial and other types of assistance from the government.

If the government helped us and I could get a good job, then I might have triumphed over poverty. In addition to that, if our children pursued studies more, it might have led to improvement of our condition.

The previous tenant of this room has got a government job. Now he is well-off and lives elsewhere with his family.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

No one has ever come to me before. You are the first. It felt nice to talk, even though my work was a little inconvenienced.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

This is an excellent method. This yields accurate information. The only problem is, the questions are quite similar. The repetition is sometimes annoying to the interviewee.

Interview 1.4

Nature and causes of poverty

I consider myself to be poor. So do others. We were not poor when we lived in the village. We had to sell our land to pay the expenses for medical treatment. We were neck deep in debt. My husband was the only earning member of the family. We had to come to Dhaka to escape from debt and poverty. We loaned some money after we came here. We are in a very bad condition because we have to pay the interest of the loan.

The reason of being poor

Husband's ulcer; No other earning member of the family, Many daughters, Payment of interest on loan. No remaining land in the village

Relationship between state and citizen

I voted once. Now we do not get to be enlisted as voters. I don't know what citizen means. My family is destitute. We are not valued in the society. Everyone considers us to be worse than him or her. Government never comes to the slum to help us. We are not of any value to the state. Everyone wants to help the rich.

The rich live happily. We are not their equals. They don't talk to us, or socialize with us. They look down on us. There is a gulf of difference between us, which gives rise to many problems. If the rich people enquired after us or the government supported us then our suffering would have been diminished. Government only gives money to those who are already rich.

What can we do but to comply with the situation? We want to overcome the adversity. I have a stall of groceries on the footpath, so that my children can hope for a better life. If the government made the provision for some capital then I could have expanded my business.

Even the government hospitals charge fees. I know, unclean living conditions can lead to many diseases. I don't know what types of food are required to maintain good health. All I know is vegetables have vitamins.

Government schools are free. My son used to go there but now he doesn't. His father is sick. My son replenishes the stock of my shop and I sell those. So, I can't send him off to his school. I did not know before now that we have the right to free housing. It would have been wonderful if you could have free housing facilities. Living in rented houses causes many problems. Government does not provide water, gas or electricity. We get rid of our garbage right in front of where we live.

We are not updated about current affairs, even though we should be. If government had provisions for capital then I could have a bigger business, leading to an improved life style.

Women cannot exercise all their rights. Men can move at will, but women cannot. One of my daughters works in a garments factory. I feel worried about her when she returns late at night.

It is unrealistic to expect that rich people would socialize with us. All I understand is, as human beings we have some basic rights. To survive, it is necessary to exercise these rights. If we could apply all the rights then we could have a better life. All the rights are inter-connected.

To live well, good clothes and a good house are necessary, as is health care during times of sickness. Even though the government is obligated to fulfil these rights, it is not doing it. Government provides more to the rich. We do not get anything. Maybe government has made provisions for us, but those are not accessible because of the rich and the powerful.

I have never seen the commissioner with my own eyes. He never helps us. I need money for my nubile daughter. But I know the commissioner will never lend the money. So, I never went to him. Some of my neighbours went to him for help, but it was in vain. We expect a lot from the government and the commissioner but those are never fulfilled. Now we have become dependent on our fate. Some days ago the slum was on fire. Then, 'Proshika' (an NGO) provided some assistance. We heard that the government also provided some assistance but we did not receive any. Only those who have power have access to it. We know that we pay the government in various ways. But government does not give anything in return. No utilities are made accessible to us. We are thus being denied. The government does not give us money, nor does it give us the services like gas, electricity or water. So, we have no access to those. We have to live our life in immense difficulty. I need to marry my daughters off, but I am helpless.

I don't want to yield to this system, but what is the alternative? I want a decent life. If the government provided free housing, some capital then I could have expanded my business and earned more.

A person known as Chandan's father used to live in this slum. Now he earns a lot by selling eggs. He has built and rented rooms of his own. His children go to good schools. Now he is much better off.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have enjoyed talking with you even though I had a headache.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I am not facing any problems in this O.T. method. But the interviewees are asking whether they need to repeat themselves. They are saying this repeatedly. But they are providing information meticulously.

Interview 1.5

Nature and causes of poverty

Yes, I am poor. I used to live in a village before coming here. My husband had a manpower recruitment business. My husband married again when my son was small. My in-laws caused me a lot of problems. Then my parents took me and my son to live with them. My father wanted me to marry again but I did not give my consent. Then my father died. My brothers grew up and got married. In our country it is a sin to live in the brothers' family. Then I took my son and left for Dhaka. I started to live in this slum. My son and I have suffered a lot. I did whatever odd jobs I could find. I sent my son to school. He will be sitting for his S.S.C. examination this year. Only I know what I had to endure to come this far.

The reason of being poor

Husband married again, father died,

If I married again, things would have been better, as I would have a shelter then.

Relationship between state and citizen

I don't know anything about the State, as I am illiterate. I would have known if I were educated. Government and the commissioners do not take care of us. We are worthless to them. We live in

rented rooms. I have worked as a housemaid in houses where they behave well. I don't work in houses where the behaviour is rude. All the rich people are not alike. I have lived in this slum for fifteen years. My son and I have struggled hard but no one came forward to help us. Whenever Allah gives, He inundates; and when He does not, He refrains from giving anything. The rich considers us to be migrants. Whenever we seek employment, the rich thinks we are migrant beggars and refuses to employ us. They look down upon us and don't even consider us to be human beings. If the government were on our side then they would not have demolished the slum four months ago. The rumour is, the slum will be torn down again.

What can we do but to accept the situation? I am desperately seeking employment in government offices, but luck is not favouring me. For many years I have tried to overcome my desperate situation, but I am yet to succeed. I have heard that many people have received assistance from the commissioner, but I am not one of them. Only the influential people get assistance.

I know a little about health and hygiene. I have never received free health care from government hospitals. I know that good food and cleanliness can ensure good health. My son studied in a government school up until class five. Examination fees were collected there. I had to pay 20 taka at the time of collecting textbooks. I heard that in the villages girls receive stipend from school, but boys don't. Government should provide housing facility, but it does not. I have to pay a monthly rent of 500 taka. The owner calls me names if I am late in paying rent.

We have to suffer because of lack of water. There is no water supply here. So we have to bring water from elsewhere. Government should ensure that we have access to water but it does not bother to do so. We have rights but the government does not acknowledge that. There is no place in the slum for garbage disposal. That is the least the government can take care of.

I am almost a widow. My husband barely exists. The government is charging us fees but nothing is provided in return. If the government provided me with a job as a sweeper in an office, I could have worked well.

The society has not granted me any right because I am a woman. I can't do anything even though I understand everything. It is not true that I don't understand anything because I am illiterate. I may understand less, but I know where things stand.

We have the right to socialize with the rich but that is not realized. What can we do if they don't want to mingle with us? They don't pay attention to us because we are poor. We are not very well informed. When Awami League was in power, many slum dwellers received assistance from them. As I did not know about it, I did not receive anything. When our slum was destroyed by fire, Proshika/ U.N.D.P. paid everyone 500 taka each. They even filed a case against the government so that the slum is not demolished.

All the rights are necessary for a good life. I have to pay 100 taka as electricity bill. Water and gas are required for a decent life. How can we know that the government is obligated to provide us these basic utilities? We do not get any facilities. The government service holders have better access to the amenities. The influential people impede our access to whatever facilities government has granted for us.

I have voted, but yet to see the commissioner in the vicinity. I have never received any assistance from the commissioner. Last year, the commissioner provided assistance, which only the members of his party received. I used to work in a garments factory. Now I do whatever is available. I am working as a servant now.

My son will sit for the S.S.C. examination soon. I am struggling hard to bear his expenses.

I have not received any assistance whatsoever from the government. The government is always looking for excuses to raze the slums, so they don't have the time for providing assistance to us. We pay taxes to the government and what do they do in return? They increase the price of the essential goods. Rice costs 18 taka per kg now. How are the poor people like us supposed to survive? The government is trying to expedite our extinction.

I am an excluded person. I have to pay 100 taka as electricity bill. Gas is not available for us. Even firewood costs money. How will we subsist with the rapidly rising prices? Government is hurting us through stopping our access to food, electricity and water. What can we do but to succumb? We are forced to do so. We have tried very hard to become self-sufficient. But we have failed. If I go to the market after earning 100 taka, I see that it is not sufficient for groceries. In addition to that, I have to bear expenses of house rent and education of children. I would have been greatly relieved if the government took steps for my employment.

Either a job or capital of 10/20 thousand taka would have made me self-sufficient. If my son got a job in the government after completing his studies then I could overcome this condition.

One of my neighbours from this slum got a job in a garments factory. He has gradually improved his condition. Now he does not live in this slum anymore. I have heard that he lives in a good house in a good neighbourhood.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I am happy that you have heard my history. It felt good to speak out what was on my mind.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

It was a little inconvenient to use this method. The interviewee was a little irritated when I repeated the same questions. But she has given the required information properly.

Interview 1.6

Nature and causes of poverty

I have to struggle so hard because I am poor. If I were rich then I wouldn't have to endure so much. My husband was a government employee. He can't work now because he is in poor health. Our family consists of three sons and the two of us. The sons are not old enough to earn. My husband's illness has led to an increasing amount of debt. We don't have any land in the village, so we can't move there. We have to pay a monthly interest of 100 taka on a principal amount of 14000 taka. This amount is increasing day by day. We are barely eking out our living.

The reason of being poor

Interest payment, my husband is unable to work, not having any land, young children who can't earn

Relationship between state and citizen

I have voted as a citizen. Every human being has value in the society. But no one values us because we are poor. Everyone wants to be happy. The slum-dwellers have no relationship with the rich. They hate us. They don't appreciate us. Even the government does not help us. The rich have gas to cook their food. But we have to use firewood. Our suffering has no limits. On the other hand, the rich are happy. Their happiness knows no bounds. The rich would have helped us if they considered us to be human beings. But they don't. They always keep their distance from us. We can't even imagine that they would mingle with us.

We are yielding to this situation because we have no other options. Everyone is succumbing, so am I. Who wants to struggle in life? Everyone wants to eat well, wear good clothes- a good life. I have travelled from door to door looking for employment. Government has so many petty jobs, but we don't get those. Government is committed to fulfil our basic rights but it doesn't. Whatever it provides does not reach us.

I know about basic health and hygiene requirements. But I don't know everything about it. My husband is sick but no one provides free medical treatment. All the services require money. I have heard that there is government primary school but I have not seen those. I got my oldest son admitted in a school which required 700 taka as admission fee.

Government should make provisions for free residence but it does not. We have to pay rent. I could have saved a lot if I did not have to pay rent. This money could have contributed to a better life.

Our latrine is in terrible condition. We have barely managed to block the view inside. We don't have access to water. We have to go far to get drinking water. It would be very helpful if government supplied drinking water. We have no place in the slum for garbage disposal. If the government made provisions for my sick husband's employment, then we could have lived well. Government does not help us in any way.

Everyone is selfish- if there is any possibility of getting any type of assistance, people just gather around there. If I ask them what is going on, they keep silent. So I don't feel like finding out anything.

Those who are wealthy will not establish any relationship with us. They hate us.

Everyone is supposed to get equal rights. We need all the rights. We need a place to live in, we need health care and employment too.

We have voted for the government. We are paying taxes but we are not getting anything in return. The government does not think it has any obligations towards us, even though we believe so. Government never thinks how we the poor will survive in this era of high prices.

We have never received any help from the commissioner. He never comes to our neighbourhood. I heard that the commissioner provides essentials like rice, oil, salt etc. but we don't receive anything. We expect a lot from the government. But what is the use of it? We don't get anything. The government never provides anything in the slums. No electricity or running water is provided. We have to cook with firewood. We don't get any gas. None of our needs is fulfilled by the government.

I am denied because I have never received anything from the state. My husband can't work. My family is barely functional. I don't get a job. We suffer a lot because we have no access to electricity, gas or water. Our latrine emits horrible odour. We can't send our children to school. What is more distressing than that?

Who wants to live like this willingly? We are forced to yield. I always worry how to get out of this mess, but I don't see any way out. I don't get a good job. I don't get any help from the government or from anyone else. I have to pay interest every month. I can't pay the principal amount back. I would be better off if I did not have to pay the interest.

I think if I had a good job, or at least the job of a sweeper in a government office, my condition would have improved. If I could send my sons off to schools and could get free medical treatment for my husband, then I would not be so needy.

Kibria bhai from our slum has made a lot of money from his business. Now he has a house in Uttara. They have gone to live there. They are much better off than we are now.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Many people have come to talk with me. They have asked a lot of questions. But talking to you about my life has been a pleasant experience. I wish it had benefited me in some way. I want help. I anticipate that from you.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

The interviewees are considering O.T. to be a good method. It is quite convenient for me to ask the questions as they are organized in steps. But the repetitive line of questioning is sometimes slightly annoying to the interviewees.

Interview 1.7

Nature and causes of poverty

I was not like this. I was happy living with my husband. But my fate could not stand my happiness. My husband died, leaving small children behind. I had to sell the land we had in our village. My sons grew up and started to work. It was also a happy time for me. But my luck turned again after my sons got married. They did not give me any support for my subsistence. I got my daughter married but her husband did not take her to live with him. Now my daughter and I live in the slum.

Would I be living in this slum if I were not poor? My days will pass somehow even though Allah has inflicted me with poverty. We don't have any money to live on. I am sad when I look at my daughter. I don't think anyone in this world is as poor as we are. I am poor because- my husband is not alive, and my sons don't take care of me.

Relationship between state and citizen

I don't know whether I am a citizen or not. But I am a voter. We vote the government expecting that it will look after us and do good things for the country. The wealthy do not value us because of our poverty. No one values us. People respect my landlord because he is a landlord. He is powerful. I am a woman. I don't understand the way of the world. I am forced to succumb to this condition.

I did not study but I send my children to school. In the past, we had to bear all the expenses. I have heard that now the government bears all the educational expenses.

What can I say about health? Doctors treat patients when you buy tickets in the government hospital. But they don't provide medicines there and asks you to buy those from outside. We do not receive any benefit from the government. I don't know about others. When we do not get any benefit from the government, it's only natural that other people don't help us. They are only willing to pay us money if we work for them. I know we are entitled to various things from the government, but the reality is different.

I don't know what commissioner is. As slum dwellers, we don't know much about these things. But I know what Ward Member is. I have never seen him, nor have I ever heard that he has visited our slum. I have never been to meet him. Once I received financial aid of 500 taka after the slum was devastated by fire. The previous government provided this. I heard that there is provision for stipend for elderly people. But I have never received it. Instead of giving us benefits, the government extracts from us. As it is, we poor don't have much money, but the price hike is unrelenting. Potatoes cost 15/16 taka, onions cost 30/32 taka. Other essentials are also beyond our reach.

Gas, current and electricity services are not available in slums. We have to access these through illegal means. When we don't get something that we should, we feel denied. The poor are not part of any society; theirs is a life of humiliation. We are not even concerned about our neighbours.

I don't feel poor now-a-days, because my daughter has made me happy.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Many people like you come to us to hear our story. But it has never brought any benefit for us. But I like you because I have been able to openly tell you my story without any reservations.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

This is an enjoyable experience. Women don't want to divulge much in this method. It took a lot of time to establish good rapport with the interviewee.

Interview 1.8

Nature and causes of poverty

I consider myself to be very poor. Isn't that why I live in a slum? If I were not poor I would be living in a building and be a big businessman. I was financially well-off in the past, but now I have become poor. My father was not poor. I was ailing since my childhood. Then my father died and my elder brother drove me out of the family. I could not earn because of my poor health. So I had to start selling the land I inherited. My condition was gradually improving. My mother arranged for my marriage. After my marriage, I saved some money and bought 300 ducks to start a farm. My farm was going well. Then a friend of mine suggested that I take the ducks out to the fields. It would make feeding and supervision easier. Listening to him was the biggest mistake in my life. 200 ducks were stolen and the rest died.

I did not go to school when I was a child so I had no hopes of getting a decent job. I started a small business that dealt in eggs. But that was not enough. So, I moved to Dhaka and became a rickshaw puller. I could not continue that for long. A few people started to come over to my place and gradually I started a mess. I have a son who is yet to grow up. Reasons for my poverty are- I have no one else in the family who can earn and my foolishness in my duck business.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a citizen because I was born in this country. I was on the voter list when I was 28 years old. Since then I have cast my vote. We know that we have relationship with the government. We cast our vote expecting the government to do things beneficial for us. But whomever we vote seems to forget us after he gets elected. Government does not like us, so why should other people? We don't carry any weight in the society because we are poor. The wealthy people call us names. They only remember us when they need to get something done and they pay us for it. We don't have any further relationship with them.

We have some shopkeepers in our area. They are financially much more solvent than we are. We only have business relationship with them. We buy things from them, either with cash or on credit. That is the extent of our relationship. The slum dwellers are on good terms with one another. Everyone wants to be happy. I don't want to submit to this poverty. As we are poor, we have to survive in this condition as long as we live. But we don't seem to have options. I could have overcome this condition if I had money.

I did not study. But I want my son to go to school. I hear from people that government has provisions for us. But I have never received anything because I am poor. I think I am entitled to the basic things required to survive. But those are yet to be fulfilled.

By commissioner, I understand village member. I have lived here for so long, but I am yet to meet the commissioner. I have never gone to him out of need. He never does anything for the slum dwellers. If he came here, we might have something to ask him for, but he does not come because he does not want to help us. I could have gotten rid of my poverty if I came across some money. I have never seen anyone do anything for us.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I am happy that you have come here. But I have one regret. Many people come here and write down our names, but nothing comes out of it. I was happy to speak to you openly.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

When I was talking to this person a man came and behaved rudely with me. But he apologized when another slum dweller came and explained what I was doing. It was difficult to explain my intentions to this person.

Interview 1.9

Nature and causes of poverty

I was not poor. I have become poor now. I pull a rickshaw van in Dhaka city. I have so little education that it is impossible to get a job. My older brother used to pull rickshaw in Dhaka. I came and familiarized myself with the environment. I gradually bought a few rickshaws. I was quite prosperous. Then my father arranged for my marriage. This marriage caused my downfall. My father-in-law is quite an influential person of the locality. He took a lot of money from me and gave me some land in return. He owns much land in the area and he is highly associated with the local people. He buys land, builds houses and rents those. I wanted the land he gave me to be in my name. But my father-in-law wanted the land that I bought to be in his daughter's name. I was forced to comply. Then my business started to go downhill. I lost my rickshaws and became a van driver. Then my wife left me. I was stuck with my daughter. Then I married again. Now my sole source of livelihood is my van. I consider my father-in-law and my wife to be the main reasons for my poverty.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a conscious citizen of this country. I know that I am a citizen of Bangladesh because I was born here. I don't live in a good society. We are not members of the high society. We are slum dwellers. People look down on us. They don't help us in any way. They are powerful and the government sides with them. Would the government have demolished our slum repeatedly if they loved us? No one loves or helps the poor. Sometimes they give us money when we work for them, and sometimes they don't. They are landowners. We will never be a match for them. So we have to pay tribute to them.

We are forced to accept this situation because we have run out of options. We are not able to overcome this state of things.

The government has granted us many things in health and education, but we cannot access those. The wealthy have access to many things because they have money. The society values them, grants them rights. We receive neither because we are poor. Instead of providing us shelter, the government wrests that away from us. The government has closed down the road to slum. They never close down any road for the wealthy, do they? We don't have much association with people outside the slum. They pay us when we work for them, but otherwise they offer nothing. Beyond this, we have no relationship whatsoever.

I know what commissioner of City Corporation is. I have even voted for him. But after he won in the election, I have not seen him once. What can be demanded from a commissioner like that? We know that we won't get anything from him. That's why we never went to him.

We never received anything from the City Corporation. We have to make our own provisions. For example, we have to take care of water, latrine, garbage disposal etc. To us, the commissioner represents the state. We feel denied because we have no access to gas, water and electricity. We don't have drainage or garbage disposal system. Even a small government job could help me prosper. Many of the slum dwellers have left the slum and are having a good life. I won't name them.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I feel wonderful after chatting with you. It has been a long time since I have had an opportunity to speak freely.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

This was a good experience because I have been able to know a lot from him.

Interview 1.10

Nature and causes of poverty

I have a family of six- including my wife, two sons and two daughters. I am a rickshaw puller. I come from Kishorganj. I have been living here for 3-4 years. I can't do anything else because I don't have money. I have no other earning member of the family. My daughter has been working in a garments factory for a month. She has not received her wage yet. It is very difficult for me to take care of my family with my limited earning. My landlord behaves very rudely because I cannot pay my rent on time. Even the grocery store owner calls me names because I buy things on credit. My life is full of misery and sadness. I could not send my children to school because of poverty. I have not been able to do anything for them. I was a farmer back home. Once the crop failed, so I had to borrow money. Then I moved to my in-laws house. There I started farming again, but lost the crop to flood. I was becoming distressed. I borrowed some money from my father-in-law and set up a tea stall. I struggled to bear my family's expenses from that tea stall. But I could not manage to repay my loans. I was under ever increasing pressure for repayment. I explained my situation to them and came to Dhaka. I could not get any job here, so I started to pull rickshaw. Even this is not an easy way to earn my bread. The government is limiting access of rickshaws to various roads. We have to pull rickshaw within a very limited area, so it is difficult to get clients. After paying the rickshaw owner the rent, it is almost impossible to maintain my family with remaining money. If the government did not close down the roads to us, then we would not have suffered so much. I don't know what to do now. Death seems to be the only way out. I feel that I am extremely poor.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a voter, but back home, not here. I am not listed here. People say that casting your vote proves your citizenship. But it is of no use being a voter. Even after casting vote, the government does not take care of us. We are worthless because we are poor.

I did not go to school. If I were educated, I could have gotten a job and then send my children to school. I would have a happy life then.

My father was a leader of the community and quite rich. Everyone respected him. People also held us in high esteem. My father maintained three wives. I had four brothers and three sisters. My elder brother had a separate family after he got married. In my mother's family, I was there along with three sisters. We had to sell off a large amount of land to get my sisters married. We had no one else to earn in our family. I was very young then. Then father sold off more land. He could not work, as he had grown old. He married me off. I shifted to my father-in-law's house after my marriage. My father even sold our home. I became a father of four during my stay with my in-laws. I could not find a way of making a decent living even after much thought. Then I decided, as people are coming to Dhaka all the time and earning their livelihood, I would also go to Dhaka. But I found the same situation prevailing even in Dhaka.

I vote because I am a voter. I vote in the hope of government's action for us. But whichever government comes into power tends to overlook us. They don't give us anything.

When we go to hospital, we get neither treatment nor medicine. We have rights, but those are violated. The wealthy cannot stand us because they live in buildings and we live in slums. They only pay us when we do chores for them. If we don't work for them, they simply drive us away. There are times when they don't pay us even after working for them. Any protest is met with the threat of eviction from the slum. We have no worth in the society because we are poor. I have not voted for the commissioner, but others did. I have seen him once or twice during the election period, after that he disappeared. We can't expect anything from this commissioner. We know that he can do much for us if he genuinely wishes- he can make provisions for garbage disposal system, sanitary toilets, mosquito repellents; but we know that he

won't do it even if we demand for these. We silently endure everything. We are afraid that any protest will result in hurting us.

I think I have been deprived of everything. I don't have any privileges because I am poor. I would have been happy if I had a decent shelter and some money. By health care I understand cleanliness, eating good food and vegetables, clean latrines and cleaning hands after using latrines. Then I would be healthy.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt happy talking to you about my trials and tribulations. Even though it took my time, I don't mind . Please pray for me.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt very happy because I have been able to explain things properly.

Oral Testimony of Modhubazar Slum- Dwellers

Interview 2.1

Nature and causes of poverty

My husband is a rickshaw puller. If I am not poor, then what am I? Am I rich? Eight years ago when we were in the village we had a sweet-shop. One day the shop got burnt and my husband became jobless. My father-in-law's family was so large that it became difficult to manage the family expenses properly. As a result, my husband and I were forced to come to Dhaka. He started pulling rickshaw and the income was enough to maintain our family grossly well. Then my husband joined an association and took loan from there to start a business with a person who fled with our investment. Later on, we had learnt that he has deceived other people as well. Now my husband has to pay the interest of that loan and this extra burden has further deteriorated our financial condition. I do not go out to work because my sons would go astray if I do not stay at home. The payment of interest is gradually making us poor. It has now become very difficult for us even to meet the family expenditure.

The reason of being poor

Burning of the sweet-shop, large family of my in-laws, my husband's being deceived by his business partner, and because of the fact that I do not have any job.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a tenant, this is my identity. I am a citizen of this country. I have an identity as a human being otherwise being a Hindu I could not have lived among so many Muslims. The rich do not show any indulgence to the poor. Those who have power treat us as low caste. They look below upon us. During election the government committed to give food grains and provide amenities in all respect but did not give anything afterwards.

I think those who have money have access to more. The rich can interact with all. They can make friends with most people in the society. The rich are invariably rich. They are always placed above us. They think that we wear untidy and unclean clothes and take unhealthy food. Had they been able to treat us as proper human beings then they would have provided us with good jobs and accommodation facilities and cared for us. The cars of the rich are more valuable than us. Whenever the poor touch their cars they become irritated and wipe the cars.

So long we are poor there would remain a difference between them and us. We are poor and uneducated, that is why they despise to talk to us.

I think there should not be such differences. All of us are human beings in the society. We are compelled to accept all these. I have tried hard to come out from this grave situation. I planned to save money in an association and start a shop with that money but could I implement that? One of the members of the association appropriated the money that other group members and I had saved.

I think if my husband can get a good job and my children can receive education then we would be able to overcome our sufferings. Our financial condition would also have improved if my children could receive proper education.

I know that vitamins exist in the vegetables but I do not know the name of the vitamin that exists in each vegetable. I do not know much about health and hygiene. However, I know that the government provides free education up to grade V. My elder son has passed grade V from a government school. Although it was a government school, we had to pay fees at the time of examination. In addition, the school authority demands 80 taka per student for textbooks at the end of the year. I have paid that money each year. I had to pay the school authority money for his education. What is our benefit if we are to pay money?

I know that it is the responsibility of the government – to supply water and sanitary latrines, but these are no longer provided by the government. We have no dustbin here. Once I went to the zoo where we had to pay money for using the toilet. We also pay money for using the toilets at the markets or shopping malls.

It is the duty of the government to pay attention towards the poor. The government may provide good job for the people who pull rickshaw. We are the citizens of this country. The government pays more money to the people who have plenty. Whereas we are needy, but do not get any money.

As I always stay at home, I do not know much but I understand that I should keep information regarding all matters. It would have been better if a medical centre were established in and around the slum in order to provide us with treatment facility at low expense.

We the women do not get any right. The husbands always oppress us. We have to abide by what they say. The society always looks down upon us. After all, we are human beings. We desire to live well; take good food and wear decent dresses but we cannot. I expect the rich to treat us as human beings. We want them to socialise with us. We need food and water– these are our rights. By drinking pure water, we can be free from diseases. It would have been better if the government could lower the prices of essentials like rice and lentil. The government is obliged to ensure our rights but in practice, it does not. We have heard that the government distributes essentials like rice and lentil in the villages. We do not get those supports in Dhaka. During election, the government makes many promises, which it ignores afterwards. Then the government does not consider us as human beings rather they treat us like livestock. We never got any support from the commissioner. Probably the commissioner gives aid, which we do not get but his supporters do. This reality has changed our expectations, which no longer exist after years of waiting in vain. Therefore, we do not expect anymore. We live by whatever we can manage by ourselves.

We have been living in Modhubazar for the last eight/ten years. In the mean time, the government has constructed the roads around the slum. It is now convenient to walk by these roads, as they do not become muddy when it rains.

We do not get all the facilities from the government. We suffer from proper water supply. At times, the water smells bad and drinking it causes stomach disease. There is no electricity after every evening. We definitely pay money to the government but it does not provide us with all facilities.

We are always deprived. Now I have given up all hopes. Government imposes everything on us. This situation is persistent. There is low voltage in electric supply. We give money to the

government school. But the government does not lower the prices of essentials. What else can we do? We are compelled to accept all these. What shall I do? My husband pulls rickshaw. Moreover, I have heard that ply of rickshaws would be restricted from different roads of Dhaka city. It would further decrease our income and increase our sufferings. It would be hard to send son to high school.

If I could educate my children then our financial condition would have probably been improved. It would have been much helpful for us if my husband could get a good job or could learn driving. He cannot learn driving for want of money. It takes four to five thousand taka to learn driving.

If the government cannot provide us shelter, at least it should provide us with a decent job, which would also be much helpful for us. Then we could probably manage to break free from poverty.

Jesmin used to live with me as a co-tenant. Her husband used to work in a garments factory. As her husband had some education, he managed a job in a hospital. Now he earns more than before. They do not live here anymore. They reside at a better house paying more rent. Now they are happy.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I liked talking to you. My mind has been relieved after talking with you. The above matters cannot be discussed with all.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

This is the first time I am working in this method. I like this OT method. By conducting this interview, it is possible to bring out the inner feelings of the slum dwellers. In the form of gossiping, they tend to open their minds. I think this method is appropriate to gather correct information from the slum dwellers.

Interview 2.2

Nature and causes of poverty

I consider myself as poor. My life passes through woes and distress. The financial condition of my father in law's family was quite solvent before we came to Dhaka. My father in law had owned 2 bighas and 12 kathas (85.8 dc ml) of land. Four to five times of river bank erosion had taken away all our land. Due to erosion of river, we became poor. My husband had one brother who died afterwards. My husband could not handle the consecutive losses and became ill out of anxiety. We had no adult child to take the responsibility of the family. On one side, we had to pay interest and on the other, people took away our remaining land. Then we came to Dhaka. Our children are too young. Since then, our hardship has begun. My life has passed in this manner. My ailing husband is unable to do heavy work. I work in a school as support stuff.

The reason of being poor

Due to erosion of river, grabbing of land by others, payment of interest, my husband's illness and for not having any son who is capable of earning money.

Relationship between state and citizen

I know that I am a citizen. I have cast vote. I am in great difficulties, my condition is worse in comparison to others. I do not have any good job.

Don't you understand what sort of relationship I might have with the rich? They hate us. They do not ever touch the glass by which we drink water. There is difference between them and us.

The rich neglect the poor. The government is represented by the ministers who hate us more. I think the rich and the government are in peace and happiness. They do not look after the poor like us.

The rich look down upon us. Can the son of a poor make friends with the son of a rich? As I work in a school, as support staff, I get the chance to interact with them. If I take my son to school, the sons of the rich would not make friends with my son because he is poor. There is huge difference between the rich and us but it should not have existed. They should keep information about how we lead our lives. We work and in return, the rich pay us money.

We do not accept this situation. We expect that the government should treat everyone equally.

We have tried much to break free of this situation. As I do not have anyone to recommend me, I do not get any good job. I could have possibly managed a good job if there were someone to recommend me. Then I could have done something for my son.

I can hardly manage the salt to have with rice. Where would I get vitaminized food? I got my son admitted to a government hospital. I did not pay any charge for the bed but had to purchase medicine from outside. They took five taka from me as ticket fee. My children have studies up to grade 5 in a government school. In spite of the fact that it is a government school, I had to pay the authority 50 taka as examination fee and 75 taka during book distribution.

I know that we have the right to free housing. However, the government does not provide the same. It would have been helpful had the government been able to provide us with free housing. Accordingly free housing would have incorporated access to water, sanitary latrine and dustbin. How can the government ensure all these when it cannot provide its citizens with mere shelter? All though we have rights, we do not have access to those.

We have the right to avail proper employment from the government, which we do not get. The Government does not support us in any way. We keep information regarding some of the affairs. We have heard that the government has been distributing rice, wheat, dates and other relief at the Rayer Bazar Community Centre. However, we do not get those. Probably the person to whom the government hands over the relief does not distribute that among us. The people who have power get hold of the supplies but we cannot.

I have heard that men and women have equal rights. But I do not see it in reality. The husbands do not give importance to their wives. We the women when go out in the streets remain in anxiety as because the social environment is not safe. Everybody wants to maintain a good living standard. Does anybody want the rich to hate or neglect him or her? We also want the rich to socialise and talk with us. We want them to keep information regarding our condition. There is necessity for every right. There are needs for job, accommodation, good place for living and good future for the children. We know that the government is obliged to ensure all these, but we do not get any support from the government. We pay tax to the government so it should definitely be obliged to support. Probably the government gives some aid, but we do not get that.

We do not even get much aid from the ward commissioner's office. Few days ago my mother died. I went to the Commissioner for a certificate that was required to carry the dead body to my native village for burial. We had to face much trouble to obtain the certificate. He delayed the total process. He never provides any financial assistance to the slum-dwellers.

We have so many unfulfilled expectations from the government. As time goes by, our frustration increases as we cut short our limit of expectations. What is the use of expecting when our demands are not fulfilled and when we do not have access to most of our rights as citizens?

The Ward Commissioner has been constructing road in the Modhubazar slum. He has been providing this facility, but what is our benefit in this ploy. We are only temporary tenants

who might leave anytime. The house owners would be benefited by this. They would increase the house rent because of improved roads. What is our benefit? We do not get any government help.

We cast vote for the government and pay tax but the government does not provide us with any support. Then what is the use of paying tax?

We consider ourselves as deprived. We keep on expecting but get nothing. We are not provided with any good jobs. Is there any future in the job as a support staff of a school? It is temporary and insecure. The prices of essentials are high. We have to pay gas, electricity and water bill along with the house rent.

I do not accept these. I try my best and think a lot. My life is at the last state. I wish that my children might lead their life well, get good jobs and face less trouble. I earnestly requested many people to provide my son with a good job.

If I were provided with a job, and had the luxury of a permanent accommodation my sufferings would have been lessened. Had my son been provided with a good job, he would be able to take the responsibility of the family. Then I think that we could have been released from all adversities.

Previously Biplob's mother used to live as tenant like us. She used to earn her living as a household help. Gradually she got a job as manager of a house. Somebody killed her husband. Her employer allocated her a piece of land for dwelling. Now Biplob's mother is a house owner at Modhubazar. She has lot of ornaments. How happy she is at present!

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Did not feel any inconvenience. It was an interesting and enjoyable sharing. I felt at ease talking to you. Other people have also come to the school to talk to me. However, none of the conversation sessions had continued as long as this one.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I did not feel any inconvenience to speak in this method. Correct information is obtained by this method.

Interview 2.3

Nature and causes of poverty

If we are not poor, then what are we? My son does not work regularly. We still could not pay this month's house rent. Unlike my in-laws my father's financial condition was fair. When my husband remarried without my consent, I did not have any option but to leave with my daughter and son. Most of the time I remain ill which prevents me from earning a proper living and support my children. I took loan on interest to buy a pulling-van for my son so that he can sell green groceries. The payment of interest is gradually taking me to the bottom of poverty line. I am becoming poorer as day passes by. My son does not render ear to my words anymore. He does not want to work regularly. It is becoming difficult for me to send his sister to school. I get inconsistent orders of sewing. My meagre income by sewing and if my son can make any profit from selling vegetables are grossly the financial input by which my family struggles to make both ends meet.

The reason of being poor

The second marriage of my husband has forced me to leave my family and come out on the streets. Apart from this, the reasons are- the burden of paying interest, the insolence and

inefficiency of my son, my incessant illness and the fact that I hardly have any money to make a respectable living let alone any savings.

Relationship between state and citizen

I understand that I am a citizen. As a person, I am in quite a miserable position. None except the almighty Allah recognises the worth of the poor. It seems that there is no relation between the rich and the poor. The rich do not recognise our worth. They seem to neglect us. We do not realise whether they consider us as human being. The government people denounce us more.

The rich live in rapture and at peace. Those possessing self have everything but we have nothing. We dare to even sit beside the rich. They regard us as destitute individuals and never enquire about our condition. We dare not speak to make our points in front of them. Unlike them we are not educated and as a result cannot socialise with them.

The rich look below upon us. As Muslims, it is not befitting to distinguish and is improper to take pride in. Invariably there would be inconvenience where differences exist. They avoid all possibilities of cohesion and keep away from us in fear of losing their pomp and prestige.

I am accepting this condition because I am poor. Everyone tries to maintain a good living standard. I am trying to get a good job. I am struggling to find employment for my son. I try to reside in a good house; we cannot afford to take good food.

I know that by eating vegetables we may possess a good health. Tell me how we can eat vegetables when the price of vegetables is so high? The price of one-kg leafy vegetable is 20 taka. The poor hardly manages to pass their lives. I do not go to the government hospitals and have never received free treatment. I have heard that in the villages, the schools are free and girl children are given money as stipend.

How would the government manage free accommodation when it cannot provide us even with little aid? I cannot even dream of that. What is the use of having the rights when they are not ensured? I have heard that we have the right to get water supply and sanitary latrines but we did not get those. What can we do if we are not given all these? Can we fight against the government?

We have all the rights but they are not ensured. If the government could provide us with jobs, then we could have lived in a better condition. If my son were provided with a job our woes and sufferings would have been lessened.

I do not keep information of my surroundings. No one gives me any information. I have not seen any aid being distributed in the slum. I would have felt free to look for such information if I were in my village. However, in Dhaka I am afraid of being inquisitive about anything.

Nowadays there are equal rights for men and women. But I do not get equal rights as a woman. I have not found any good job yet. There should be good relationship between every human being. This pleases Allah. Had the rich socialised with us then Allah would have been pleased. The fact is that the rich hate us. They always want to get rid of us.

In spite of our being poor, we understand that we need all our rights. If we could take nourishing meals and use sanitary latrines then we would have suffered from fewer diseases. We could have saved a little if it were the reality that we would not have to pay the house rent. In fact, we feel ashamed when we are unable to pay even a month's rent.

We are creditors to government. We pay tax to government. Therefore, the government is obliged to ensure our rights, which it does not. We think that the government will look after us if we cast vote. However, after election the government completely ignores us and forgets about the promises it had made before the election. I did not get even a cloth as aid yet.

We have cast our vote for commissioner expecting that he would distribute rice, lentil and wheat to the poor but he does not do so. We struggle a lot. The commissioner should help us by giving some money to ease our struggle. He can give us money if he wants to but he does not.

We have so much expectation from the government. However what is the use in expecting if they are not fulfilled?

The commissioner has been making roads in the slum. While working, I keep the sewing machine at a corner of the platform. When the road construction would be over then probably I shall have to give up that place.

We have not received any facility from the government. Had we been provided with something then we would have believed that we have been benefited by casting vote. We cast vote and pay tax to the government, but what is the use of all these when the government does not provide any facility to the poor. Why would we deny if we were provided? I would have told you if that were the case. No necessity of my life has been fulfilled.

We do not get anything then why should not we consider as ourselves deprived. The house owner levies electricity, gas and water consumption bill with the house-rent. My son could not get any good job or work. I could not get my son educated. I am not provided with a better job. I am sick that is why nobody wants to employ me.

I do not accept this situation. What else can be done but to accept this? Everyone wants to lead a decent life. But it does not become comprehensible. My son cannot go abroad for want of money. If I could train my son in a good vocation, he could have earned enough to provide us with required food and lodging.

I think if my son and I could get a good job or he could work efficiently, then we could have managed to be liberated from the poverty cycle. We would have also been relieved if we were not in a position to bear the burden of the interest.

I do not know his name. I have heard from people that the family came here from a village. Presently, they have enough money and do not reside in the slum.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I did not feel any inconvenience while facing the interview. I can understand that you have come for our concerns. You have listened to my inner feelings. Nobody ever came to me before. It was a pleasant feeling.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

As OT method takes more time than usual, it seems that they feel little inconvenience. In spite of this unfavourable context, they have talked to me.

Interview 2.4

Nature and causes of poverty

I am invariably poor. Allah has made me poor. The financial condition of my husband was good. We had much land in our village home. All the land has been swept away by river bank erosion. Then we took shelter at my brother's. However, how long can one stay at her brother's house? Consequently, we came to Dhaka and have been living here for 14 years. At that time, our children were too young and we could grossly meet the family expenses through my husband's income. He used to pull rickshaw. Later on, I came to know that he had sold our land that resurfaced on the other side of the river. After seven long years, I have acquitted the land by taking loan on interest. Still, I am bearing the burden of that interest which is around 15,000 taka. My husband cannot do heavy work, as he had to undergo operation twice. Our family expenses are managed by the income from the brief and casual works that my husband carries out. As we are not educated, we fail to get any job. My son has not grown-up enough to take over the responsibility of the family.

The reason of being poor

The reasons are river erosion, husband's operations, payment of interest and not being educated.

Relationship between state and citizen

I have cast vote once. I do not understand what citizen is. I am in a grave condition. I want to share my sufferings but fail to do so as I feel embarrassed. My son is too young to start earning. We the poor cannot associate with the rich. They do not recognise our worth.

The rich and the government have good relationship whereas the poor have good relationship only with the poor. The relationship between people of the slum and the rich are not good. They hate us. They do not want to talk to us. If I request somebody to provide my elder son with a job, he rebuffs me and commands me to talk less. The rich get everything. They eat chicken curry with every meal, which we cannot afford to eat. The rich sleep on the mattress but we sleep with much discomfort. Only the rich get all types of facilities from the government but we do not get.

The rich envy the poor. They do not talk with the poor. I have heard that the rich spend much money for their dogs. They feed and take care of the dogs but they do not consider the poor as human beings. The expenses of two families of the slum can be met by the money they spend for a dog. The rich do not talk with the poor. They always keep the poor sidelined or cornered. They cover their nose with clothes whenever they see the poor. So, isn't there a difference between them and us? According to my opinion, one should not promote differences. Would they socialise with us if we want to?

What can we do but to accept this condition? So long Allah has made us poor, what else can we do without accepting this? We try to overcome this situation but fail to do so. Due to operation, my husband cannot pull rikshaw. He cannot do other jobs properly also. My husband rented a house in the Modhubazar slum and started a vegetable shop in that house. But he is not educated. As a result, he could not keep written record of the people who had purchased on credit and therefore he failed to remember all of them. Later on many people had denied about purchasing vegetables from him on credit. The rent of the shop had been pending for three months. At last we paid the rent by borrowing money on interest. We had to stop the business after that incident.

It is good to be neat and clean. One would not suffer from diseases if s/he remains tidy. Good health can be possessed when nourishing food is taken. We cannot eat good food for want of money. Even the leafy vegetables cost around 20 taka per kg. If that were the case then how the poor people like us would survive. 20 thousand taka was spent during my husband's operation. We tried much but we failed to get a bed in government hospital. Whenever we went to the authority, they used to harass us by asking us to wait for the next day. Later on when my husband's condition deteriorated, I got him admitted to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital by arranging money on loan. My elder son used to read in a government school. We used to pay twenty taka per month for his tuition fees.

We have rights to the government but our rights are not ensured. Although we have the right to get free housing facility, we do not get that. The government does not provide us with a house. However, the government is compelled to provide the same. We have to pay for water, gas, and electricity consumption. There is no dustbin in the slum. The latrines need to be upright. We have nothing. We have the right to get employment from the government. But what shall we do if government does not provide us with any job? We cannot go to the government. The authority would not permit us to enter.

I keep information of my surroundings. I have heard that blankets are distributed in many schools. The authority gives rice, lentil, sugar, flours and many other aids which we do not get. They are possessed by those who have power and strength.

Among the poor, women do not have equal rights. It is expected that the women should pass through bowing their heads when they come across men. The women cannot stay outside alone at night. Whenever my younger daughter goes out, I remain in anxiety. The condition of the social environment is not safe. The people belonging to the middle class can approach the rich but we, the poor cannot. The rich would have recognised our worth if we had money. As

human beings, everyone should maintain good relationship with others. They would not socialise with us because we are poor.

There is of course need for all our rights. We need job because if we were employed then we could have been able to eat good food and maintain our family well. If it were the reality that we won't have to pay house rent, then we could have used the money for paying the interest. We would have been less indebted if we were provided with free treatment facilities in the government hospitals.

We have cast vote for the commissioner but he does not help us. I went to his office for a certificate that was required for the driving licence of my elder son. He did not help me at all. Moreover, I had to pay 700 taka to get other certificates from him.

Neither the government nor the commissioner has been able to fulfil our hopes and desires. That is why I do not aspire. I have been waiting without any expectation. I am just waiting and observing how far I can proceed by the grace of almighty Allah. During the election, government tempts us in so many ways.

Commissioner has made roads over here. In fact, the roads are not made for me only. Everybody walks on the roads. What is my benefit then? Government provides no facilities in the slum. Government is gradually increasing the electricity, gas and water consumption bills. The house owners are also increasing the house rent. They say that the government has increased the price of everything so we have to pay more as house rent. We cast vote for the government and pay tax but the government does not help us in any way. So, what is the use of paying tax? We do not get any kind of facility from the government.

I consider myself as deprived. We cannot live where the rich live. We do not get any help from the government. I could not manage a job for my son. We are getting nothing at all. What else is left in our life!

What can I do but to accept this condition? I am obligated to abide. If my son could get a job, our hardship would have been less and we could have repaid our loans. If I could get a job then my family would have been better off.

I think if my son could get a government job, if my husband could get a suitable employment, I would have been in less difficulty. If I did not have to pay the interest, I would not be so poor. If I could get all these, I would have been free from poverty.

Manik used to reside beside us. He used to work in a paint shop. His family was in hardship. He now owns a shop and sells shoes and other things. Manik's shop is running smoothly. His situation is better than before. Manik now can afford to pay two and half thousand taka as house rent.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt at ease talking to you. It was an interesting and enjoyable sharing. Your approach of asking has helped me share everything with an open mind. I did not feel any inconvenience. No one came to talk with me before. The way you asked questions was appreciable and excellent. However, the process takes much time.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

When OT method is used, the people interviewed become emotional and state all their sufferings and their inner feelings. This is a very good method. As it takes more time than usual, it seems that the interviewees feel little inconvenience.

Interview 2.5

Nature and causes of poverty

As I am poor, I work to live. 17 years ago when my husband was alive, we used to live in Rangpur. My children were very young. My husband was engaged in cream-roll business. Our family was well off and we faced no hardship. Then my husband died all of a sudden. His elder brother was not a dignified person. He took control over all our land and property and refused to provide my children and me away even any shelter. Then I came to Dhaka with my children and rented a room here in Modhubazar. I used to work at a lawyer's residence. They were good people. My sons were very young. I engaged them as apprentices in a hotel and in a tailoring shop. We somehow managed to survive with my little earnings. Gradually my daughters were grown up. Two of them are married. My elder daughter is quite pretty so I did not pay any dowry. However her younger sister has some disadvantage so I had to pay much money as dowry to wed her off. I borrowed the wedding money on interest that I am still paying. She is living with me now. I need three thousand taka more to pay as dowry to send her at her husband's house. Three of my four sons are now married and have their own families. They have left me and do not keep in touch or provide with any financial support. I now work in a dormitory. I have to pay the interest with whatever I earn. The family now depends mostly on my younger son's income.

The reason of being poor

The reasons are death of husband, payment of interest, negligence of sons, and payment of dowry.

Relationship between state and citizen

I did not find my name in the voter list and do not know what the term 'citizen' means. I am in naïve and hapless condition and do not foresee any way out. At this old age, I am compelled to work and earn for the payment of interest. Other people have recognised my worth but my sons did not.

The rich do not look after the poor. Only the people who have good souls treat us as human beings but others do not. I have sought support from the rich for my daughter but in vain. Everyone refuses to offer me any help because they think I have four sons to get support from. The slum dwellers do not have good relation either with the rich or the government. They do not treat us as fellow human beings. They never help us.

The rich live well and dine well. I am in a dire state and eat hand to mouth. They live happily but I struggle because I am poor. I struggle because Allah has not given me anything.

The rich people pay us when we do work for them. They give us value when and if we can work otherwise we are ignored. They do not let us sit on their couch or bed. We abide by their rules even though we believe that there should not be discrimination of any kind among them and us. We are all made by Allah. We cannot socialise with them because we do not have money and education. How powerful they are! They are different. What else can be done but to accept this? The possibility of association between them and us is subject to our being like them.

I tried to challenge this situation and breakaway. I helped my sons to be eligible to work and earn so that they can take care of me at old age. I have succeeded in making my children self-reliant by working for other people. Even now at this age I work in a dormitory in order to overcome the sufferings.

I understand that one can remain healthy by taking nourishing food but we cannot afford to buy that. It is known that taking vegetables is good for health. I have been to a government hospital where all services are not free. People have to buy drugs from outside. One of my sons has studied in a government school. However I had to pay the school 25 taka per month.

There are so many rights that the government is obliged to ensure of which we only hear but never avail. We have heard that we have the right to adequate water supply and free housing. However we are not provided with these facilities by the government. The house owner levies electricity, gas and water consumption bill with the house-rent. We have no dustbin near the slum and therefore pay 15 taka per month to the private waste management company. Our house does not have proper latrine facility. The government do not provide us with any facility.

Living so many years in Dhaka has not made us eligible to avail any small government job. The government should provide job facilities to poor people like us. Though we have rights, we do not have access. I do not have enough time to keep or ask for any information. I work in two dormitories. As I have four sons, the rich do not help me. It is good to keep information about everything.

I think that the children of the rich people enjoy equal rights but the daughters of the poor people do not. I have experienced that if the daughters of the poor people can give enough dowry, only then their husbands let them stay else they are driven away from their families.

It is nice to have relationship with the rich but that does not help us in any way. The rich generally do not want to associate with us. They treat us well only if we can serve and work for them properly. Otherwise, we do not have any value to them.

We need all the rights in order to live in a respectable way. We need a proper place to stay. If I do not get a decent job how am I supposed to maintain my family properly? We need money. When we are sick we need free medicines.

It will be helpful if the government gives us a place to live. You have informed me that we pay taxes to the government. Then the government is bound to give us everything we need but they do not. I have not yet received any help from the government. I have been struggling to earn and live properly with my children since I came to Dhaka.

The commissioner does not help us in any way. The rich get facilities but we do not. When I needed money for my daughter's marriage, I sought help from many people but no one offered anything. I know that I will not get anything from the commissioner so I do not approach him. I have not received anything from the rich or the government even though I have expected. I have no expectation from them as I do not get any help from them. I have given up hoping as it only remains but nothing happens. The government does not give aid in the slums. Sometimes the commissioner comes to the slums. He has made roads around here that are used by both the rich and the poor.

I did not get anything from the government. The government has not helped me. My distressed life remained as it is. My sons do not take care of me so I work hard for my livelihood. The government does not fulfil any of our expectations.

I am underprivileged. None of my demands is addressed, so am I not deprived? I helped my sons to grow up and earn enough money but they do not look after me. They live separately with their wives. I am ignored by my sons also.

What can I do but to accept this condition? I have tried hard to get a good job for my youngest son. If he were employed then the condition of my family could have improved.

Had I some money then I could have sent my daughter to her husband's house. I require three thousand taka for that. I could have come out of this situation if the government could provide me with free shelter. If my youngest son were employed, if all four my sons could take care of me and support me then I could have lived a better life.

Sumon's mother used to rent a room beside me. She used to work as a household help. Her son who used to abide by her was very studious. Sumon owns a shop now. Their financial condition has improved. They do not reside in the slum any more. They have rented another house at a better place.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

It was pleasant talking to you. I felt some inconveniences as you talked for a long time, and I have to prepare food for the night at my workplace. No one came to talk with me before. I expressed my inner feelings to you. If I open my mind to others, they think I am lying.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

As OT method takes more time than usual the people interviewed felt little inconvenience.

Interview 2.6

Nature and causes of poverty

Can I live my life in this way? My family survives on whatever I can earn by a whole day's work. I am from Barishal. My father had some land that he sold to make a living. As I grew up, our condition worsened. My income in the village was not enough to support my family. So I came to Dhaka to find that condition here is even worse. Here all my money is spent on necessities and house rent. Sometimes I have to borrow money from others. I think that I am the poorest person in this city.

The reason of being poor

My father has no land, I have no money and I am not educated.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a Bangladeshi. As I was born here, I am a citizen and a voter. I vote someone to represent the government on my behalf. I vote that person so that s/he can serve the country well and help the poor. As we are poor, no one gives us any value. Do the poor belong to the society? We live from hand to mouth and that is our main identity.

The relationship that exists between them and us is like masters and slaves. If we work, they pay us and if we do not go to work one day, they rebuke us and drive us away. Our relationship with other classes of the city is quite congenial. I believe that they do not look down upon us.

The people belonging to upper class of the city are robbing us through exploitation. We do not possess any power. If that were the case, then we would have lived with them in buildings. Power originates from money and education. Listen, we have no option but to accept this situation. Protesting this would result further deprivation. We might face physical assault or be forced to leave. Therefore, we are compelled to abide. Who does not want to get away from this situation? However, unfortunately we do not have education, wealth and power.

The government has not provided us with these benefits. We can send our children to free schools but rest of our rights are ignored. The poor are not recognised anywhere. Recently I have undergone an operation but have not received any medical benefit from the government. Even though I was admitted to a government hospital, I had to spend a lot of money. I had to buy all the medicines from outside. If this is the reality then where do the rights of the poor remain? Rights are for the rich people of this country.

Where is our right for proper housing? This is also for the rich. We reside in a rented house. We get everything in lieu of our hard-earned money. We even pay for water and latrine facilities. The government people come here to take away waste because the owner of our house pays them extra money.

I can get money if I work. I have never received any help from the government. We are poor. We are always busy looking for ways to earn our living so we cannot manage much time to keep up with most of the current affairs. The government has recognised equal rights for men and women. Do the men want to accept this? There is congenial relation among neighbours in

the slum. We support and admire each other. I am aware of my right to socialise and interact with the people living outside the slum. However, as we are poor, I am uncertain about what changes our awareness can bring forth.

All the rights of a citizen are interlinked. I do not blame the government because it is actually providing support. The fact remains that we do not have access to those but others have. I know that the government is obligated to ensure the rights.

We have cast vote for the ward commissioner but he has not done anything for us yet. Our house owner has helped us. As far as I am concerned, works related to water supply, road construction and other services are being undertaken now-a-days. We are deprived of all these because we are poor.

We are enjoying all these facilities because they are inclusive with the payment of the rented house we live in. I consider myself as deprived because I do not have access to other facilities besides these for which am not paying. We are bound to accept this condition. Is there any other option?

Had I some capital, I would have started a petty business to maintain my family and ensure proper education for my son. I believe that then I could have managed to improve my condition. I do not know whether anyone has been able to break-free from this situation.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have liked this new form of interviewing. Many people have come here as you did, but previously no one has ever asked me anything in this manner. I am happy to have been able to share and express my inner feelings with you.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I do not think that the persons interviewed have faced any faced any difficulty to understand the new method. I also have not struggled to make them understand.

Interview 2.7

Nature and causes of poverty

My mother died when I was very young and afterwards my father had remarried. My sufferings have started since then. My stepmother's torture made me run away from home to Dhaka. After I had reached *Sadar Ghat* (the main river port at Dhaka), a man employed me at his shop where I served for a long time. Later on, I started my own shop but could not continue the business due to rivalry with the wholesaler (my former employer). Therefore, I left the place and started working as a street-side billboard painter. Accidentally, one day I slipped and fell down and was badly hurt. Now I cannot work anymore. I pull cart every now and then just to survive. My family can barely sustain by my meagre income. I do not have any savings. I am not only poor but an orphan as well. I do not have any brother to take stand beside me at this time of distress. My father has land of which I am deprived. He is making his living by selling our ancestral property. I consider myself as poor because I do not have any money and land.

The reason of being poor

I have become poor because of my father, for not being able to have education and for not having any money.

Relationship between state and citizen

I know that I am a citizen because I was born in this country. I am a voter as well. What is society to me? The poor do not belong to any society. Acceptability and respect of the society and the government towards poor people like me increase on the eve of election. This is our experience of orientation with the society.

The rich people of this country rob us. At times, they do not pay us after getting things done for them. No one loves the poor.

We regard everyone as equal. This is because everyone uses me but does not give anything in return. I believe that a person treats all poor people the same way as s/he treats me. We do not have any money or land and that is why we are poor. We do not have any power. The rich have both, wealth and power.

Is there any way out but to accept this condition? Protesting this would result further deprivation. We might face physical assault or be forced to leave the area.

Is it possible for anyone come out of this situation even if s/he earnestly wants to? In order to overcome this situation we the poor need to be united. However, that culture does not prevail among us.

The rights regarding education that exist at present were not introduced at our time. My children can now receive free education. The poor do not get any other privileges besides this. Medical facilities are not free at the government hospitals. People have to buy most of the medicines from outside while very few are supplied from the hospitals. What would have been the result even if we were conscious? We know everything but our rights are not ensured, as we are poor.

What is dwelling to the poor? The government takes away any public land that we occupy. The government is obliged to ensure rights but not ours, that is for the peoples like F. Rahman of this country.

I am quite conscious about using sanitary latrines and other hygiene factors. I drink boiled water and wash my hands properly after using the toilet. I have taught my children the same practices. I put the garbage in the place allocated by my house owner. We do not get any service from the government.

I live by cart pulling and nothing else is my concern. Rich people get hold of the provisions that actually are arranged for us.

I live hand to mouth by whatever I can manage. I do not feel the need to know all these. We have the right to socialise and engage with the people living outside the slum. We believe that we live as friendly neighbours but their approaches do not reflect that.

I know that we need all our rights in order to live as decent human beings but there is nothing to do. I do not know the interrelationship among the rights. All my rights are at the hands of the government and the government is bound to ensure those rights. The government is supposed to support me when I am in need or in distress.

The ward commissioner is not for me. His services are for the rich. The commissioner never helps poor people like us. We never seek support from him. Our house owner is getting many privileges from him. The commissioner has helped in fixing the trouble regarding supply water in our house. Previously, dirt used to come out with the supply water but now it is clean. It is not the commissioner but our house owner who provides us with all the facilities in lieu of the rent that we pay.

We do not get the facilities from the government that we are supposed to. That is why; we are not only deprived but unfortunate as well. What other options are there but to accept this situation? We are to abide by all these only because we are poor. I could have succeeded in breaking free from this situation provided if I could raise my children properly to be self-reliant and if I could get support from someone. As far as I am concerned, no one in this slum is free from poverty.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Never was I asked by anyone in this way and never could I express my feelings like this. I have enjoyed the method very much and strongly believe that others would also express similar opinion.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I think that this method has helped them to understand easily, the points that I wanted to make.

Interview 2.8

Nature and causes of poverty

If I am not poor, then why should I live in a house built on a platform over lowland water? I live like this because I am poor. I am the only earning member of the family of six. I sell fishes from door to door. So many people condemn me everyday! Actually, my misfortune has brought me into this profession. My father had adequate farmland. He became sick when I was around 8/10 years old. My elder brother and maternal uncle took him to Dhaka for treatment. The doctors could not diagnose the disease and eventually we lost him. There was no one to look after us except my elder brother who could not survive smallpox. He was only 20/22 years old. We sold a lot of land for his treatment but in vain. We felt helpless after his death, as there was no one left to take care of us. We had to sell all our land to survive and to continue treatment of my mother who suffered from TB (tuberculosis). The sufferings did not stop here. The river *Padma* that used to flow near our village had eroded our last resort, the ancestral homestead. Afterwards, we have become poor.

The reason of being poor

I have become poor because of the death of my father and elder bother and riverbank erosion.

Relationship between state and citizen

I was born in Bangladesh and I cast vote. Considering this, I am a citizen even though I do not have any value in the society. The society does not show respect to the people living in the slums. Only the poor people like us can empathise and understand with their sorrows and sufferings that the rich do not. Sometimes I feel very thirsty after walking quite a long distance. The rich households have never responded to my appeal for a glass of water. Rather in many occasions, they have driven me away. I sell fishes from door to door. I know how the rich look upon the poor. The poor do not live at the posh areas like Gulshan, Banani and Baridhara. Residents of those areas think that there is no poor in this country. People belonging to the middle class at times call me in to listen to my current state. If I ask for drinking water, they even serve me biscuits with it. They can empathise with our hardship. The rich, living in big buildings would never understand our sufferings. They live inside AC rooms. They can only make us work but offer nothing in return. One of my daughters works for nine hours a day in a garments factory. She earns only 900 taka per month but her total monthly expenditure including food and house-rent is around 12/14 hundred taka. Can you please tell me from where does the deficit money come from? You cannot. I have been living in this area for a long time. Everyone is fond of me and no body has shown me any power yet. They might have spared me but have not stopped tormenting poor people like me. There is a gang of young men in our slum, who can put people in trouble at any time. If someone buys a rickshaw then s/he is forced to pay them money (chanda⁹) otherwise, they would take the poor people's assets away. On the other hand, they charge illegal toll on someone who is making a comparatively fair living. We cannot do anything

⁹ Illegal toll

to stop this because they are the people of the house owners and they physically abuse the protesters. They have power but we do not that is the main difference between them and us.

I do not accept this from my heart but I am forced to comply. I want to break free from this situation. This requires good intention of the society. Moreover, if the rules of the administration can be and is governed properly, then we can overcome this situation.

All our rights exist with the government. However, what is the use of existence when we do not have access to those. The government does not ensure our rights, rather the rights of the rich are ensured. Education is one of our basic rights but there is no government school in our area. Therefore, we cannot send our children to school. All are private schools which I cannot afford as it requires 8/9 hundred taka per student a month. Then how would I ensure proper education for my children? Some dwellers of our slum can hardly manage one meal a day. How is it possible for us to bear the expenses of our children's education when we hardly earn enough to survive? The government is supposed to establish schools in this area. Can you please tell us why there isn't any government school in our area? I know that you would not be able to answer because you are also the member of a poor family like us.

The government is supposed to provide dwelling facility to the landless people like us but it does not. The relatives of the ministers are given the Khas land (government owned land/public land), which we were supposed to get. The government gives those who have more. It was declared that some land at Savar (suburb of Dhaka) would be allotted to the landless through lottery but the relatives of the ministers are also getting that. They are acquiring the land in our name.

There is no dustbin in our area. Everyone is disposing garbage at open places that has made the slum a breeding ground of different diseases.

The government is supposed to provide us with jobs but it does not. There are some educated people among us but they are unemployed. One of my grandsons could not manage a job even after becoming a graduate. The employers demand money from the job-seekers. We do not have anyone to ask for money or employment. Those who have holds to lobby or to bribe on their behalf, get the jobs. Our rights are for stating rather than ensuring.

The government has ruled equal rights for women and men. The salary of a man working in a garments factory is 1000/1600 taka per month whereas the salary of a woman undertaking similar responsibilities in the same factory is 900 taka per month. The question is where does the equal rights status prevail?

We have the right to develop relationship with the people living outside the slum. However, we do not have the space to speak about our rights with them. How can they socialise with us when they do not even consider us as human beings? All these rights are interrelated i.e. food with clothing and education with medicine. The government is obligated to ensure these rights, which it actually does. However, we do not have any access as the rich secure these rights on our behalf.

We have many demands to place to the city corporation most of which were never responded or ensured. I had three rickshaws that were stolen by some local people. I went to the commissioner for proper judgement and solution to the incident. Instead of resolving the matter, he has subjected me to further sufferings and deprivation. He did not give me the certificate of citizenship when I asked for it. After that, I have stopped calling on him. Once, all of us went to his office to make a request for establishing a dustbin in our slum. He turned deaf to this request as well. We will keep on seeking support from the commissioner but he will never respond. As there is no road connection to pass through the platform over low-land water, we requested him to make a road but he did not do that either. At present, our house owner is constructing the road.

The city corporation does not provide any help to poor people like us. We do not get any service from the government or the state. We do not pay the government or the city corporation so they do not give us any facilities. We do not get as much facility as the amount we pay our

house-owners. We have observed that we do not get the proper amount of gas that we pay for. The same happens in the case of electricity. Sometimes we do not get electricity for 12 hours a day. However, they take no less in payment. If we do not pay the money, they cut the electricity supply. My house-owner is taking the gas bill accurately but we cannot cook our food properly for want of gas.

I feel deprived from the society and the state because I do not get any facility in this state and society. The society does not treat us like human beings. We have no place in the society, only the rich people have that. The state does not provide us with the rights that we were supposed to receive. We do not have a government school here. We do not get proper treatment facility. I took my son to a government hospital but that was a government hospital in words but not in action. I had to pay 5000 taka to the hospital and to buy medicines from outside though it was a government hospital. If we have to pay money, then why is it called government hospital? We the poor also do not get proper treatment facility and that is why we feel deprived.

I oppose and despise my present condition by heart and soul. In order to breakaway from this situation, the government must formulate new laws.

If the government gives me a place to stay then I will no longer have to pay my house rent. If I could build my own house and have some tenant, I could have become a rich person. If the government could give me some money then also I could have started a business and improved my situation.

No one can come out of our slums because we live hand to mouth.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Talking to you was a pleasant experience. You have heard all my pains and sorrows and noted those down. No one has ever asked me anything or noted down my comments in this manner. You are the first one to listen to my inner feelings. Many people have come here as you did, but previously no one has ever asked me anything like this that takes so much time and patience.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I think that while I explained this new method, they have easily understood the points that I wanted to make. Therefore, I enjoyed it.

Interview 2.9

Nature and causes of poverty

I am an electric helper. I get only 100 taka as remuneration. With this amount, I cannot maintain my family because it consists of nine members --my mother, father, brothers and sisters. Therefore, I face difficulties in maintaining my family. I cannot get a decent job because I am not educated. I could not manage a suitable work yet. That is why I consider myself as poor. My previous condition was somewhat better but as my father had no income, so gradually it became impossible for him to manage the family anymore. Afterwards when I grew up a little then nothing was left except our homestead. Then all of us came to Dhaka with my father. After coming to Dhaka, I went astray by being involved with ill-disciplined boys. I had been with them for a long time but did not get anything in return. One day the police arrested me and took me away but I was released on request of few people. Afterwards I came round. Leaving all my previous activities, I began to pull rikshaw van of a company. They used to pay me some money with which I used to maintain my family. Incidentally, I lost the job. Now I am an apprentice to a electrician. He pays me taka 100/150 as remuneration. The expenses of my family are met only with that amount. Therefore, I consider myself as poor.

The reason of being poor

I could not receive education and financial condition of my father was not good. I think due to these two reasons I have become poor.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a human being and a voter. So I am a citizen of Bangladesh. I have cast my vote for the government. I have few friends in my slum. I have cast my vote for the candidate they suggested. I shall not be able to survive without following their instructions. I think that my interaction with other members of the society is satisfactory. However, our relationship with the government is not good. We cast vote in favour of the government because we hope that they would provide us something. However, the government grants us nothing rather it only provides the rich.

We have been able to live in this area for eight years because our relationship with the people of all levels of the city is good. They consider us as decent people so do we. This is because we neighbours. They take stand alongside us when we are in menace and in happiness. I think that they consider us as poor. We have to abide by all their instructions.

No matter how strong we are, we shall not be able to compete with them. What else can I do but to accept such condition? We have no money and there is no unity among us.

When we used to study, government provided us with nothing. Now the government is providing many facilities in the field of education. There is no value of our health. We do not get any treatment and medicine when we go to the hospitals to cure our illness or diseases.

Once my child was ill and I took him to Dhaka Children's Hospital (Dhaka Shishu Hospital). But they drove me away as there was no vacant seat. Later someone asked for 500 taka to manage a seat for my child.

Will the government ensure our right to proper housing? We are undoubtedly poor. Only the rich are provided with housing facility. I have heard that the government has allotted them land at subsidised price. However, we do not get such facility because we are poor.

We reside in a rented house. Unlike the government, our house-owner has provided us with everything. We get nothing from the government. We have several demands to the government but the government does not fulfil any of our demands.

I keep much information about the happenings around me. I keep information about what services the government can provide us. But what is the use of knowing all these when we receive nothing? It is true that the government provides us with necessities but we do not get them. This is because there is no society for the poor people like us.

To me the commissioner of our area is a well-admired person. He is available whenever the slum dwellers call upon him. He has initiated much work in our neighbourhood. Every now and then dirty water enters in our slum. When he was informed, he committed to look in to the matter. Presently, he has been working on this issue. We get nothing. Our house-owner gets everything. We get electricity and water facilities because along with our house rent we pay him for these services as well. Why has Allah sent us as poor? Why were we not rich?

As we do not get anything from the state and the society, we consider ourselves as deprived. For example, the government is obliged to provide us with our right to proper housing, right to free movement, right to education, right to law and justice and lot of others to follow. Most poor people do not have any access to these rights. However, they accept all these because they have no alternative.

If I could manage or if the government could sanction some money for me, then I think I would have been able to break free from this condition by starting a business at my village home. I have seen many people who became better off in this way but I do not know their names.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I really enjoyed this new method and the conversation with you. No one ever talked to me like this. I feel grateful to have been able to share and express my inner feelings with you.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I am confident that I have made people understand this method.

Interview 2.10

Nature and causes of poverty

I not only consider myself as poor but as a very helpless person as well. Though I am educated, I cannot amble in this society with my head held high. I have passed SSC (Secondary School Certificate). However, I could not utilise my life to its fullest extent. My life has been affected by my trait of being obstinate from my boyhood. I never bowed my head to any injustice. I was unemployed for a long time during which I did much harm to my father. All of a sudden, I came to Dhaka. I secured a job in the bank by convincing a person known to me. I became unemployed again as I lost the job after three months. Afterwards, I had to struggle hard to get a temporary job in an insurance company. It was mentioned in the terms and condition that my service will be permanent if I can bring nine clients for the insurance company. After bringing four people, I could not manage any more due to which the company did not pay my salary. In fact, the poor do not have any importance in this world. There is nothing to be expected and gained. The main cause of my being poor is education. The intense dearth in our country is subject to lack of education.

The reason of being poor

I regard my obstinacy mostly responsible for my being poor because I was never defeated to my stubbornness. Therefore, I mostly regard it responsible.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am not just a citizen but one of the conscious citizens of Bangladesh also. This is because I understand everything well. Actually as our society is not upright, the government cannot remain fair. Though we are the citizens of this country, we are being deprived of our basic rights.

Could I have lived in this locality for such a long time if I did not have fair relationship with the people of all sections of the city? I have been living here for about 25 years. We have only contributed to the society but have not obtained anything in return. We have absolutely one relation with the rich and that is they are rich and we are poor or neglected people of the society.

By other class, I mean those who are the shopkeepers of our area. Our relationship with them is good as well. They look after us during our happiness and sorrows. I can assume that they also treat others like us.

We are poor. We have no money, no strength. They (the rich) have money and power. Then it is implied that there is much difference between them and us in respect of power structure.

We have to accept this situation because we are poor. What else can we do but to accept this? It requires money to break free from this situation but we have no money. Then how can we breakaway from this situation?

In terms of health and education, I am much conscious. These rights are not ensured. However, we have been observing that now the government is providing education at free of cost. We are poor. What is the use of our health and what will we get? When we go to the hospital, we never get proper treatment facility.

Rather than conferring, our right to proper housing the government takes away more from us. For example, if we receive five thousand taka as loan from the government and fail to repay the money the government would take away the small land that we possess. However, the government does not consider it as problem if the rich have loans over millions of taka. Everything is quite acceptable when it comes to the rich. What is the use if I remain conscious? In fact, I have no right.

We live in a polluted area due to which the water that we drink is also tainted. I understand what sewerage is. But we do not get any right to become neat and clean.

I know what rights I can demand from the government. The government may give me ration for my livelihood. In spite of having these rights, I do not have access to any. What is the use of keeping information regarding everything if I get nothing? It is the duty of the government to ensure our rights. But the government only confirms the rights of the rich people of this country.

We the slum dwellers do not get any facility from the city corporation. We have no social, political and economic rights. Our expectations remain negated. The government is not providing us with any kind of facility. For this, we consider ourselves very vulnerable.

We have to purchase everything so we consider ourselves as deprived. All our hopes remain static. That also why I consider myself as deprived. I have many plans but there is no use in disclosing them.

I shall be able to get out of this situation by engaging myself in a work but not by the help of others. Please pray for me. I have seen many persons who came out of poverty but cannot name them.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

This method has not only impressed me but I would like to heartily welcome the chief of this project and pray for him. The way he wanted to raise the voices of the poor towards the mass of the country is very appreciable.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

People have easily understood the new method that had been used. I also consider myself fortunate because I have managed to make people understand.

Oral Testimony of Tejgaon Slum-dwellers

Interview 3.1

Nature and causes of poverty

It is true that I am poor. Allah has granted me six daughters but not a single son. I don't even have a small plot of land back home where I could have shelter. If I am evicted from here I cannot go back with my daughter to the village. My father was not a wealthy man. We just managed to live on bare minimum. My father used to deal in jute. Whatever he earned was spent on our family. We had some arable land but its yield was not sufficient for us. Father was the only earning member of the family. One day our jute stock was burnt by fire. All our jute was burnt as the fire service was far away and the fire trucks did not arrive in time. We were in grave difficulty then. My father borrowed money and started his business again. After three years, my father was robbed of all his money. He went insane from the shock. We did not have the money for his medical treatment. We had to sell all our land to repay his loans. We were very young then, without a single earning family member. We had to survive on whatever help we received

from our maternal grandfather. My mother used the remaining money from our land sale for the treatment of father. He recuperated after the treatment. He borrowed money and started his business again. We were scraping by. But danger befell us again. Father died in an accident while he was returning from Narayanganj after selling jute. From then on, we became genuinely poor. Causes of our poverty- razing of our jute stockpile, robbing of father and his death.

Relationship between state and citizen

I was born in Bangladesh and I cast votes. So, I am a citizen of this country. Society does not appreciate us slum dwellers. They don't consider us to be human beings. I work rigorously in the garments factory but I don't get my wage on time. We don't even have the appreciation as received by the pet dogs of the wealthy people. The owner of the garments factory is younger than my brother, but he does not show me minimum of respect. The people who are above us but beneath the wealthy class are called the middle class. Even they cannot stand us. We are in no way comparable to the rich people. They live in big houses and we live in slums adjacent to the rail road. We can be evicted anytime because we are living on land owned by the government. On the other hand, the wealthy people have bought the land they live on. Even the money we earn with our blood and sweat is not straightforwardly disbursed by the owner. We are supposed to receive our wage as soon as we have finished our work. But he does not pay us even after 7/8 days have passed. He calls us dirty names when we ask for our wage. If we insist forcibly, his pet thugs beat us mercilessly. There are many spoilt brats in our slum who extort money from people. No one can protest against them because that would invariably lead to their forced expulsion from the slum. I don't want to submit to this condition. If the police help us, and the wealthy pay us our fair wage, then I think we can overcome this situation.

I know that we have certain rights granted by the government but we can't exercise those. Only the wealthy can exercise their rights. We have the right to food, clothes, shelter, education, health care etc. but these are our right only in name. They don't carry any value. We don't have any government school near to this slum. The only school that we have was of 'Proshika' but that has been closed by the influential people of the vicinity.

We don't even have legal rights. Some time ago the police arrested my brother. They also took away the son of a powerful man. I had to pay money to free my brother, but the other boy did not have to pay. Housing is our basic right. But the government tore our slum down instead of giving us land to live on. We submitted a petition for not demolishing our slum, but it was ignored.

Our slum does not have any place for garbage disposal. Even then, garbage from outside is disposed in our slum. Government was supposed to build a sanitary latrine, but it didn't. We are supposed to be provided employment, but they limit our employment opportunities instead. My cousin used to work in Adamjee Jute Mill. Government shut it down. My cousin became very vulnerable. They say, both the sexes have equal rights but reality is different. If a man has a salary of 2000 taka then a woman receives only 1200/1300 taka.

We have the right to build relationship with people outside this slum but we fail to do so. They consider us beneath them. Rights are inter-related. Government is obligated to grant us our entitlements but we can't exercise those because of the influential people.

We have a lot of expectations from the City Corporation, but those are not fulfilled. Our slum is used as a place for garbage dumping. We cannot stand the stench. We have formed a group and went to the commissioner for stopping this garbage disposal. But it was fruitless. Mosquitoes are spawned in garbage. The previous commissioner used to sprinkle insecticide. but the present commissioner has stopped that. Our children suffer from mosquito bites and various diseases because of it.

Some people conduct illegal businesses in our slum, which is inconvenient for us. Because of them the police come to our slum and harass us. We requested the commissioner to talk to

the *thana*¹⁰ so that they stop harassing us. But he did not help us in this regard. We have to suffer during the rainy season. We don't have access to water or electricity. City Corporation is responsible for providing these. But they don't. We have stopped demanding for these because it has been proved to be futile. We don't pay the City Corporation or the state. They don't help us.

I think I have been denied by the society and the government. They don't give us any privileges. The society has always overlooked us. The state does not grant us the rights it is supposed to. I could not send my children to school because there is no school in the vicinity. We don't get medical treatment. I took my sick wife to Tejgaon health complex. I bought a five taka ticket but the doctor did not meet and treat my wife. He was busy otherwise. I went there thrice and returned. The doctor was engaged in looking at the reports of his patients from private practice.

I have succumbed to this state of affairs. I don't have any way of overcoming this situation. I will never be able to go beyond this state.

I have to spend more money than I earn. So, how am I supposed to be liberated from this situation? The family is dependent on my sole earning. I have no other means of income. If the government helped me with some money for business and some land to build a house then I could have earned from business and house rent. I don't want to prosper like the people who have done so from this slum.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Talking with you for so long has been a loss for me. If I had been working instead of talking with you, I would have earned some money. But on the other hand, it was good, because I could voice my sorrows. No one wants to hear the story of our suffering. You are the first who wanted to hear it. So, I feel happy.

Interview 3.2

Nature and causes of poverty

Why do I live in a slum if I am not poor? I am poor because if I have a meal then I have to skip the next. My father was not economically well-off. He was a day labourer. I had three brothers and two sisters. Then there was a depression. My father was sick during that period. I was the only one who worked then. We had no land except for the one on which we lived. We had to sell our ancestral home to bear the expenses of father's medical treatment. We came to Dhaka then. We became poorer after arriving here. I think my father's illness is the main cause of our poverty.

Relationship between state and citizen

They took my name for population census. Since then I am a citizen of Bangladesh. But we are citizens only in name, not in any other way. In the society, the slum dwellers are not considered to be human beings. The wealthy don't consider us to have human qualities. They may be right, as we are not educated, and we don't have money in the bank. We don't have industries, job or money. They live in buildings; we live near the railroad in shacks made from gunny bags. The slum dwellers pull rickshaws and vans, some work as day labourers, some others work as handy men. We are in no way equal to the wealthy people. The wealthy can assign us tasks, but they pay us much less than what is just. After toiling a whole day, we only get 80/85 taka from them. But one can earn 200/250 taka a day by pulling a rickshaw. If we protest against unjust wages, they say that we were born to serve them. When we pull rickshaws, boys no older than our

¹⁰ Police station

children address us as 'Tui'¹¹. They can afford to do so because they have money and power. We have to tolerate this rude behaviour. Every month some influential people come to extort money from us. If we don't pay them they would beat us and drive us out of the slum. We have to keep aside some money for them, whether we have enough to buy our bread or not. We want to be free from their harassment. We need government's help for that. If the government strengthens its law enforcement then I think we could be free from this pestering.

Do we slum dwellers really have any rights? If we had, then we would be able to exercise those. Our rights are on paper only. I don't know much about the rights. I only know a little. We have some fundamental rights. What is the use of knowing about those rights? Those are not granted to us. We have no scope for sending our children to school. If we really want our children to study, we find out that it is impossible for us to bear the expenses. We don't have a single school in our slum. We could have sent our children if there were. We have no health care provisions. If we go to government hospitals, the doctors are not available. If they are available, they are otherwise engaged. If we take anyone for treatment there, they neglect us. But if wealthy people go there for check-up, they are treated well, only because they have pocket full of money.

Sometimes the police come to the slum and arrest even the decent boys. It costs a lot to free them. But if they have arrested sons of the wealthy and the powerful, only a telephone call is enough to free them.

So tell me, where are our rights? We have the right to free speech. But we cannot talk anywhere. If we try to talk with the wealthy people, they consider us beneath them. The same is true for law enforcement and health care. Having a shelter is our right. But we have to live in shacks made out of gunny bags and paper. Even after that we have to pay forced contribution. The police comes and tears down our shacks for money.

I am not much informed about the state of affairs. I hear that both sexes have equal rights. But the women are not having equal rights. They are humiliated openly. We want to have good relationship with everyone, but the rich don't. The government is obligated to grant us our rights. But some powerful people obstruct that. Government grants for us, but they are the ones who avail those. Justice will be served by Allah one day.

We have many demands from the City Corporation. Insisting is fruitless, so we have stopped demanding. We went to our commissioner to request him for water and dustbin in our slum. He promised that water and electricity services will be made available but he has not fulfilled his commitment. When the order for tearing down our slum was sanctioned, we went to the commissioner. He said that it does not fall within his jurisdiction. So we had a meeting with the minister, ministry of land. He listened to us and assured us that our slum will not be torn down. He even visited our slum and noted down all our names. Two months after that the election was held. A new minister was in place. We went to meet the new minister. But we did not receive the permission to meet him. We don't receive any assistance from either the City Corporation or the government. We don't pay anything to the City Corporation or the state.

We think that we have been denied of our rights by the state, society and City Corporation because we don't get our dues. There are some people in the society who take from us but don't give us anything in return. So, I think I am denied. I am forced to comply with this situation, because if I don't, it will lead to dire consequences. We slum dwellers want to be free from this condition. We can only be free if the government helps us.

I think if our children were provided the opportunity to pursue their studies, they would succeed in triumphing over this situation. They can be employed and support us. The government could give us some business capital. Then we could prosper. Many people have prospered and left our slum. I don't want prosperity of their kind. They sell phensidil, ganja,

¹¹ A disrespectful mode of addressing.

liquor etc. I would rather starve. But I don't want to ruin the youth who are our future. I cannot bring myself to deceive the nation like that.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

It felt good talking to you at length. We are slum dwellers. No one speaks to us for so long. I could get some weight off my chest talking to you. I have kept all those sorrow hidden inside me for a long time.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

It was a nice experience working in this new method. Not as a field worker, as a slum dweller I think no one listens to our heart's content. We field workers can listen to them using this new method. They don't want to open up easily. They are always frightened when the slum would be torn down again. Some people don't want to spend so much time because they have to work. This method is quite time consuming. It would have been better if it took a little less time.

Interview 3.3

Nature and causes of poverty

If I weren't poor, would I have lived in a slum? I can't express in words how poor I am. I am the only earning member of the family. Two of my sons have gotten married and left us. They neither look after us nor give us any money. My wife and I are somehow passing our days with our youngest son. I am trying to bring him up well. He is studying in class seven in a Madrasa. We are counting on him.

My father had no assets. Whatever little he owned we had to sell because he fell sick. We don't even have an ancestral home back in our village. When father fell ill, we were very young. When father died we had to struggle very hard. Then a man advised us to go to Dhaka. We came to Dhaka during the famine of 1974. We had come after we had nothing to eat for three days. Since then we have been living in this slum. My younger brother fell ill after coming to Dhaka. It also cost us a lot. Then he died. His wife stayed with us with their two children. After three years she also died. I became totally distressed after that. I don't mind telling you. It is difficult to maintain my family, let alone additional members. Can you imagine what those days were like? The family is dependent on my earnings only.

My father's death and subsequent deaths of my brother and his wife- I consider these events to be the cause of my poverty.

Relationship between state and citizen

I took birth in Bangladesh, my name is enlisted in the population census and I am a voter. So, I consider myself a citizen of Bangladesh. I know we are members of the society, but we bear no value to the society. We live in slums and that is considered to be a shortcoming. The rich people who live near the slum do not consider us to be human beings. They cannot stand us. We want to live in harmony with them but they don't want it. They take us home for performing chores but they don't pay us justly. They pay 50 taka for what others would pay hundred. Even after that we want to live peacefully with them. I live in a slum and they in huge buildings. So, we are not equal in any way. I consider them to be much above us. Only those who live in slums live congenially together.

Now a days we have to pay illegal tolls, which is a recent occurrence. Some bad boys come and collect from us. Some days ago they came and told me that if I want to stay in the slum I will have to pay them. Otherwise I will have to leave. I had to pay them. What else could I do? Even after that, they harass us in various ways. Sometimes they make us do their work but they don't pay us. They call us names when we demand our wage. We want government's

support to overcome this harassment. Only government can save us. If the government enforces law properly, the situation will better.

Even if we know our rights, we don't get those. What is the use of talking about right to education and right to justice- these are not available for us. Let me tell you about right to housing, we have made these shacks for ourselves, which can be torn down anytime.

I have studied a little so I know a little about many things. I know that there is vitamin in vegetables. We could send our children to study if there were a school in this slum. It would be nice if we had access to medicines. There is no sanitary latrine here. People would have suffered less from diseases if there were a latrine. A dustbin is necessary for cleanliness and hygiene. These are my rights, but do I get those? We are supposed to get jobs so that we can live, but we don't get it. If a factory were built here it would have provided employment for us and we could have lived a better life. All these are our rights.

I try to be informed about what is the state of affairs in the country. I know that some rice was distributed in our slum. We also know that the government took initiative for demolishing this slum. My dear, I know about rights but what's the use? Government does not grant us rights. We cannot even talk freely with the people around us as they look down on us. We have to pay illegal tolls in this slum. We went to the thana to complain about it, but nothing has changed. I believe all the rights are inter-related. In addition to right to health and education, I know that both sexes have equal rights. For example, a woman should draw the same salary as a man. Government is supposed to ensure these, but it doesn't.

We have many expectations from City Corporation, which remain unfulfilled. We don't have water in our slum. We requested the commissioner for it many times. Instead of taking it into consideration he just shooed us away. We requested for a *Moktab*¹² in the slum so that our children could at least study the Koran.

We don't receive any facilities from the government. Instead of a *Moktab* for us, a club for the children of wealthy people was built. Many people dump their garbage beside our slum which causes unbearable stench. We have gone to the commissioner many times for stopping this, but he says that there is no other place for garbage disposal. We don't pay the government or City Corporation because they have never asked for it. We wanted to pay for the water services in the slum. The commissioner said that the service would be provided without any money, but that is yet to happen. We have stopped going to the commissioner because it is fruitless. Now we have left everything to Allah to see what He does for us! Since our arrival in Dhaka, we haven't received anything from the government and the commissioner.

I consider myself to be denied, as I have not received anything from government, City Corporation or society. We expected a school and hospital from the government for this slum but that has not been realized.

We expected a lot of things from the City Corporation, like water supply, electricity, dustbin for cleanliness etc. The police arrested many harmless boys from this slum. We have gone to the commissioner for turning them free but instead of helping us he insults us. This is another reason why I feel denied. I am not submitting myself to this situation, but what else to do? Only Allah can rescue us from this danger.

If water and electricity services were provided and law was properly enforced then may be we could have found a way out of this situation. What is the use of saying this? Can you show us a way out? If a school was established in this slum we could send our children to study. Then they might have good jobs and we could rise above poverty.

A school in the slum, improvement of law and order situation and a house for me could free me from my poverty.

A person has become rich from this slum. I don't want to be like him because he adopted dishonest means for earning his wealth. I pray to Allah to keep me honest for the rest of my life.

¹² A school for Islamic instructions

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Many people have come before and written down what I had to say. But none of them was so patient. I feel better now that I have told you about my tribulations. Even after spending so much time, I have liked what you had to say. No one has heard my tale of misery like you since my arrival in this slum.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

The man was not willing at first to give interview because it would consume too much time. I had to convince him. I did not face problems employing this method. I could take the answers through chatting.

Interview 3.4

Nature and causes of poverty

Why do I live in a slum if I am not poor? I am a landless person. I have no land of my own. We possessed some land during my father's time. He gave a lot of money to a recruiting agent who promised to send me abroad. He took the money and fled. My younger brother had a business which incurred heavy losses. We got involved in lawsuits concerning our land. That also cost us heavily. My grandfather fell sick and the treatment was expensive. Thus we gradually became poor.

Causes of my poverty are- recruiting agent who fled with our money, my brother's loss in business and my grandfather's illness.

Relationship between state and citizen

I was born in Bangladesh and I am voter. So I am a citizen. Slum dwellers have no position in the society. We take the goods of the rich people to their houses or shops. Then we have to carry those up. They don't want to pay us. They never tell us that you have worked so hard, now take some rest. We are poor so they treat us poorly. Those who are above us but not rich, are called the middle class. They can stand us. We are in no way in the same class as the rich people. They live in big building and I live in a slum beside the railroad. They can evict us anytime. But they cannot be evicted before the judgment day. Sometimes they beat us when we try to talk to them.

Some unscrupulous youth collect illegal tolls from us. No one can protest against them. If anyone does, then he will have to leave the slum. So everyone keeps silent. This is an unacceptable situation. But we have to comply. Otherwise we will have to leave. Where will we go with our children? I don't see any way out of this situation.

Do the poor really have any rights? They only know how to give, not to demand. I know we have rights. But those are not granted. The government does not give us our entitlements. Instead, those go to the rich. For example, we have the right to education. But there is no government school nearby. Only private schools are there. I don't earn enough to send my children to that school. It costs 800/900 taka per month to send a child to those schools. So, how will my children study? There are many others like me in this slum who don't know where the next meal will come from. We can hardly bear our living costs, so how can we send our children to study? The government is supposed to establish more schools but it does not. We are supposed to be allotted *khas*¹³ land, but those to the relatives of ministers. We are supposed to get land in Savar through lottery, but we are not getting those. The wealthy people are enjoying those land in our name. It holds true for health care. Once I had an accident and got admitted in

¹³ Belonging to government

Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They charged almost four thousand taka from me. In addition to that, I had to buy medicines from outside. So what type of government hospital is that? Government is supposed to give us jobs. But they don't do it. In lieu of that, they are restricting the roads where we pulled our vans. My uncle used to work in the government mill in Kishorganj. That mill has been shut down. Now my uncle has become a rickshaw van puller in Dhaka.

I try to be informed about whatever is going on in the country. I watch news on television. Government has granted equal rights for both sexes. But women cannot exercise equal rights. A man can spend the whole night outside his home, but a woman cannot. It is not safe for her. A man can have more than one wife. But a woman cannot have more than one husband.

We slum dwellers are hardly human beings. Not everyone knows about the rights that we have. What is the use of their knowing? The rich don't want anything to do with us just because we are slum dwellers. All our rights have inter-relations. For example, food is related with clothing, education with health etc. Government is obligated to fulfil our rights and they try to, but we miss out because of some powerful men.

We expect many things from the City Corporation which we don't get. They only come to us during the canvassing period and promise that they would improve the condition of the slum. But they forget it afterwards. We don't have electricity, water; we don't even have drainage system, which will drain away rainwater. We don't even have a dustbin. All these are responsibilities of City Corporation. But they don't even glance at our slum. We met the commissioner many times. We have stopped going because he does not do anything for us. We have lived here for long but neither the government nor the City Corporation has helped us. We have not paid them anything and they have done nothing in return.

I think I have been deprived by the state and the society. The state does not provide us what it is committed to. We don't have a government school nearby. We have no provision for health care. So we are being deprived of everything. I have resigned myself to the current situation and kept faith in Allah for redemption.

I don't think I will ever prosper. I live from hand to mouth. I cannot save any money. I think if I did not have to pay rent, then I could have saved and prospered. If the government granted us land then I could have made a house and lived there. I could even earn from rent. Thus I could have become free from my poverty. As far as I know, no one from this slum could triumph over poverty.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have enjoyed talking to you for so long. No one has talked with me for 4/5 hours. Many people have come and noted down my name but you have noted down the story of my life.

Interview 3.5

Nature and causes of poverty

Yes, I am poor. Would I be working as a minti¹⁴ in Kawran Bazar and slept beside the railroad if I were not poor? Everyone calls me 'minti' even though I have a name. If I had a lot of money I would not be carrying loads, and no one would be able to call me 'minti'. Everyone is God's creation so why there is so much inequality? My father had 40/45 bighas of land. We had a shed full of cows. Those are things of the past. It is not a good habit to boast of wealth. When I was a student of class five my father was diagnosed with cancer. At that time there wasn't any treatment for cancer, but my brother tried very hard to cure my father. We did not have cash at hand at the time of father's sickness. We had to sell off our land. We had to sell most of our

¹⁴ Porter

assets but we could not save him. Our family life was in turmoil after his death. Our land was given out to *bargadars*¹⁵. But they were cheating us by giving us much less than our dues. It continued for 6/7 years. Then my mother fell sick. We had to sell more of our assets for expensive treatment. Fortunately, she recovered from her sickness. The river Brahmaputra flows by our village. We lost some of our land to river erosion. I became sick after my marriage. Our ancestral home had to be sold for bearing the expenses of my treatment. From then on, I have remained to be poor.

I hold our consecutive sickness (father, mother and me) and river erosion responsible for my poverty.

Relationship between state and citizen

According to my understanding, I vote and that makes me a citizen. I have no identity in the society. I have been excluded from the society. Society does not assign value to the poor. The wealthy people in the society cannot stand us. We can't claim ourselves to be human beings even after taking birth as humans. Those who live in large buildings and have bank full of money are the human beings. Unlike us, they have identities in society. We cannot measure up to the rich. They only make us do their work. But they don't want to understand that we deserve payment for our hard work. I carry heavy loads on my head. They pay me 5/6 taka after I have carried weight for a mile. But if he had taken a rickshaw it would have cost him 10 taka. They don't even treat us well. This is their nature. They have both money and power and we have neither. We live beside the railroad, but even then we have to pay illegal tolls. If we don't pay, we will be forced to leave. Every month some powerful people come to collect the tolls. There are some illegal businesses running in this slum but we cannot protest against those. But if they get caught they say that we have informed the police and claim money from us in that regard.

I don't want to yield to this situation. But we have to submit or else we won't be able to live here. We can only overcome this situation if the government helps us.

Do we really have rights? If we had we could exercise those. Our right is only on paper, not in practice. I know a little about the rights. We are citizens of Bangladesh. So, we have some fundamental rights. Food, clothing, shelter, education, health- these are our basic rights. But these are for the wealthy people. We are living beside the railroad without causing the government any inconvenience. But we have to pay the police. Government is supposed to allot land for the landless. But we don't have access to that. Instead of allotting us land, it is given to those rich people who are on good terms with the ministers. We have no water, sanitary latrine or dustbin in the slum. Government does not care about that. They are concerned about how to demolish our slum. Instead of providing us employment they restrict our opportunities. After restricting access to some roads the rickshaw-pullers' income has dwindled.

I heard that government has granted equal rights to both the sexes. But why should the women get equal rights? According to Islam, women should be behind veils, playing their roles as mothers and sisters. They should cook inside the house and be grateful to Allah. We have the right to establish relationship with people outside the slum. But they don't want to have relationships with us. We are not deemed to be human beings in their eyes. The rights that we are entitled to are inter-related. For example food and health care are related. Government is obligated to fulfil these rights.

I have nothing to ask from the City Corporation. I have gone to the commissioner with various problems at different times. It serves no purposes. The police beat us because of the illegal businesses in the slum. We went to the commissioner regarding this but he remained inactive. He has taken money from us to make provision for electricity service in the slum. But that is yet to happen. We have stopped these fruitless visits to him. We have received nothing but negligence and harassment from the City Corporation.

¹⁵ Sharecroppers.

I consider myself to be deprived by the state and society. The state does not fulfil our rights. None of the rights like education, health, housing, clothing, law and order are realized. The society looks down on us. Schools, colleges and hospitals are primarily for the rich people. After going to the government hospital, the doctor remains unavailable even after buying a five taka ticket. They treat patients from private practice and examine their reports while they are in the hospital. They don't pay us any attention but stands to attention when there is a rich patient.

I was a patient in Mahakhali cholera hospital for three days. I didn't see the doctor once during that period. Nurses came and prescribed medicines which I had to buy from outside. I don't see any way out of this situation.

If the government allotted some land to slum dwellers, then we could have prospered. I could have been free from poverty if I could exercise my rights. As far as I know, no one from this slum became free from poverty adopting honest means. Those who have overcome their poverty have done so through illegal business. I don't want to be rich by those means. I hope Allah will give me the strength to remain honest.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Talking with you for so long has been a pleasant experience for me. No one chats with us slum dwellers for so long. No one either speaks or notes down like you taking such care and time.

Interview 3.6

Nature and causes of poverty

Would I have begged living in a slum if I were not poor? I am even poorer than the others. Others have someone else in the family to earn, but I am on my own. I come from the Rangpur sadar thana. My father had almost 40 bighas of land. My family consisted of my two brothers, my parents and me. At that time girls were not allowed to go to school. So I did not learn how to read and write. When I was 14/15 years old I was married to my cousin. My husband's family was even better off than my own. He had three brothers and two sisters. My father-in-law died four years after my marriage. My mother-in-law died one year after that. He suffered from TB (tuberculosis) for three and half years. At that time its treatment was not available. My mother-in-law was also infected. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ th of all our land had to be sold off for their treatment. Then all the land was distributed among his successors. My husband got 4 bighas of land in his share. We hardly managed to live off that. My husband used to gamble. He had to sell two bighas due to his heavy losses at the game. Then he fell ill and we had to sell the remaining two bighas. But he could not be saved. He died and I had to go back to my parents. My father also passed away. Then I came over to Dhaka.

Causes of my poverty- husband's death, having no children and illness and subsequent death of both my in-laws. These three I consider to be the main causes.

Relationship between state and citizen

I don't know about citizenship. I just cast votes during the elections. Do we really have a society? I earn my bread by begging. If I don't receive any alms I have to forsake my meal. I am a common beggar. Do I have any worth? If I visit ten houses I receive alms from one. If I push the calling bell they call me names and ask whether I won't let them sleep in peace. At times like this I have to escape with my life.

The rich people live in buildings and we live in this slum. How can we have relations with them? There are some leaders among the wealthy people who live beside the slum. Sometimes they visit our slum. They say that government would give us many things, in return for which we have to pay them 100 taka for each shack. They beat us if we refuse to give them money. So we are forced to pay. Without paying them we won't be able to live here. Some slum dwellers work

on their behalf. They also get money from them. All of them do illegal businesses. They are powerful but we are not. They have money and we don't that is the difference between the rich people and the slum dwellers. We wanted to form a cooperative society in the slum but we could not do it because of the rich people. It requires power and money to become a member of the society. Without money and power you cannot be a member of the society. If we don't comply with the wishes of the rich and the powerful we won't be able to live here. Only government can free us from this state. We could live in peace if the government ordered the police to arrest them. What can we say about the rich; only some sympathy and compassion from them can save us from this torment.

Do we really have rights? The poor don't have any rights. If we had, then we would have received what we are entitled to. Our right is only in name, not in practice. For example, education, health, law and order, free speech, housing- these are our rights. But we are not getting these. Do you know why? Because we don't have money. There is no school in this slum. Poor children could have studied there. We don't have health care facilities, law and order is almost non-existent. These are our rights, but which have remained unfulfilled. We have no scope for employment. If we were employed in good jobs, we could be free from poverty. An equal right of both sexes is not practiced. When I was at my prime I would receive 50/60 taka for the same work a man would do and earn 100 taka. Men can exploit us in any way they want. They can marry 2/3 times. Why can't we keep more than one husband? Can you answer my question? I know you can't.

We have the right to speak freely but we cannot talk with the rich. Education and health care are related, as are free speech and law and order. Government is duty bound to provide us these. But we are not getting these because of some powerful and upper class people. They devour everything.

We have many demands from the City Corporation. But what is the use? We don't get anything. I have gone to the commissioner many times. He has not even given me a cloth. We have neither electricity nor water. We went to the commissioner for these. He said he would look into it, but he hasn't. We suffer a lot during rainy season because we don't have a drain. We went to him to demand for justice when the president of our cooperative society was severely beaten. He said that justice would be served. But it did not materialize. We have stopped going to the commissioner because of its futility. We have paid many times for electricity and water services but nothing happened. I have lived here for a long time, but I have received nothing from the government or the City Corporation. Many of the slum dwellers are not enlisted in the voter list. They went to the commissioner but they were not enlisted because the commissioner thought that they would not vote for him.

I am not getting the services I am entitled to. Society, state and City Corporation overlook our needs and us. We don't have the right to free speech. We can neither communicate with the rich people nor socialize with them. The powerful torture us for money. We don't want to submit to that but we have no other options. Only government can free us from this unbearable situation.

I am in old age now. I will not live long. I think, a school and hospital could be very useful to other slum dwellers. I don't want anything for myself. I just have one request to the government; it should ensure the rights of the slum dwellers. I wish it would lend business capital to us. Then I think people would prosper. I don't want every one to become rich through illegal means like the previous residents of this slum.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

At first I did not like it. Many people collect our names but it does not bring any benefit. Now I am talking to you in the hope that it would benefit us in some way. I don't have any one to call my own. So talking with you was an enjoyable experience.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I like it. First I was a little uncomfortable though. We did not face any problems using this method. The slum dwellers easily understood the questions and answered accordingly.

Interview 3.7

Nature and causes of poverty

Why do I live in a slum and work in a garments factory if I am not poor? My father was a simple man living in the village. My family consisted of me, my brother-in-law, two brothers and my parents. My father died when I was a student of class eight. We fell into hard times after his death. My mother got me married in the neighbouring village. My in-laws were not financially well off. I was passing my days in harmony with others. Four years passed and my husband married again. They forced me out along with my children. I then came back to my father's house. But they are struggling to earn their livelihood. My brothers were too young to work. So I came to Dhaka. I have been living in this slum for seven years now. My husband sent me my *talaknama*¹⁶ after my arrival in Dhaka. Thus, I was gradually impoverished.

The main reasons behind my poverty- my husband's second marriage and my father's death.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a citizen of Bangladesh because I was born here and I am a voter. We don't have a society. Our only identity is that we are slum dwellers. But there are some rich people who have understanding of our plight. We in no way measure up to the rich people. They live in buildings and we live in slums.

There are some leaders whose only concern is extracting money from us. They commit that they will make arrangements for electricity and water and collect money from us. There are some spoilt youth in the slum who are always coercing money from us. We have to pay them illegal tolls every month. They threaten us that we will have to leave if we don't pay them. We want to be free from this difficulty. Only government can free us.

We have some rights, which are unfulfilled by the government. Those are education, health, free speech, shelter, law and order, food, clothing and equal rights of men and women. But these are not seen in practice. A man can get married thrice but a woman cannot marry more than once. A woman is paid 50/60 for a whole days work as opposed to a man's wage of 100 taka. Does this imply equal rights?

I have been living here for quite long but none of the rights has been realized. Right to law and order actually goes against us. Policemen come everyday and beat us. They even assist the illegal toll collectors. Government assistance just goes to some rich people.

We are supposed to have right to free speech, which is not reflected in reality. The wealthy people just turn around when we try to speak to them. They consider us unworthy of their company. I work in a garments factory. They fire us at will, which is contrary to the Constitution. There is clear law that there must be a severance pay equivalent to three months' salary. So our rights are not in practice. Neither medicine nor doctor is available when we go to the hospitals. I went to hospital and bought a five taka ticket. The doctor hardly paid any attention to what I had to say. So, how can we say that we have the right to health care? Only those with pocketful of money have entitlements. Not us slum dwellers. I don't blame the government for this. I only blame my kismet. I have been deprived from everything because I took birth in a poor family.

¹⁶ Letter of divorce

Rights are inter-related. Food and clothes are related to education. I think government has made provisions for us, but we are being deprived by some people. We don't have water, sanitary latrine and dustbin in this slum. Access to these would have made life easier. Now we have to bring water from afar. Our children suffer from various diseases because of lack of cleanliness. We would not be in such state if the government paid attention to us.

We expect a lot from the City Corporation but which remain unfulfilled. We don't have water, electricity, school, and hospital in our slum. We have met the commissioner many times and we have even contributed money. But we are yet to have access to these. They come to us prior to election and tell us that they understand our plight. All of us went together to the commissioner and reminded him that, 'you promised electricity and water services when you get elected. Now that you have become elected please take steps for fulfilling your commitment'. He said that everyone makes commitments in order to get elected. He told us to go to government offices, which are responsible for these services. He said that they would provide us these services upon payment of small fees. We have not paid anything to the government and got nothing in return. But we have made payments to the City Corporation for water and electricity but it was fruitless.

Of course I consider myself deprived. Should I consider myself privileged? We have received nothing but trouble from the government. No school for our children. No right to free speech. People come and collect illegal tolls but the law enforcing bodies keep silent. Rights, services-, these are words only, without any practical value. Thana does not file our complaints. Commissioner does not listen to us. Women do not get the same rights as men when they go to work. These are the reasons why I consider myself deprived.

I simply cannot surrender to this situation. I want to triumph over it. But it is futile. Only government can free us, and Allah. If Allah creates sympathy, kindness and compassion in the hearts of people then may be we can be free from this sorry state.

I think if we can properly exercise the rights that we have then we won't remain poor anymore. For example, if we get the chance to send our children to school then they would grow up and get good jobs. Then our poverty will be reduced. If the slum dwellers were provided with some business capital by the government then they could become rich. Many people from our slum have become rich but they had to adopt unfair means. Their wealth disgusts me.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I enjoyed talking with you. I have never spoken like this before. Many have come before you but I have not shared so much with them.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I am happy to know of this new method. I have collecting enjoying information from slum dwellers through this method of chatting.

Interview 3.8

Nature and causes of poverty

Would I be living in a shack made of plastic bags if I were not poor? I can't sleep at night because of the noise caused by frequently passing trains. I have to struggle hard to survive. Very few others are as poor as me. If I have one meal, I have to skip the next.

My father was a poor man. He arranged for my marriage with a poor young man. My husband's income barely kept us alive. We had three children. Then my husband fell ill. I became totally distraught and started asking for assistance from door to door. I had to feed my children and buy my husband's medicine. It went on for one and half years. I had to sell off my husband's ancestral home to bear his medical expenses. He died afterwards. We left our village and came

to Dhaka. I secured a job in a garments factory and started to send my children to school. Then one of my sons became ill and it also led to financial crisis.

Causes for our poverty- my husband's death and my son's illness.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a citizen because I was born in Bangladesh and I am a registered voter. I know this much. Do we really have a society? No one speaks kindly to me because I am poor. I am a slum dweller and this is held against me. You won't see any of the wealthy people in the neighbourhood talking to me. We want to live a life of harmony with them but they don't seek it. They are always thinking up ways of evicting us. They complain that they cannot sleep because of the hue and cry caused by our children. Policemen come to us twice or thrice a day and ask us to leave. They even tear down our shacks. Still we are living here. We can stop them from coming for a few days if we pay them. But then they reappear again and harass us. Some influential people from around here also harass us. They threaten us and sometimes beat us for money. Once they get paid they go away, but only for a while. This is our life. What will be the use of your writing down our life's struggles? Can you rescue us? Can you save us from harassment? I know you can't. The influential people would continue tormenting us and do we have to stand it throughout our life? I don't accept it. We want to be free from this agony. We can overcome this situation if the government helps us.

I know we have rights, but the government does not fulfil those. We have no home. We live beside the railroad. There is no school where our children can go. There is no place for garbage disposal. We have no sanitary latrines. Children defecate at random places. We don't have any health care facility. We can't have treatment when we fall sick. We can hardly get our meals. Where will we get money for medicines? Does the government know that we slum dwellers also have rights? They would have done something if they knew of it. They could at least build a hospital for us.

I know that women and men have equal rights but that is not in practice. If a man earns 100 taka from working, a woman only gets 60/70 taka. So where is this equal rights?

We need many things for our subsistence. Shouldn't the government do things for us?

We know that we have the right to communicate with others from outside the slum. Even that right cannot be realized. We could have mingled with the rich people if they at least heard us. If the government made provisions for our subsistence then we would be saved.

We try to keep informed about various issues. Few days back polio vaccination took place in the slum. They would be distributing vitamin 'A' capsule today. Some medicine for hookworms is also supposed to be administered today. Sometimes I watch television. So, you could say I am fairly informed of the state of affairs.

We have many demands from the City Corporation- water, electricity, school etc. We have to bring water from far away and we have to pay 3 taka for taking a bath. We have to live in darkness because we don't have electricity. We have to use either candles or kerosene lamp. The children cannot study because there is no school. We cannot even sign our own names. So, we want our children to be able at least to sign their names. But that is not possible under the circumstances.

My son fell ill some days ago. I requested the commissioner to help me get credit from NGOs so that his medical treatment could be possible. But he did not help me. He did not see any valuable furniture in my shack, which could be used as collateral. Then I had to borrow from my neighbours for my son's treatment.

We slum dwellers went to the commissioner to request him for electricity. He said he would take steps but he hasn't. Now we don't go to him anymore, as it is fruitless. Government or the commissioner doesn't assist us in any way.

I feel deprived because the society or the government has never helped me. They never grant us any facilities. Rather they neglect us and harass us. We don't even have the basic

amenities here. We have no homes to call our own. We have to worry all the while because they can tear down our slum any time they want to. We have no hope. At night, darkness surrounds us. There is no light anywhere in the slum. We have to suffer without medication when we fall sick. We don't get medical treatment because we don't have money. We don't have job opportunities. It is very hard to get a job. Considering all this, I feel deprived. I have submitted to this condition because I have no other choices. Once I had hopes and aspirations. Now I only hope for a job, which is my sole means of subsistence.

If I received assistance from the government or the commissioner or if some NGO gave me some credit then I could work as a seamstress at home and sell clothes. Or I could buy my oldest son a rickshaw, which would also be a source of income. Another of my son could have a vegetable stall on the footpath, which would both have generated income and provided vegetables for my table also. I think I could thus become free from my poverty.

There are some people in this slum who are better off than me. Some are doing illegal businesses. They have earned a lot, built houses of their own and bought land. I don't want to earn in that way. I want to live on my honest income.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

You have asked a lot of questions. I enjoyed sharing with you our trials and tribulations.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

This is a good method. Initially they were having troubles understanding me, but after I have explained properly they have been able to respond as required.

Interview 3.9

Nature and causes of poverty

Yes, I think I am poor. I would have lived in a building if I were rich. I am a slum dweller because of my ill fate. Both my father and my husband were quite well off. We had to spend a lot of money when my father-in-law and my husband became ill. One misfortune after another drained all our resources. My son also fell ill and we had to sell our home for his treatment. We were stripped off all our resources. Then we left our village and came to Dhaka. We have been living in this slum for seven years. I am illiterate. My husband does not work regularly. He also has the habit of gambling. He is a rickshaw puller. My son does whatever is available.

Causes of my poverty- simultaneous illness of my father-in-law, husband and son; husband's irregular habit of working and gambling.

Relationship between state and citizen

I used to vote when I lived in my village. I have the right to vote. So I consider myself a citizen of this state. We are not on good terms with the upper class and middle class people. They look down on us because they have money, cars and big houses. But we don't have anything. We live from hand to mouth, so houses and cars are a far cry for us. We have to starve if we don't work even a day. My husband buys rice, oil and other things with his day's income. Then we start cooking. I have four sons and two daughters. My oldest son has gotten married and lives separately. The second oldest son does not work. All the other children are quite young.

The rich people in the city do not wish us well. They always hate and neglect us. They have both money and power. We have none. They can demolish our slum whenever they want to. So, we have submitted ourselves to fate.

We don't have a government hospital or medical facilities. We only have big clinics which only the rich can afford. We can't afford to spend so much for medical treatment. We can't earn so much money. We don't have any government school nearby. There is a school so far away

that small children cannot go there. They have no opportunity of studying. Those who are older can walk there. We have neither water nor electricity in our slum. We have to live in darkness. There is electricity in the neighbourhood where people in government and other services live but we are deprived from it. We have to light hurricane lamps when it is dusk. We don't have sanitary latrines. Children can defecate anywhere but we cannot. So, we have chipped in to build a latrine. We don't have any dustbin so we dispose of our garbage at will. We slum dwellers do not get any facilities from the government.

Even though we have rights, the government does not fulfil them. We don't have job opportunities. Both the sexes are not granted equal rights. We get to hear from those people who read newspapers that during flood many countries give us aid. But we never receive those. Those who receive it keep it for themselves and deprive us. We have the right to housing, education and healthcare. We hear variety of information but what is the use? There is no use. So, I don't feel the need to be well informed. I know that it is healthy to consume vegetables. But the vegetables are so expensive that those are beyond our reach. Things were not so expensive during the regime of the previous government. But the prices have shot up during this government's rule. So, I can't buy vegetables for my children. In fact I have to struggle to feed them enough rice.

I have never voted for the commissioner. We have not received anything from the City Corporation. Once many of us went to the commissioner to request him for water supply. He said that he would make provisions for it, although he did not keep his word. We had to make our own latrine with gunny bags. Government and the City Corporation did not do anything for us.

I feel that I have been deprived because we have not gotten anything from the state and the society. We don't have any provisions for electricity, water, gas or sewerage. We requested for water but it did not yield anything. We have to cook with firewood because we don't have gas. We are not protesting against this situation because there is nothing else that we can do. We are slum dwellers and we cannot do anything on our own. We are being denied our common needs. We could have made our exit from this situation if the government helped us.

It is not possible for my husband to earn enough for the whole family. If the government helped us by allotting us some land then we could have been better off.

They are much better off than we are because they have good jobs or businesses or shops. You can earn a lot if you have a shop of your own. You can live well and save too.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I like this new method. Many have come before, noted things down and promised that the slum would benefit from them. But nothing materialized. No aid arrived. Now you know how we live and earn. It would be nice if your write-up helped us in some way.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I did not have any problems working in this new method but I had to face a lot of questions. It's quite difficult to answer all their questions. I had to explain to them.

Interview 3.10

Nature and causes of poverty

It is true that I am poor. I am poorer than poor because everyone has a son except me. I only have a daughter. If I had a son he could earn. I am ill fated because my husband died when I was very young. My daughter was a baby then. My father was a day labourer. We had to struggle all the time because father was the sole earning member of the family. I had no brother. Like father, I also was not blessed with a son by Allah. My father got me married in a poor family from next village. My husband was also a day labourer. We had to live from hand to mouth. We

had to starve when my husband could not work for a day. Then he fell sick and our life came to a standstill. He had no asset except his homestead. I had to sell of that home to bear his medical expenses. We moved to his sisters' home. He died after living there for four years. My daughter became an orphan. After his death, we became even poorer.

Causes of poverty: husband's death, having no son and ancestral home.

Relationship between state and citizen

I don't know much about citizenship. All I know is that I am a citizen because I vote and I was born in this country.

Do we really have a society? The rich people don't consider us to be human beings. They don't talk to us kindly. We want to mingle with them but they don't want to. They don't want that we live here. They provoke the police and the police come and beat us. They go away after we pay them some money. Some influential people also come to extort money from us. If we don't pay up, they beat us and tell us to get away from here. We are being extorted constantly. We know that law and order is a right. But the police and the extortionists are abusing us continuously. As if, it is a sin to live in a slum. People are worthless if they don't have money. Money is like second God. If I had money then I could mingle with them. I don't have any worth just because I live in a slum. The rich and the powerful will continue abusing us and we will keep on being silent.

The government of Bangladesh is a government in name only. It does more harm than good to us. I don't want to stand this abuse. But what else can I do? Our government could save us from this mistreatments. If law was on our side then we could be relieved. I believe that if the government paid attention to us then we could be happy.

Do the poor really have rights? We are the laughing stock of everyone. Even then I know about our rights. Education, health, free speech, law and order, housing, vote- these are our rights. But what is the use of knowing all these? We cannot exercise these rights. All we are being handed out are negligence and abuse. We want to lead a meaningful life, but we are not being able to. We don't get work. They have promised many times that they would do many things for us but they haven't. We are entitled to having homes of our own but this is not being fulfilled. We have to live beside the railroad and we are extorted in various ways. So where are our rights? I took my husband to the government hospital but we had to buy all the medicine from outside.

Even the government harasses us because we are poor. We had a 'Proshika' school in the slum which has been torn down. So, don't our children have the right to education? Our rights are inscribed in our Constitution. But the question of our rights only surfaces during the election time. Then there are commitments of schools and water services. But after the election has taken place, these people simply disappear. Is this a meaningful life that we lead here? Many people were infected with diarrhoea last year. No one took notice of us then. Government is supposed to provide oral saline but that never arrived here. Our right is only in name, never in practice. I went to the government hospital to bring birth control pills for my daughter. They have told us to buy that from outside. If the government made a factory for us, then we could have earned more money and lived well. I think even though the government is obligated to fulfil our rights, it cannot, due to obstacles created by some powerful people.

We are poor people with a lot of demands, which are not fulfilled. We don't have water and electricity. If we meet the commissioner for this purpose, he shoos us away saying that we will get those. But he forgets us when we come back. We can't assert our demands because we are slum dwellers. Once he charged us 120 taka each promising that we would get a relief card. But he has not kept his word. They keep on sucking us dry and building houses and buying cars from the proceedings. We toil and sweat to earn and they enjoy their lives by extorting us. We have none but Allah to turn to. All we can hope for is that justice will be served by Him. They have not even given us a dustbin. Furthermore, the rich people dispose of their garbage in our

slum. Our children move amongst that garbage and suffer from diseases as a consequence. I have been living in this slum for thirty years but I am yet to receive any assistance from the government or City Corporation. Casting vote is our fundamental right but we cannot cast votes according to our own volition. There are some hooligans who tell us to vote for those who pay them more. If we don't vote according to their wish they threaten us to expel us from the slum. My oldest daughter is a voter but the second oldest is not, because she did not vote as per their wish. They beat her and forced her out of her shack. I could only pray to Allah for justice. We have not paid anything to the government, but we have paid the commissioner many times. But he has dished out nothing except negligence. From the government side, we have received beating by the police and harassment, nothing else.

I consider myself deprived by the state because we have received only abuse and negligence from it. I could not educate my daughters as I did not have money. Education is our right but not in practice. We cannot move around freely because of the rapidly declining law and order situation. We don't get medicines when we go to hospitals. We cannot speak with the rich people. When we try they just say how dare we slum dwellers try speaking with them and then drive us away. When we go to work we see men get paid 100 taka daily while women get only 50/60 taka. I heard that the government has passed the law that people of both the sexes have equal rights. Is this a demonstration of that?

I hate this situation with my heart and soul. Only the government can bring us out of this impasse. If the government properly enforces law, do not deprive us of our rights and let our children study, then I think we could overcome this situation. We could live a happy life if the rich people viewed us with kindness and stopped extorting us.

I think if the government provides the opportunities for educating my children and give me some capital for business, then we could be free from poverty. In a nutshell, if our rights are realized then we can become rich. Many people from our slum have become rich. I don't want to be rich adopting their dishonest means. I would rather starve than betray our nation by such businesses.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

It felt good talking to you. No one listens to our sorrow. I am feeling better after speaking to you. I don't know how you feel after talking for such a long duration but I feel well.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I did not face any inconvenience employing this method. I felt really happy that I could extract their heart's content.

Oral Testimony of Katashur Slum- Dwellers

Interview 4.1

Nature and causes of poverty

If one were happy or rich then would s/he live in a bamboo shed built over a swamp? We have to bear mosquito bites to live here. I live in this situation because I am poor.

There are reasons behind my becoming poor. My father was very rich. We had 80/90 kanis (measurement of land) of land in the village. I am the first-born of my father. I was very quick-tempered from my childhood. As everyone had a lot of affection for me, they used to tolerate me. No one ever tried to restrain me. I used to gossip with my friends from my childhood. After I had passed the S.S.C I took charge of my father's business. Then my parents had me married. I never cared for the business, rather had continued my old habit of gossiping with friends and coming back home late at night. My father used to yell at me whenever I was

late. One day my father isolated me. He gave me 20 kanis of land 80/90 munds of paddy. I had no relation with work. My wife used to cultivate the land by labourers and wage workers and I used to gamble with my friends. I sold more than half of my land for gambling. I could not run business for long. I had sustained a great loss as one of my boats loaded with fertiliser drowned in the river. Then selling the rest of my land, I managed money to go abroad but in vain. I could not go abroad because the manpower recruitment agent (*Adam Bapari*) escaped with all my money. From then on I became poor because of my habit of gambling, the loss that I sustained in my business, loss of money for going abroad. I think these three to be more responsible among many reasons of my becoming poor.

Relationship between state and citizen

I know quite a bit about citizenship. I was born in Bangladesh, so I am a citizen of Bangladesh by birth. I cast my vote because my name is registered in the voter list. I do not know anything more than this. We are citizens only in words, but not in deeds. The society does not regard the slum dwellers as human beings. They do not have any value in this society. The rich think that the slum dwellers are not human beings. This is actually true. We are illiterate. We have no house to live in, no bank balance or no good job. Even our lives do not have any value. Some of the people living here pull rickshaws and some run petty businesses on the pavements. We cannot be compared with the rich in any way. The rich know how to make us work for them but they do not realise that they should pay us for our labour. They take people from our slum to work for them and pay them only 80/90 taka for a whole day's work. If a man pulls a rickshaw for the whole day then he can earn around 200 taka. On the contrary, the rich go away paying this small amount of money. If we want to say anything, then they start yelling at us. Even boys of the age of our sons address the rickshaw pullers contemptuously. This is the behaviour of the rich. They behave like this because they have money and we are to tolerate everything because we do not have any money or power. Some influential people collect illegal tolls (*chanda*) every month from petty businessmen like us. They physically hurt and take away the business stocks of the people who disagree to pay. Irrespective of the fact whether we have enough money to manage our food, we have to save money for paying them *chanda*. We the slum dwellers want to break free from the oppression of these influential people. If the government makes the judicial system more powerful then this problem can be settled.

We have some rights from the government or the state. For example food, clothing, housing, education, and medical treatment—these are our fundamental rights. The government is bound to ensure these rights. I think that the government provides these but we do not get them. Some upper class and influential people take all our money. I am living in this slum for almost 10 years, but have not received any help from the government yet.

What else would I say about rights? There is no government school in our slum. There is a private school for the rich where the cost for each student is about 1000 taka per month. My family lives by my income alone. What would I do, bear my family's livelihood or send the children to school? As a result, I do not send them to school.

When we used to live on the embankment (*beribandh*), we paid nothing for housing. We made our own house and used to stay there. The government evicted us without ensuring our rehabilitation. We cannot stay wherever we want to. The government is supposed to allocate land for the landless, but no slum dweller has got any land yet. Helpless slum dwellers like us have to stay like this forever. We cannot make our livelihood according to our preference. I have to pay *chanda* to the local influential people for running business on the footpath. I also have to pay money as bribe to the police. The police arrested me several times for not paying them money. Then where are my rights?

I can read and write a bit. Therefore, I manage to keep some news. Sometimes I read newspapers. For example, the government declared that the price of onion would not be more than 18 taka per kilogram (kg) during *Ramadan* (fasting month), but we are buying the same for

36 taka per kg. The government has deployed Mobile Courts along with the Joint Force (*combined team of Bangladesh Police, Bangladesh Army and Bangladesh Rifles*) on different roads and crime prone areas. Nevertheless, these measures have not brought any changes in our lives. Getting prior information, the police move away from the places where hijacking occurs. They come back again after someone has been hijacked and arrest ordinary people. This is the law and order situation of our country.

Equal rights for women has been recognised but not for the women living in the slums. That is for the rich. A woman is paid less money than a man is, whereas she takes the same workload as he does. A man can keep more than one wife, but a woman cannot keep more than one husband. Then where does the equal rights status for men and women prevail? All these rights are related with one another. The government is bound to ensure these rights. This is because the government owes us these rights. However, we do not have the access because of some upper class people.

We the slum dwellers expect many things from the city corporation, but get none. Once I went to the commissioner to get my name registered in the voter list. The commissioner did not help me in getting my name listed. We are much troubled by mosquitoes at the place we live but no insecticide is sprayed. The police demand money from me. I complained about this to the commissioner, but he did not take any step to settle the matter. Once when the police arrested me, my wife sought help from the commissioner to set me free, but he did not help. From then on, I do not go to him anymore because there is no use. I do not pay anything to the City Corporation but my house owner does. We do not get as much service as we pay for. Here, we do not have electricity for 18 hours out of a day. We do not get adequate water supply. The place where I reside has almost 90 rented rooms. However, there are only five gas-stoves and one bathroom for all. We do not get as much service as we pay the house owner.

I consider myself to be deprived from the state and the society. Because I do not get the rights from the governments as I should. For example, we are deprived of our right to education, as there is no government school in our slum. There is a private school. Everything is for the rich. If the police arrest me, I need money to be freed. However, if any influential person is arrested, then only a telephone call can set him free. Same situation prevails in case of treatment. No doctor is available at the government hospitals because they are busy with their private clinics. They have no time to hear our problems. For these reasons, I consider myself as destitute. I do not think about overcoming this situation. I have left everything on Allah.

I think that if the government can ensure our rights properly then we can come out of this situation. For example, if the government establishes a school for our children, then we will be able to educate them properly. If they can get a good job after completing education then our situation will improve. I think that our situation would have been improved if the government could ensure a shelter for landless people like us and give us some capital for business. As far as I am concerned, no one living in this slum could manage to change his/her condition. People who live in this slum think about earning their next meal after having one. They can hardly concentrate on anything beyond this.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have enjoyed our long conversation. Many have come to write down our names but no one has listened to our joys and sorrows. I feel relieved being able to tell you all these. I am bearing the pains for long. Even though we talked for long, I was not bored.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I am feeling good to work in this new method. While taking the interviews of the slum dwellers, many do not want to talk. They also ask us different questions. I had to respond to all their queries.

Interview 4.2

Nature and causes of poverty

Had I not been poor then would I have lived in the slum? Our life has no value. When we were at our village home, our family lived by the property of my father. I feel sad to talk about my past. When I was about 20/22 years old, then my father became seriously ill. I consulted many doctors, but in vain. At last, I brought him to Dhaka selling our land and property. His condition improved after coming to Dhaka. Then my father passed away and we became helpless. My mother fell sick about three years after my father had died. Again, I managed her treatment by selling land. At that time, we were left only with our homestead and one bigha (33 decimal) of land beside the river Arial Khan. That land was also lost in riverbank erosion.

The reason of being poor

Father's illness, mother's illness and riverbank erosion.

Relationship between state and citizen

I was born in Bangladesh. That is why I consider myself as a citizen of this country. I cast my vote because I have my name registered in the voter list. I do not know anything more than this. We the slum dwellers have no value in the society. I live in a rented room at a private slum for which I pay 800 taka per month. However, I do not get as much services as I pay for. Very little opportunities and services are available for the 90 odd families living in this slum. There is only one water tap all. We have no neighbourly relation with the house owner. Because, he is the house owner and we are tenants. There are some influential people in this slum. We have to give them *chanda* (illegal toll) every month. They beat us and do not let us run our business if we disagree or fail to give *chanda*. I earn my family's livelihood by running business on the footpath and send my daughter to school. Besides all these expenditure, I am forced to give *chanda* regularly as well. We the slum dwellers are hostages in the hands of these influential people. We do not want to accept this situation that we are forced to abide. This is because we do not have any power or strength. I want to break free from this condition. For this, we need the help of the government. I think we can get out of this situation if the government helps us.

'Rights' for slum dwellers like us are words only but not something that need to be ensured. In education sector, it is seen that our children do not have access. There is no government school beside our slum. There are schools for the rich where we cannot send our children for want of money. Because, in those schools the monthly charge for each child is around 1000 taka. I have heard that the government has taken food For Education Programme. However, we do not get this facility. We are also deprived of our right to law and order. I am a poor helpless businessman. I do business on the footpath. The police take me to the *thana* (police station) to claim money (as bribe) from me. Food, treatment, clothing and housing all these are our rights. However, I have not yet been provided any right. Freedom of speech is our fundamental right. But we cannot speak freely with the rich. We want to live in harmony with all, but the rich do not.

I have had little education. That is why I can keep some information by reading newspapers. I think that one right is related with another. The government is bound to give us all the rights. However, we do not have access to our rights because of the rich and influential people.

We the slum dwellers expect many things from the city corporation but get nothing. We do not get any facility from the City Corporation or the government. We do not pay them anything also. But our house owner does. Though we do not pay any money but our house owner does. But we are not getting proper water or electricity facilities.

I consider myself to be deprived from the state and the society. This is because I do not get my rights from the state. We cannot educate our children because there is no government schools beside our home.

We are also deprived of the right to law and order. For example, when the police arrested me, they also caught the nephew of the commissioner. 3000 taka was needed in my case, but no money was needed for the commissioner's nephew. It took only one phone call to set him free. We also have no right regarding medical treatment. I took my wife to the government hospital for treatment when she was ill but I had to pay much money for the services.

I do not think about getting out from this situation mostly because I have no way out. If I could increase the capital of my business then I think I could come out of this condition.

Our situation would have improved if the government could ensure a shelter for landless people like us. I do not have any idea whether anyone from our slum could get rid of poverty. How can the people who cannot earn enough for food or house rent get out of poverty?

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt very good talking to you. No one has ever taken the trouble to listen to my sufferings as you did. Even though we talked for long, I did not get bored.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt comfortable to work in this new method. The slum dwellers do not want to talk freely. A fear always works in their mind. They think that their slum will be demolished if anyone from outside know about their comments.

Interview 4.3

Nature and causes of poverty

If I were not poor then would I have lived in the slum? I would have lived in big buildings if I were rich. We all used to live together in our family. I was a child then. My father used to work alone. We were five brothers and sisters. Two of our sisters got married. My eldest brother took his family to Dhaka after he had got married. I used to live in our village home and look after our land and property at that time. My father used to work in Dhaka. Sometimes he went home. We had many cows. When father came home, he used to take care of the cows. One day while bringing back the cows from the fields, father was caught in a storm. From then on, he became mentally challenged. He could recognize none. I brought father to Dhaka for treatment. But it was of no use. He had to take bed rest for one year because of the illness. We had to mortgage all the land and property for my father's treatment. We had to sell our big tin shed house also. At last, we sold all our land and property. My father was cured. But by then we became poor.

The reason of being poor

Father's illness, and for not having any land, property or house at present.

Relationship between state and citizen

I stay here with my parents and family. All of us were born in this country. Therefore we belong to this country and we are voters. We all cast our votes during election. Vote is our right as citizens. We are aware of this. There are many kinds of people in our society. Some are comparatively richer, some are less. Those who are rich have many things. For example, house, cars, money etc. we have nothing, we live from hand to mouth. There is no comparison between us and the rich. We cannot buy our food if we do not work for a day.

In which way would the rich treat us? I think that they do not look upon us in a positive way. They always neglect us because we live in the slum. The rich can do whatever they want to.

They can send their children to good schools. On the other hand, we cannot fulfil any our children's demands because we do not have any money. We cannot send our children to schools, let alone good schools due to lack of money. We are deprived of many facilities because we are poor. We are deprived of employment facility. There are many pains for being poor. We have to live by struggling.

People who are helpless like us accept this situation under compulsion. What else can I do but to accept this? I have no other way. I am uneducated. I do not have any job. I earn my livelihood by rickshaw pulling. There is no peace in pulling rickshaw now because the government has limited the entry of rickshaws to many roads. Had the government done anything for the rickshaw pullers like us, then we could have come out of this condition. The government does nothing for us. The government only wants to oppress us.

We know that there are government schools where education is free up to grade five. But it is seen that even though it is a free government school, we have to spend money for books, note books, pens, pencils and paper everything. We do not get free treatment in the government hospitals. We have to buy medicines from outside. There is no employment opportunity. I have heard that the government is making houses for those who have none. But we got nothing. I know that we have rights from the government. But what is the use of knowing this when the government will never fulfil our rights. I know that men and women have equal rights, but I do not see it in reality. We know that every person is the creation of Allah. But in this society the rich hate us.

I did not cast my vote for the commissioner. I have never received support from the government or the commissioner. And I have never sought anything from them. I have no wanting from the commissioner but he and the government have something to ask from me. They will come to for vote me at the time of election. They will go from door to door for vote.

We have everything here. However, there are problems in supply. For example, there is irregular water and electric supply. We do not get as much service as we pay for. We have no good school here. There is a BRAC school, but children do not get proper education facilities over there. We have to wait for long in the government hospitals. They do not treat patients without ticket. Moreover, we have to buy medicines from outside. Never does any aid reach here. Even if aid comes, we do not get it. Dirty water always surrounds our slum. It never dries up. None ever takes any step to get rid of this water. The commissioner or the government take no responsibility.

When I am not getting anything from anyone, then I would surely feel deprived. We do not get as much service as we pay for. Though we have rights, we are excluded from all facilities. What can I do alone? Who would listen to me? I accept this situation by being compelled. I think about getting out, but find no way. I have no money, no education. Moreover, the government is closing the roads for rickshaws. Therefore, I have no way to break free from this condition.

I have no money. Again, I do not have any education. If I were educated, then I could have come out of this situation by doing a job. Those who know a little reading and writing can come out of this condition by doing small business.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt quite well talking to you. But you ask the same question repeatedly. If you do not mind, let me ask you one question, what is your benefit from listening to us?

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt good, but first I had to make them understand and then bring out the answers by talking to them. I had no problem in working in this new method. But they do not want to give time. Yet I got the answers from them by making them understand.

Interview 4.4

Nature and causes of poverty

Those who live around me in big buildings and ride in big cars, in comparison to them, I am a mere poor man. My family consists of eight members including my mother, sister, wife and children. All of us stay together. One of my sisters read in school. My wife stays at home. My condition was a bit better before. However, it deteriorated after the death of my father. We had land in our village home. The paddy that came from our land was enough for the family. I used to work as a wage labourer and my father used to work in our fields. Suddenly my father fell sick. I took him to a doctor who could not diagnose his disease. My father remained ill for a long time. I started to sell our land slowly for his treatment. At last, I had him brought to Dhaka for treatment. After admitting him in the hospital and doing all the required tests it was found out that there is a sore in his lungs. Thus, we lost everything that we had for ensuring my father's proper treatment at the hospital. At last father passed away.

I did not get the chance to study. I can hardly sign my name. The whole family came to Dhaka after my father's death. I have been living in this slum on the embankment (*Beriband*) for 5 years.

The reason of being poor

Having no money; father's illness and having no homestead in the village.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am the citizen of this country by birth. We are Bangalis. We speak in Bangla. My father, mother and brother were born in this country. We cast our votes during election. I have cast vote once. It is my right as a citizen to cast my vote. Many types of people live in our society. Those who have houses in Dhaka, cars and money in the bank are called the rich. The middle class people also have property but relatively much less than the rich. We are the labourer class and labour means work. The government does not think about us. We cannot be compared to the rich. They have many things, which we do not. They can do whatever if they want to, but we cannot. They have power. They have many people to abide by them. If they wish to, they can destroy this slum by their people. We have no means to resist them. This is because we have no power and no money.

What can I do but to accept this situation? We have nothing to do. The rich look down upon us. They neglect us. They always think about how to evict us from this slum. However, we have no other place to go. I work in a brick factory. There is work for only 6 months a year and no work during the rest of the months of the year. When there is no job, then it is very hard to bear the family expenses. We are trying to get out of this situation but in vain. If we had regular jobs then we could have come out of this condition.

We know that we have some rights from our state and government. For example, food, clothing, housing, education, and medical treatment these are our fundamental rights. There is no use in talking about all these because we have read these in school only but never got access to any of these in reality. Since my father's death, we have been living in this slum for 5 years, but have never got any support from anyone yet. We have no houses. We live in houses built beside the road. We used to live on the road when it was mud built. Awami League was in the government then. Eventually there was change in government and BNP came to power. The new government ousted us for constructing permanent road on the embankment. The government should have taken some measures for our rehabilitation but it did nothing. Many people had to return to their village home at that time. However we stayed, as we had no houses. Afterwards we used to live in a house built far away from the road. There is no electricity here. We have to burn candle or kerosene lamp at night.

We do not have any good schools nearby. My children cannot go to school. One of my sisters goes to a primary school, which is far from here. That school is non-government. They provide free textbooks but we have to notebooks, pens and other stationeries from outside. Sometimes we have to pay tuition fees as well.

We do not have any treatment facility. We have to buy medicines from pharmacies. We cannot sleep well at night. Vehicles ply on the road round the clock. There is no sanitary latrine. The condition of our slum is very shocking. The children use open spaces as toilet. As we are not in a position to do that so few of us have built a toilet with bamboo walls and roof. There is no fixed dustbin. Everyone throws waste here and there. The whole slum is full with dirt and wastes. The environment here is not hygienic at all.

I have heard and known that men and women have equal rights, but have not seen it in practice. A girl cannot move as freely as a boy can. They have also less employment facilities. In this place, there is hardly any opportunity for work. All works are stopped during rainy season.

An individual who is rich always looks upon me in disgust. If s/he does not interact with me or wants to talk to me, then should I force him/her to talk? He boasts on his houses and cars and hates me. We have the right to speak but with no effect. The government is compelled to ensure our rights, which it does not.

I never cast my vote for the commissioner. Moreover, I never got anything from the City Corporation. It has never done anything for our slum. There is waste everywhere due to lack of fixed dustbin. Many diseases spread from dirt. For example, it creates mosquitoes that cause Malaria, Typhoid, Dengue. No insecticide is sprayed here for mosquitoes. We cannot even sit to talk after evening; the mosquitoes even fly into our mouths. Occasionally the city corporation men used to come and spray insecticide during the tenure of the past government. However, this government does nothing for us. They do not understand that though we live in the slums we are also human beings and might have something to ask for. We have rights but we do not get any. Our condition becomes deplorable during winter because there is hardly enough closed space to resist the cold wind. The government can provide us with blankets and other woollen wears if it wishes to. We would not have endured such sufferings if we could afford to buy them. We have the right to clothing.

Had the government provided us with shelter, aid, job facilities, a hospital for medical treatment then we would have lived a better life. However, the state, the government or the ward commissioner do not help us in any way. We never get any facilities from them. Once I went to the commissioner for a boy who lives next to me. He was a mobile tea and biscuits seller. One day some youth extortionists beat him and took all his money. Then some of us went to the commissioner together. After listening everything, he said that he would take care of the matter, but still he has done nothing. The influential people can whatever they want to. We the slum dwellers cannot deal with them, so we silently accept all oppression. They always come and take *chanda* from whomever they like to. I used to keep my daughter in care as they took away many girls. None protests them. The police also do not help the slum dwellers.

We never get anything from the government or the commissioner. We have been excluded from any needs and wants. We have no houses; we live in the houses that we build beside the roads. We have no good schools in the neighbourhood. At night, light burns everywhere, except in our slum. We are forced to live in the dark. We bring water from far away. We have set a tube well with our own fund. From there we bring water to drink and to cook. And we bathe in the river. There is no medical facility. There is no government hospital in the neighbourhood; the existing one is very far away. There also they do not provide treatment facility without payment. We need tickets to see the doctor. We have to buy medicines from outside also.

We have no working facilities. The worst condition is during the rainy season. When all work is stopped. There is no job of brick building until the water dries up. Therefore, we have to

earn our livelihood by doing other jobs. Neither the government nor the commissioner does anything for us. We are deprived of our rights as citizens of this country.

No one wants to live in this situation. Everyone wants to live in a better condition, so do I, but I cannot find any way out. I live from hand to mouth and spend everything I earn. If I could get any facility, then I could come out of this condition.

I run my family by hard work; otherwise, I cannot make a living. If I were given some money for business, then I could have sold some vegetables on the footpath, or could have tried to break free of the poverty cycle by selling fruits as a hawker. Those who do business are in better condition. Those who have shops in the market, earn much money everyday. They do not pay any rent because they own the shops. Therefore, they can save that money. Many have had success in this way.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

Many like you have come in this slum. Many have given us hope, but we have not received any benefit. However, no one wanted to hear about us in such detail as you did. What benefit would such intensive hearing and writing bring to you? Would it benefit us? I have spent too much of my time with you. I could have taken rest during this period. Never mind, I have given time because I gave you my word. Please do not mind. If you can, then please try to do something for us brother, because we are very poor.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I enjoyed working in this new method. However, I had to talk a lot with some people to make them understand the cause. Again, many do not want to open themselves. I did not face any problem; I managed to make all understand.

Interview 4.5

Nature and causes of poverty

I would not have lived in slum if I were rich. If I were rich then I would have had a house in Dhaka and I would have been a house owner.

My condition was not like this. It was much better when we used to live in our village home. We are seven brothers and three sisters. We had many properties. My father had died long ago. I am the first born. Half of our land was lost in riverbank erosion. We lost the rest half in cases with my cousins. My father had divided our land. However, my paternal cousins took possession of my land in an evil dispute. Then I came to Dhaka with my family. After that, I have not been to my village home for long and have no relation with the village. I used to irregularly represent myself in the court. All my land was possessed by others in this way. I have been living in this slum for 8 years. I have five sons and a daughter. I have been living in Dhaka for almost 35 years.

The reason of being poor

I have no homestead of my own; I have no money and at present I am unemployed.

Relationship between state and citizen

I do not know what 'citizen' means. I know that my ancestors used to live here. All of us were born here. I have heard that if someone is born in Bangladesh then s/he is regarded as the citizen of Bangladesh. In that sense, I am also a citizen of Bangladesh. I have cast my vote twice.

The relationship of the slum dwellers is not congenial with the upper and middle class people. We cannot be compared with them. They have much wealth. How can we socialise with

them? They do not consider us as human beings. For example, a man from our slum can sit and have tea with me at a tea stall unlike a rich man who would never do that. He will look down upon me. The rich would never sit in a tea stall and exchange greetings and information with their neighbours as we do. When I used to pull carts then at times the rich putting their cupboards or refrigerators on my cart used to warn me to handle them carefully because those were very valuable. This denotes that to them their material possessions have value, but we do not. I have accepted this situation. For how many days would I live so that my acceptance would matter?

If someone does not ensure others' rights, then from where would one get that? For example, we have rights from the government, which it does not ensure. Then what is the use of having rights?

We had no school, hospitals, or so many doctors during our time. We have no houses of our own, so we have to live in other people's land. There are no hospitals, electricity, sanitary latrines, and dustbins. We make houses beside the road on which vehicles ply all day and night. Moreover, sometimes the government people evict us from the slum. Unlike the rich, we have no electricity in our homes. We burn kerosene lamps at night. We used to bring drinking water from far away. The government has given us a tube-well now. Therefore, we bring drinking water from there. We have to go far to the river to bathe.

We get no help from the government. Six years ago, this slum was on fire. All the houses were burnt down. Then the government allocated some aid for us, which we never accessed but the house owners did. Once some people came and gave us cards. We went to the commissioner with the cards. They gave us only 5 kg of rice. We have got nothing except this, even though the government allots many things for us. We work and live. We have no right from anyone. I never expect any relief or rice from the government.

I have heard that men and women have equal rights. Previously only men used to work outside but now I see that women also work. I am not sure whether they get the same wages as men.

We do not get anything from the city corporation. We mostly need water and electricity in our slum. We never go to the commissioner's office for anything because they do not listen to us. They do not consider us as human beings. I am not obliged to pay money to anyone. When the road was not constructed, then there was not much traffic. Here we all live together without any help from the government or the commissioner.

We do not get any facilities from the state or the society. They do not ensure any of our rights. The garbage disposal trucks of the city corporation do not take the waste from here, so the decomposed waste emit bad smell. Due to the disturbance created by the mosquitoes we cannot even sit to talk during the evenings, they even fly into our mouths. The last commissioner used to spray insecticides occasionally, but at present, we are deprived of this service.

I have five sons and a daughter who got married in the village home. One of my sons is missing. However, one among the rest works regularly, but the others do not have regular income. Therefore, the whole family is basically dependent only one person. If my other sons were able to manage regular work, then my condition would not have been so grave. It is possible to come out of this condition by doing jobs or by working properly.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt quite well talking to you. I told you all about myself. No one has ever talked to me for so long. If the things that you have said can change our condition, then it would be nice.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I enjoyed doing the work. I came to know many things. There was no problem taking the interview. He understood my points properly and I have also understood what he wanted to say and documented that.

Interview 4.6

Nature and causes of poverty

I consider myself as poor. Both my parents and my in-laws were quite solvent. We used to live in our village home. We came to Dhaka when our financial condition worsened and we had no livelihood option. My in-laws' house was washed away by river bank erosion. Now I have nothing. My husband used to work in railway construction when we lived in the village. One day while he was working, a piece of wood went into his chest. We had to spend a lot for his treatment. He used to gamble. Thus, our condition has deteriorated.

The reason of being poor

I am illiterate; I have no property and money.

Relationship between state and citizen

I have cast my vote several times in my village. I belong to this country. My parents were born in this country. The rich around us consider us poor. They have money but we do not. They look down upon us and make us work hard for them. They do not pay us well. They cut the wages for three days if we are absent for one. Friday is holiday, but they make us work on that day too. They do not pay us overtime wages properly. They even do not pay our regular wages when we leave the job. As labourers, we expect many things from our employers. However, they do not fulfil any of our demands. We cannot maintain our families well with the wages we earn. The garments factory owners are very rich and have houses and cars, but they do not want to pay us what they owe. They have both money and power. They can do whatever they wish to. But we can do nothing by ignoring them.

What else can we do but to accept this situation? We cannot go against them. The owner can afford to establish a new factory elsewhere. We earn barely enough money to maintain our family. Moreover, we have to spend for our children. We have to pay house rent to live in Dhaka. We could have lived better if we did not have to pay 800 taka to the house owner each month. Then we could have spent the money elsewhere.

We have rights from the government. I have cast my vote several times when I was in my village home. I shall not say that I got nothing from the government. I got rice, wheat and a little amount of money when I was in the village. Many got tin shade houses. I took my family to Dhaka when my condition was too bad. I got nothing from the government since I have come here. The house owner has built our rented home on a platform over dirty lowland water. We have electricity and gas facilities for which we pay the house owner. In here, we face serious water crisis and at times, the electric supply is interrupted for hours. There is no sanitary latrine. The platform of the only latrine is bamboo made underneath which there are loads of dirt and filth. The place spreads horrible smell. There was a government school in our village where I have studied a little. Then I came to Dhaka. I did not go to the government hospital mainly because they charge money for providing treatment. Moreover, they do not take proper care of the patients. Here we work to live. When my husband used to bleed from nose and mouth, I took him to the hospital. We had to spend a lot of money, but he was not cured. Then I consulted a reputed doctor who succeeded in curing him. Here we work to live. I do not get the opportunity for any other work.

I do not keep information about current happenings. What is the benefit, when nothing reaches us? The television shows that many relief have come, but we do not get any. We hear that men and women have equal rights, but we do not enjoy that.

Men and women work together in the garments factory. It is seen that they pay salary to the men first. Because men are physically strong and unlike women, they can be unruly. Therefore, they do not take the chance to harass men. A male helper gets higher wage than a

female helper does. Do these refer to equal rights status? The rich who live beside the slum do not interact with us. Because they are rich and we are poor. We do not have good relationship with them.

Previously we used to live in the village. There is no commissioner in the village. There are the chairmen and the members. We never sought help or got any support from them. We live here in a private slum. We pay rent to the house owner. In exchange we get water and electricity facility. However, we do not get as much service as we pay for. There is often no electricity and when it is interrupted, it takes very long time to come back. Everywhere else, electricity facility prevails with less interruption, but here the interruption is consistent and continuous. There are no fixed dustbins, so everyone throws wastage here and there. The government or the commissioner has not specified any place for dustbin, so people throw waste in the dirty water, which never dries up and becomes a breeding place for the Mosquitoes. They used to spray insecticide before, but this government does not do that. They spray insecticide around the houses of the leaders or the politicians, but not here.

There are dustbins in the residential areas. We are poor and have no money or property. Therefore, we are deprived of all facilities.

Since we stay in a private slum, we get water, gas and electricity facilities through the house owner. However, we do not get any facility from the government or the commissioner. Though these are our rights, we do not have any access to them. We are deprived of everything. I have accepted the present situation. What else can I do? It is not possible for me to make any change alone. Everyone wants to live well. If we could get some support then we could have come out of this situation.

My daughter and I work in the garments factory. My husband pulls rickshaw. If the government could provide us with shelter then we would not have to pay the house rent every month. We could have bought a rickshaw with that money. Then we would not have to pay money to the owner. Thus, gradually we could have come out of poverty. Not everyone's condition is like me. Those who have their own rickshaws are better off than I am because they do not have to pay anything to the owner.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I liked this new method. Another person like you noted information about our condition when I was in my village home. I was told that we would be given – tin shade house, credit and other aids, but they did not give us anything. You have asked us many things and have written them down. If it helps us in any way then we will remember you all through our life.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I liked and enjoyed it. This is for the first time I worked in this new method. At first, this woman did not want to talk because she does not have time off even on Fridays, which is a government holiday. Later on, she managed to talk to me. In this new method, the views of the slum-dwellers come out as it does in an informal conversation.

Interview 4.7

Nature and causes of poverty

I am poor; otherwise, I would not have lived in Dhaka. I live in a small house because I am poor. Unlike my husband's, the financial condition of my parents is good. They can manage well enough. I have become poor because of my husband. Earlier my husband's economic condition was quite good. But when he became sick, we had to spend a lot of money for his treatment. Yet he was not cured. He is suffering from TB (Tuberculosis) and bleeds when he coughs. I am still spending a lot for him. I do not have much property in my village home. I live in a rented house

here. I can only read and write my name. My husband works as helper of a tempo (human hauler). I do tailoring at home and make dresses for children and adults. My two sons and my sister live with me. She helps me with the cooking and sewing. My husband cannot work regularly. The doctor said that taking much workload would be injurious to his health. I hardly manage to maintain the family. My sons are very young.

The reason of being poor

My husband's disease, having no property and money and the inability of my husband to work regularly.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a voter and I cast my vote. Vote is my right as a citizen because I am a citizen of this country. My identity in this society is that I am a human being. I have cast my vote for the government. I have been living in Dhaka for 8 years. We cannot be compared to the upper class or the middle class people of the society. They are rich; they have money, houses and cars. Some of them are businessmen, some do big jobs. On the contrary, we live from hand to mouth and struggle hard just to pay our house rent. They do not consider us as human beings. The rich have both money and power, we have none. What can I do but to accept this situation? I have no other option to break free from this reality. It is very hard to maintain a family in which the male member is unable to work.

There is a government school that is quite a distance from here. My sons are too young to go to a far away school. The school that is nearby is for of the rich people. Nowadays it takes money to read in the government schools as well. I do not know whether all the hospitals are government. However, I know that we need to buy tickets to avail treatment at the hospitals and we need to buy medicines from outside. I have been to a government hospital for my husband's treatment. Money is also needed there. They have done many tests for which we had to make payment. I have seen it on television that the government has provided many people with shelter. But we do not get that. We pay house rent to live here. Our house is on a bamboo platform under which there is dirt and filth. We get water, electricity and gas facilities from the house owner but not from the government. We pay money to the house owner every month.

What is the use in keeping information about current happenings? We do not get any help. I know that the government has recognised equal rights for men and women but we do not get that. The rich and the poor have the right to stay in togetherness. All human beings have equal rights, but the rich do not interact with us.

I have cast my vote for the ward commissioner. The commissioner does not provide us with any facility. Previously, they used to spray insecticide for mosquitoes, but now they do not. There are too many mosquitoes here. It is very difficult to resist their attack in the evenings. Often the police arrests innocent youths from our slum. The helpless cry of their parents cannot convince the police to set them free. The commissioner shows pride when we go to him, he does not give us any value. Some youth extortionists come here to collect *chanda* (illegal toll). The commissioner does not resist them because they are his helping hands. We silently tolerate their torture. We do not pay anything to the city corporation. We pay our house owner for providing gas and water facilities.

I consider myself as deprived because I do not get any support or facility from the government or the city corporation. We have water, electricity etc but no sewerage system. We live in houses built on platforms and we throw waste under it because the government or the commissioner did not provide us with a fixed dustbin. We can hardly take our meals at home due to bad smell that comes from outside. Moreover waste from elsewhere get stored here. The dirty water here never dries up, and creates many diseases. Like everyone else, I also want to live well. If my husband were cured and could work properly, then I could have stayed in a better environment. I live here with my sons because I have no other option.

My husband cannot work properly for his illness. If the government could give me some loan, then I would have set up a small tailoring shop beside the road and then would have extended it if the business were good. Thus, I could have improved my condition and that is my dream.

It might not be anyone from our slum, but people who live outside this area have managed to improve their condition in this way. They started with small capital. They saved little to start with small tailoring shops and thus they prospered. In this way, people can become well off and change their condition. If people have money and effort then they can do well.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

No one has ever come to us to ask or write down anything in this way. As this is the month of *Ramadan* (fasting month) and Eid (Eid-ul-fitre- religious festival of the Muslims) is getting near, so I have excessive work pressure at present. Yet I had to give you time. There are orders for work from everywhere; I have very little time at hand. Therefore, I had difficulty in giving you time, please do not mind.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have not faced any problem to work in the OT method. However, the person I took interview of is very busy. She has to finish her works before the Eid. Yet she gave me time.

Interview 4.8

Nature and causes of poverty

Does anyone live in the slum if s/he is not poor? I live in the slum because I am poor. I have a son and a daughter. They are too young to work and earn. My main cause of my poverty is that I am an orphan. My father had died long ago, and a year after my mother also passed away. I grew up in much hardship. I had no scope for education. I was married to a poor man. The financial condition of my in laws was not good. Then we came to Dhaka and have been living here in the slum for 5 years. My husband is also illiterate, and because of this, he cannot have good jobs. Our condition was neither good before nor now. Therefore, our condition has not changed at all.

The reason of being poor

I have no education; I am an orphan and have no property in my village home.

Relationship between state and citizen

I have cast my vote once after coming to Dhaka. My parents and I, we all belong to this country. I also had cast my vote once when I was at my village home. Therefore, it can be said that I am a citizen of this country. We cannot be compared to the upper class and the middle class of our society. They live in big buildings, ride on modern cars, and wear gorgeous clothes. We are poor. We do not have any place to live in, let alone cars to ride. They look down upon us. We do not get any relief from the government even if it comes, mostly because of a man who lives here. We cannot deal with him because he is very powerful. He takes relief in our names, but distributes that among his followers.

My husband is very old. He cannot work properly now. He makes houses with bamboo but this job is not always available. There is no such work during the rainy season and then we face much difficulty in maintaining our family at that time of the year. It becomes very hard for us to manage three meals a day. We even cannot manage adequate rice to live by. We do not want to live like this, but there is no other way out.

There is no government school over here and no hospital as well. There is only a BRAC school where our children go. A lady doctor used to practice here, I do not know whether she was from the government or a private practitioner. There they used to charge 5 taka to make a card and 10 taka for medicine. We live by the side of the embankment (beribandh). When the slum was near the mud road, we did not have to pay any rent. Then they demolished the slum to construct the road. Here we have water and electricity facility. The slum has to pay 1000 taka for water supply and each family has to pay 100 taka for electricity every month. We do not have gas-stove here; we cook on mud-cooker with firewood, which we have to buy. We have no sanitary latrine. Each of the household has contributed 100 taka to make a sanitary latrine. Now we use the latrine that we made by bamboo structure and walls of rug. We have no fixed dustbin; we throw them here and there.

We keep information about current happenings, but it is of no use because no one provides us with any support. The influential people give these to their relatives though they receive these in our names.

I know that men and women have equal rights. However, women do not enjoy equal rights. Many girls are oppressed for dowry. They are sent to their parents' home after being beaten.

I have never cast my vote for the commissioner and never asked for anything to him. He also did not give us any facility. If any aid comes from the government, then the commissioner gives the charge to a man. He writes down our names but we do not get anything. We pay to the manager of the house owner for water and electricity. We get these facilities for money. But we do not get as much service as we pay for. Most of the times there is no electricity. It can be seen that electricity is available elsewhere but not in our slum. It comes again when the supply is interrupted everywhere for a while.

We do not get any help or right from the state and the government and because of this we consider ourselves as deprived. Previously, we used to live in the government slum, after being evicted from there we started living in this private slum. We have no dustbin, no sanitary latrine and no gas supply. We buy firewood from outside for cooking. The government does not want to give us any opportunity. It gives loan to only those who can repay. Like everyone else, we also want to live well. If the government could help us a bit or could provide us with shelter, then we could have come out of this situation.

My husband makes houses. He does not get any work most of the time. He gets more work during winter. There is very little work in other months of the year. He cannot do heavy work for his age. If we could get some help from the government then we could have set up a tea stall and make our condition better.

A man used to live here whose financial condition was very bad. Now their condition is good. They have set up a tea stall. The earning from the stall enables them to maintain their family quite decently. Besides, they can save a lot. He earns much money from his daily tea sale. Now he has made the condition of the shop even better and sells biscuits, chocolates and other groceries along with tea. I think people can come out of poverty in this way.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I felt good talking to you. Many people like you come here but no one has asked so many things like you did. They gave us much hope, have not been provided with any support yet.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

In this new method, it is possible to take out the inner views of the slum dwellers in the guise of informal discussion. However, the problem is that one question has to be asked repeatedly, for which many become annoyed. There is no other difficulty except this.

Interview 4.9

Nature and causes of poverty

In comparison with the rich people living around me, I am poor. I married against my parent's will. I have hurt their feelings. If they were responsible for marrying me off then they would have been more cautious and calculative. Then my financial condition would not have been so severe. Now my husband pulls rickshaw. I earn some money by weaving sweaters at home. It is difficult for my husband to maintain the family by his income only. That is why I do sewing work at home.

The reason of being poor

I have no money; I am illiterate and I have no property in my village home. I do not have any money that is my main problem. Money is the root of all happiness. I consider this as my major problem.

Relationship between state and citizen

I am a human being. My parents and I were born in this country. I cast my vote to the government. One who cast vote is regarded as citizen.

There are many rich people in the society with whom slum dwellers do not have good relationship. Because they are rich and we are poor. They have many things but we have nothing.

We have no interaction with the rich. The rich have relationship with the rich only, and the poor with the poor. We are tenants. One poor will share with another, but the rich will not share with the poor. Therefore, the relationship between the rich and the slum dwellers is not good. They always neglect us and look down upon us. They can make their wish come true. They do not even reply to our respects and greetings. They always hate us.

Those who have money, have power as well. They can do whatever they wish. They take pride in their money. They want to buy people with their money. For example, suppose a rich man has money, but no child then he buys a child from a poor man. In this way, they can even buy other people. The poor sell their children to others for want of money.

I do not accept the relationship between the rich and the poor. Because the rich have their own prestige and honour and I have mine. If I had money like the rich then I could be like them. However, that does not make me low compared to the rich. I have my hands and feet with which I work to earn my living.

I have cast my vote. I know that I have many rights from the government like food, medical treatment, shelter and clothing but we do not get these. I know that there are government schools that give Tk.125 to every child, but we do not get that. We have to buy paper, pens and everything. Moreover, the government hospitals do not treat without money. We have to get treatment by buying tickets and buy medicines from outside. Therefore, it can be seen that even in the government hospital we are compelled to pay for the services. We get nothing from the government. The government gives rice, wheat etc in the villages, but not here in Dhaka city. May be the government gives everything but we do not get that; or the people who are in charge of distribution do not give us.

The government has recognised equal rights for men and women and for this reason, men and women work together on the roads. I could not cast my vote for the commissioner because my name was not registered in the list. Otherwise, I could have cast my vote. However, it was better in a sense that the commissioner does nothing for us. The slum was under fire once. After that the followers of the commissioner came to list our names. They gave us a slip. They gave each of us a piece of cloth that I could not wear for long because of its very low

quality. I would not have taken it had I known this before. They bring many things from the government in our names, but do not give us anything.

We have accepted these. What else can we do, should we fight with them? How can we succeed against them? They have everything money, houses and cars but we have nothing.

I got nothing from the government. Only once I got a sari after my house was burnt. But they did not give it to every victim, they gave to those whose names were listed or had slips with them.

They say in the television that we should wash our hands properly with soap or ash after coming out of the toilet and we should take plenty of vegetables and there are many vitamins in the leafy vegetables.

I do not get anything from the government or the commissioner. We have no other way but to accept this reality. We cannot compete with them in any way. They have money and many helping hands. The commissioner has many followers who do not give us any value. They have power, people abide by them but nobody would listen to us.

I married according to my choice. I weave sweaters at home. My husband earns almost 80 taka a day. From that, he has to pay 30 taka to the rickshaw owner. Rest of the earning is spent in the family. However, I try to save something from it. I have joined an association where I have to save five taka everyday. They give loan after 6 months. There are 65 members in the society. In this way, if I can get 2000/3000 taka from the association then we shall buy a rickshaw and therefore would not have to pay the owner any more. The money that will be earned will be spent in my family and the rest I will save in the association. After that when the loan from the society will be repaid, then I will buy another rickshaw. Gradually, I will buy some land in my village home. I shall sell rest of the harvest from the land after keeping some to eat. In this way, I can improve my condition.

Many people in our slum have taken loans from the association. Many women have invested money on cultivation in their village. If one gives money at the time of cultivation then one gets the share of paddy after 6 months during harvest and the principal remain intact. Thus, people are improving their condition slowly.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

I have never talked being so open minded with anyone. Moreover, no one has documented my speech for so long. You have written so much, would that benefit us in any way?

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

While working in this method the woman did not understand anything at first. Afterwards when I managed to make her understand then she responded accordingly and answered properly.

Interview 4.10

Nature and causes of poverty

I have left my village home and have been living here in the slum because I am poor. Otherwise, I would not have lived here. Unlike my in laws, the financial condition of my parents was quite well. My parents gave my marriage to a poor man. We lost all our homestead and land due to riverbank erosion. We had no property of our own. We used to live on the land of my maternal uncle. I came to Dhaka after getting married. I have been living here for 5 years. Our financial condition is not good; we live from hand to mouth.

The reason of being poor

We have no land and property of our own; we are illiterate; we have no money and we live from hand to mouth. We starve if we do not work for a day.

Relationship between state and citizen

I have never cast my vote because my name was not registered in the voter list. We used to live in the village. All my relatives and my parents live in this country. Therefore, we are the citizens of this country.

We do not have good relationship with the upper class of the society. Because they are rich, they have money, gold etc. we cannot even maintain our family properly let alone having those valuables. I work as a household help because not all our family expenditure can be met by my husband's income alone. I have four daughters but no son. I had taken so many children for want of a son. My eldest daughter reads in school. She is 7 years old. The rest three are very young. The rich do not behave well with us and they look down upon us. The family I work for is very rich. They live in their own house. However, the woman of the house is not very helpful. She does not give me old clothes that she has. She sometimes gives clothes when they are quite unusable. I am employed to do all household works. Sometimes she makes me do the same thing repeatedly. Even after washing the dishes sometimes, they say that those are not clean, so I wash again. I am to work according to their instructions else, they may fire me or may not pay me properly. They become very angry if I bring my child at work. They hate us because I am poor. They call us "Bua". They do not let their children play with ours. What else can I do but to accept this reality? We have no other way out. We have no power to come out of this situation. I have to live by working, otherwise what would I feed my children?

I have never cast my vote. I do not know how to cast vote. We have rights from the government but the government does not ensure our rights. We have the rights to food, clothing, shelter etc from the state. However, the government does not give us anything because we are poor. We do not have any government school here; there is one for the rich. We cannot afford to send our children there. There is a school of BRAC nearby, but the children do not get proper education there. The teachers do not take adequate care and the children become very unruly. No one can have education in this way. We do not have any government hospital nearby. There is a private hospital but that is for the rich who have money. In the government hospitals, we have to buy tickets to consult physicians and buy medicines from outside. We used to live in a house built on government land. Later we were evicted. Now we have to live in a rented house and pay for water, electricity and everything. We have to buy firewood for cooking. We have no working facility. My husband is a helper of a truck. He is illiterate. The money that he earns from working is not enough for the family. I am barely managing the family with the money and the meal that I get from working as a household help. We have to pay the house owner 400 taka per month. If the government could provide us with shelter then we could have saved some money every month, which we could have utilised elsewhere to live in a better way. The past government has recognised equal rights for men and women. But we the women do not get equal rights. Many girls are divorced or beaten up by their husbands or are oppressed by their in laws or are driven away from home because of dowry. The government does not ensure justice for them. No one talks about these sufferings of the poor.

I know this much about information that many aid comes for us from the government, which we never get. Other people have those in our names. There is a powerful man here and all help comes through him. But those who have good relationship with him or are his own people can get these. We do not keep much news, because we do not get anything.

I have not cast my vote to the government or the commissioner. We do not go to them because they do not help us in any way. We are poor and live in the slum, so they do not value us as human beings. We live here as tenant. We have water and electricity for which we make payment. There is no dustbin in the slum. The city corporation or the commissioner can make a dustbin for us if they want to. It is the duty of the city corporation. They do not understand that

we also have the right to live in a good environment. We do not get as much services as we are paying for. Sometimes there is no water supply for several hours or even one or two days. Then we have to go elsewhere for water.

We have water and electricity here. After we had paid 1000 taka altogether then they supplied us water. Before that we did not have access to water. We used to bring water from elsewhere and bathed in the river. We consider ourselves as deprived because we do not get any support from the government or the city corporation. When there is no water, we bring that from the neighbours. Each family pays 150 taka for electricity. We have no provision of gas here. The government does not ensure any facility for us.

We live here in this slum because the house rent is quite cheap and because we have nowhere else to go. We silently tolerate all oppressions. What else can we do but to accept this reality? Who would listen to us? Can't the government address these problems of ours? Thousands of people like us are in deplorable condition. The government does not consider us, the slum dwellers as human beings; we are the insects of the society. They do not care whether we live or die. The rich of the society think that we are living under their feet; they do not socialise with us. We are the deprived people of the society.

We are poor people who live from hand to mouth. We cannot even make both ends meet with our income, let alone thinking about the future. At present, my husband is a helper of a truck. If we could get some help from the government or any NGO, then we could have sold some fishes on the footpath. Afterwards if we could run the business well then could have taken a shop in the market. In this way, we could have come out of this condition. It would have been much better if we could get a place to live in. Then we would not have to worry so much about the house rent. Those who have shops or small businesses are better off than us. Moreover, those who have small families where every member can work and earn are solvent. This is because they have adequate income, but less spending. Thus, the condition of people improves.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

No one has ever come to us or asked us so many things. Once our names were listed to give us the rice that the government had sent, but we never got that.

Opinion of the person interviewed on Oral Testimony method

In this new method, it is easier to take out the inner views of the slum dwellers in the guise of informal discussion. One has to make a good environment by talking to the slum dwellers at first, then facilitate them in sharing their feelings slowly. This woman and her husband answered together. It was quite difficult for them to make time for the interview. They go out to work in the morning and are not available at home even after evening.

CHAPTER FOUR EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION ON POVERTY: EXTRAPOLATION FROM ORAL TESTIMONIES

4.1 Nature and Concepts of Poverty

Concept and indicators of poverty

In order to understand their concept on 'poverty', when the slum dweller communities were asked whether they consider their current condition as living in 'poverty'; majority opined that they are poor. 'Living in the slum' and 'current occupation' were the prominent evidences that they presented as proof of their being poor while responding to the enquiry that why they think of themselves as poor. This means that the slum-dwellers have their own concept and awareness about poverty and they consider their professions as 'low category work'.

"Of course I am poor. There is no other reason for living in a slum." (1:3)

Every slum-dweller has mentioned her/him as poor. According to the oral testimonies, each respondent considers her/him as poor due to the condition of their life-style and their struggle. One of them said, "I consider myself as poor"(1:2). Therefore, it can be mentioned that the slum-dwellers strongly believe that they are marginalised.

A person interviewed at Modhubazar slum, when asked to respond about his condition said "If I am not poor, then why should I live in a house built on a platform over lowland water?" (2:8). The same response came from another interview "If we are not poor, then what are we?" (2.3). Therefore, these statements prove that the marginalised people are aware of the fact that they are poor.

"If I weren't poor, would I have lived in a slum? I can't express in words how poor I am." (3.3). Dwellers of Slum no.3 also consider themselves as poor and are conscious of it. Along with this they have developed their own understanding about why they are poor. One person has said "Would I have begged living in a slum if I were not poor?" (3.6). Another person informed "Why do I live in a slum and work in a garments factory if I am not poor?" (3.7). It can be understood from these statements that basically they consider living in the slum as a sign of poverty. (details in interviews 1-10 of slum no.3).

"Does anyone live in the slum if s/he is not poor? I live in the slum because I am poor." (4:8). The personal understanding of the slum dwellers about whether they are poor is consistent to the comment mentioned above. The following comments-- "I am poor; otherwise, I would not have lived in Dhaka. I live in a small house because I am poor." (4:7) and "I am a mere poor man" (4:4) have also helped in learning their concept on poverty and about the common indicators they consider to rationalise their condition.

Causes and process of poverty

Each slum dweller has shared divergent life-experiences of "being poor". The testimonies have affirmed that previously most of the slum dwellers were solvent. These families have become the victims of poverty due to different preceding events in their lives. The most common 'catalysts' that contributed to the 'process' of their 'being poor' are 'river erosion', 'medical expenditure', 'marriage or more than one marriage', 'husband's death', 'not being educated', and 'irregular working habit of son' etc. According to the interviews, similar contexts prevail

"Half of our land was lost in riverbank erosion. We lost the rest half in law-suits with my cousins." (4:5)

in almost every slum. However there are some incidents that do not match the trend i.e. downfall of business, business place being burnt and being deceived.

It has been noticed that irrespective of the ways the process or fact of being poor has been stated, most of the slum dwellers had been well-to-do citizens before they became impoverished. However not all the causes that has made them poor are of the same nature at least according to the information of the first slum where medical expenditure, not working properly in one's own land and even marriage have been identified as causes of poverty. (details in slum no.1; 1-10).

A person belonging to slum no.2 shared similar experience. She said, "My father in law had owned 2 bighas and 12 kathas (85.8 dc ml) of land. Four to five times of river bank erosion had taken away all our land. Due to erosion of river we became poor."(2:2). Thus social phenomena or natural disaster has changed the position and condition of people and tossed them into the cycle of poverty.

One of the person interviewed stated, "Four years passed and my husband married again. They forced me out along with my children. I then came back to my father's house. But they are struggling to earn their livelihood." (3.7). This woman has been struggling for the last seven years in the slum. Her younger brothers were too young to support her after her father's death and the only alternative she could come up with after being divorced was to come to Dhaka. In Bangladesh, a girl child is still considered as a burden for a family. Moreover, the families having a daughter at marrying age feel vulnerable and unwieldy. It has also been substantiated by the experience of the marginalised slum dwellers. Some of them noted that taking loan on interest to marry off their daughters as one of the major reasons for their becoming poor. It is evident that in the lives of the low-income people, payment of interest to the *mahajons*¹⁷ is like violent flames that has steadily compelled them towards a menacing life. Thus, the fact behind becoming poor is similar for each individual.

Another person has informed that he had been ill since his childhood. At that time, his father died and consequently he started selling the land he inherited. Then with much struggle, he had bought ducks to start a farm but the ducks died as well. Thus he became poor. (see 1:8). Sometimes deception by individuals and at other natural disaster is liable for their becoming poor. While discussing these facts one person said that, he sold all his property for the treatment of his wife's brain-tumour. Besides this he was cheated by an insurance company which is the foremost reason behind his misfortune. Another person interviewed also said that she sold land to heal the tumour developed on her husband's chest and back. However, her husband died. Thus she became destitute from a solvent position. (1:3). Most of the respondents stated that they have become impoverished by selling their land in order to cure the illness of their father or an earning member of their families (3:3; 3:9; 3:10). It can be noticed from the above facts that 'medical expenditure' to treat critical diseases is one of the major reasons behind the poverty of the low-income class. As an example one of the women interviewed while sharing her life experience informed, "My husband used to work in railway construction when we lived in the village. One day while he was working, a piece of wood went into his chest. We had to spend a lot for his treatment." (4.6)

The background or reasons of being poor as described by the dwellers of slum no. 3 is quite coherent with the life histories of the people living in other three slums (details in all the interviews of slums 1, 2, 3, 4). It is noticed in one of the interviews that a family's hardship started as their sweet-shop got burnt. Later they started an association with a view to take loan, invest in any suitable business, and improve their condition. However, they

¹⁷professional money lender

have become further marginalised as the person with whom they wanted to start the business with, had fled with all the money they borrowed on interest as business investment (2:1).

Another person said "One day our jute stock was burnt by fire. All our jute was burnt as the fire service was far away and the fire trucks did not arrive in time." (3:1). Another testimony informed "My husband used to gamble. He had to sell two bighas due to his heavy losses at the game. Then he fell ill and we had to sell the remaining two bighas." (3:6). However in a different interview one person said "having no son" (3:10) is one of the major reasons for her poverty.

The aforementioned discrete facts are also known to be responsible for creating debacles in a person's life. Nevertheless, it is evident in the testimonies of most of the slum dwellers that medical expenditure, death of father or husband can also be regarded as significant causes of their poverty.

The reasons for becoming poor in case of inhabitants of slum no.4 are also similar to the dwellers of the other slums. They have identified natural disasters like riverbank erosion and medical expenditure incurred due to illness or accidents occurred in the lives of their husbands or fathers as reasons for their becoming poor. (details in interviews 1 -10 of slum no. 4). "We had to mortgage all the land and property for my father's treatment. We had to sell our big tin shed house also. At last, we sold all our land and property." (4:3) can be mentioned as one of the evidences to support the information stated.

The nature of life experience of the poor people is quite similar. The evidences establish the understanding that the struggle or "success" and "failure" of the people belonging to the same class are influenced by their class-experience. Thus, a comparatively solvent family become extremely poor. Not one but all slum dwellers have become poor in this way.

The slum dwellers consider themselves as poor because of the oppression they face, the inhuman condition they are in, not being able to educate their children and their current living condition. It has been noticed that riverbank erosion, medical expenditure incurred and death of husband are dominant among the reasons for their becoming poor. The major reasons of becoming poor as stated in all the testimonies of slum no. 1 are similar in nature. This means that the life experiences of the people belonging to the same class are indifferent in nature. As an example, the main causes of poverty as stated in the second interview of the slum no. 1 are—(a) holding the person's father mostly responsible; (b) for not being able to study properly and (c) for not having any money. One person said, "I think my wife's illness was the root cause of my poverty. I was insured in the hope that I would have a better life. But my hopes have remained unfulfilled. I could not pursue higher studies. May be I would have gotten a good job if I were well educated." (1:1). Another woman stated her husband's death, not having any money and because the government does not provide any support as the major reasons for her becoming poor. (1:3).

Among the reasons the newly identified one is 'the government does not provide any support'. Some of the poor slum dwellers actually consider non-cooperation of the government as a reason for their becoming poor. They expect that the government should provide a citizen with aid at the time of their distress from which they are utterly deprived. The poor slum dwellers do not regard this failure or reluctance of the state as an "acceptable act".

The slum dwellers have criticised the government decision to limit the ply of rickshaw in Dhaka city or gradually making Dhaka rickshaw free. They stated that their poverty has

endured due to this decision as it has very largely decreased their daily income. The state should ensure rehabilitation of the rickshaw pullers before making the capital rickshaw free.

Regarding causes of poverty, similar type of information has been obtained from slum no. 2. They are (a) riverbank erosion, (b) husband's treatment and (c) regular payment of interest. It has been noticed that the nature and process of struggling of the marginalised people is somewhat same. The other causes are – (a) more than one marriage of husband; (b) payment of interest and (c) insolence and inefficiency of son (2:3) and death of father; (b) death of elder brother and (c) riverbank erosion (2:8).

It can be noticed from the lives of the marginalised people that similar causes prevail regarding the process of their being poor. There is hardly any difference is evident between men and women in these phenomena. However, in case of most women, death of their husbands can be mentioned as the only catalyst of their becoming poor (details slum no.2, interviews 1-10). The norm prevailing in our society that inflicts most women to be dependent on men has resulted 'death of husband' to emerge as one of the major reasons due to which women become poor.

Some of the slum dwellers have mentioned payment of dowry (interview 2:5), illiteracy (interview 2:9) and more than one marriage of husband (interview 2:3) as causes of poverty whereas few held the irregular working habit of their sons responsible for this. However, 'riverbank erosion' has been discerned as the common cause of marginalisation of the slum dwellers (details slum no.2, interviews 1-10).

The nature and causes of poverty as perceived and discerned by the dwellers of slum no.3 are similar to the inhabitants of the other slums. The reasons mentioned are (a) father's death; (b) subsequent deaths of brother and sister-in-law; (3:3) and (a) husband's death; (b) not having any children; and (c) illness of in-laws; (3:6). Like information were obtained from slum no. 4 where (a) husband's death; (b) son's illness; (c) defrauded by manpower recruitment agent and (d) loss in younger brother's business; have been identified as causes of poverty. The evidences prominently showed that when the members of lower income families suffer from any severe disease, they are compelled to sell their properties to manage treatment expenditure and thus they gradually become destitute.

The descriptions of the poor slum dwellers regarding the causes of poverty that they hold most responsible are identical. For example, the frequent causes of poverty as stated by the dwellers of slum no. 4 are -- (a) father's illness; (b) not having any land; and (c) not having any property or house; (4:3), (a) husband's disease; and (c) not having any money; (4:7) and (a) mother's illness; and (c) riverbank erosion; (4:2).

It has been noticed that most of the marginalised people have been sufferers to further deprivation due to physical illness, death or natural disasters. The duty of the state is to provide the citizens with support in these contexts. Moreover, according to the constitution of Bangladesh the marginalised people have the right to avail support. The Article 15(d) of the constitution states, "It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens- the right to social security, that is to say to public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment, illness or disablement, or suffered by widows or orphans or in old age, or in other such cases" (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Part-II, page 5). It is apparent from the testimonies that the government has completely failed to address the previously mentioned rights of the marginalised people.

Process of Adaptation

“There is no other alternative but to accept” or “yes, we are accepting” – these are the common comments made by all slum dwellers. Most of the persons interviewed are convinced that they have no hope of coming out of their current condition. The marginalised people are distressed and frustrated by such despair that does not bestow them any courage to break free from their current condition.

“I am forced to succumb to this condition.” (1:7)

Every single person has opined that s/he is forced to accept the prevailing condition. “We are yielding to this situation because we have no other options” (1:6) or “As we are poor, we have to survive in this condition as long as we live” (1:8) – these comments refer to the failure of the social system. In our society the poor people are such vulnerable as human beings that they cannot even assume any negligible positive change in their lives. It has been observed that even in a traditional social structure the state mechanism has become futile in changing the position and condition of its citizens.

The opinions gathered from the slum no. 2 are- “What else can be done but to accept this?” (2:5), “I am accepting this condition because I am poor” (2:3); “So long Allah has made us poor, what else can we do without accepting this?” (2:4). Many of the interviewers have expressed their desolation as above. Some of them tried to cope with the situation by making them understand that it is their fate that has bestowed upon by Allah.

As regards surviving their current condition as well as social relationship they opined, “What can I do but to accept this condition?” (2:5). The slum dwellers believe that the reality is as such that it is impossible for them to come out of this situation. That is why a submissive tone can be recognised when they said, “I don’t want to stand this abuse. But what else can I do?” (3:10) or “So, we have submitted ourselves to fate.” (3:9). In all the poor people some sort despair can be sensed which they have attained from practical experiences.

Ways to Eradicate Poverty

When asked ‘how they can come out of this situation’ almost all the persons interviewed mentioned about ‘government aid or support’. They believe that if only ‘government support’ can be ensured and obtained then they can come out of the inhuman condition that they are in. The people have admitted that they want to break free of this situation and in that case the government is the only authority to take required measures. Some of the respondents said that had the government been able to provide monetary support and improve the law and order situation then such dreadful situation would not have prevailed (details slum no.3, interviews 1-10).

“I simply cannot surrender to this situation. I want to triumph over it. But it is futile. Only government can free us” (3:7)

“I want to break free from this condition. For this, we need the help of the government. I think we can get out of this situation if the government helps us” (4:2). Only four among the ten persons interviewed in slum no. 4 who have expressed hope to come out of their present condition, have also admitted their inability to succeed by their own effort only (details slum no.4, interviews 2, 3, 4, 6).

It can be envisaged that considering the present ‘income’ or ‘social position’ of the marginalised people it is not possible for them to break free from the poverty cycle without any external help. That is why they have made comments like “if the government helps us”. Several rickshaw pullers said, “the government has limited the entry of rickshaws to many

roads. Had the government done anything for the rickshaw pullers like us, then we could have come out of this condition" (4:3). According to the information collected from the poor people living in the slums, eradication of their poverty is subject to the availability of government support.

4.2 Relationship between State and Citizen

The current research tried to explore the experiences and concepts of the marginalised people on the relationship between state and citizen as well as about their reciprocal duties and responsibilities. The objective of this initiative was to gather grassroots views on how much responsibility is the state enduring for its citizens, in a country like Bangladesh. This is because it is stated in the Article 19 and clause 2 of the constitution -- "The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic." (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Part-II, page 6). Therefore the views, concepts and consciousness of the marginalised slum dwellers on four issues were collected. These are (a) orientation, (b) rights, (c) service and (d) deprivation.

Orientation

Concepts and consciousness as citizens

It is important to know about the concept and consciousness of the marginalised slum dwellers on citizenship. The issues related to the needs, demands, rights and responsibilities of the citizens especially from the state become important when an individual is conscious about her/his 'citizenship'.

"I don't know about citizenship. I just cast votes during the elections." (3:6)

Among the poor dwellers of slum no 1, the men are quite conscious and informed about 'citizenship'. Most of the slum dwellers have given positive information about their being citizens (details slum no 1, interviews 1, 2, 8, 9, 10). However in this context, men are more informed than women. For example, from one person interviewed said, "I know that I am a citizen" (1:1) and another person said, "I have voted as a citizen" (1:6).

According to the testimonies, among the slum dwellers most of the men have said that they are citizens whereas only one woman has mentioned that she is conscious about citizenship. In fact, it has been apprehended that most of the women do not have much idea about it. The interviewed women said, "I don't know whether I am a citizen or not" (1:7) or "I don't know what citizen means" (1:4). As the marginalised women do not have much idea about citizenship, it can be said that the women slum dwellers have less political consciousness.

Almost all the persons interviewed from slum no.1 have opined that they know that they are citizens. One of them said, "I am a citizen of this country" (2:1). The others said, "I understand that I am a citizen" (2:3) and "I am a human being and a voter. So I am a citizen of Bangladesh" (2:9). From the comments made by the marginalised slum dwellers it can be mentioned that in spite of their poverty most of them are conscious about citizenship. However two women among the five interviewed from this slum has said that they do not know whether they are citizens. In their own words, "I do not understand what citizen is" (2:4) and "I...do not know what the term 'citizen' means" (2:5).

Regarding 'citizenship' the conception of most of the person interviewed from slum no. 3 are quite similar in nature. Alike the dwellers of most other slums, to them citizenship

means casting their votes. They said, "I took birth in Bangladesh, my name is enlisted in the population census and I am a voter. So, I consider myself a citizen of Bangladesh" (3:3) and "I am a citizen of Bangladesh because I was born here and I am a voter" (3:7). The perception of slum dwellers on citizenship is mostly focused on casting their votes. Similar information has been collected from slum no. 4 where one person said, "I have heard that if someone is born in Bangladesh then s/he is regarded as the citizen of Bangladesh. In that sense, I am also a citizen of Bangladesh. I have cast my vote twice" (4:5).

However, their overall perception on 'citizen' is quite elusive. This is because there is hardly any similarity between their concept of citizen and the theoretical periphery of the term 'citizen'. For example, most of them said that they are citizens because they cast vote. The others said, "We all cast our votes during election. Vote is our right as citizens" (4:3); and "I was born in Bangladesh. That is why I consider myself as a citizen of this country. I cast my vote because I have my name registered in the voter list. I do not know anything more than this." (4:2). Besides these there are some other comments that are also significant, such as "I do not know what 'citizen' means" (4:5). From the above information it is known that the concept of poor slum dwellers about 'citizen' is not much apparent because to them casting vote is 'citizenship'.

Relationship with other classes of the city

When asked about their relationship with other classes of the city the marginalised slum dwellers opined that the rich people hate them and look down upon them. The rich do not treat them as fellow human beings. One of the slum dwellers said, "The rich people pay us when we do work for them. They give us value when and if we can work otherwise we are ignored. They do not let us sit on their couch or bed" (2:5). Some of the interviewees have said that the rich do not value the poor even as much as they value their furniture.

"They become very angry if I bring my child at work." (4:10)

The 'behaviour of the middle income class' is said to be reasonable. The poor people have stated that the well off class of the city does not acknowledge their obligation to the poor and are not even considerate.

Different information has been collected regarding the relationship of the poor people with the other classes of the society. Some of the poor slum dwellers have mentioned that the rich do not consider the poor even as human beings. Had they considered then they would have helped the poor. They have also complained, "The wealthy people call us names" (1:8). Therefore, the poor slum dwellers are in a way dishonoured and ignored (details slum no. 1, interviews 1-10) by the members of other classes. Most of the women said that the rich people hate them (details slum no. 2, interviews 2, 3 and 4).

Ultimately, the poor hardly have any acceptance in the society. They do not have congenial relationship with the other classes of the city. Most of the slum dwellers have said that the upper and middle income class people of the society hate them (details interviews of slum no. 3). The persons interviewed said, "If I push the calling bell they call me names and ask whether I won't let them sleep in peace." (3:6) and "Slum dwellers have no position in the society" (3:4).

Most slum dwellers said that the rich people do not regard them as human beings. In reality the upper income class people of our city is not at all sympathetic to the poor. The mentioned statements support the same. One respondent said, "In which way would the rich treat us? I think that they do not look upon us in a positive way. They always neglect us because we live in the slum" (4:3). Another interviewee has expressed much annoyance as

he said, "The society does not regard the slum dwellers as human beings. They do not have any value in this society. The rich think that the slum dwellers are not human beings" (4:1).

From the aforesaid extracts there is no space to disagree that that none of the upper or middle income class people is compassionate to the marginalised slum dwellers.

Views of the poor slum dwellers on their acceptability to the other classes of the city

When asked how they are being accepted by the other classes of the city, the slum dwellers stated that they are constantly being humiliated by the educated city dwellers. The slum dwellers are not acceptable to the other classes of the society. However they are interested to live in harmony with them by developing mutual relationship. Some of the respondents informed that they struggle to accept the difference between human beings. The poor people want to socialise with the poor.

"They cannot stand us. We want to live in harmony with them but they don't want it." (3:3)

Difference of power structure

The concept of the poor people about power structure is based on their belief that riches or money is the source of power. Those who have money are powerful and influential and there lies a lot of difference between the influential people and them. They also consider the *mastans* (extortionists) as powerful. As a class they believe that they cannot be compared at all with the upper or middle-income classes of the society.

"Some influential people also come to extort money from us. If we don't pay up, they beat us We are being extorted constantly" (3:10)

The poor people are quite conscious about the difference of their 'power structure' with the structures of other city dwellers. However they have identified self-interest as the cause of disparity. Almost all interviewees have accused the government for not providing them with any facilities (details in slum no. 2).

The perception of the slum dwellers on 'power structure' did not seem much consistent. This is because the social explanation of 'power structure' cannot be depicted by their view. Nevertheless they believe that the *chandabaj* (illegal toll collector), police and ward commissioners are influential and basically money is the source of power. For example, one of the persons interviewed said, "If we don't comply with the wishes of the rich and the powerful we won't be able to live here" (3:6).

The dwellers of slum no. 4 also do not have any visible explanation on the difference between the power structure of the poor and other city dwellers but they understand the power structure by having money and own house. The foremost reason behind the difference of power among the two classes (the people who have power and who do not have any) is 'money'.

Discrimination among human beings is the indication of extreme failure of a society, which is evident in the information collected for research work. It is stated in the article 19 and clause 1 of the constitution "The State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens." (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Part-II, page 6). However it is observed that inside the power structure, the poor are most marginalised.

Rights

The poor slum dwellers were asked how conscious they are about their right to healthcare, education, housing and other basic needs. Diversified information has been obtained when they were asked whether they know about the basic rights that they are entitled to avail from the state as citizens. The government is obligated to ensure the basic rights of the citizens. The citizens have some basic rights to the state that the government must ensure. The opinions and experiences of the poor slum dwellers about whether the government is ensuring these rights are imperative.

Right to Education

The slum dwellers think that if the government could establish schools in their slums, then they could have educated their children there. They are being deprived of education because there is no school in the slums. Many have stated 'education' as their right. They believe that the government should ensure free and quality education for them. The testimonies proved that the government schools collect money as admission fees and examination fees from the slum dwellers although education is one of their basic rights. The state should withdraw all enrolment fees and examination fees for the poor people so that their children can afford to have education (details slum no 1, interviews 1-10). However, they have appreciated the government decision to ensure free education for girls and providing stipend to the girl students at high school level (1:3). They have also informed that the stipend money helped many families.

"Education is one of our basic rights but there is no government school in our area. Therefore, we cannot send our children to school." (2:8)

The slum dwellers have much interest about education and most of them believe that education brings prosperity. As girls' education is free, many were able to send their daughters to school. However, some have complained that on several occasions they had to pay money to the government schools. "My elder son used to read in a government school. We used to pay twenty taka per month for his tuition fees" (2:4). Another person also remarked "Although it was a government school, we had to pay fees at the time of examination. In addition, the school authority demands 80 taka per student for textbooks at the end of the year. I have paid that money each year. I had to pay the school authority money for his education. What is our benefit if we are to pay money" (2:1)

The poor slum dwellers are being deprived of proper education due to different reasons. Firstly, because sometimes they have to pay money to the government schools. Secondly, there are no government school in the slums. The poor people consider education as their right. It is evident from the following testimony "we have the right to education. But there is no government school nearby. Only private schools are there. I don't earn enough to send my children to that school (3:4) that the government has mostly failed to ensure that right.

Similar information has been noticed in another interview "We had a 'Proshika' school in the slum which has been torn down" (3:10) and "I have heard that the government has taken food For Education Programme. However, we do not get this facility." (4:2)

According to the information obtained from all the slums, the slum dwellers have perception and consciousness on their right to education along with other basic rights. However, they have informed that there remain some difficulties in availing these rights. Most of them have reported the failure of the government and expressed interest to participate in education if they can get any aid.

Right to health

They are aware of requirements for good health but it is difficult for them to consume food enriched with vitamins. The slum dwellers have complained about the dismally low quality of government health care services. They have stated that one has to buy tickets in government hospital and medicines are not easily available there (1: 1-10). One has expressed sorrowfully, 'My husband is sick but no one provides free medical treatment' (1:6). It is evident from this information that the poor are considering 'buying tickets in government hospital' and 'unavailability of free medicine' as the state's failure to provide services to its citizens.

Doctors treat patients when you buy tickets in the government hospital. But they don't provide medicines there and asks you to buy those from outside. (1:7)

They are moderately aware about healthcare but poverty prevents them from taking necessary steps. For example, 'We cannot eat good food for want of money. If we want to have leafy vegetables, it also costs 20 taka per kg' (2:4). When enquired whether they intake food enriched with vitamin, one slum dweller states, 'I can hardly manage the salt to have with rice. Where would I get vitamined food?'(2:2). They have reiterated their lack of economic resources. This they have identified as the main reason for their appallingly low standard of living. Some have proclaimed that they don't know much about health, but are well aware that vegetables contain vitamins (2:1).

The dwellers of the second slum have stated specific grievances against health care system. They have asserted that medicines are not available to them from the government hospitals. Not only that, they faced harassment during their visits to hospitals. A woman complained, 'We tried much but we could not get a bed in government hospital. Whenever we went the authority used to harass us by delaying for next day'(2:4). Other interviews also yielded similar type of information. So, the poor have complaints against government health services.

The slum dwellers have had similar types of experience regarding health care (For details, please refer to all interviews of slum 1,2,3,4). Interview 2 from the 3rd slum states their equity concerns, 'If we go to government hospitals, the doctors are not available. If they are available, they are otherwise engaged. If we take anyone for treatment there, they neglect us. But if wealthy people go there for check-up, they are treated well.' An excellent suggestion came up from another interview, 'We don't have any healthcare facility. We can't have treatment when we fall sick. They could at least build a hospital for us.'(3:8). Regarding right to health and education, the slum dwellers have expressed their concern that they cannot avail the facilities because of financial reasons. They think that government should take necessary steps to make health services accessible and available to the poor.

Right to Shelter

This research has found out that the poor have their own perceptions about shelter. They think it would be better if the government made provisions for their shelter but instead it tears down slums. They consider 'slum eviction' to be a violation of their rights. In fact they have expressed that the slum dwellers should be allotted land in various new residential projects.

I watch on TV that the government has given shelter to many people. But we do not get that. (4:7)

The poor slum dwellers think that they have the right to shelter and government should provide it. But they feel that the government is totally unsympathetic towards them. They consider their eviction from slums to be a grave injustice. One interview provides this

interesting insight, 'Instead of providing us shelter, the government wrests that away from us. The government has closed down the road to slum' (1:9)

Housing is vital to the slum dwellers because they live amongst filth and dirt which is quite harmful for their health. But many are not aware of government's responsibility in this regard. For example, some have stated, 'I know, we are entitled to free housing... It would have been helpful if the government would have given us free accommodation.' (2:2) so, many are aware that they are entitled to shelter but they are blaming the government for not providing them with it. In fact, a concern has been voiced that the rich are being allotted with land. So, this research brings out the poor people grievances regarding government's inability to provide adequate housing facilities. 'The relatives of the ministers are given the Khas land (government/public land) which we were supposed to get' (2:8). So, the finding comes out that the poor have the right to housing and government land and they hold government responsible for not making housing accessible and affordable to them.

Like other slum dwellers, the residents of slum 3 are also of the same opinion. They consider the government to be totally indifferent to their problem. Some have stated that they are being extorted. '...we have to pay forced contribution. The police comes and tears down our shacks for money' (3:2). This is considered to be a gross violation of their right.

The slum dwellers have stated that if they did not have to pay rent for their shacks then they could use that money for their poverty alleviation. Housing is their basic right. But instead of providing that, the government tears down the slums and makes them homeless. 'The new government ousted us for constructing permanent road on the embankment. The government should have taken some measures for our rehabilitation but it did nothing' (4.4).

All these voices sum up to a passionate plea for equitable evaluation of their rights as citizens of the state. Many were of the opinion that 'citizen's rights' are just words that can be found in books but are of no pragmatic implications whatsoever.

Right to water, sanitary latrine, sewerage and garbage disposal

Information collected regarding water supply, sanitary latrine, sewerage system and garbage disposal shows that the slums do not have minimum provisions for this. The slum dwellers opined that these services should be made available as soon as possible.

There is no sanitary latrine. The condition of our slum is very shocking. The children use open spaces as toilet. (4:4)

Otherwise, maintaining minimum quality of life as citizens of a country would be impossible. The slum dwellers are well aware of the fact that government is obligated to fulfil these basic needs, but they have vouched for government's lack of concern for coming up with solutions. One has stated, 'I know that it is the responsibility of the government – to supply water and sanitary latrines, but these are no longer supplied by the government' (2.1). Another has made an incisive comment, "I know that we have rights from the government. But what is the use of knowing this when the government will never fulfil our rights" (4:3)

So, it seems that they are in desperate need of fulfilling these rights. In fact, the services have been made inaccessible to them due to the lack of proper steps taken by the government. 'We have no fixed place to emit waste, we throw them anywhere' (4.8). 'People would have suffered less from diseases if there were a latrine' (3.3). Comments like this makes it evident that the slum dwellers are compelled to live in an environment which is unfit to meet the bare essentials of human decency and dignity.

Right to livelihood

Most of the slum dwellers have accused the government of violating human rights regarding livelihood options. They are of the opinion that government does not take any steps for their earning livelihoods. Instead, prohibiting the access of rickshaws to various roads, the government is restricting their means of livelihood. Many have stated that eviction from footpath has also led to disastrous implications for their livelihood.

If a factory were built here it would have provided employment for us and we could have lived a better life. (3:3)

Jobs are needed to generate income. But slum dwellers have the complaint that instead of creating employment opportunities, the government limits the scope of work. Instances of closing down various mills and factories have been cited in this respect.

No one has made any direct comments regarding livelihood. But most of them stated that their earning was not sufficient to maintain their families. Most of the slum dwellers are rickshaw and van pullers, footpath traders, housemaids and cooks. They think that income from this occupations are nowhere near enough to sufficiently fulfil the basic needs.

Right to information

Most of the slum dwellers did not consider having access to much information very useful. The people interviewed did not think information served them in beneficial ways. But some were of the opinion that they should remain informed. Some have cited the example of vaccination program to which they took their children after knowing about it from television.

I do not keep information about current happenings. What is the benefit, when nothing reaches us? (4:6)

Everyone unanimously agreed that the government is obligated to fulfil the demands of the poor citizens. But they have also mentioned that the government does not fulfil any of those. So, the lack of government's accountability to its citizens has been iterated forcefully once again.

The slum dwellers have shown minimal interest in keeping informed. Most of them questioned whether there is any benefit of staying well informed. (For details, all the interviews of slum 1,2 and 4 can be viewed). But one has stated, 'We also know that the government took initiative for demolishing this slum' (3.3).

Discussing the implications of staying informed, some have stated, 'We keep information about current happenings, but it is of no use' (4.8). These type of comments only shows that the poor citizens don't consider any proactive role in keeping updated to be 'positive' for them. In fact, the continuous trend of thwarted expectations have turned them into an extremely frustrated and pessimistic lot.

Equal Opportunity

Most of the slum dwellers seem to know about the equal rights of the both sexes. But, especially the women interviewees have disclosed that they are less entitled than their male counterparts. Examples of discriminatory wage patterns have been cited. The women are paid less even after carrying out similar workload as men. One woman interviewee has stated, "We the women do not get any right. The husbands always oppress us" (2:1). So, it seems that the poor people are conscious about the equal rights of the both sexes.

They say, both the sexes have equal rights but reality is different. If a man has a salary of 2000 taka then a woman receives only 1200/1300 taka. (3:1)

Residents of different slums have divergent views on equal rights. For example, the interviewees of slum 3 think that there are no practical implications of equal rights irrespective of sex. There is no equal right in practice. The strongest example cited was of gender determined wage differentials. Marked indifference of state regarding inequitable wage rates have also been noted by the slum dwellers. Even though Bangladesh is a signatory to ILO Convention which unequivocally and categorically declares that there would be no discrimination between the wage of men and women. So, government should take steps to implement the ILO Convention.

Right to establish relationship with people outside the slums

Everyone is eager to establish congenial relationship with people outside the slum and they think that everyone should live as members of the same society. But reality is drastically different. Most of the slum dwellers have passionately articulated the discrimination faced by them in their day to day life by outsiders and the curt rebuff experienced by them in any attempts to build relationship outside the slum.

The wealthy people just turn around when we try to speak to them. They consider us unworthy of their company (3:7)

Fundamental rights

They don't have lucid concept of this. Most of the slum dwellers did not articulate clearly regarding these. But they have stated that all rights are inter-related and complementary.

Opinion on Government Obligation to fulfilling rights

The interviewees have been unanimous in articulating that the government is obligated to fulfilling their rights, which it is not doing at the moment. Some of them strongly believe that government's attempts at fulfilling their rights are being thwarted by the rich and the powerful. The slum dwellers strongly believe that as citizens, they are fully entitled to the fulfilment of their rights. This has been a recurring theme in almost all the interviews. So, there is no doubt that the slum dwellers are fully aware of their entitlements. But they have also opined that the government has completely failed to ensure the fulfilment of their rights. As evidence, they have cited that they have not received their due as the citizens of the country.

The government is obligated to grant us our rights. But some powerful people obstruct that (3:2)

Service

The State is constitutionally obligated to serve the citizens. According to the Article 15 and Clause (a) of the Constitution, "It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens- the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care" (The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Part-II, page 5). The research has also shed some light on the extent of public services availed by the slum dwellers. They have made significant and insightful evaluation of the government and the City Corporation which have unanimously reached the verdict that the State has abjectly failed to fulfil demands of its citizens.

Demands from the City Corporation

When enquired about the demands from the City Corporation, similar types of information have been provided by the interviewees. They have reached the verdict that the City Corporation is a complete failure as an administrator and public service provider.

A long history of continuous deprivation by the City Corporation has forced the slum dwellers to stop demanding services from it. Regarding this, a feeling of utter futility has resonated throughout the interviews. 'We don't have water and electricity. If we meet the commissioner for this purpose, he shoos us away saying that we will get those. But he forgets us when we come back' (3.10). 'We expect many things from the City Corporation. But we the slum dwellers get nothing. We do not get any facility from the City Corporation or the government (4.2). The slum dwellers have expressed their opinion that neither the City Corporation nor the government serve them as they should. They have complained that even the emergency utility services like water and electricity are beyond their access.

They have been of the same opinion that the City Corporation does not supply them anything. Repeated requests and implorations to the Ward Commissioners have proved to be futile and fruitless. Some have said that the commissioner is available only during the canvassing period for election. At other times s/he remains aloof. They have concluded that the Corporation is an unresponsive institution.

We expect many things from the City Corporation which we don't get. They only come to us during the canvassing period and promise that they would improve the condition of the slum. But they forget it afterwards. (3:4)

Facilities provided by the City Authority and Government

The information collected about the services from the city administration clearly indicates that the poor slum dwellers are not at all happy about the quality of service. Almost everyone has stated that, as the City Corporation supplies hardly anything, it is fruitless to demand from them. Some have said that the commissioner is available only during the canvassing period for election. At other times s/he is not available.

The slum dwellers hardly receive any services. Some have mentioned that, at times roads have been constructed or serviced, but it has contributed more to their loss than benefit. Their landlord has increased the rent in this pretext.

The interviewees have complained that only election time makes the candidates or the people holding tenure available to them who stop coming to them once they get elected. They don't receive relief goods, nor do they receive aid from the government during natural disasters.

They have also expressed their grievance that they have ceased to expect anything because none of their expectations have been fulfilled. As citizens, they are entitled to electricity and gas services but the State has either failed or it is not at all interested to serve the poor. The government has only increased the price of the essentials but has not taken any steps to provide the public their due services. For example, one interviewee states, 'we poor don't have much money, but the price hike is unrelenting. Potatoes cost 15/16 taka, onions cost 30/32 taka. Other essentials are also beyond our reach' (1.7).

Most have been quick to point out that neither the State nor the City Corporation provides any service to the slums. They have stated to the researchers that they have been

The government never provides anything in the slums. No electricity or running water is provided. We have to cook with firewood. (1:6)

compelled to drink filthy and stinking water but the government has not taken any steps. Another's experience was, during thirty years' stay in the slum, no assistance whatsoever was available from the side of the State.

Service Charges

The slum dwellers were not deemed to be aware of paying the State or the City Corporation. But they have expressed that they don't receive anything from these authorities. Some have even complained that what is the use of paying tax as the government has failed to provide basic amenities?

We know that we pay the government in various ways. But government does not give anything in return. (1:4)

Most of the slum dwellers have expressed their disappointment at the unavailability of the State's services. There are complains that even though the supplied water was filthy and stinking, government did not take any preventive measures. In a nutshell, the slum dwellers consider the State to be a resounding failure in providing them services as per the social contract between the State and the citizens.

4.3 Deprivation

Perception on Deprivation

All the slum dwellers are unanimous in agreement that they live in constant deprivation. There are many pronged reasons for their deprivation. No service provided by the government and the City Corporation, price hike, decreasing livelihood options- in short, exclusion from fundamental rights has led to their deprivation.

I am denied because I have never received anything from the government. (1:6)

Information from the slum 1 clearly shows that the slum dwellers consider themselves to be deprived. 'I am an excluded person. ... Even firewood costs money. How will we subsist with the rapidly rising prices? Government is hurting us through stopping our access to food, electricity and water' (1.5).

When enquired if they feel deprived, everyone replied in one voice that they do. One commented, 'I consider myself as deprived. We do not get any help from the government... We are getting nothing at all. What is left in life!' (2.4). Everyone considered himself or herself to be deprived, denied and excluded because they don't receive any support even for the essentials for their subsistence. Most feel that they have been grossly neglected by the government. Some considers the State to be playing a role of 'harasser' (Interviews in slum 3)

'I consider myself to be deprived from the state and the society. Because I do not get the rights from the governments as I should' (4.1). they are fully aware of their lives amongst various forms of deprivation. They have stated that their needs are taken care of by the government, as it should be. They have also stated that they are not even getting services in return for their payment. 'He has taken money from us to make provision for electricity service in the slum. But that is yet to happen' (3.5).

Numerous examples substantiate the claim of the slum dwellers that they are deprived by the government and the City Corporation.

Process of Deprivation

Interviewees are very much conscious and analytical about the process of deprivation. They think that they are deprived in all the facets of human rights- health, education, housing. They have even identified inaccessibility to credit as part of the deprivation process. According to their analysis, not receiving assistance from the State, price hike of essential goods and services, limited employment opportunity- all are parts of the deprivation process. One has stated, 'Government is gradually increasing the electricity, gas and water consumption bills. The house owners are also increasing the house rent. They say that government has increased the price of everything. You have to pay more house rent. We cast vote for the government and pay tax. Well, the government does not help us in any way. So, what is the use of giving tax?' (2.4)

Society, state and City Corporation overlooks us and our needs. We don't have the right to free speech. (3:6)

The residents of slum three have also concurred that they are deprived from all the basic necessities. Especially 'right to free speech, which is not reflected in reality' (3:7), and 'law and order' (3:10) have also been identified as causes of deprivation. Some have also identified extortion as a cause of deprivation. These have invariably referred to the State's failure to successfully intervene in the process of deprivation.

While asked about the process of deprivation, they have stated the aforementioned crises regarding 'rights' and 'public services'. Inaccessibility of healthcare, education, electricity and gas services have emerged as instances of deprivation. Relevant information extracted from one interview states, 'We have no dustbin, no sanitary latrine and no gas supply. We buy firewood from outside for cooking. The government does not want to give us any opportunity. It gives loan to only those who can repay it' (4.8)- comments like these also encapsulate their process of deprivation.

Process of Adaptation

The slum-dwellers have forcefully declared that they do not accept the present situation. But they have also vented their frustration by stating that there is no way out. The State has repeatedly failed to fulfil their basic rights even though the Constitution has committed to fulfilling these rights.

I have resigned myself to the current situation and kept faith in Allah for redemption. (3:4)

'This is an unacceptable situation. We want to break free, but we are not being able' (1:3) or 'The poor are not part of any society; theirs is a life of humiliation' (1.7) – these comments only illustrates the feeling of utter helplessness as experienced by the slum dwellers which eventually forces them to succumb to the prevailing situation. They don't know any 'strategy' that can help them become free from a life of abasement. Their pervasive frustration is evinced throughout their interviews, 'I always worry how to get out of this mess, but I don't see any way out' (1:6). The reality is like this. It does not signal any viable exit strategy for the poor from their inhumane condition. So, the slum dwellers have grudgingly accepted this situation. Some have attempted to defy the gravity of the situation, 'I simply cannot surrender to this situation. I want to triumph over it' (3:7) while others have opined, 'I have submitted to this condition because I have no other choices. Once I had hopes and aspirations' (3:8). But most slum dwellers have resigned to fate and seek for help from Allah.

4.4 Poverty Alleviation Strategy

Those who have lived in dire poverty have their own thoughts and plans for their poverty alleviation. These 'poverty alleviation considerations' by the poor are significantly important in their own way. This research has collected information regarding this.

Plans for poverty alleviation

Everyone considers 'government's assistance' essential to overcome poverty. They think that personal initiative and capacity is not sufficient to become free from deprivation.

Only government can free us from this unbearable situation. (3:6)

Some have stated that if his/her son could secure a job then their misery would be over. One has come up with a recommendation, 'if the rules of the administration can be is governed properly, we can overcome this situation' (2:8)

The poor can identify their deprivation all by themselves and they have valuable opinions of how to overcome this- it has been an important finding of this research. Their experiences would contribute significantly to determining poverty reduction strategies.

Residents of slum 3 have expressed that only with government's assistance can they become free from poverty. Some have been replete with frustration, 'I don't see any way out of this situation' (3:5). A group of people becomes devoid of all hope of triumphing in their struggle only when they don't have a single ray of hope to guide them. The poor people's comments have reflected this acute frustration.

'If the government could help us a bit or could provide us with shelter, then we could have come out of this situation' (4:8). Another slum dweller states, 'If I could increase the capital of my business then I think I could come out of this condition' (4.2).

The above quoted comments and their analysis shows that the slum dwellers' own 'capacity' is not enough to reduce their poverty. SO, they deem it necessary that they get assistance from government or credit from other sources.

Imitable poverty alleviation strategy

Most of the slum dweller had similar experiences in this regard. Some of the slum dwellers who had some education have left the slum after getting jobs. Some others have started small businesses and reduced their poverty through increased income. Others have stated that they are not aware of such incidents.

Some are doing illegal business. They have earned a lot, built houses of their own and bought land. I don't want to earn in that way. I want to live on my honest income. (3:8)

Most of them have said that they have seen only a few overcome their poverty through individual initiatives. Some have left the slum after their husbands got a good job. In some cases, the son of the slum dweller has started running a shop after completing studies and has become solvent in the process. (Slum 2; interview- 1,2,3,4,5)

Residents of the slum no. 3 have said that they don't support those who have become free from poverty through illegal means and they don't want to alleviate their poverty through such dishonest means.

Ways to be free from poverty

Most of the slum dwellers think that 'government assistance' or a job could contribute to their poverty alleviation. But some also think that being educated may lead to freedom from poverty. Others are of the opinion that if the government made provisions for their free housing, then they could do something else with the rent and gradually emerge free from the thrall of poverty.

Either a job or capital of 10/20 thousand taka would have made me self-sufficient. (1:5)

In this research, the poor citizens have given some very important information regarding poverty alleviation. To answer the question, 'how can one be free from poverty?' the interviewees mainly responded with three types of strategy- State's financial assistance, job and education. Some others have stated that government housing could solve their problems. Most of the slum dwellers are of the opinion that 'a minor government job' or business with 'capital provided by the government' can alleviate their poverty (1: 1-10). Similar information has been collected from another interview, 'If the government provided free housing, some capital then I could have expanded my business and earned more' (1:4). Also 'I could have started a business if I had received assistance from the government' (1:1). So, the poor people have ideas of their own about how to overcome their poverty; application of which will successfully alleviate their poverty. These experiences are quite important in determining poverty reduction strategies. One interviewee has stated, 'If I could manage some money or if the government could sanction some money for me, then I think could have managed to break free from this condition by starting a business at my village home' (2:9).

Another one has commented, 'If I were provided with a job, and had the luxury of a permanent accommodation my sufferings would have been lessened. Had my son been provided with a good job, he would be able to take the responsibility of the family' (2:2).

The important finding of this research work is that the poor are capable of determining poverty reduction strategies based on their own experiences. These excluded people can enrich the present development theories using their experience.

'If the government helped me with some money for business and some land to build a house then I could have earned from business and house rent (3:1). Most of the slum dwellers don't consider their own position or capability sufficient to triumph over their present adversities. So they have expressed that they require assistance from 'external sources' for their 'poverty alleviation'. The quotations substantiate this. For example, 'I just have one request to the government; it should ensure the rights of the slum dwellers. I wish it would lend business capital to us' (3:6). Similar information is seen, 'If I received assistance from the government or the commissioner or if some NGO gave me some credit.' (3:8)

'If we could get some help from the government' (4:8). All the poor think that their condition can be improved through small businesses (4: 1-10). But according to some, government provision for housing would have freed up the money used as rent and could be put to poverty alleviation purposes. 'If the government could provide us with shelter then we would not have to pay the house rent every month. We could have bought a rickshaw with that money' (4:6).

Some have also spoken out that education in slums could lead to reduction of poverty. They think that if education was made accessible and affordable to them then their sons could study and subsequently get jobs, which would reduce unemployment. 'I think if our children are provided the opportunity to pursue their studies, they would succeed in triumphing over this situation. They can be employed and support us' (3:2). These

comments illustrate the utility of education in poverty reduction as deemed by the slum dwellers.

4.5 Macro-level context of the Oral Testimonies and its implications

A differential diagnosis is clearly required of the determinants of increasing numbers of slum dwellers in Bangladesh today and the various contexts in which slums occur. More specifically, evidence suggests that the incidence and number of people living in slums is not necessarily reduced by faster economic growth. Indeed, a number of slums have flourished during times of significant economic growth, when labor migration pull factors went unaccompanied by adequate housing and settlements for new city residents (as was the case of the garments sector boom in Bangladesh). This is an example of dysfunctional economic growth, or more specifically a process where sustained economic growth takes place without any institutional mechanisms to redistribute its benefits in a socially equitable manner. Such inequity in benefit-distribution is critically and directly linked with the quality of life of slum dwellers. In addition, it is also important to note that slums of a critical size relative to the local economy can themselves hamper the true growth potential of an urban agglomeration by impairing the effectiveness and labour efficiency of significant portions of the potential working force, with serious repercussions on national growth. Indeed, although a significant surplus in the urban labour force has historically allowed for worker exploitation, that very exploitation has worked against long-term, effective, and sustainable economic growth.

However, it is evident from the oral testimonies that the slum dwellers are not getting the attention they deserve to help ensure that slum conditions improve for low-income populations. Some of the root causes of less than optimal attention at present are:

1. Government's policies and investments lack an understanding of the full complexity of processes of slum formation and/or are not influenced by or accountable to citizens.
2. Government restricts the resources and powers available to democratically elected city and municipal governments.
3. The unfortunate juxtaposition of the images of the "good peasant" feeding the nation vs. the slum dweller as bearer of crime and disease.

This is rooted in a historical trend of discrimination that blames the circumstances on the characteristics of the individuals concerned - it was their lack of education, improvidence, inability to maintain a job, and predisposition for petty crime that led to their being slum dwellers. From the vantage point of many in the bureaucracy and even the state itself, slum dwellers are considered to be rural interlopers who had no place in "their" city.

This unfortunate scenario exposes two facts. First, the contribution of the slum dwellers is ignored. It is conveniently overlooked that slums exist because they differentially benefit different groups in an urban centre as well as the larger economy – be it landlords, illegal land developers, water vendors, politicians who aid their formation, expansion, or servicing, as well as employers who keep wages down, ignore occupational health and safety regulations – or subcontract to other employers who will on their behalf in the name of cost-cutting. Slum dwellers' livelihoods are quite often an integral part of a city's economy, but if such activities transpire in informal sectors then slum dwellers themselves are not privy to the formal public safety nets they would otherwise enjoy (i.e., labour safety standards, minimum wage, health benefits, etc). In such a case, these low-income urban residents are both included and excluded from the social life of the city, and via the city, national and

global activities – an ironic scenario of being included in producing benefits and excluded from receiving them.

Second, Insufficient political will of government to invest in the improvement of the living conditions of the urban poor. As a result, the urban poor receive a disproportionately small proportion of the benefits from urban development planning, public infrastructure provision, and overall economic growth. This anti-poor bias in government commitments also has clear links with *gender inequality*. Overcoming such issues concerns the address of both the “formal” structure of government institutions (e.g. high degree of centralization) as well as their “informal” characteristics, such as inefficiency, corruption, and gender biases. Furthermore, a wrong policy approach of slum clearing is being adopted, instead of slum upgrading. Ideally, the central policy concern is the need for affordable housing with full municipal amenities. By way of contrast, slum clearance, only results in the relocation of slums within an urban area. It fails to deal with the underlying problem: the lack of affordable housing. Again, as discussed above, this need varies according to the different priorities of the groups or individuals in question. In other words, a solution offering permanent residence to the migrant worker and costly temporary housing to the very low-income family seeking stability and permanence in a particular locale is simply not suitable nor a real improvement. Interventions in improving the lives of slum dwellers must take into account the diversity of what different low-income residents in this definition rubric can realistically afford to pay for housing, their location and quality priorities, size needs, etc.

As resources will always be relatively limited, City Corporation needs to get rid of its inertia as observed by the slum dwellers in their testimonies and focus on “doing more with less”. Appropriate, insightful examples of how and where City Corporation should intervene, acting as a catalyst to other positive developments, are crucial. In addition, the direct involvement of slum dwellers and low-income urban communities in planning and improvement initiatives (community contracts, relocation schemes, assisted self-help housing, community development schemes, micro-credit programs, tenure regularization, etc) should be ensured to fulfil their basic citizens’ rights.

An impending threat of a dichotomous city seems to be prevalent from the Oral Testimonies. It is the dichotomy between citizens and non-citizens that has accentuated the impasse between the “two cities” – the city of privilege and the city of despair. On one hand, all the privileges are being accumulated to the rich, on the other hand, the rights of poor citizens are egregiously violated and public services are being denied to them on the multifaceted grounds of accessibility, availability, affordability and acceptability. But this dichotomy spells potential disaster for everybody. The walls between the haves and the have-nots can only go so high. These barriers create explosive situations, which have led, and will increasingly lead in the future, to confrontation and violence. Furthermore, this marginalisation and exclusion impose hardships on the most vulnerable segments of society, primarily women and children. Nobody stands to gain from the “divided city”. Only a few entrenched members of today’s urban society think that the walls between the privileged and the dispossessed can stand up forever. However, one cannot isolate oneself permanently from the city, which is, by definition, a public space. The false security enjoyed behind gated communities and walled compounds is negated every day by the risks that loom for all those who dare leave such gates. Remaining action-less about the underlying problems and building higher walls only exacerbates danger and prepares the ground for future disaster. Enormous sums of money are being wasted in seeking individual solutions to a collective social problem – the divided city. The only efficient and effective solution is to

promote conditions of well being and dignity for the *whole population* of the city. Only real stakeholders have a real interest in peace, law, and order.

The most meaningful way to abolish this dichotomy is to ease the transition of the slum dwellers from *inhabitants of precarious urban settlements* to *citizens with full civic rights and responsibilities*. The adoption of such a perspective would mark a monumental departure from the conventional approaches followed so far by the government. These approaches have been piecemeal and project-based. Often, the improvements gained by individual interventions of a sectoral nature (be it shelter, housing, sanitation, community development, or other areas) are at the discretion of benevolent agencies and external funding, and are thus short lived. It is essential to create the conditions whereby the urban poor are enabled to become masters of their own destinies and integral to the cities in which they live and work. Unless the State is willing to undertake its full responsibilities as dictated by the sacrosanct social contract between the state and the citizen, it will not be able to discard the stigma of an unresponsive state as branded by its suppressed but unvanquished citizens, namely the slum dwellers whose unified voice has been encapsulated in the oral testimonies.

CHAPTER FIVE REFLECTIONS ON CONTEXTUALISING ORAL TESTIMONY METHODOLOGY

One of the important objectives of the study was to find how the 'oral testimony' method of research could be made more appropriate and context specific for social research. Based on the experience of the OT collectors in conducting oral testimony interviews, reflections on contextualising oral testimony methodology is presented in this chapter.

Testimony Collectors' Reflections on Oral Testimony methodology

OT Collectors Reflections on the Process – 1 (Katasur Slum)

At first, I did not understand what work to do or what the job will be like and how will I do it. After I came to the training, I learned and understood. The training was supposed to be for three days but it took us six days to complete because we needed to understand properly and without difficulty. It was good for me. I never worked in the fields; this is my first time so I faced difficulty in understanding the method and nature of the job. When I understood the relationship between state and the citizen and the deprivation issue, it helped me a lot. The teacher in the training was supportive and helped me a lot. They made us understand very well and made the job easier. We had much experience when we went to work in the fields. We could extract the inner feelings of the slum dwellers in form of informal discussion. To do that, at first we had to make a congenial environment by talking with them. They have also talked to us like friends/relatives and answered us excellently. I liked working with this OT method. I worked in the Tejgaon slum. Firstly, they behaved with me very well but some of them were annoyed. At the beginning, they did not want to understand. Many people had previously come, annoyed/disturbed them and gave good hopes. Some had taken money from them. However, no one had ever helped them or made any favour. That is why some felt disturbed but after I told them about my work, they understood easily and answered my questions very well. I did not feel any inconvenience at first but later on, I had some problems when some did not want to talk with me or some did not regard him/herself as poor or when some left. Few have stated that as Allah has given them everything, why they should be poor if they work properly. Therefore, I have discarded them and replaced them with new people. Some were furious so did not want to talk with me, and asked if talking with me would help them in any way. If not then they would not talk. I felt that it was not wise to force some one to talk and so I omitted them. After that, I had no difficulty in making people understand. However, I tried to help the people who faced problems to understand. Some of them did not understand what citizen means and some did not know about deprivation. I helped them to understand and then they gave answers.

The questionnaire helped us to gather proper information. If the question paper was not with us, then all the answers may not be available. Sometimes I forgot the order of the questions and the questionnaire helped me a lot to remember. However, I did not have to consult the paper repeatedly, once was enough to remember the whole sequence.

We felt some inconvenience to take the prolonged interview. Our job was at first make a friendly environment then gradually after repeated questions; take out the inner views of the poor slum dwellers in the form of informal discussion or chat. Then it was observed that the individual/people are answering me perfectly. In the process, they sometimes used to say many things, which were of no use to me, but I could not just stop them. Therefore, I had to listen to him. When I saw that the respondent is far from

answering my questions, I had to make him come back to the track. In this way, it takes a lot of time. I cannot rush, as the result will be harmful for my work and not all the answers may come. It caused us little inconvenience but as it is our duty and job, we should try to work it out with responsibility. The people whom I interviewed viewed the length of time as an advantage and as a disadvantage. The advantage was some of them hoped that their views could make a difference or could be beneficial for them. They were not annoyed if they did not receive any help, as we promised them to give consolation prizes/gifts. Some of them were mad at us. When I was in the Tejgaon slum, a woman seeing me with papers and pens did not want to talk with me or give me any time. She told me that she would rather sell handmade cakes in the market than talk with me. After convincing her, she agreed to sacrifice her time for me. The garments factory workers do not have free time and have to work even in the Fridays. They cannot give any time during the day so they agreed to talk with me at night. But they have much house hold work to do at night. During these works, they managed some time for me so they were annoyed. Those who are household help (*Bua*), have to work until afternoon so they gave me time at afternoon returning from their job. The housewives were easily available for conversation though they also had their work. Some were annoyed because of the duration of the interview. They could have done other things during this period like the woman who is a household help could take rest. She could not take rest because of the conversation. The garments factory worker also was displeased and could not take rest or sleep, as she had to talk with me up to late at night. It was little inconvenient as she had some household works at hand but little time to do that. She also had to take care of her children.

Besides the household works they have other jobs outside. Both the men and women felt inconvenience to manage time after a whole day's job. Everyone wants some rest after returning home from a day's work. They had to use that time for us. We have omitted those who did not want to give time and took new respondents. The inner views of the slum dwellers can be extracted by informal discussions in this OT method.

OT Collectors Reflections on the Process - 2 (Modhubazar Slum)

When Aminul Sir informed me about a new job, he stated that we would have two days training. After that, we would work in the fields. But it took six days to complete the training. The subject we were trained on was a complex one so it took more time to understand. Later we understood that very well. The people who gave training were very friendly and cordial in making us realise everything.

After the training, we hardly faced any trouble in finding respondents. This is because at first, we have divided the slum into four blocks and drawn a map and chalked out the location of the men and women according to profession. Then after talking to them, we have listed them according to the required age and profession.

I did not feel any inconvenience in location the respondents and took the interview at the time specified by the respondents. All the interviews were properly done.

When I asked them about nature and causes of poverty, they answered promptly and easily and narrated many events of their life.

They easily understood the questions on relationship between the state and the citizen. When asked about the slum dweller's relationship with the government people and the rich, they expressed their inner views. The next question was on, his views about the rich of the society and what the rich think of the slum dwellers. This two questions annoyed many people. I think that the answer they give to the question about the relationship

between the rich people and the slum dwellers is the same as the answer of the two questioned mentioned above. They did not have any problem regarding the questions on rights. The respondents answered correctly.

They were annoyed about the question of 'services'. They confuse the answers with the answer that they have given in the questions of 'rights'.

We did not have any problem about the questions on deprivation. But as the same questions were repeated, they were irritated. While asking the question they sometimes said, "I have answered this before. How many times will I have to answer it?" In 'deprivation' there is a question asking, how can you come out of this situation and what are your thoughts and plans? Again, in 4.1 there is another, how can you breakaway from poverty. As the same type of questions were asked two or three times, the respondents were irritated.

They respondents think that there are too many questions altogether. They complain, "You people ask too many questions". According to my work experience, I think the questionnaire is appropriate for gathering information. Although there are many questions and the respondents get annoyed, I think that correct information can be obtained.

OT method takes more time than other methods and so the respondents show reluctance. They seem to feel inconvenience or may not want to talk because of the long time the interview requires. However, I did not feel any inconvenience regarding the time.

OT method is a very efficient method to acquire information. The questions in this method make people express the pain of deprivation, the emotions and anger of the heart and in this process their inner views or facts. My one-month's experience supports this. If the questions are not asked part-by-part, rather they are incorporated, and then it would be helpful for the respondents. They think that the time taken for the interview is long, they will not be annoyed and will give correct information if the time is shortened.

OT Collectors Reflections on the Process – 3 (Mohakhali)

In training at first, I had much difficulty to understand, as it was my first opportunity of my life to work in the fields. Later, teachers of my training helped me, as many ways as they can to understand the different features and language of the interview. Eventually I had no problems in understanding or working in the fields.

I gathered much experience while working in the fields. For example, I liked to talk with the poor and listen to the stories of their life. While taking the interview of the respondents I had to answer to many people and I did that comfortably. I am confident that I answered all their questions, made them understand my work properly and also effectively gathered correct information from them. Both of us felt no inconvenience.

Sometimes there were many difficulties in making people realise the questions but the advantages were greater. The illiterate people had problems but others who had a little education could understand the questions easily. I believe that the questions were very helpful for acquiring information and many facts came out in the discussion.

There were some inconveniences to take the interviews for so long as we had talk at night after fasting for the whole day. For that reason, the respondent felt honoured to participate in the interview and express his/her inner views. They also said, "We could never talk like this with anybody before. You are the first one."

I think that by using this method we could gather all the information we needed to know. So our success rate is hundred percent.

OT Collectors Reflections on the Process - 4 (Tejgaon Slum)

One day I was having tea with four or five of my friends in a tea stall near my house. There I saw my Mr. Aminur, standing beside the road for a long time saying nothing to anybody. At one point he approached us and gave us his regard (gave salam). He then said to one of my seniors of the locality, "I need to talk to you" and started conversation. He was looking for an educated man/boy. However, in our slum few people who have any education can hardly write their names. No one with more education was available. I had no intention of working. As there was no one available in our slum, I agreed to work. Then after a discussion with Mr. Aminur, he told me to come to his office one day. I went to the office on 09/10/2003. There we were introduced to Mr. Jakir and he told me that training would start from 15/10/2003. Then we went to the office on the specified date for training. At the beginning of the training, we could not understand anything. Our training was supposed to be for two to three days. On the second day, we understood some things.

On the third day training, none of us could understand one thing. So, a new one was constructed to replace the old training manual. We had to attend the training for four more days instead of two. We started our fieldwork on 21/10/2003. First day at work, I interviewed a man called Ansar Ali, who is a rickshaw puller. He did not want to give me much time. He told me, "I cannot give you any time. I can earn one hundred taka with the time I have to sacrifice for you." I had to persuade Ansar Ali to give an interview. While working, I found out that not everyone wants to give time like Ansar Ali. I believe that time is the biggest problem of this new method. No one wants to sacrifice time. Therefore, it will be better if this new method consumes less time.

One thing about this method is answers can be found in the mode of informal discussion. As the same questions are repeated, the respondents have problem understanding the questions. I feel that questions should not be repeated. I also think that the questions are very difficult; they should be easier and simpler. When I went to talk with Sachchu Mia of Katasur slum, he misbehaved with me because I asked him, "Are you poor? Do you live in the slum?" He replied, "I pay Taka 1800 as house rent. Why will I live in the slum?" He used to live in a house built on a platform over a lake, which we called private slum. I changed the name of two persons of our area. They did not want to give time and so I changed them. I think that if the time needed for an interview is less it will be more helpful for the interviewer.

Proposals for Contextualising Oral Testimony Methodology

The Oral Testimony collectors are unanimous about the fact that by the OT methodology it is possible to know the life experiences of the poor people. The OT collectors agreed that the poor narrates their life events like anecdote, which can be documented by this system. For example, it was found from the slum no. 3, "One feature of this new method is the answers are given in the form of story" and "Oral testimony method is an effective system for gathering information" (Slum no. 2) or, "I could collect the inner feelings of the slum dwellers in the guise of story (Slum no. 4)". These comments were known from the experiences of the interviewers while doing research in the fields.

From the experiences of the field workers, it is found that this method is difficult to understand. However, after completing the training they were able to get hold of the method. Different reactions were observed regarding the oral testimony system. "During training, at first I had much difficulty in understanding" (Field worker no. 1). "The subject we have been taking training is very difficult" (Field worker no. 2). From these comments, it can be stated that as a method this 'Oral Testimony' is very difficult. After the training, these complications were solved. So, the proposed three-day training was extended to six days. Everyone has agreed that the training manual was very important in understanding the system.

In oral testimony method, the time required for an interview varies from one to eight hours. While interviewing in the fields, it was observed that general people were reluctant to sacrifice so much time. The field workers have attained useful information about time. Their opinion was, "As it takes a lot of time, they (the respondents) feel inconvenient" or, "I do not like to talk for so long" (See slum no. 1). In the same context, it is found in slum no. 4, "In case of men or women, both had problem with time". Again, from slum no. 3 we find, "Time is the biggest problem in this new method. No one wants to sacrifice so much time. So it would be better if the interview on new system takes less time" (Details in slum no. 1, 2, 3 & 4). It should be mentioned that as the poor people remain very tired and exhausted, they do not want to talk for long. This is why the field workers suggested that the highest time for an interview should be one to two hours.

It was discovered that when taking interview, 'professions' should be taken into consideration seriously. Every one has suggested that 'time' should be different for people of different professions. For example, we find in slum no. 4, "Those who work in other people's residences cannot be available whole day. Those who are housewives can participate. However, the garments-workers felt inconvenient to give interview after a whole day's hard work." This issue is supported by the suggestions about the method from the slum no. 3. We find that as two of the slum dwellers did not want to give time, two new persons were included as respondent.

The field workers have given their valuable perception about how the questions in this system should be to get proper information about from the poor people of Bangladesh. They respondent were much bored as some questions were repeated in the questionnaire used. For example, it was mentioned in slum no. 2, "As the same questions were repeated, they (the respondents) were bored. Like in case of deception; they were asked, how can you breakaway from this situation, what are your future plans and thoughts"? In 4:1, "How can

you get out of poverty”? More evidence of this fact is found from slum no. 3. “It is better not to repeat a question if it was asked once. Moreover, the questions are difficult to answer”.

Here one thing that is clearly understood about the type and pattern/mode of questions is, if there is similitude in the questions regarding different issues then the respondents might not answer correctly. Similarly, as the questions were complicated, the respondents had difficulty in understanding. In this case, the subjects of research should be observed carefully because for the poor people it is very difficult and in many cases impossible to answer tough questions. Therefore, the questions should be easy and simple to make them appropriate for the subjects. The suggestion that came was “if the question were not asked part-by-part rather asked once, it may well have benefited the respondents” (Slum no. 3).

This present method adds ‘some new strategies’ that simplifies the research data/information collection. These are, (a) the slum dwellers are interviewed by a slum dweller; (b) the women of the slums are interviewed by a female interviewer; and (c) no recording instruments are used thus narrators felt at ease with the OT collectors to describe their life events, perceptions and experiences.

In light of the discussion, it is proposed that some issues should be added in order to utilise the oral testimony system for the poor people of Bangladesh. The issues that need to be supplemented are:

- **Time of interview:** The time of interview should be adjusted according to profession. For example, a housewife can give an interview any time but a garments-worker can only manage time for the interview at night.
- **Interview duration:** The time taken for an interview should be one to two hours for each session.
- **Consideration of Occasions:** As this interview requires a lot of time, it should be adjusted according to the situation. At the month of *Ramadan*, people may not agree to talk for this long or get bored. In order to collect information, special consideration should be taken to adjust to different occasions when the interviewee might be willing or non-willing to share their views.
- **Questions:** The respondents became bored if same questions were asked repeatedly. Therefore, the questions should be easy and care should be taken for not repeating questions.
- **Language:** The language of the questionnaire should be more lucid and straightforward so that the illiterate poor can understand easily.
- **Training:** Training of OT collectors remains to be an important part of the study. This is more so, since OT collectors are slum-dwellers themselves. The testimonies of OT collectors calls for a long training sessions of 8 to 10 days to grasp complex issues of Oral testimony methodology and also of the thematic issues of the study.
- **Training manual:** The ‘training manual’ should be prepared in easy and simple language so that the participants or the trainees can understand about the oral testimony methodology and thematic issues accurately.
- **Use of recording instruments:** The study clearly shows that oral testimonies may be collected without the use of any recording instrument. The recording instruments distance the narrator from the interviewer and thus, narrators may shy away answering many of their inner feelings on tape.

- **OT collector selection criteria:** Since oral testimony study seeks to gather information without any intermediary intervention as such perceptions are often clouded by the identity and power of the observers, it is important that OT collectors are selected from the study area who have good rapport with the narrators. A number of criteria may guided the selection of OT collectors. These are (a) OT collectors have to be residents of respective study area for at least a good number of years; (b) OT collectors have to be at least functionally literate. Efforts should also be directed toward keeping a gender balance in selecting members of OT collection team, in order to maintain that the OT collector and OT narrators are of same sex.

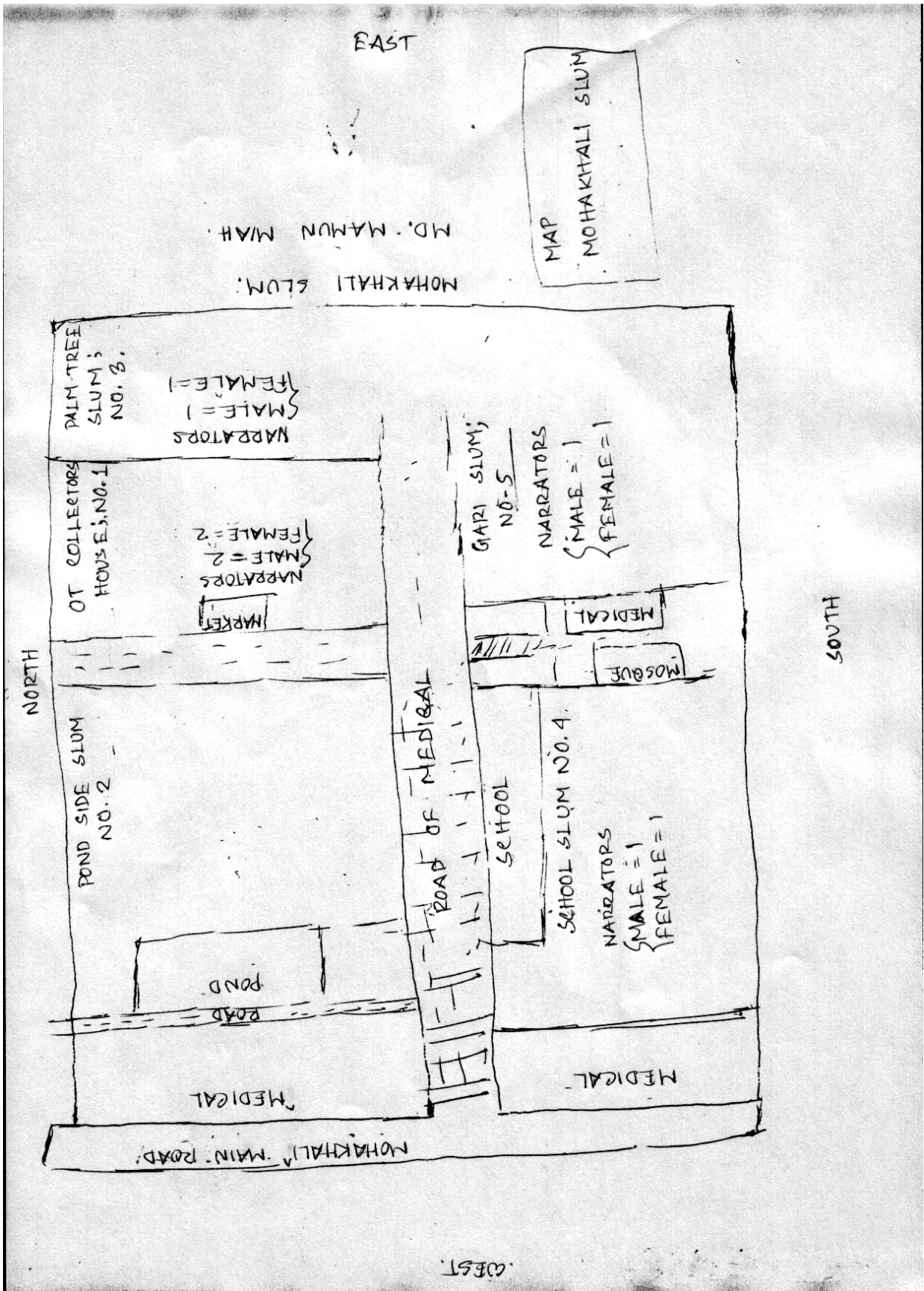
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS:
BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON EXPLORING NEW METHODOLOGY OF POVERTY RESEARCH

October 2, 2003

Sl. no.	Name	Address
1.	Professor Muzaffar Ahmed	71, Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi
2.	Dr. Mahbub Ahmed	Professor of Sociology, Dept. of Sociology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka
3.	Md. Obaidur Rahman	Programme Officer, Save the Children Sweden, Denmark, house no. 9, Road no. 16, Gulshan 1, Dhaka
4.	Lily Lapenna	Intern, BRAC
5.	Faruq Hasan	Policy Analyst, BRAC Advocacy and Human Rights Unit
6.	Abu Hasan	BRAC, Research and Evaluation Division
7.	Dr. Wali Ahmed Fatha	UNFPA
8.	Rezina Parvin	Advocacy, BRAC
9.	Jakir Hossain	The Innovators
10.	H. M. Monzurul Azim	Advocacy, BRAC
11.	Md. Mashiur Rahman	Advocacy, BRAC
12.	Dipayon Khisa	Research Associate, The Innovators
13.	Luthfun Nahar	Research Associate, The Innovators
14.	Syeda Hasinatul Jannat	Research Intern, The Innovators
15.	Jahangir Kabir	Research Associate, The Innovators
16.	Dr. Md. Aminur Rahman	Research Associate, The Innovators
17.	Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir	The Innovators

LIST OF NARRATORSName of the slum: *Mohakhali*

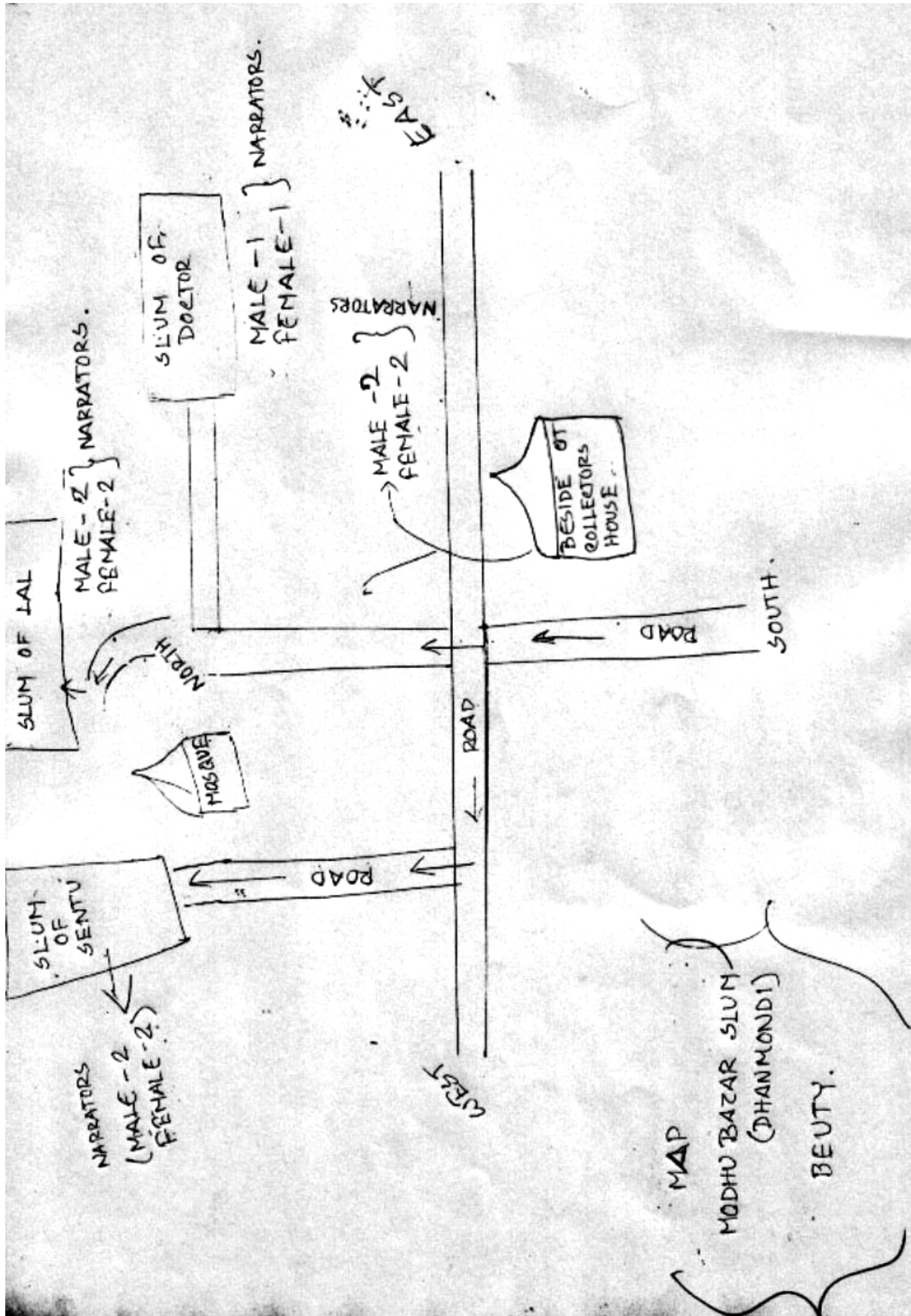
OT No.	NAME	OCCUPATION	AGE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
1.1	Chan Miah	Labor	40	Gari Bosti
1.2	A.Rajjak	Vegetable Vendor	50	Beside OT collectors House
1.3	Sufia Khatun	Housewife	35	Beside a pond
1.4	Asia Khatun	Petty Businessman	50	Beside OT collectors House
1.5	Rina Aktar	Housewife	35	Gari Bosti
1.6	Forida Yasmin	Housewife	32	Palm tree Bosti
1.7	Azajunnesa	Housewife	50	Beside OT collectors House
1.8	Sofiruddin	Employee of Mess	50	Palm tree Bosti
1.9	Md. Hanif	Van Driver	38	Beside Pond
1.10	Alal Miah	Rickshaw puller	38	Beside OT collectors House



LIST OF NARRATORS

Name of the Slum: *Modhu Bazar.*

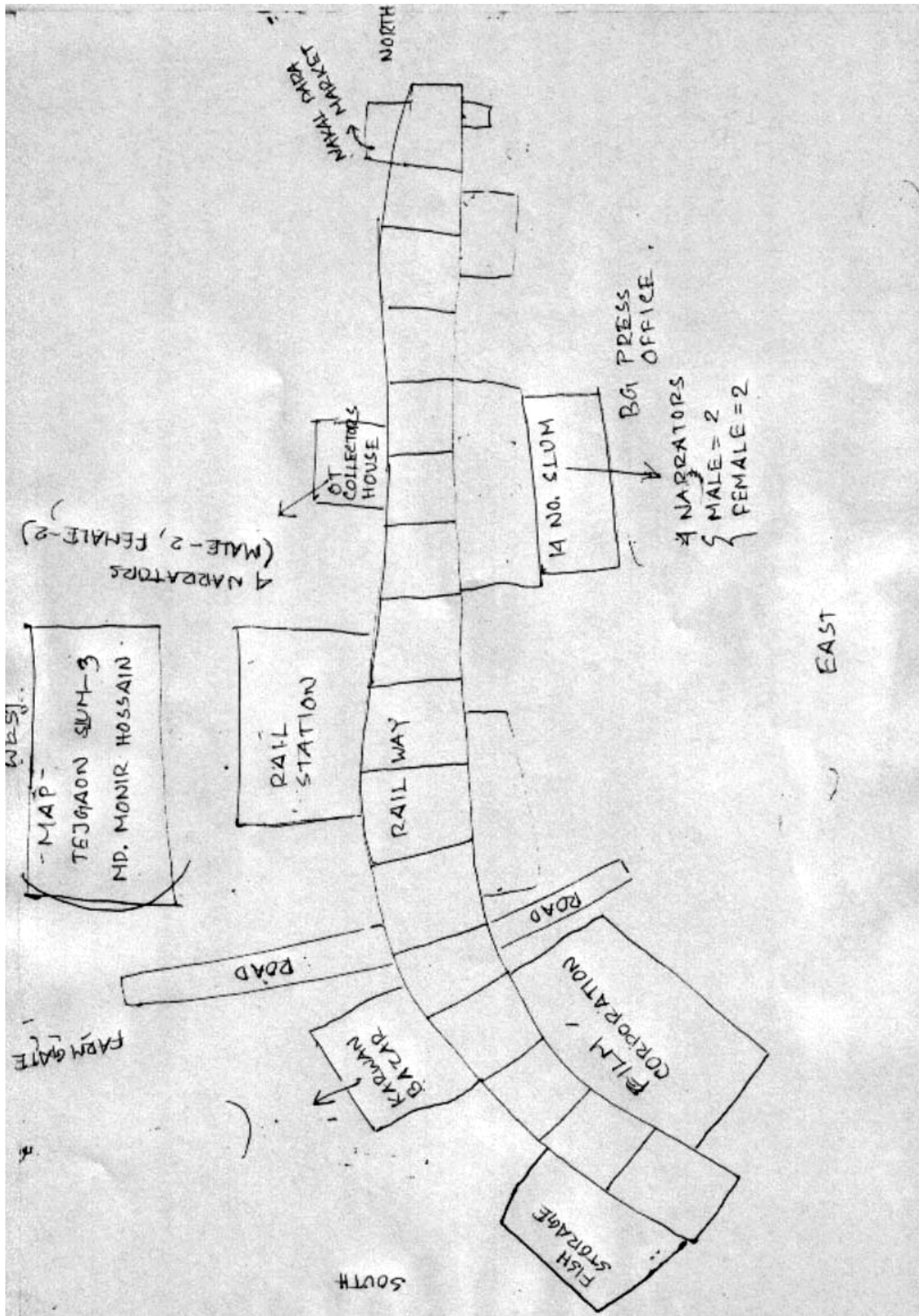
OT No.	NAME	OCCUPATION	AGE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
2.1	Shibani Debnath	Housewife	35	Beside OT collectors House
2.2	Rokeya Begum	Attendant of School	55	Beside OT collectors House
2.3	Momtaz	Sewing Worker	40	Slum of doctor
2.4	Piyara Begum	Housewife	45	Slum of Sentu
2.5	Ozufa Begum	Housekeeper of Mess	60	Slum of Sentu
2.6	Liakot Ali	Daily labourer	38	Slum of Sentu
2.7	Md. Zakir	Driver of Pulling Cart	40	Slum of Lal
2.9	Kobir Mir	Daily labourer	40	Slum of Sentu
2.10	Mannan Miah	Unemployed	52	Slum of Doctor.



LIST OF NARRATORS

Name of the Slum: *Tejgaon*

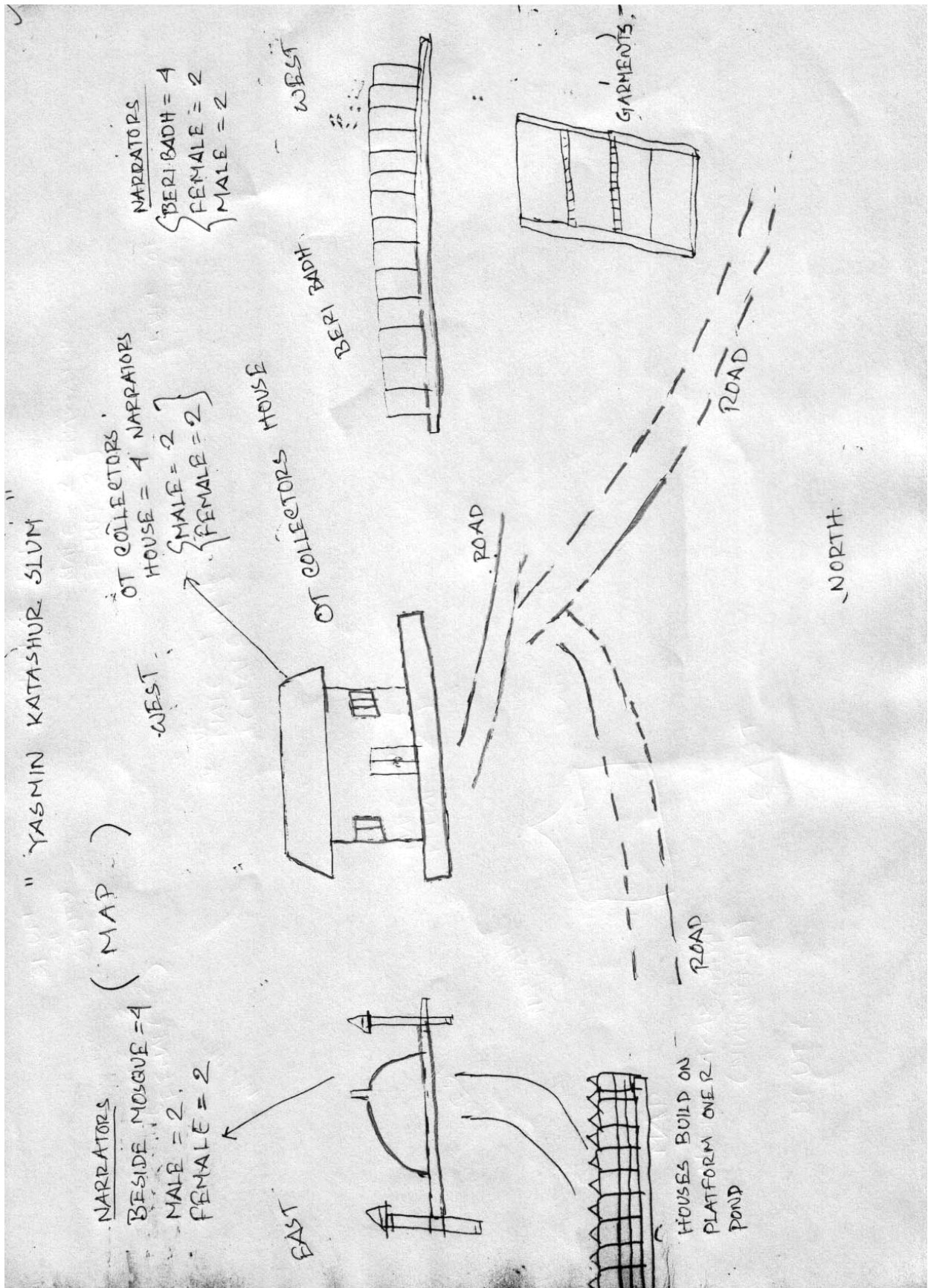
OT No.	NAME	OCCUPATION	AGE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
3.1	Ali Akkas	Garments worker	40	14 no. Slum
3.2	Chan Miah	Rickshaw Puller	50	Karwan bazaar slum
3.3	Md. Ansar Ali	Rickshaw Puller	40	Beside OT collectors House
3.4	Shohidul Islam Kuddus	Cart Puller	30	14 no. Slum
3.5	Fazlu Miah	Petty Businessman	30	Petty Businessman
3.6	Asiron Aktar	Beggar	65	14 no. Slum
3.7	Monoara Begum	Garments Worker	35	14 no. Slum
3.8	Laily Begum	Garments Worker	40	Beside OT collectors House
3.9	Amena Begum	Housewife	35	Beside OT collectors House
3.10	Moslema Begum	Housekeeper	50	Karwan Bazar Slum



LIST OF NARRATORS

Name of the Slum: *Katashur (Mohammadpur)*

OT No.	NAME	OCCUPATION	AGE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE
4.1	Md. Razzak Ali	Petty Businessman	65	Beside Mosque
4.2	Shorab Uddin	Petty Businessman	50	Beside Mosque
4.3	Jotsna Begum	Garments worker	30	Beside Mosque
4.4	Rohima Begum	Sewing Worker	32	Beribadh Slum
4.5	Shiuli Khatun	Sewing Worker	32	Beside Mosque
4.6	Md. Anis	Rickshaw Puller	30	Beside OT collectors House
4.7	Moyna	Labor of Brick field	32	Beribadh Slum
4.8	Khalek	Unemployed	65	Beribadh Slum
4.9	Nurjahan	Housewife	51	Beribadh Slum
4.10	Yarun Begum	Housekeeper	42	Beside OT collectors House



Oral Testimony Interview Checklist

(All the information collected in this research will be kept secret. It will only be used for the study on *Listening to People Living in Poverty: Oral Testimony of Dhaka Slum-dwellers*)

1. Personal Information

- Name
- Name of Slum
- Occupation
- Age
- Number of Family Members

2. Nature and Causes of Poverty

- 2.1 Do you consider yourself poor?
- 2.2 Describe the incident/reason behind your destitution.
- 2.3 What are the causes due to which you consider yourself poor?
- 2.4 Among the causes mentioned, which do you think are more responsible?

3. The Relationship between the State and Citizen

3.1 Identity

- 3.1.1 Your awareness and self-perception of citizenship or identity status.
- 3.1.2 Perceptions of the relationship between all sections of the city including upper class, middle class, working class, government with the slum dwellers.
- 3.1.3 Your perception of other groups of the city.
- 3.1.4 How do you perceive the other classes are acknowledging the slum dwellers?
- 3.1.5 Do you have any perception of the difference in the power structure between slum dwellers and other city dwellers and why do you perceive this way?
- 3.1.6 Have you resigned to this perception?
- 3.1.7 Or do you want to get out of this state and how?

3.2 Rights

- 3.2.1 Awareness and Perception of Rights to services of Health and Education
- 3.2.2 Awareness and Perception of Rights of tenure in housing
- 3.2.3 Awareness and Perception of Rights to water, sanitation, gas, electricity, sewerage, waste disposal etc.
- 3.2.4 Livelihood Opportunities
- 3.2.5 Awareness and Perception of Rights to Information (Right to the Important knowledge needed stay alive)
- 3.2.6 Are the women given equal rights than men or not?
- 3.2.7 Awareness and Perception of Rights to social inclusion with residents outside the slum
- 3.2.8 Do they know that these rights are indivisible?
- 3.2.9 If yes, your perception regarding the interplay between your rights.
- 3.2.10 Perception of the obligation of the government to fulfil your Rights.

3.3 Services

- 3.3.1 Demands from the City Corporation (Socially, politically and economically)
- 3.3.2 Do these expectations change, if yes, then why?
- 3.3.3 What are the benefits that the city corporation/state is providing your slum?
- 3.3.4 Your opinion regarding the sufficiency of opportunities-benefits that city corporation/state is providing in exchange for the money you pay them.

3.4 Exclusion

- 3.4.1 Do you think you are excluded from the opportunities-benefits (like electricity, gas, water, waste disposal etc.) that state and society provides?
- 3.4.2 How are you excluded?
- 3.4.3 Are you resigning to or accepting the present circumstances?
- 3.4.4 If you don't accept it, then do you have any plan/thoughts for overcoming the present circumstances, describe it.

4. Poverty Alleviating Strategies

- 4.1 How do you think you can alleviate your poverty?
- 4.2 Has anyone from your slum been relieved of poverty? How?

5. The potential of Oral Testimony methodology as a tool for Social Research

- 5.1 The advantages and disadvantages of this new method of research.
- 5.2 The experience of the field workers in implementing this new method of research.