Women's struggles for social wellbeing in the patriarchal dried fish value chains of Bangladesh

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Dedication

Dedicated to my younger self, who has gone through a lot

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Abstract

The social wellbeing of the women who work in the dried fish value chains of Teknaf, Bangladesh is interlinked with the patriarchal society and the state. On the one hand, women are engaging themselves with the value chains as economic actors and contributing to them. On the other hand, they face various patriarchal constraints. Women work as laborers in the processing sites day and night to support the processing site owners but suffer financial exploitation and unequal treatment, and often sexual harassment in return. They also must tolerate social stigma because of working late at night. Furthermore, processing site owners and male laborers belittle the responsibilities of female laborers in the kholas. Women's mobility is controlled by patriarchal ideology centered in the family, neighbors, and society. Women support dried fish processing site owners through their home work but without any payment in return. If they are abandoned by their husband, brothers, or sons, their futures become even more uncertain and insecure. The patriarchal orientation of state policy is indicated by women's exclusion from all fishing related laws and policies.

Nonetheless, women are not passive recipients of these patriarchal constraints, rather they have strategies to negotiate with the patriarchal system for their social wellbeing. Negotiation occurs through their everyday employment and engagements within the value chains. Female laborers between the ages of 35 and 72 have built an unofficial association to argue for financial and other benefits. Often, they accommodate one patriarchal ideology to negotiate with another. Their clothing and where they construct their houses are relevant examples in this regard. Women use symbolic strategies to contest patriarchal constraints within the khola and in society. Moreover, bargaining with the patriarchal system is constantly changing through the everyday engagements of the female laborers within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf, Bangladesh.

Glossary

Adot	Wholesale trader's business premises
Adotdar/merchant	Wealthy wholesaler who buys mounds of fish from hundreds of processing site owners.
Dadon	Advance loan taken by the laborers from the processing site owners which are repaid in a small amounts over a long period of time. Laborers should work for the owners in return for taking the loan.
Dorga	Shrine for Muslims.
Gulti	Slingshot
Khola owner	Marine drying operators are called khola owners/managers.
Khola	Marine drying operations are referred to as *khola* (Hossain et al. 2013).
Machang	A machang is a flat square rack made of bamboo, five by five feet in size, to dry fish. Machang are raised or placed directly on the ground. They are easily moved and protect dried fish from water, clay or dust.
Sadar	Khola owners are called "sadar".

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Research has long demonstrated women's active involvement in different aspects of fishing economies (Weeratunge et al. 2010). Belton et al. (2018) has shown that women are important economic actors in fish drying and capture fisheries value chains in Bangladesh. Despite this strong evidence of women's importance in fisheries, fisheries science and policy have largely overlooked women's engagement in small scale fisheries and remain "gender-blind" (Smith & Basurto 2019) by defining "actual fishing as a male-only activity" (Jadhav 2017). Their inputs are also undervalued at household and societal levels (Weeratunge et al. 2010; Macdonald & Connelly 1989). Often their contributions are named as 'supportive roles' in fisheries-dependent patriarchal societies (Deb et al. 2015). A strong gender division of labor, unequal wages, and sexual harassment are common in women's fisheries workplaces (Belton et al. 2018). Sometimes women are forced to leave their work in small-scale fisheries because of these socio-cultural stigmas and patriarchal ideologies (Aswathy & Kalpana 2018). These patriarchal constraints affect women's material, relational and subjective wellbeing within fisheries and dried fish value chains (Galappaththi et al. 2021).

Also, the fisheries literature does not recognize women as significant actors in dried fish value chains most of the time (Galappaththi et al. 2021). Similarly in Bangladesh, with a few exceptions (e.g. Deb & Haque 2015), women's participation in small-scale agriculture, fisheries, and aquaculture remains unappreciated (Khan et al. 2014). This is true at the practical level (within a family) and at the academic level (within academic research). Besides, women's paid work in small-scale fisheries empowers them within the household (Lebel et al. 2010), increases their socio-economic status (Hassan & Sathiadhas 2005), and often provides the most direct economic (Cohen et al. 2019) and nutritional benefits to their families (Thilsted 2012). Also, contributions to dried fish value chains are a source of their agency too (Galappaththi et al. (2021). Building on these insights in the gender and fisheries literature, my research explores women's engagements in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh, the patriarchal constraints that women encounter, and their efforts to negotiate those gendered obstacles to their social wellbeing. My research explores women laborers' lives and livelihoods in the dried fish value chains of two sites in Teknaf Upazila (sub-district), Cox's Bazar district.

The study participants are not only female laborers, however, but also women who are connected to the dried fish economy, including the wives of owners and other persons from broader Bangladeshi society. I interacted with this diversity of research participants to learn about social perceptions regarding women workers in

the dried fish sector. Male owners, co-workers, and members of society are also included in the study to include their understandings and efforts to enhance or limit women laborers' engagement in dried fish value chains in Teknaf. Men and women are interrelated to block and uplift women's agency in the study area.

1.1 Research objectives and research questions

I explore women's social wellbeing within the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh through their everyday actions within the value chains in my research. The study is based in Teknaf, the southernmost upazila of Cox's Bazar. Teknaf is one of the most important marine fish drying sites in Bangladesh (Asia-Pacific Farmers Forum 2017). I conducted the research following the objectives below:

a. To identify women's engagements in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh.
b. To explore the patriarchal constraints women experience while working in dried fish value chains.
c. To identify the ways in which women exercise agency to counter the ongoing constraints they face.

1.1.1 Research questions

My study addresses the following questions:

a. What are the types and levels of engagements of women laborers and other female actors in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh?

b. What gender-based obstacles do women face in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh? How do these constraints relate to broader patriarchal restrictions that women face in Bangladesh and Teknaf?
c. How do women exercise agency to counter the patriarchal oppression they face in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh? What helps women to survive and continue their engagements within dried fish value chains?

1.2 Scope of the research

Even though there has been a substantial body of research on dried fish value chains in Bangladesh, the role of women in dried fish value chains has not been a central concern most of the time (Belton et al. 2018; Asia-Pacific Farmers Forum 2017; Khan et al. 2014; Hossain et al. 2013; Halim 2004; Apu 2014; Rabbanee et al. 2012; Hassan & Sathiadhas 2005; Sultana & Islam 2017), with a few exceptions (Deb et al. 2015). This is especially true for the women dried fish workers in the remote area of Teknaf about which nothing has been published. Keeping that in mind, the following rationales are the basis for my scope of research.

a. Ignoring women's significant engagements within the dried fish value chain is the common scenario in much of the fisheries literature in Bangladesh. Even though the literature often acknowledges the connectedness of women to dried fish value chains, it overlooks the major contribution they make to this sector.

Rather, they are often described as supporting actors, which downplays their actual engagements in the value chains. My research sheds light on the even less well-known livelihood pattern of the women who work in dried fish value chains in Teknaf Upazila. The dried fish literature in Bangladesh typically also neglects the work that women do at home that supports the dried fish economy.

b. Women laborers' understanding of the patriarchal and other constraints they face has also been overlooked in research on dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. Women's perspective on the patriarchal constraints they face is significant because it provides a direct window onto their social wellbeing. Constraints, at the extreme, can affect their ability to continue to work in dried fish value chains. Constraints can also affect the quality of women's lives and livelihoods, that can be understood in terms of their overall social wellbeing. My study adds value to the fisheries literature in Bangladesh in the attention it pays to the patriarchal constraints women participants in dried fish value chains encounter and the way they see those constraints in relation to broader patterns of patriarchy.

c. The agency of the women within the dried fish value chains remains unaddressed in research conducted on women laborers working in the dried fish value chains. As women are continuing their engagements in these value

chains despite various obstacles and patriarchal constraints, it is evident that they have various types of bargaining strategies and sustaining capabilities within dried fish value chains. This resilience has been unremarked and unexplored even though it is essential to women's survival capabilities. My research contributes to addressing this key deficiency in the understanding women's social wellbeing in Bangladesh's dried fish value chains.

1.3 Thesis structure

My thesis is divided into seven chapters where each chapter has specific contents and contributions. The first one is the introduction chapter where I briefly explain my research and research findings. The second chapter contains the literature reviews and relevant concepts that I followed in my research to build my theoretical framework, to strengthen my arguments, and position the contribution of my research. The third chapter describes the methods I have used to collect my field data, my positionality, the overview of the field, the differences of my two field sites, and the challenges I faced in a remote area of Bangladesh where women are expected to maintain purdah and stay at home.

The fourth chapter is the first findings chapter where I describe women's roles, women's spaces, their engagements in the social economy of dried fish value chains in Teknaf, Bangladesh, and the contributions that women make to those value

chains. Here, not only I present the roles of the women workers working in the dried fish processing sites, but also other women who are engaged in dried fish value chains. These women include the wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers of the processing site owners and the wives, sister, and mothers of the male workers. I also include reflections from women who work in other households but are not directly employed in the processing sites. Their roles have also been presented in this chapter as they make vital contributions to dried fish value chains in Teknaf. Covid-19 had impacts on the livelihood of female laborers which I also explore in this chapter.

The fifth chapter focuses on the patriarchal constraints women face within the dried fish value chains of Teknaf. This means, in other words, the obstacles they face because of their gender, because they are women. Here in this chapter, I have explored their own voices, what they understand by the patriarchal constraints, and how they define those constraints.

The sixth chapter is focused on different kinds of women's agency. Here, I discuss their bargaining strategies within the patriarchal constraints of dried fish value chains. In this chapter, I also show how their bargaining strategies have power to resist patriarchal obstacles and allow women to survive within the value chains year after year.

The seventh chapter is the discussion and conclusion chapter. Here, I reflect on the contributions of my research to understanding dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. I make policy recommendations based on my interactions with the processing site owners, female and male laborers, local residents, and administrators who shared their experience and knowledge with me.

1.4 Conclusion

My research aims to understand the social wellbeing of women workers in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh through exploring their roles, gendered constraints, and patriarchal bargaining strategies. These women lack recognition from society (Deb et al. 2015) but are legitimate value chain actors (Galappaththi et al. 2021). Research has shown women's material engagements in fish value chains and the relational obstacles they encounter but it has not explored how women exercise agency to sustain their engagements in the value chains year after year. Hänninen (2015) pointed to a general failure of the patriarchy concept, which explains women as passive and controlled by dominant males. My study intends to use the social wellbeing perspective to frame the material, relational, and subjective dimensions of women's agency within patriarchal dried fish value chains in Bangladeshi society. Deb et al. (2015) and Galappaththi et al. (2021) mention women's agency within fishing communities in Bangladesh but do not provide a thorough analysis of the point. In response to this knowledge gap, my research seeks to explore women's

material engagements, the patriarchal constraints they face, and the ways in which they act to advance their social wellbeing within dried fish value chains in Teknaf, Bangladesh.

Chapter Two: Situating patriarchy in Bangladeshi women's experience

2.0 Introduction

Academic and policy discussions on wellbeing and agency are explicitly gender neutral but often male centered. These discussions often contain cultural biases and overlook gender (Kabeer 1996: 11). Although women are actively engaged in the fisheries sector, their contributions are undervalued at household, societal and policy levels (Weeratunge et al. 2010; Macdonald & Connelly 1989). Similarly, in Bangladesh, women hold a subordinate social position, even though they contribute to their households through livelihoods and psychological support to fishers (Deb et al. 2015). Nonetheless, as Kandiyoti (1988) and Kabeer (1999) explain, as women have strategies to 'bargain' with patriarchy, my research centers on how women pursue strategies to achieve wellbeing within the constraints of their employment in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the following review develops my research interest in relation to four themes: social wellbeing, women's roles in dried fish value chains, the 'wickedness' of the constraints they face, and evidence for women's proactive engagement with these challenges. I begin with the social wellbeing perspective as it frames the other three themes and serves as an overarching conceptual framework for my research.

2.1 Social wellbeing

The social wellbeing approach includes three dimensions: objective, relational and subjective (Coulthard et al. 2011; Weeratunge et al. 2014; Johnson 2018). Social wellbeing requires that human needs be met, and that people have freedom (or autonomy) and a good quality of life (Coulthard et al. 2011; Weeratunge et al. 2014). McGregor (2007: 317) explains social wellbeing as a combination of: a) what a person has, b) what they can do with what they have, and c) how they think about what they have and can do with what they have. Subsequently, Coulthard & McGregor (2015) have explained these dimensions of wellbeing further, where objective wellbeing is what they have in the objective sense: their existing resources and utilization of those to meet their basic needs, such as food, earnings, assets, shelter, job, access to services and natural resources, and environmental quality. Relational wellbeing is people's interactions with others to meet their needs and life satisfactions. Relational wellbeing focuses on relationships of affection, relations with the state, social institutions, rules, and norms which can control the access to natural resources, collective actions, conflict and security, law, cultural and political identities, and power relations (Coulthard & McGregor 2015). They also have added the influence of the social in relational wellbeing because social relationships play a significant role to achieve or deny wellbeing. The subjective aspect of wellbeing, on the other hand, is people's own evaluation about their life state, including quality of

life, satisfaction, perceptions, and feelings (Coulthard & McGregor 2015). Furthermore, Patel et al. (2015: 14) argue that women's subjective and emotional wellbeing (relational dimension) depends on and is shaped by the allocation of and access to resources and on decision making processes within household, farm, community, and national levels. External context is another significant aspect besides these three dimensions that impacts social wellbeing in different ways, and includes social, economic, cultural, historical, political, and environmental factors (Coulthard & McGregor 2015).

The social wellbeing approach recognizes wellbeing not as calculable steps, but that it rather includes valued material, relational, and subjective capabilities (Johnson 2018) and, also, examines diversified perceptions of wellbeing (White 2010). Therefore, social wellbeing can illustrate what shapes women's abilities to live well, the relational constraints and opportunities that inform their lives, and how women themselves perceive their interests and their freedoms. The social wellbeing perspective is thus a valuable analytical tool for understanding the quality of women's lives and work within the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh.

Social wellbeing seeks to account for imbalances of power in the form of structural inequality and exploitation. It considers the unequal effects of environmental degradation (Coulthard et al. 2011). Research in South Asia using a social wellbeing lens include the following cases. Biswal et al. (2017) show how

weak institutions and ineffective governance affects social wellbeing through the case of declining fish catches in the fishery of Saiyad Rajpara, Gujarat. Stacy et al. (2018) show how the social and economic marginalization of the Sama-Bajau in Southeast Asia are marginalized has undermined their fishing practices and their way of life has eroded their social wellbeing. The women target groups of the NREGA project of India face similar experiences. Even though the project has aimed to improve women's wellbeing, research shows that it has overburdened women with household responsibilities, agricultural work, and NREGA employment (Patel et al. 2015).

Kabeer (1999) explains wellbeing differently, as an achievement for women to be able to take informed decisions for themselves through manifesting different kinds of agency (decision making, negotiating, deception, manipulating etc.) which are constrained in patriarchal societies. Her approach links to relational wellbeing and the relational freedom aspect of social wellbeing, while also having implications for subjective wellbeing. Similarly, Weeratunge et al. (2014: 263) have pointed out that wellbeing is very significant to women's agency because their gendered identities, life satisfaction, needs, expectations, bargaining capacities, and sacrifices for the wellbeing of the household or community are interconnected with wellbeing. In the ways they link to and complement understanding the achievement or denial

of women's social wellbeing, identity, gender, patriarchy, and agency are important factors in my research.

2.2 Identity

In Teknaf, individuals are defined by multiple social identities, such as ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual identity. Identity has immediate impacts on my respondents' relational and subjective wellbeing. Sociologically the concept is used to emphasize an individual's social and cultural surroundings, and the process of socialization and cultural acquisition (Barnard & Spencer 2002). But identity as a term is not static in anthropology, rather it is ambiguous, where in one meaning it refers to distinct and unique characteristics of a person's self-identity and in another way, it means uniformity with groups based on several salient common factors, such as ethnic identity (Barnard & Spencer 2002). That's why identities are always relational and incomplete, temporary, and unstable in process (Grossberg 1996). Similarly, Yuval-Davis (2010) explains that identities are not only personal but also collective, which means they belong to a social group or category but that doesn't necessary to limit a person within one social category: as a woman, as a black person, as a member of a working class, etcetera. Rather, identity including the self and their boundaries, identity construction, and practices around identity construction. According to Hall (1996: 4), "Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured;

never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions". Politics is also implicated with the identity concept (Brubaker & Cooper 2000), such as the politics of location (Hall 1996). Production and representation of identities are not excluded from identity politics (Grossberg 1996). Even though identity as a word is a paradox, its inconsistency multiplies when applied to women (Gardiner 1981). Gardiner (1981: 353) proposes "female identity as a process" because female identity is typically less fixed, less unitary, and more flexible than male individuality. Contemporary women's literature says that a sense of full, valued, and congruent female identity may form in the continuing process of give and take that re-creates both self and other in a supportive community of women (Gardiner 1981: 361). Furthermore, ethnicity, defined by one's culture of origin, cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors but sometimes also with other diverse elements such as exploration, resolution, and affirmation of ethnicity (Umaña-Taylor 2011) is part of identity. My research area Teknaf, is a place with different ethnic communities and their identity impacts on their social wellbeing directly and sometimes indirectly in a positive or negative way. Gender intersects with other identities including ethnicity, caste, class, culture, and religion, which may produce and sustain further patriarchal constraints on women compared to men and undermine their social wellbeing. Thus,

intersectional identities may heighten gendered oppression of women within dried fish value chains in Teknaf, Bangladesh.

2.3 Gender identity

Gender is the psychosocial classification of biological sex, which includes gender stereotypes, gender-roles, social roles, attitudes and values (Ayman & Korabik 2010). Martin (2004: 1264), on the other hand, argues that gender is a social institution, because it has features of institutions, such as ideology, practices, barriers, conflicts, and power. Gender is also linked with average income differences, working hours in the workplace (long hours and unquestioned availability like that of male workers, assuming male employee with no household responsibilities), job expectations, poverty rates, legal rights over property in many countries (Nelson 2016: 1362). Even a country's nationalism could also hold gendered ideologies. According to Whitehead & Perry (2019), in America Christian nationalism is strongly associated with gender traditionalism across political ideologies and religious traditions. Subsequently, feminist utopian literatures aim for a patriarchy-free world to subvert the existing social dominance hierarchy. Their perfect societies are typically marked by an absence of men in imagined worlds where misogyny and violence against women is not the norm (Kasai 2018: 1394).

2.4 Patriarchy

Gender roles and relations are shaped by patriarchy in every society. Patriarchy is a gendered power system: a network of social, political and economic relationships through which men dominate and control female labor, reproduction and sexuality as well as define women's status, privileges and rights in a society (Kalabamu 2006). "Power, and the exercise of power, is central to the definition of patriarchy" (Kalabamu 2006: 238). Patriarchy is both a system and an ideology that shapes and determines gender relationships and rights in a society (Kalabamu 2006: 239). Men are dominant, and women are subordinate in that gender relation (Witz 2013). According to Hänninen (2015), patriarchy is the system of male dominance over women, fathers' power in his family and older men's ruling power in society. This domination originates from the family and constitutes men and women as separate social groups (Winter 2019). At the same time this system creates a worldview where men are counted as fully human and they tend to appropriate women's bodies, time, labor through laws, cultural norms, sexual and reproductive attributions (Winter 2019). Patriarchal society comprises kinship structure organized following male lineages, and male dominated family and property systems where women are excluded from positions of power (Hänninen 2015). As a result, patriarchy is structural, systematic, ideological, and global which encompasses all the societies and relations between men and women, men and men, and between women and

women (Winter 2019). Hunnicutt (2009) also illustrates patriarchy as systems of male domination and female subordination. It means social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group structurally and ideologically through its patriarchal systems at the macro level (bureaucracies, government, law, market, religion), and patriarchal relations at the micro level (interactions, families, organizations, patterned behavior between intimates) (Hunnicutt 2009:557). Patriarchies serve as models of dominance for other hierarchical institutions and systems such as age, class, race, ethnicity etc. (Hunnicutt 2009: 563). Hunnicutt (2009) proposes a theory of "varieties of patriarchy" where gender is a central organizing feature, maintaining a hierarchical emphasis and focusing on social systems and social arrangements that reinforce domination. According to her, this concept should be used carefully because it does not exist in uniform and systematic ways rather assumes a variety of ideological and structural shapes across the social landscape and varies across time, place, and material contexts. These varieties also shift continually as power relations change with other key social changes. According to her, understanding male violence means exposing how those men who use violence against women are victims of their own culture. For that, we must focus on men's power as well as powerlessness (Hunnicutt 2009: 569). Likewise, Sanday (1981) has rejected universal female subordination and argued that male dominance is not inherent in human relations but is a solution

to various kinds of cultural strain. She also has demonstrated interdependence of male and female roles in societies lacking male dominance and named it "mythical" male dominance where women "play the game" of believing in male superiority while retaining their own power and agency.

2.5 Agency

As patriarchy is visible in every known society (Ortner 1972), agency is the way to deal with it. Hays (1994) defines agency as choice, which is the key factor in all definitions of agency. She explains agency through presenting the differences and connections between social structure and agency. Because agency means the production, modification, and conversion of social structures, agency can act within the constraints of existing limiting structures. According to Hays (1994), agency depends on the willing or unwilling, conscious, or unconscious participation and purposive actions of human actors within social structure. Also, “People produce certain forms of social structure at the same time social structures produce certain types of people” (Hays 1994:61). According to her, within agency human social action may also productively influence social structure through “structurally transformative agency”. Even though social revolutions are the extreme incidents of structurally transformative agency, revolutions do not always intend to change the entire social structure. A specific group of people in the society could also be the actors of revolution by their agency under identifiable structural conditions (Hays

1994). Through this, agency becomes a continuous process of the structural transformation by the effective revolutionaries.

Kabeer (1999) explains agency as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. To her, agency includes meaning, motivation and purpose of those actions, or the power within, that go beyond visible action. Agency includes not only decision-making but also bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more immaterial, cognitional procedures of reflex and analysis (Kabeer 1999: 438). She also notes positive and negative meanings of agency, in relation to power. 'Power to' agency is the positive sense of power, that refers to people's capacity to define their own life choices and to pursue their own goals. And 'power over' agency is the negative sense where actors override the agency of others using violence, coercion, and threat. The third form of agency is 'power with' refers to the capacity to enhance power through collective action (Kabeer 1999: 438).

Ortner (2006) explains agency as always part of a process of the making and remaking of larger social and cultural formations. In some sense agency is universal and fundamental humanness, always culturally and historically constructed (Ortner 2006: 136). According to her, agency has two fields of meaning, one is the intentionality of the pursuit of culturally defined projects, and another is the exercise of or against power; but never merely one or the other alone. Rather, these two sides

of agency blend or bleed into one another or retain distinctive in a intertwined relationship. Agency is always unequally distributed; some people have it and others not; some people get to have more and others less. At some level, agency itself may be defined as a form of power (Ortner 2006: 152). Women in every known patriarchal society also have specific power or pathways over the hurdles they face (Kandiyoti 1988). According to Kandiyoti (1988) these strategies are part of "patriarchal bargaining", and they are different in different contexts and frame women's gendered subjectivity as well as the nature of gender ideology. "Systematic analyses of women's strategies and coping mechanisms can help to capture the nature of patriarchal systems in their cultural, class-specific, and temporal concreteness and reveal how men and women resist, accommodate, adapt, and conflict with each other over resources, rights, and responsibilities" (Kandiyoti 1988: 285).

Examples of work on women's agency include the following cases. Farnworth et al. (2019) outline the agency of Muslim and Santal women of Bangladesh who face institutional barriers to accessing agricultural technologies in wheat-maize innovation. Their access to resources, knowledge, financial services, markets, and more varies according to their socio-economic location in society and their ethnicity. Also, they must seek permission from their male spouses and elders in the lineage. To overcome cultural barriers and obey the norms, they first secure male support to make their journey easier and continued in the wheat-maize innovation (Farnworth

et al. 2019). Malik (2019:3) on the other hand sheds light on a common tendency of victimizing women in any difficult situation or conflict zone, which cuts through their long-time agency. She explains the Kashmir war and Muslim women's situation in there, which is thought as docile, neglecting their everyday resistance against brutalization and dehumanization to save their families and themselves, denying that "women are not merely accidental victims but conscientious resisters". This perception is also common in the case of my respondents.

The preceding concepts are significant and intrinsically connected to my research as I explore women's engagements, patriarchal constraints, and negotiation strategies with patriarchy in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. Gender and patriarchy are necessary for my research, as Bangladesh is a patriarchal society where women are treated as an inferior gender in every sphere of the society (Deb et al. 2015). The coastal areas of Teknaf are subject to patriarchal ideologies. Women encounter gendered oppressions and inequalities because of their gendered and other intersecting identities which badly affect their social wellbeing. But still women continue patriarchal bargaining within the value chains to carry on their engagements and to achieve social wellbeing, which clearly represents their agency.

2.6 Patriarchy in Bangladeshi women's experience

In Bangladesh, patriarchy means a system where women remain dependent on men in every way (Pervin et al. 2023). Even though the constitution of Bangladesh

(Article 19 and 28) provides equal rights to men and women, men have more control over ideology, resources, public space, and authority than women in Bangladeshi society (Pervin et al. 2023). Most seriously, women are always considered as dependent or owned by a man, either by her father, husband or son (Pervin et al. 2023). Chowdhury (2009) explains patriarchy in Bangladeshi society likewise, that men control and repress women through private and public patriarchy using religious misinterpretation, exploiting unpaid labor, and excluding them from economic power. Although women earn money, they do not have control over their earnings in most cases. She further added that women are considered as passive dependents and the property of men in Bangladeshi society. In addition, patriarchal Bangladeshi society has its own norms over women who are engaged in different institutions and working in different workplaces. Sultana (2011) shows how patriarchal Bangladeshi society discriminates against and subordinates women. Patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence support the patriarchal system in Bangladeshi society. "Male domination and women's subordination are the basic tenets of Bangladeshi social structure" (Sultana 2011). Sultana (2011) further adds that existing social, political, economic, religious, and cultural inequalities between both genders produce and sustain women's subordination in patriarchal Bangladeshi society. Even though several initiatives have been taken by the Government and NGOs to upgrade women's social condition, discriminatory cultural practices (patriarchal gender

norms, conservative religious ideologies, and social acceptance of gender discriminations) are barriers to eradicate gender-based disparities that affect women in rural Bangladesh (Kutub 2023).

Islam (2016) documents the experience of women laborers within Bangladeshi garment sector, where women are contributing to economic development but not having an impact on gender disparities at home or in the workplace. The capitalist economy and patriarchal structure in Bangladesh intersect to extract more profits through cheap labor from women within the garment sector according to Islam (2016). Even the trade unions are not concentrating on the female members and their issues, hence, they have failed to remove the patriarchal structure or to claim equal payment for female laborers working in garment factories (Evans 2016). Patriarchy is an everyday part of all aspects and spaces of life for Bangladeshi women.

2.7 Patriarchy in women's experience within dried fish value chains

In the three following sections I explore the material engagements (livelihoods) of the women, the material, relational, and subjective factors that constrain their social wellbeing, and the opportunities for agency that also exist in those material, relational, and subjective dimensions for patriarchal bargaining and obtaining social wellbeing within the dried fish value chains in my research area.

2.7.1 Women's roles in the social economy of dried fish

Exploring women's roles within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh is the basis for understanding the operation of patriarchy for women in dried fish economy in Bangladesh. Understanding women's roles requires knowing what women do and how much they are involved in the different activities they do. Deb et al. (2015) illustrate the importance for gender mainstreaming of fisherwomen's 'supportive roles' to create socio-political spaces for the women in fisheries-dependent patriarchal societies. But I intend to mainstream all the roles women perform within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh as mandatory tasks, not 'supporting roles' which are significant for their family's social wellbeing. Some women actively catch fish from the shoreline, do processing activities with their male family members, and even trade fish or dried fish in the market. So, it makes little sense to frame women's responsibilities solely as 'supporting'. Belton et al. (2018) have suitably stated that women who work in fish drying are economic actors in capture fisheries value chains in Bangladesh. Moreover, women's active participation in the dried fish trade connects them with the rest of the world (Salagrama & Dasu 2021).

Some general writing has focused on women's engagements with fisheries and dried fish value chains including their activities as workers and as part of a household team. Turner et al. (2020) is one of those who have specified women's central responsibilities in enacting food sovereignty, where women are the main resource

user, manager, planner for home gardening, shellfish harvesting, contributors to agriculture and many other secondary production activities. Also, they are chiefly responsible for fish processing and preparation in the Siviru community in Colombian Pacific, where men are engaged in high profile fishing and farming, specifically market oriented products. Similarly, Shyam & Geetha (2013) mentions that fisherwomen accomplish most of the fish processing activities in both artisanal and industrial fisheries. Besides, among fishing communities in Andhra Pradesh, India, where men moved out for alternative income sources because of deficit income and women have started earning from fishing to fill the income gap (Salagrama & Dasu 2021). Again, "traditionally, dried fish production and trade has been associated almost exclusively with women, though men also worked in the activity" (Salagrama & Dasu 2021).

Likewise in Bangladesh, women are active in different aspects of fishing, sometimes they are fishing, processing, or trading. Deb et al. (2015) have mentioned three main areas of fisherwomen's roles in fishing activities: a) preparation for fishing, b) fishing operations, and c) post-harvest activities; including fish vending, post-harvest processing (solar drying, salting, smoking, and fermentation), net mending, equipment cleaning etc. Often, they must work for 7-17 hours depending on fishing season and number of the household members. Shrimp fry fishing is another sector where both girls and adult women have active participation including

fry fishing business in an 'entrepreneurial mood' in coastal areas of Bangladesh (Deb et al. 2015). Authors have also found nomadic women (vede/vaidhya, predominantly Muslim) actively fish using fixed and chasing gear. With this income they not only support their family but sometimes run their whole family while husbands are disabled or sick (Deb et al. 2015). On the other hand, in fish processing, 50% of the casual laborers are women. They sort fresh fish by species, prepare fish to hang for drying, and sort mixed fishes during drying (Belton et al. 2018). They work the whole day (dawn to dusk) but within strong gender division of labor (Belton et al. 2018). Besides active participation in fishing, fish trading, and processing, women have several other roles which are not directly fishing based but complementary to it. During the fishing season when fishermen leave their house for half of the year in fishing communities in Bangladesh, then the traditional patriarchal household automatically transforms into matrifocality, with women assuming all the responsibilities of the male members (Deb et al. 2015). Furthermore, women also perform different symbolic activities concerned with fishing. Deb et al. (2015) have presented women's symbolic roles from fishing communities in Bangladesh where women from both Hindu and Muslim religions observe two types of special rituals: a. uncertainty and luck, and b. risk; these are viewed as nonproductive but have immense impact on the psychological well-being of the fishers which would help fishers to get more fish and save their lives from any environmental disasters. But

these roles of the women are mostly unappreciated and overlooked by the patriarchal society, by men and also by the women of the fishing communities.

Turner et al. (2020) presented an example from Siviru community where in community meetings or workshops men introduce themselves as fishers or farmers, but women call them mostly as housewives or sometimes harvesters. Also, the fisheries literature lacks focus on these roles of the women, and that's how women don't get recognition as significant actors of the value chain (Galappaththi et al. 2021). Similarly in Bangladesh, references on fishing communities are found but not all have focused in detail on gender relations or women's contributions within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. They mostly describe the roles women perform in fish drying sites in a brief paragraph, but do not explore the roles in detail. Sometimes these references describe women's responsibilities as 'supporting roles' or overlook the roles women perform as part of a household team. Often women work in fish processing with another household member (Hossain et al. 2013). Even though women are involved in fish trading, their work in trading has not been widely explored in fishing related writing. Also not explored the way women perceive their work lives. Do they perceive their work lives primarily as struggle against patriarchal constraint? Or do they see opportunities for hope? Again, research doesn't pay much attention to women's subjectivities regarding hope and agency.

Another recent addition is the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, which restrained the women from engaging with dried fish value chains for months. Atikullah Sawdagor, president of the Nazirartek Dried Fish Traders Cooperative Society shared that, "Our orders were cancelled because of the lockdown, among 30,000 workers, two-thirds are women, they all are jobless and living under piteous situation" (The Financial Express, April 15, 2020). That may have created several other patriarchal barriers to women's engagement within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh which also needs to be explored.

Thus, my interest is in gender mainstreaming women's engagements within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh through my research as women's work is a significant part of their social wellbeing. I inquire about their perceptions regarding their roles, their definition of dividing men's and women's roles, and their own ways of performing their roles and responsibilities within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh.

2.7.2 Patriarchal constraints on women

Despite women's active engagement in different aspects of fishing directly and indirectly, they are subject to various patriarchal constraints and limitations (Weeratunge et al. 2010). They are undervalued, rendered inferior, and their contributions to fisheries are overlooked because of existing patriarchal ideologies against women or in favor of fishermen. Often household, society and the state work

together in the process of producing fisherwomen's invisibility, reinforcing gender disparities, and enforcing gendered employment (sometimes fisherwomen are replaced by fishermen when a fish fetch higher price) (Weeratunge et al. 2010), which represent systematic and structural aspects of patriarchy. Furthermore, social, historical and economic research has also overlooked women's participation in the fisheries sector (Manez & Pauwelussen 2016), in a way that is consistent with patriarchal ideologies.

A similar situation is faced by women in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. Deb et al. (2015) have divided these socio-cultural and institutional constraints and limitations confronted by fisherwomen in Bangladesh into three layers: a) patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal construction of women, b) religious norms and traditions controlling women, and c) limited access to resources and decision-making process. These restrict fisherwomen's services and mobility into male domain public places in conservative patriarchal societies of coastal areas of Bangladesh (Deb et al. 2015). Sometimes socio-cultural stigma and patriarchal ideologies force them even to leave the paid work of small-scale fisheries (Aswathy & Kalpana 2018). These patriarchal constraints sustain gender inequalities and threaten women's material, relational and subjective wellbeing within fisheries and dried fish value chains (Galappaththi et al. 2021).

Women have fewer material resources than men in fishing communities (Weeratunge et al. 2010), and patriarchal constraints affect them materially at all levels of family, workplace, society and state. Macdonald and Connelly (1989) find that whether women had paid jobs or not, they uniformly had to engage in household reproductive work. In India, Manimekalai & Sujathkumar (2015), Salagrama & Dasu (2021), and Singh et al. (2014) found that women from fishing communities have active participation but remain invisible and still men are the decision makers. Weeratunge et al. (2010) have shown that fisherwomen are replaced by fishermen if a fish fetches higher price in the market. Other infrastructure-based constraints exist in fishing areas that limit fisherwomen from engaging with marketplaces, such as absence of toilet facilities in fish landing centers, fish markets and in fishing communities (Salagrama & Dasu 2021). Even though it seems neutral but it is actually gendered where infrastructure is built targeting men only, within male dominated public places.

In Bangladesh, authors have mentioned patriarchal constraints regarding material aspects faced by the women within fishing and dried fish value chains. Belton et al. (2018) found a disadvantageous gendered division of labor with unequal wages for the same causal labor where women get USD 1.85, and men get 2.50 for a full day work in fish drying at Nazirartek. In another fish drying site in Bangladesh, Daspara, permanent male workers get USD 60 per month including meals and

temporary male workers earn USD 3 per day but women get most of their wages as fish processing by-products and sometimes cash for certain tasks. Halim (2004) notes that women dried fish workers do not get equal payment, are sexually harassed, have variable working hours, and sometimes are fired for no reason. Apu (2014), Rabbanee et al. (2012), and Hassan & Sathiadhas (2005) have also pointed out the very low, unequal, and unpaid wages of the women dried fish workers in Bangladesh. Likewise, Sultana & Islam (2017:40) have presented fisherwomen's engagement in dried fish value chains in Chalanbeel, Bangladesh, along with various forms of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is also very apparent within families in fishing communities in Bangladesh where men and boys get first priority in meals because they are perceived as the 'breadwinner'. As a result, women and girls must sacrifice their food when there is food deficit and become malnourished (Deb et al. 2015).

Patriarchal constraints regarding women's relational wellbeing reinforce material constraints. Turner et al. (2020), for example, explain this with regard to the Siviru community in the Colombian Pacific where women's work is perceived as inferior, and men are ashamed of doing it. Shyam & Geetha (2013) have found that women's various kinds of work in fisheries are thought of as 'unskilled' or 'semiskilled' by the state, society, and their male counterparts in the fishing community in Kerala, India. Sometimes men tend to even ignore and belittle

fisherwomen's knowledge, such as in dried fish trade related meetings in Andhra Pradesh where men responded on behalf of fisherwomen by saying, "She doesn't know" (Salagrama & Dasu 2021: 49). Women traders also face relational constraints. Salagrama and Dasu (2021) also report that women face social restrictions on traveling for their business at night to the fish landing center on her own to purchase fish, and face challenges to stay for longer periods at the market at night due to social and familial pressures if they are not old (Salagrama & Dasu 2021).

Relational constraints are based on patriarchal ideologies for women in Bangladesh. Women are not found in deep sea fishing because boat owners are not supportive, women are perceived as impure as they menstruate, and absence of women friendly space prevents women in marine fishing (Deb et al. 2015). As a result, they are mostly engaged in shoreline fishing and fish processing activities as workers or as part of household enterprises, which are also not beyond relational constraints and limitations. In their research in the dried fish sites of Dublar Char in Bangladesh, Belton et al. (2018) found no women inhabitants or workers, because it was thought that women's presence makes the place impure. Besides in Bangladesh, when women buy and sell something in the market this is not perceived as trading, rather calculated as an 'extension of domestic roles' (Deb et al. 2015: 315). Furthermore, women fish traders face further patriarchal constraints from family and

society as they must stay at the market for longer hours or to move around at night. Women who are married, widowed and old (40-65 years) are only 'allowed' to trade fish by society, otherwise young girls could lose their social marriageability or face sexual harassment if they join fish trading (Deb et al. 2015).

Gender intersects with other structural oppressions in society (Galappaththi et al. 2021). As a result, gender relations should be understood by examining systems of power and oppressions. Dried fish value chains are not beyond this, rather gender intersects with other identities in this sector, such as caste, ethnicity, culture, and religion which deepen gender inequity (Galappaththi et al. 2021). Belton et al. (2018) found that unmarried young women (widows, divorced, abandoned women), and Rohingya women are at high risk of sexual violence and exploitation from male khola[1] managers because of their intersecting identities within dried fish value chains at Nazirartek, Bangladesh. World Fish Center (2018) has found similar discrimination among women from minority groups, or who have a communal or ethnic identity like Hindu or Rohingya women. There are other relational patriarchal constraints faced by women in Bangladesh because of intersecting identities, such as for women who fail to give birth, or who are incapable of giving birth to a son. Such women are treated badly and sometimes divorced (Alam 2018). Stone (1978), Ortner (1972) and Kandiyoti (1988) have explained similar patriarchal constraints

[1] Marine drying operations are referred to as *khola* (Hossain et al. 2013).

to women in patriarchal society. Deb et al. (2015) have found that women without children (vajha) are excluded from fishing related rituals in fishing communities in Bangladesh.

The State frequently takes part in reinforcing these patriarchal relational constraints to women through its gendered policy and governance systems. The Department of Fisheries under the ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of Bangladesh has mentioned "fish and fishery products" and "fishermen" in all their policies (Halim 2004; Shamsuzzaman et al. 2016; Siason 2002), no specific mention is made of dried fish and fisherwomen which implicitly excludes women from fish and dried fish value chains. This rejection is also seen in Andhra Pradesh, India when there is an annual fishing ban during which fishermen are compensated but not the women fish vendors and processors who are also affected (Salagrama & Dasu 2021).

Beside these relational constraints and limitations from within dried fish value chains, women are neglected in the fisheries literature, where they are often treated as an auxiliary force in fishing (Manez & Pauwelussen 2016). Sometimes the literature perpetuates patriarchal ideologies through writing that overlooks fisherwomen or downplays their engagements in fisheries. Dey et al. (2016) for instance have worked at Naogaon district in Bangladesh and only have counted women's participation if they own a business or have invested money in fish drying

activities (Dey et al. 2016: 652). By this they are excluding women workers, or women who are working in a household enterprise without payment.

Subjective aspects of patriarchal constraints seem missing in much of the research as writing typically explores patriarchal constraints from author's perspective but not from the women's perspective. That's why Coulthard & McGregor (2015) emphasize the need to explore women's perspectives on certain issues to get the actual scenario of their social wellbeing. I focus on women's own explanations and understandings regarding the patriarchal constraints they face. How do they differentiate between patriarchal constraints? How do they experience these constraints? What would be the possible resolution of these constraints from the perspective of women? The focus of my research responds to critiques of early approaches to patriarchy which overemphasized the way women were oppressed but did not pay attention to their agency. Even though there is a risk in including agency of reinforcing existing structural oppressions of patriarchy, I aim to explore those gendered oppressions with a significant hope to focus on women's bargaining strategies regarding these patriarchal constraints.

2.7.3 "Patriarchal bargaining"- exploring women's agency

As Kabeer (1999: 435) explains, women's empowerment is not an outcome, but rather a process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices with the help of three inter-connected dimensions: a) resources (access to material, human and

social resources), b) agency (decision making, negotiation, deception and manipulation), and c) achievements (Wellbeing). Thereby, agency or "patriarchal bargaining" is necessary to negotiate with patriarchy and gendered constraints, and to achieve social wellbeing. Social wellbeing is also focused on agency through women's capacity to engage relationally with others, question their subjective identities and to recognize material needs and constraints they have within individual, household and workplace, collective space, societal, religious and the state spaces. Women may try to change state policy, try to liberalize religious ideologies, and try to change institutions that control public space like marketplace with their own bargaining and dealing strategies.

Some research has been done on women's agency and bargaining strategies in patriarchal societies which is relevant to explore the bargaining strategies of women who work within patriarchal fishing economies. One of those is Galappaththi et al. (2021), who have presented women as actors in dried fish value chains and in the process of wellbeing creation. Women are source of their own agency in patriarchal bargaining as they are increasing their marketing activities, making decisions within households, and deciding to spend their own income out of resistance to patriarchal norms. Their actions may trigger to the shifting of gendered norms and constraints.

Kandiyoti (1988) is another author who has specifically explored women's patriarchal bargaining strategies and agencies within patriarchy by exploring women's resistance to patriarchal oppression actively or sometimes passively using symbolic strategies, such as accommodation of purdah (veiling) to come out from home and engage in work. Sometimes they resist, refuse to provide free labor for their husbands, or insist on payment for domestic work (Kandiyoti 1988: 276). These tactics are individual level patriarchal bargaining with patriarchal constraints. Scott (1985) has also explained symbolic resistance among peasant societies an individual level and explored that peasants or weak people are not always weak, rather they are conscious of repression, and deny and resist those oppressions in a symbolic way (Scott 1985: 304). Ramamurthy (2010) in addition, has drawn a scenario of individual level bargaining strategies where women keep their extended families together to get more unpaid labor and take care of their young children, so that they can engage themselves in income generation, while maintaining their patriarchal duties to home. Bennet (2005), on the other hand, emphasizes more collective agency in West African fishing communities, such as the improvement of women's organizations, the strengthening of women's lobbying/negotiation capacities, women's associations as pressure groups, awareness-raising for men, women moving into management roles, and interventions by NGOs through PIPs (Participatory Inquiry in Practice) (credit for women, supporting gender issues).

Collective associations are helpful to bargain at a larger scale, but the limitation is the possibility of losing focus on structural constraints, particularly the patriarchal ways in which those constraints operate. Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have employed the concept of hegemony and demonstrated the relationship between the political and economic dimensions of the mass strike, where no movement remains confined within itself but rather transforms into a symbol of resistance and inspires other movements. I have not found any example of such collective movement of the women working in the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh in the literature nor in the field, but they have collective force to bargain with the owners of the processing sites.

In the case of Bangladesh, some references provide examples consistent with the idea of women's patriarchal bargaining in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. Deb et al. (2015) for instance presents a few patriarchal bargaining strategies of women in coastal areas of Bangladesh. They argue that seasonal matrifocality (fishermen stay in the deep sea for half of the year during peak season) is a transformation of women's unproductive to significant productive roles for several months when women's roles, responsibilities, social networking and also dignity shift. Through this power and authority, women create their positive identity in society. They have further added that coastal fisherwomen are blamed because of their 'negative' characteristics as vocal, bad-mouthed, and masculine attitudes they

are said to demonstrate but, in reality, these work for women as a 'self-guarding safety system' against sexual harassment, abduction and other patriarchal obstacles in unsafe and isolated fishing communities. Again, Deb et al. (2015) are translating fisherwomen's immense adaptation capabilities within their uncertain situations as their agency. Women are expert in accommodating added responsibilities and various forms of social relations to achieve female autonomy. Alam (2018:150) has explored women's agency differently, from the perspective of women's access to men's power in a village in Bangladesh. In this context, women marry into a rich family, get financial security and the right to exercise a man's power (husband, father, brother, son) to negotiate with patriarchal society. Similarly, Deb et al. (2015) have found the wife of moneylenders in coastal fishing communities in Bangladesh are more powerful than other women as they are using their husband's power.

So, women engaged in fishing related activities have specific bargaining strategies and agency to bargain with existing structural oppression and gendered norms, but their bargaining strategies and agency vary. My review of the literature shows attention to the diverse patriarchal constraints faced by women working in fisheries. There is less attention to women's roles and responsibilities, and very little to their agency in fisheries and, particularly, in dried fish value chains. This is a major oversight when exploring women's social wellbeing. Given this gap in the literature, I have tried to learn from women about their bargaining strategies. How

do women use their resources to bargain within patriarchal constraints? How do they coordinate action with men and women empathetic to them to open up those spaces? What degree of agency do women have in individual spaces and collective spaces? Research in Bangladesh doesn't pay very much attention to the process of women attempting to expand their agency or to women seeking to empower themselves. The broader fisheries literature says more about it, but even there it is incomplete. My research seeks to fill these gaps.

2.8 Conclusion

The concepts and literature reviewed above were the inspiration on which I developed my theoretical framework, built my research design, and grounded my interpretations of my research data. The social wellbeing approach for instance, is the underlying approach for my study. Social wellbeing is significant to explore and explain the subjective, objective and relational wellbeing of the women laborers of Teknaf dried fish value chains of Bangladesh. The social wellbeing conceptual framework therefore is the basis for my inquiry into women's livelihood patterns, the everyday constraints they face, and their negotiation strategies within the dried fish value chains of Teknaf. I explore not only positive wellbeing but also negative wellbeing in my research. Identity and gender identity concepts help to comparatively identify the social positions of my research participants. It also helps to explore intersectional identities and the constraints they face because of those

intersectional identities. The concept of patriarchy helps to understand the gender-based obstacles women face within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. Agency, on the other hand, helps to explore bargaining and negotiating strategies women employ within the patriarchal dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

Furthermore, the literature on women's roles in the dried fish value chains helps to acknowledge and explore different engagements of the women within those value chains. It also helps to appreciate the roles women have outside of the processing sites, women's activities not recognized by the society or research yet, and mainstream their engagements. On the other hand, the literature on the patriarchal constraints pushes us to listen to women's views of the constraints they face every day while working in dried fish value chains. The patriarchal constraints literature emphasizes the need to differentiate other constraints from the patriarchal constraints women go through. Lastly, the literature on agency points to the everyday engagements and negotiating strategies of women within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

My research addresses a sensitive and challenging topic in its focus on women's engagements, obstacles, and agency in the dried fish sector of Teknaf. My research was sensitive as I explored patriarchal constraints that women face in relation to their family members and in the workplace. These women hesitated to talk about discrimination and sexual harassment specifically. It was challenging to earn their trust in discussions of workplace inequality. They requested me repeatedly not to share anything with their processing site owners as they might lose their jobs. I used qualitative research methods as an appropriate way to sensitively address these challenges in the lives of women dried fish workers. More than other approaches, qualitative research methods have the potential to build rapport with participants and help the researcher to gain a deep understanding of their lives (Kalu & Bwalya 2017). Qualitative methods also generate unforeseen insights into how living conditions may be improved. My fieldwork started in April 2022 and ended in July 2022.

Even though I am a Bangladeshi Muslim woman, doing fieldwork was very tough for me in Teknaf, because of language, cultural, and environmental differences from Dhaka where I have been raised. In Dhaka, I enjoy freedom of clothing, mobility, and communication but not in Teknaf. It is a very conservative religious place, and all the women come out of the houses wearing burka or hijab, correspond

to their age and social positions. NGO activities have increased in this area since October 2017, due to a massive Rohingya refugee influx. Lots of women are coming here from other parts of the country as NGO employees as well. Women workers try to wear socially accepted clothing, especially if they are working at the community level (for example, raising awareness to the local people on contraceptive use, child marriage, girls' education etc.).

As my fieldwork was directly involved with the community and I needed their acceptance, I also wore a burka. But I had difficulties to understand their language as Teknaf local dialect is entirely different from Bengali dialect. So, I hired a young woman who helped as a translator to communicate between me and the male and female participants. As my dialect is different from the Teknaf dialect, it was difficult to build rapport with them in the first place. But I learned a few key words of their dialect within a few days which took me closer to them. Besides, female participants enjoyed sharing their lives with me as they do not get chances to share with others. The father of my research assistant was also a fisherman. Although my assistant's father had died, everyone in the processing site knew her and facilitated my ability to get acceptance from local people. I learned about their lives and livelihoods from my research assistant too. My professional identity as a university teacher helped to become close to the male processing site owners as they are familiar with teaching and research related matters. They were happy to share their

dried fish related information but my professional status was also a barrier as they were afraid to disclose about chemicals and Rohingya employment in the locality.

3.1 Methodology

I conducted my research in Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar District, under Chittagong Division, Bangladesh. Teknaf is situated in the southernmost point in Bangladesh and shares an international border with Myanmar. It is significant for my research because this is a major site for dried fish production and processing, and as it hosts tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees, many of whom work in the dried fish sector. There are several dried fish processing sites in Teknaf including South Jalipara, Dorgarchora, Habirchora, Shamlapur, St. Martin's Island (Asia-Pacific Farmers Forum 2017), Majherpara, Khonkarpara, Kachubunia, and Shaahparirdip in Teknaf Sadar (Reza et al. 2005). I could not cover all these sites in the context of a master's study. I focused on South Jaliapara and Dorgarchora dried fish processing sites. I chose these two because of their significant locations and contributions to dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. One is situated in an extremely rural area (Dorgachora) and another one is in an urban area (South Jaliapara). These two significantly vary in terms of payment systems, women's engagements, patriarchal constraints and women's negotiation strategies. Their diversity reflects the diversity of the larger dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

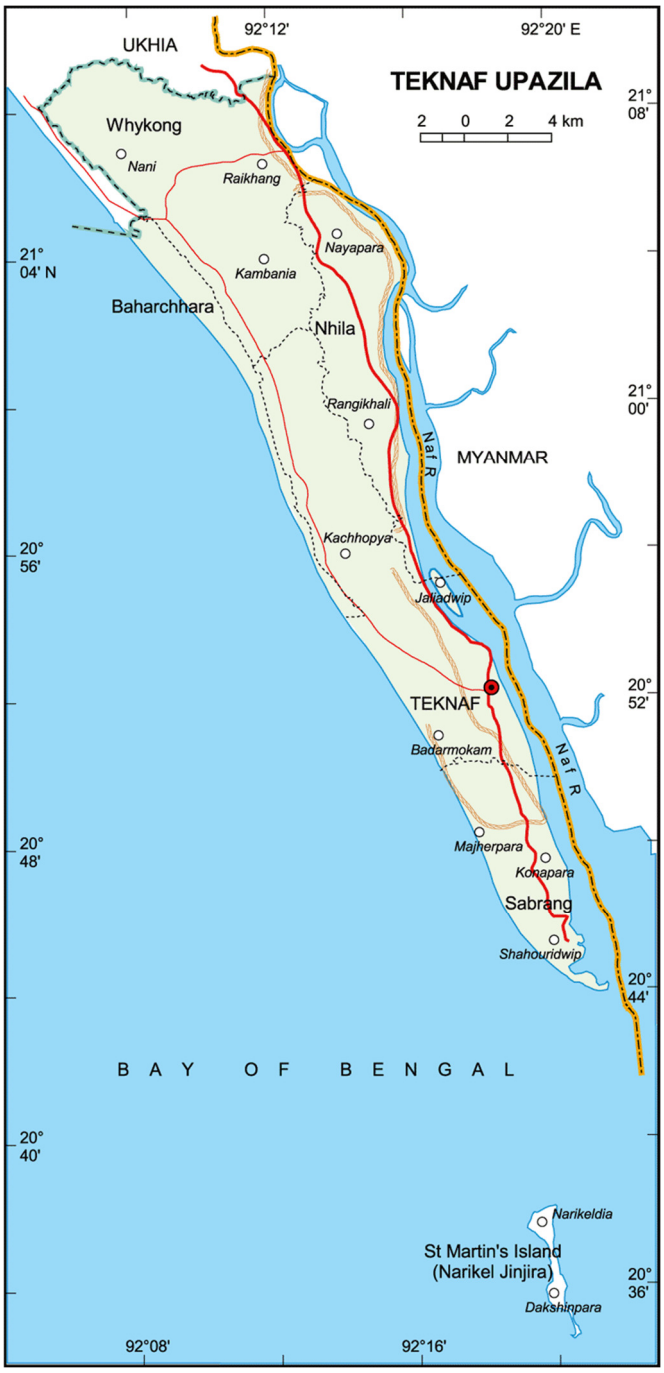

Figure 1. Location of Teknaf Upazila

https://photos.wikimapia.org/p/00/02/65/70/06_full.gif

In my research, I am specifically interested in how women's engagement in dried fish value chains in Teknaf contributes to their wellbeing and that of their families, but also in how their ability to fully meet their wellbeing is compromised by patriarchal constraints. An important part of the answer to these constraints lies in women's ability to bargain with patriarchy. Their bargaining capacity reflects their material, relational, and subjective resources. A mix of semi-structured and unstructured methods gave me the data basis to answer my research questions. Specifically, I used semi-structured interviews, participant observation and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews were most useful to explore my research questions 1 and 2, and focus groups were most useful for questions 2 and 3. Participant observation was relevant for all three questions but particularly important in addressing question 3.

Semi structured interviews were effective to explore fisherwomen's engagements in dried fish value chains because these interviews systematically asked women about their important and minor work activities within dried fish value chains and in the household and family context. My semi-structured interviews included questions about subjective wellbeing (Coulthard & McGregor 2015), including questions on the perceptions of women, their families, and other members of society about the relative status of women's work. My second research question on the patriarchal constraints faced by women working in dried fish value chains

was also explored effectively through semi-structured interviews considering the sensitivity of the questions and the confidentiality of the information fisherwomen provided. In my field sites, I found it normal for women to not to share experiences of sexual harassment or other confidential issues in front of many people, and women are aware of risks to them of being open about these issues in a public context. Patriarchy, gender identity, gender relations, division of labor were components of the semi-structured interviews along with questions about women's engagements and patriarchal constraints within the dried fish value chains.

I started my fieldwork with participant observation. I conducted around fifty less formal interactions with people involved in dried fish value chain through participant observation. My target population were female laborers, their male coworkers, processing site owners, community leaders, nearby shopkeepers, family members, and member of local society to understand women's lives and livelihoods and the cultural context of their work. Participant observation also helped me to build a strong relationship with the people of the processing sites including male and female laborers, site owners, landowners, shopkeepers, community leaders, and others. These relationships allowed me to conduct my fieldwork without any hazards. Insights from participant observation enriched my data and prompted me to ask new questions regarding patriarchal constraints as the research evolved. Participant observation was most useful to address research question 3 on women's

ability to engage in patriarchal bargaining. I explored women's everyday activities in dried fish value chains, and in their households, to learn about their strategies to deal with patriarchal constraints in their daily environments. I also learned how women speak of agency and how they exercise agency through participant observation. I began my fieldwork with participant observation to familiarize myself with the research community by observing everyday life and to make women comfortable with my presence as a researcher (Bernard 1995). But with time I understood that participant observation was a vital way to understand the agency or the negotiation strategies of the female laborers within dried fish value chains and at home.

I carried out six key informant interviews (KIIs), after participant observation at the beginning of the research, to become familiar with the place and overall dried fish value chains of my research area. I conducted the KIIs with 5 male informants and one female informant. I included key persons involved in dried fish value chains in Teknaf including a community leader (1), khola owners[2] (2), a trawler owner (1), a landowner (1), and a skilled and permanent female laborer (1). These individuals functioned as gatekeepers, in the sense that they not only directed me to people in their networks, but they presented idealized descriptions of the research location. I

[2] The owners of marine dried fish drying yards are called khola managers.

needed to cultivate their support while also remaining aware of the limitations of their perspectives and relationships (Bernard 1995).

I conducted twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews during the research period. Among them, ten were with female laborers, four were with male laborers, three were with wives of the processing site owners, and three were with female members of the local society. My target interview population was mixed so that I could get a varied set of perspectives on women's lives and livelihoods. I did not limit them by age or skill but rather kept my selection criteria open and included women working in different roles in the dried fish economy. Religious identities are crucial to understand women's social wellbeing because Muslims are dominant at Teknaf fish drying. I did not find any Hindu workers in the processing sites in Teknaf. Although Muslims are divided into Shia, Sunni, and Ahmedia sects, these differences were not significant among them. Rather, economic class and religious differences are prominent there. During the peak season from mid-August to mid-April, many seasonal workers engage in dried fish processing, including Rohingya people (Belton et al. 2018). I involved respondents from varied class and place backgrounds because of their intersecting identities but did not conduct interviews with Rohingya people as I did not have ethical approval to work with this vulnerable group.

I also conducted two focus group discussions to provide insight into research questions 2 and 3, as they enabled me to observe differences in answers and behavior in women only and mixed gender groups. I also explored more insights into barriers faced by women in the focus groups. I arranged focus groups with only women and focus groups between women and men to inquire two different scenarios. A mixed gender focus group allowed me to observe patriarchy and patriarchal dynamics in action. It was also possible to observe barriers that women themselves do not identify but affect them every day. Focus group discussions are also effective to explore different external contexts, such as social, economic, political, historical, cultural and environmental factors that shape wellbeing (Coulthard & McGregor 2015). As a result, this method helped to explore the influence of those external contexts on fisherwomen's engagements, the patriarchal constraints they encounter and the bargaining strategies they use to negotiate with gendered constraints in dried fish value chains at Teknaf. Focus groups are also valuable as a method for cross-checking findings from semi-structured interviews and participant observation (Bernard 1995; O.Nyumba et al. 2018). Focus groups discussions that I conducted met these goals. During mixed male and female focus group discussions, I observed that men dominated the discussion flow over women even though the theme was regarding women's issues. The focus groups confirmed findings gathered from the semi structured interviews and participant observation.

I used corresponding research methods to investigate patriarchy, gender identity, agency, and social wellbeing in both of my field sites- South Jaliapara and Dorgachora. But my research strategy changed over time considering the weather, availability of the respondents, and field settings. I made a plan to accomplish my target interviews and observations in both South Jaliapara and Dorgachora simultaneously in the beginning. But I changed the strategy after a few visits. I visited both sites almost every day but interviewed only in one field site per day to prevent data overlapping. I started conducting participant observation, semi-structured interviews from Dorgachora field site at first but I conducted key informant interviews in the beginning of the fieldwork in both field sites. I conducted focus group discussions at the end of my fieldwork in both fields. Exploring gender identity, patriarchy and social wellbeing was parallel for both sites. But I focused more on participant observation to understand agency as the research progressed. Also, I had to apply for an ethics renewal as well, after finding a 72-year-old female laborer in South Jaliapara field as my age limit for the female respondents was 65 in my earlier ethics protocol.

Besides the primary data from my fieldwork, I also collected secondary data based on Teknaf dried fish value chains. I also collected reports and articles on Teknaf fisheries and dried fish, government reports, NGO reports working in the study area to learn more about the socio-political context, management, and

governance system of the dried fish in the study area. I used pseudonyms for all my respondents and developed a codebook for background information. I used field notes to register my field data because it helps to organize findings (Bernard 1995). For coding and analyzing, Atlas.ti software was used which helped data coding and establishing linkage among the findings.

3.1.1 Positionality

As an educated, unmarried Muslim, middle-class female researcher, I faced distinctive challenges in the field. My urban background and Canadian affiliation added further challenges because Teknaf is a remote area of Bangladesh. I had to be concerned always about my positionality during my fieldwork to protect my neutral position. I tried to be neutral and reflexive throughout the study to minimize the power relations.

I did my best to empower my participants while conducting interviews. Therefore, I always expressed my knowledge gap to them and told that I went to learn about their everyday life, livelihoods, experiences, and what is notable in the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. I also told them that their knowledge and skills are significant to sustain the dried fish value chain. I always asked the participants about the time and place of interviews according to their comfort in advance. I answered all questions about my research during interviews. Moreover, I was always respectful while communicating with the participants and villagers through greetings

and salaam. I called the senior male participants as uncle and young male participants as brother (vai), but the female laborers of all age as sister (apa) as they called me sister too. But my tone expressed appreciation throughout my communication with them.

As a woman, it was not difficult for me to conduct interviews with the female participants except for the limitations of language. In that case, I learned key local words quickly in order to create goodwill. But my gender was a problem while communicating with senior male respondents, as it is culturally problematic for unknown women to communicate with unknown men in Teknaf. In this case, my close connection with a local family helped to ease their doubts. Fortunately, I happened to be friends with a student from my university in Bangladesh (Jahangirnagar University). That student came with me to the field and introduced me to my male informants as his elder sister. As my friend's father is a local community leader, everybody knows his family well. This connection assured them about my identity and trustworthiness. My everyday presence and clarity about my research purpose also helped to make them comfortable. I was still very concerned while conducting interviews with senior male informants and I chose my vocabulary carefully so that they did not feel uneasy or awkward. I sat in open places outside the khola to conduct interviews with them. Interacting with the male respondents was easier in terms of language as senior men were fluent in standard Bengali due

the requirements of maintaining their business relations. Local women have no need to communicate with outsiders most of the time.

As Teknaf is a religious place and women are married at a very early age, my marital status was a shock for my respondents in the beginning. They were curious about me as I was going in the dried fish processing sites, market, and shops to talk to them which is not normal for the women from this place. It was normal for them to ask about my marital status, children, my job, income, reason for going there, parents' job, parents' income etc. Through these, they tried to get to know and trust me. To build trust, I tried to answer all the questions they had in a clear way so that they could know me properly. But still some of them had doubts about my presence in the khola. In this case I told them about my relative from the locality. Even after sharing that local connection, a few of them still had doubts about my presence in the khola. This was especially true for the processing site owners, as I was observing everything about fish drying. I assured them, consistent with the research ethics approval that I received from the University of Manitoba (**HE2021-0232**), that I would not share any information that could cause harm to them and that all the data that I collected was confidential. The son of one processing site owners had completed his 12th class exam and was trying to get admission to university. He understood the idea of research, and explained my purpose to the processing site owners, laborers, landowners, shopkeepers, and others asked about my presence. He

played a significant role in the field to help me build trust and complete my research. Even after explaining the purpose of my stay in the field, I was still asked the "actual reason" by lots of people from my field sites and others I met. Some of the participants thought that I worked for an NGO and started to explain their terrible financial situations. Not only the laborers but also other people from the village came and shared their sufferings and expected financial help from me.

Even though I tried to be one of them, my marital status was always a matter of curiosity and worry to both men and women in the locality. They could not understand why I was not married yet because I was well beyond the 'proper' age according to the Teknaf culture. One of my female respondents expressed her concern by saying, "What is point of being a woman if you are not married yet? You are not able to give birth child anymore". It is clear from her statement that a significant part of women's role in Teknaf society is to bear children within a certain age. People in Teknaf are proud to marry off their daughters at a very early age and child marriage is a matter of every household. Another female respondent said, "Men will abduct you from the street, be careful". According to her, unmarried, single women are always at risk in the street. Another male respondent even warned me to stay safe at home because I was staying alone in a house. He suggested that, "You should be prepared for all sorts of extreme accidents. You know what I mean?" He meant that the single women get raped even at their home. That was shocking for

me hearing the assumptions they have about the woman who work far from their family and stay alone. I was offended another time by a processing site owner in South Jaliapara in the last days of my fieldwork. I went to South Jaliapara to take interview of a male respondent that I talked previously to conduct interview and he agreed. He told me to come right after the lunch break when he gets free time, and he would talk to me without hampering his work in the khola. So, I approached him when he was coming to the khola after his lunch. He proposed to sit in the shop beside his house, where he could offer tea and snacks. I was talking to him and after 25 minutes the processing site owner came and was very rude to me. He scolded me to not to come in the khola next time, because I was disturbing their work in the khola. He shouted that I was talking to the khola laborers all the time which disturbed their work. I was shocked as he had seemed to like me until that moment but reacted like this suddenly. But one of my respondents, female laborer who works under him shouted him back, saying, "You have insulted my relatives. You are not even a human being". Even though I was sad but happy inside after hearing this, that I had made a few relatives during my field work.

They also admired me for going there and tolerating the smell of dried and fermented fish which is not easy for most people. A sixty-year-old female laborer from South Jaliapara said to me, "don't you find the smell disgusting? People do not come close to us because of the smell, it doesn't go away after washing with soap or

sand". Women like this are forced to do this work despite the smell because of their poor financial situation and their status as widows. My research assistant one day vomited in the South Jaliapara dried fish processing site, even though she is local and always surrounded by the dried fish and fish. I did not know about my capabilities of tolerating the smell day after day. But I always like the smell of dried fish and dried fish curry.

3.2 The study area

3.2.1 South Jaliapara

South Jaliapara is situated in Teknaf municipality next to the Naf River. The Bangladesh-Myanmar border is in the middle of the Naf. The local people explained that they built the khola in South Jaliapara because of the ready availability of the fish from Naf River and availability of female Rohingya laborers. They could get cheap female laborers from the Burmese population from Myanmar (There was no strict surveillance on crossing the border through Naf River earlier) back then before huge influx of Rohingya during 2017. After that event, the Bangladesh government banned fishing from boats in the Naf River. Fishing from shore for small numbers of fish remains legal. Some boat owners have connections in the BGB (Border Guard Bangladesh) and can illegally take boats into the Naf River to catch fish by paying the BGB.

Ten khola owners process dry fish in the South Jaliapara khola. Six of these individuals are three sets of brothers while the others are unrelated to each other. These men own and run ten separate khola businesses. There are bamboo stands, and bamboo made *machang*[3] in the khola but no huts to store the dried, salted or raw fish. Fish are stored in the homes of owners. Two khola owners have huts on their kholas, but they do not store dried fish in them. Mostly they store different kinds of necessary equipment in the hut, including polythene sheets, bamboo for drying lotiya (Bombay duck), plastic drums for carrying water, and rope. The laborers and khola owner also rest a little in the huts during the middle of day in summer.

The South Jaliapara dried fish processing site is located right beside the residential area of Teknaf and thus outsiders from the local neighborhood who are not working in the khola but may be related to the khola owner or are neighbors, fish traders, or boat owners regularly visit. Outsiders come to the kholas often to pass their free time with the khola owners who are only busy with supervising their laborers.

3.2.2 Dorgachora

The Dorgachora dried fish processing site is situated beside the Bay of Bengal and the coastal road (Marine Drive) which helps the khola owners to buy more fish and transport them easily to the drying area and to the market after processing. This

[3] Bamboo raised platform 2-3 feet off the ground for fish drying.

drying area is nearly half kilometer from Dorgachora village. As a result, local people and outsiders are not seen here often. In contrast to South Jaliapara, people visit the drying area primarily for fish drying related reasons not to pass the time. There are six khola owners in Dorgachora khola. Three of them are brothers, two of them are father and son, and another one is not a blood relative but resides in Dorgachora village. Each individual has his own separate dried fish business and khola. Their relations are not strictly competitive, however. Sometimes, for example, they lend each other materials to dry fish or store fish for each other.

The khola owners in Dorgachora have small huts to store dried fish, salted fish, and fish to ferment. They also store drying equipment in the huts such as plastic drums, polythene sheets, baskets, and chairs. All the owners own one to three huts. The number depends on the size of their investments in dried fish. Two khola owners have bought cows for extra income. Another khola owner has bought thirteen buffalos and recruited a Rohingya boy (12 years) to take care of them.

The name Dorgachora is linked with their religious beliefs and a myth. There was a dorga[4] here in the village they say, where people would come from far away to offer a cow or goat to God and after feed the cooked meat to the local people. The water from the lake offered them gold utensils to serve food from the lake in a huge

[4] Shrine for Muslims

gold pot. But one day a woman stole a spoon, and the utensils and huge pots stopped appearing. The place was not pure anymore. Offerings stopped after that, but the legacy remained in the name of the village.

3.3 Ethics

I conducted my research in accordance with the ethics protocol approved by the Joint Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. My research was guided foremost by respect for the participants in my research and for their knowledge. As I note above, I took great care to build rapport and trust with residents of South Jaliapara and Dorgachora. A key part of that trust building was my explanation of my research objectives to them as part of the recruitment process. I ensured their written or oral consent before interviews. I was also concerned about the welfare of my research participants and took precautions to ensure participant confidentiality to minimize the risks of any harm befalling them.

Chapter Four: Women's engagements in the social economy of dried fish

4.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question of the study about the types and levels of engagement of the women within the social economy of dried fish in Teknaf, Bangladesh. In this research, women's engagement refers to their livelihood activities as well as other unpaid types of involvement within dried fish value chains. Women's engagement also includes their dried fish related unpaid work as a member of a household which supports dried fish value chains indirectly. Female laborers directly contribute to the dried fish economy by working in the dried fish processing sites. The female household members of the khola owners contribute indirectly to dried fish value chains by substituting for hired female laborers through cooking, drying, packaging, storing dried fish at home which remain unseen but significant for the dried fish value chains. Another indirect contribution includes reproductive activities, or home-based labor support like washing clothes, caring for children in various ways, managing household finances, shopping, and providing emotional support for family members. Women's activities in both spaces are central to the social economy of dried fish in Teknaf and Bangladesh.

Women's engagements in dried fish value chains also contribute to their social wellbeing by meeting their needs, and by providing autonomy and good quality (comparatively) of life (Coulthard et al. 2011; Weeratunge et al. 2014). But identity

(gender, ethnicity, class, religion) has a significant impact on the socio-economic roles within Teknaf dried fish value chains. On the one hand, locally held religious norms discourage women from engaging in dried fish processing related activities as it requires them to compromise purdah. On the other hand, they are valued by the processing site owners because of the scarcity of women laborers in Teknaf and the stigma associated with dried fish processing responsibilities seen as associated with women. Because of the inferior status of women's tasks, male laborers resist performing these activities in the khola and thus processing site owners are forced to hire female laborers. The lower status assigned to women's responsibilities has the paradoxical advantage for women laborers of providing an employment opportunity and the means to get around purdah restrictions.

Intersecting identities influence women's socio-economic roles within dried fish value chains positively and negatively. Age, ethnicity, religion, and class affect women's ability to work as khola laborers. For example, youth, non-ethnic Bengalis, non-Muslims, and relatively well to do women are not 'allowed' by the processing site owners and broader society to engage in these activities. On the contrary, women who are poor, older (45-72), without a husband, abandoned, divorced, without a son, or childless are prioritized to work as a laborer in the dried fish processing sites. The vulnerability of these women, however, makes them more subject to patriarchal ideology. They face unequal wages, variable working hours and tasks, negative

perceptions about their work, and patriarchal belittling of their responsibilities. Nonetheless, women are engaging themselves with the Teknaf dried fish value chains as economic actors and contribute to the social economy of dried fish as laborers and to their households' social wellbeing.

Women's work in dried fish value chains is paradoxical. It is important for women, their households, and to the dried fish economy but it is also stigmatized work that subjects women to costs if they engage in it. Patriarchy thus creates an economically advantageous system for khola owners that perpetuates exploitation of women's work. It gives women some space for agency but also uses societal norms to limit the scope of that agency and restrict the benefits that they can get from exercising their agency.

This chapter comprises six sections to illustrate women's roles in the social economy of dried fish in Teknaf, Bangladesh. The first section presents women's levels and types of engagements in the Teknaf dried fish processing sites in detail. The second section explains the recruitment system of the women laborers in the processing sites which is different from the other institutional systems existing in Teknaf (policies and written regulatory system) and has implications for their roles. The third section examines women's working hours and the effects of those hours on women laborers' wellbeing. It the final section, these general reflections on women's engagements in dried fish value chains in Teknaf are then considered in

the specific context of the 65-day fishing ban period. The chapter examines women's struggles and contributions to dried fish economy and emphasizes the positive and negative duality of their engagements.

4.1 Women's engagements in the social economy of dried fish

This chapter exclusively emphasizes women's engagements within dried fish value chains in two areas of Teknaf, Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. The first section focuses on a detailed description of their different engagements throughout the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. The chapter looks not only at women laborers but also at other women who are directly and indirectly supporting the dried fish economy. Women household member's engagements that I present in this chapter are overlooked in other research on fisheries in Bangladesh.

Women's roles are very significant in Teknaf dried fish value chains because of laborer scarcity. In Teknaf, men have various options for employment. The sea is always open for them to go fishing. They have job options in the market for various other kinds of business too, but women have few employment options because of conservative religious beliefs that their place is at home, including purdah. Women who do not have any male wage earners in their families, such as widows, abandoned or divorced women, or wives of disabled or sick husbands are 'allowed' to work outside of home. But they only have a few employment options outside the home,

such as working in the dried fish processing sites, working as a maid, collecting betel leaf (4 months of the year but not daily), and picking chilies (4 months but not daily). A few women work as tailors but not as a primary income source, or all year-round, because tailoring needs continuous connection with the market which is not possible for a woman staying at home. Among these, dried fish processing sites provide year-round job opportunities, but purdah must be compromised. As a result, older women (45-72) mostly work in the processing sites. Younger women have different stories to explain why they became involved in dried fish value chains as younger women face more societal pressures than older women, they must be desperate in order to work in the dried fish value chains in religiously conservative Teknaf.

4.1.1 Preparing and drying fish

Women laborers are the heart of the dried fish processing sites of Teknaf. Both in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara, all the dried fish processing site owners have permanent female laborers for whole year round. But the number of permanent female laborers varies according to processors' investment on dried fish. Some of them have one or two but a few have five or six female laborers. During periods when labor is scarce, (for example, when alternative work is available in chili and betel leaf fields with higher payment) or during the peak season, these permanent laborers also work for other processing site owners as a permanent laborer for the entire khola. There are also seasonal female laborers who work in both processing

sites. Their number depends on the availability of the fish. Even though all processors have permanent female laborers, not everyone has permanent male laborers. Only those with largest investments have permanent male laborers. Other processors save that money by doing work normally assigned to men themselves. Also, all the processing site owners work with the laborers every day in place of a male laborer. They save money through this too.

Women's engagement within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf includes drying and processing different kinds of marine and sweet water fish from Bay of Bengal and Naf river. In Table 1, I list the most common fresh and marine species that are dried and fermented in Teknaf.

Table 1. Fresh water and marine fish species dried and fermented in Teknaf

No.	Fish name	Scientific name	Dried price (BDT)	Fermented price (BDT)
1	Phaissha (gangetic hairfin anchovy)	*Setipinna phasa*	150-250	190-600
2	Suri (ribbon fish)	*Cololabis adocetus*	200-600	200
3	Surma (maitta) (King mackerel)	*Scomberomorus cavella*	400	N/A
4	Loittya (Bombay Duck)	*Harpadon nehereus*	120-250	N/A
5	Poka/poa bigger (Less tiger-toothed Croaker)	*Otolithes ruber*	200-300	400
6	Small poka/poa fish	*Otolithes ruber*	150-200	300
7	Lal Datina (long spine sea bream)	*Argyrops spinier*	150-200	300
8	Pata fish (Stingray)	*Himantura walga*	200-250	N/A
9	Chapila (Gudusia chapra)	*Gonialosa*	150-220	N/A
10	Olua (Pointed tail anchovy)	*Coilia dussumieri*	50-180	N/A
11	Takkara/takhia/dhonsha (Fringe-scale sardine)	*Sardinella fimbriata*	40-120	N/A

12	Ilisha/Hilsa shad	*Tenualusa ilisha*		400-500
13	Lal poa (Silver pennah croaker)	*Johnius argentatus*	180	N/A
14	Rup Chanda	*Chinese pomfret*	400	N/A
15	Fouro chanda/moon fish	*Mene maculata*	250	N/A
16	Tia chanda/Hali chanda/ Black pomfret	*Parastromateus niger*	200	N/A
17	Shishiri/mola mach	*Amblypharyngodon mola*	250	N/A
18	Lal chanda/ shortnose ponyfish	*Leiognathus brevirostris*	250	N/A
19	Sonali mach/goat fish	*Upeneus sulpheureus*	350	N/A
20	Khorul bata mach/ Flathead grey mullet	*Mugil cephalus*	300	N/A
21	Kukubra/Tuna mach	*Thunnus*	380	N/A
22	Tiktiki mach/ Lizard fish	*Saurida tumbil*	200	N/A
23	Oorr mach/shark	*Rhizoprionodon acutus*	70-200	N/A
24	Kata mach/cat fish	*Arius spp*	50	N/A
25	Pundura/dharkuta/ Forster's barracuda	*Sphyraena forsteri*	250	N/A
26	Tilla/ Tolwar fish/Lady fish)	*Sillago Domina*	400	N/A
27	korat/ sawfish	*Pristidae*	350	N/A
28	Achila/Tiktiki/Greater lizard fish	*Saurida tumbil*	300	N/A
29	Koral/vetki/Giant Sea perch	*Lates calcarifer*	350	N/A
30	Kukkurjib/Long tongue sole	*Cynoglossus lingua*	250	N/A
31	Pudi	Puntius	450	N/A
32	Japani mach/tilapia	*Tilapia sparrmanii*	160	N/A
33	Chapa Kori/ Talang queenfish	*Scomberooides commersonianus*	700	N/A

A female laborer starts her day in the early morning, from 7 a.m., until all the work is done. In the early morning after coming to the khola they clean the yard and the huts. After that they usually remove fish scales of the salted fish bought at night or on the previous day. If the volume of fish is large, then they also come at midnight

to pour salt over the fish. Removing fish scales and gutting them takes lots of time. Normally they wear gloves provided by the processing site owners while removing the scales. But female laborers from both of my field sites told me that they buy cheap low-quality gloves that do not last. Farzana Akter (38) from Dorgachora shared that, "Processing site owners think about their money, not our hand scars or health in this case." Most of the time they work with their bare hands and salt makes their hands itchy and whitish. That hurts after work. In Dorgachora, the young boy laborers aged 7-15 (Rohingya) also join with the female laborers to remove fish scales and gut fish. Usually, they sit in a circle facing each other on a huge plastic sack. The fish are piled in the center, and they sit around the pile. They use a wooden board and a fish scale remover for scaling the fish (see Figure 4). Male laborers bring salted fish from the hut and take fish for washing after the scales are removed. Female laborers are responsible for removing all the fish scales and other waste from the yard, not men. Male laborers say, "It is not our job, but that of women to clean the yard." They take some rest when women laborers are cleaning the yard and throwing out the waste. In South Jaliapara, gender-based job distribution is little blurred because of the scarcity of female laborers. Here male and female laborers both scale and gut fish. But these male laborers are usually other family members or relatives. I have seen the sons of the processing site owners, fathers and brothers-in-law, brothers, nephews, and uncles of the processing site owners doing this work.

Their response is different than the male laborers from Dorgachora. They say, "These are women's jobs, but we lack women laborers here, we need this job done and that's why we are doing this." These male laborers also clean up the waste after work because the female laborers are elder than them and they cannot order them to do the work. Rather the female laborers often order them to clean the yard. But if there are seasonal female laborers working with them then male laborers order them to clean the yard regardless of their age. Women laborers from both processing sites instruct the seasonal laborers or the young boy laborers to scale, cut and gut the fish properly to save the owners from loss.

Both male and female laborers spread the scaled and gutted fish to dry in both of my field sites. When they dry fish then both male and female members are equally involved. They both carry sections of drying racks made of bamboo (*machang, see Figure 2*), square shaped, five by five feet. Each machang requires two males or females to carry the machang and put it on the bamboo stand, 2 feet off the ground. This activity is not distinguished by gender, rather both males and females equally engaged in it in both study sites. Sometimes male or female laborers carry machang alone on their heads, but that is very tough and only done when there is a labor shortage. I have seen women laborers from South Jaliapara carry machang alone but not in Dorgachora. After spreading the fish for sun drying, they come and tie up the tail of ribbon fish. That is very artistic work in the sense that they tie the tails of the

fish like a flower. Each tied bundle contains 6 ribbon fish on each side (see Figure 8). They also separate the ribbon fish according to the size and make 3 different sizes of each. These will cost three different amounts per kilogram. Tying the ribbon fish tails is considered as women's work in both study sites. All the female laborers and also the family members of the processing site owners from both of my study sites shared that they like to do this among all the activities they do in the khola. According to Sheuly Begum (65), "All the work in the khola needs to be done uncomfortably sitting, standing, moving but this we can do comfortably sitting in a dry place, I love this part of my work most." Before doing this, they need to cut the rope into small lengths to facilitate tying. When they are sitting and tying up the tail, they deter crows and other birds using a slingshot (*gulti*) made by them (see Figure 5). They cut the rope with a knife made for them from a nearby blacksmith shop. Each woman laborer has their own knife. They say that "You need to work comfortably, the owner has knives for us, but they are not sharp, they do not take care of them. We have our personal knife to do our own work comfortably". They also need to spread a plastic sack on the floor and make space to sit before tying ribbon fish tails. They usually do the work of tying inside a hut or in the shade of a tree. When they are tying the ribbon fish tails together, male laborers will carry the dried fish to them using bamboo baskets. But if they try to bring half dried fish then the female laborers will shout at them or return the fish to them for further drying.

Female laborers know whether fish are dried sufficiently to meet market demand. Heena Bibi (55) says, “Even though men know how to carry heavy loads, they have nothing in their heads. I always correct them to dry the fish properly, I have been working here for 20 years. I know everything about dried fish.”

Women laborers also use their knives to cut the bigger fish into pieces, particularly silver jew fish (*argyrosomus japonicus/poa* fish). The bigger fish is thick and it takes several days to dry and insects may infest it during that time. So, they cut the fish into 8-10 slices so that it will dry quickly and avoid infestation. The head remains whole and attached to the larger dried fish. Smaller silver jew fish are just cut open across the belly but otherwise kept whole. They dry small shark (*Selachimorpha*) after cutting it into tiny slices. Members of the indigenous community (Chakma, Marma/Mog) living in Teknaf are the main customer for this dried fish. The processing site owners sell this in local retail shops. They also dry gangetic hairfin anchovy (*Setipinna phasa/phaissa* fish) in both processing sites. If the fish is not rotten and if it is brought during daytime or in the morning, they wash, gut, remove the fish scales, and dry it immediately. Otherwise, they pour salt over the fish to keep it from rotting overnight. Bombay duck (*Harpadon nehereus*) has low abundance in this area which makes fresh Bombay duck expensive and therefore not frequently dried, unlike in Nazirartek and other drying areas further north along the coast.

Figure 2: Drying fish using bamboo racks (machang)

Another load of fish bought by the processors comes at noon after the morning landing. Female laborers become busy emptying the plastic barrels (See Figure 6) in which the fish were transported. Male laborers in the meantime wash the fish in nearby water bodies. Sometimes they use tube well water to wash fish if there is not enough water in the water bodies. As washing fish necessitates carrying heavy plastic barrels, that the work is assigned to men. Male laborers also drain the water

from the fish afterwards. They bring the fish to the female laborers and take some rest. Female laborers take the fish out from plastic barrels and put them into another bamboo basket, plastic crates or into a plastic sack before spreading the fish on the floor and pouring salt on them. These steps help to drain all the excess water that remains after the fish are washed or that comes out from the fish during the salting process. If the owner buys ribbon fish, it only needs to be washed and dried immediately without the addition of salt.

Figure 3. Fish scaling and gutting in Dorgachora

Figure 4. Fish scale remover

Figure 5: Gulti (slingshot)

Figure 6: Plastic barrels

Figure7: Plastic crate, plastic bucket, and plastic basket

Figure 8: Bundled ribbon fish

Figure 9: Ribbon fish drying in vertical bamboo racks

Figure 10: Gloves

Figure11: Betel leaf field

After the fish is dried, female laborers take it inside the hut or put it into baskets. If the cleared space on the drying racks is insufficient, they then can set up

more bamboo racks. Ribbon fish are dried on machang (flat racks) first and then hung to dry over bamboo poles because the length of fish makes it easy to hang them. Males and females both hang the ribbon fish to dry. When they are done with these tasks, they go for lunch. Younger female Dorgachora laborers go for lunch only after the completion of their work, whether that is at 2:00pm, 3:00pm or 4:00pm. Older female laborers and male laborers from South Jaliapara stop doing work when its 1:00pm-2:00pm and go for lunch. I have seen a processing site owner requesting the workers to finish their tasks and then go for lunch, but they refused to do so. Shahida Begum (50), who has worked in South Jaliapara for 17 years once refused to work at lunch time by saying, "We are your laborers, not your slaves. How can you request that we work on an empty stomach? Are you a human or animal?" After hearing this, the processing site owner replied with a smile to go and come back as fast as they can. The women laborers from South Jaliapara usually take one hour for lunch, having betel leaf, tea, maybe a cigarette, and rest. Processing site owners request workers to take their lunch breaks quickly as they must flip all the fish in the khola that are spread out to dry. It takes a long time to do this task as each fish has to be flipped individually. Flipping is also needed for ribbon fish but tougher to do than other fish as it has sharp teeth and laborers can cut their hands several times a day without gloves and care. The laborers tie the tails of two ribbon fish together while flipping them and then hang them on long bamboo poles that are held up

horizontally. Usually, laborers flip fish five to six times a day to dry both sides equally. The number of flips depends on the heat of the sunlight. If the heat is strong, then six times but, if heat is low, then 4 times. Drying both sides equally will prevent insects from attacking the fish.

Figure 12: Drying ribbon fish step by step

Figure 13: Drying different fish species

Figure 14: License for dried fish business

During my fieldwork, I saw a woman laborer named Peyari Akter (26) from Dorgachora invent a new technique to flip a lot of fish altogether. Usually, fish are dried on a machang. So, Peyari (26) suggested to another male laborer to put another machang over top of the first and they both flipped it at once like a sandwich. All

the fish between the two machang were flipped at once except for a few that remained stuck to the original bottom rack. They removed these fish and arranged them by hand to resume drying. The processing site owner was regretful on seeing this. He told them, “Why didn’t you invent this during peak time? We could have saved plenty of time, idiots.” But all the laborers laughed happily that they had invented a new thing to save their own time-consuming work in the sun. Farzana Akter (38) said, “We also become dry like those fishes while spending all our time flipping fish.” Flipping fish is considered women’s work in both of my study sites. According to male laborers in the kholas, this is “soft and steady” work for women. Men prefer to do all the hard work like carrying heavy loads. Female laborers also think that this activity is less tough than male responsibilities. Heena Bibi (55) shared, “flipping fish is lazy work, you do and do but are never finished. Our hands, back, and waist get tired and broken doing this. Men are not willing to break their body flipping fish because they need to keep their backs strong to do all the tough activities.” The situation changes in both study sites when owners need to dry fish urgently. Male and female laborers all flip fish so that the owner can sell the dried fish on market day. All the processing site owners sell their fish at Asadganj, Chittagong, on Saturday and Monday.

In the afternoon when they close the khola and bring all the dried fish into the hut, there is another gender division of labor. Women collect all the dried fish one

by one into bamboo or plastic baskets. The male laborers carry the baskets into the hut. They transfer the dried fish into sacks or another bigger basket and bring the empty basket to the female laborers for reuse. This is not end of the day. They also need to cover up all the bamboo machang to keep them dry. Otherwise, it will take a long time to dry the fish the next day. All the male and the female laborers gather the machang one by one in a bamboo rack and store five or seven together. Then they cover the stacked machang with thick polyethene sheets. During rainy days, they use five to six layers of the polyethene sheets to cover the machang to protect them from the rain. There is no gender division of labor in the khola for this work; rather whoever is free to join does this. Rainy days also blur the gendered scenario of the laborers. Instead, both male and female laborers join to collect and carry dried fish so that it does not touch the rain. All the fish will be ruined within one night if it gets a drop of rainwater on it. After covering up all the machang, they pack up the dried fish.

Even though all the male and female laborers work in the processing sites from dawn to dusk under extreme heat, the processing site owners come up with ways not to give a lunch break to them. Rather they cook food for all the laborers at home during peak season, or if the fish amount is huge. By doing this, the processing site owners save time that the laborer would otherwise waste by going home, eating

and having rest. On these occasions, they cook special meals like beef curry or chicken curry so that the workers cannot resist eating the provided meal.

Women laborers play another significant role in the khola as weather forecasters. During my fieldwork I saw them working during rainy days, drying fish during this time. The sky is always cloudy and it often rains for few days at a time. If they get a sunny day in the middle of the monsoon period, they will spread fish to dry. This increases their levels of anxiety, however, as they fear that it could rain anytime, even if the sky is not cloudy.

During the rainy season, the processing site owners depend on the most experienced female laborers, who have worked in dried fish processing for twenty to forty years. The owner does exactly what they suggest with regard to the weather. And the women are correct all the time. I can remember once a wife of an owner stated that it would surely rain. The female workers disagreed but she insisted. Then the female laborers collected all the machang with dried fish and covered up with 6 layers of polythene sheets and sat there in the khola. After half an hour the sky was clear and sunny. Then female laborer Heena Bibi (55) shouted and used slang to say, "We work for you, we are not your slave. Why did you force us to collect all the fish? Do you know how tough it is to collect and spread them out again? We will not work for you anymore." The wife of the owner said sorry to them, including the owner. Only then they agreed to work.

The female laborers also have permission to sell dried fish to retail customers who visit the khola whenever the owner is not in the khola and then they give the money to the owner when he comes back. The laborers know the wholesale and retail prices of all the dried fish they dry and the reasons why their prices fluctuate, as processing site owners regularly discuss the prices of all the dried fish with them. Retail sales are not part of their job and do not get them any extra payment, but they feel that this unpaid labor is their responsibility.

I have seen the children of women khola laborers in Dorgachora khola. Children of two women laborers whose houses are near to khola come and play in the khola for the whole day. The children also help their mother or anyone who asks for help. If someone asks them to bring a basket, to scare away crows or dogs, to pass rope, bring polythene, water, or a phone the children happily do those chores. They receive smiles in return.

Figure 15: Daughter of a processing site owner scaling poka or poa fish

Female laborers also depend on others to take care of their children so that they can come to the khola to work. Some of them have elder daughters who take care of the cooking and younger children. Some of them leave their children at their parents' house to get child-care support from their mothers. Some of them have brought their mother permanently into their homes to take care of the whole family. These types of social reproduction of relations are common to the female laborers in Teknaf, as they are in other contexts in South Asia (Ramamurthy 2010) women's extended kin networks thus provide unpaid labor to dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

4.1.2 Fermenting fish

Dried fish are called *fuana mas* in Teknaf. Fermented and salted fish are called *mitha mas,* which means sweet fish. Fermenting fish is another tough job for women laborers in Teknaf. I have seen them fermenting fishes, such as- phaissha (gangetic

hairfin anchovy), poka (poa fish), suri (ribbon fish), maitta fish (king mackerel), and takkara/takhia/dhonsha (Sardinella Fimbriata). They ferment phaissha and poa fish mostly among these. They do not ferment other fish as those are more valuable in fresh form. Fermenting is only done during the rainy season when catches are good but drying is difficult because of lack of sunlight. During this time the fish processing site owners buy fish at night and then mix them with salt immediately to stop rot developing. One mound of fish takes 7-8 kilograms of salt. During this time female laborers are expected to work at night with male laborers. At night, male laborers bring fish and salt to the woman laborers. Women laborers layer the fish and salt in plastic buckets using a plastic tool known as a *mora*. In the morning, they salt the fish again properly. Then they spread plastic sacks on the floor of a hut or a roof at least to protect the fish from rainwater. In the sacks they build up the fish in a round shape, layer by layer. After making a round layer of fish, they spread salt in every layer. They spread plenty of salt to ferment them properly. Women laborers know the exact amount of salt required for each layer. Young Rohingya laborers (aged 8-13) also join with the female laborers in the layering and salting of fish. If male laborers are done with bringing the plastic buckets (see Figure 16) and bags of salt, then they join the fermenting work by pouring salt on the layered fish. The women make round layers to facilitate draining the fish during the fermentation process.

They can store this fish like this for 8-15 days. Within this time, if they see proper sunlight then they dry the fish and sell them.




Figure 16: Using plastic bucket to carry salt and plastic basket for carrying fish to ferment


Figure 17: Fermenting poa fish and phaissha fish in Dorgachora processing site.



Figure 18: Fermenting fish in South Jaliapara

Fermenting ribbon fish is a very risky task the female laborers share. Ribbon fish may only be salted for 3 days at most before it rots and needs to be discarded. During rainy days after buying ribbon fish, it should be covered with white plastic sack or polythene sheets for one or two hours depending how rotten the ribbon fish are. Female laborers are experts at fermenting fish. After salting, if it does not get sunlight within three days then it should be thrown out. That's why they tell owners not to buy ribbon fish during rainy days. Their expert knowledge does give them any wage premium but, rather, they consider it as an integral part of their responsibilities.

The marketing of fermented fish is different than dried fish. The price of the dried fish is fixed by the adotdars of Chittagong for one season. It fluctuates between 10-100 taka. But fermented fish fluctuates every week depending on the availability and amount of rain. If it rains heavily for several days, the price goes up and goes down with drizzling. It can fluctuate from 100 to 300 taka in one season. Processing site owners with low amounts of capital are forced to sell the fermented fish immediately for a minimum profit. They can store the fermented fish for 15 days to 2 months depending on how dried they are and then they have to sell. But the

processing site owners who have enough capital to invest, store the fermented fish in Chittagong cold storage and later sell it when they get a satisfactory price.

4.1.3 Packing fish

Dried and fermented/mitha/sweet (half dried and salted) fish require different types of packing. Dried fish do not need robust packaging because there is no chance that they will break in shipping. Laborers throw dried fish without worry and pack them into polythene or jute sacks. They do this for all dried fish except ribbon fish. Ribbon fish needs the additional step of being tied into bundles held together with jute or plastic cord wrapped around the base of the tails of the bundled fish (see Figure 8). Each bundle contains 6-10 ribbon fish for a total bundle weight of half a kilogram to one kilogram. Intact tails are very important for ribbon fish and women take special care to protect the tails. Ribbon fish with broken tails are put into the category of small dried fish and the price will be low. The small dried fish includes mixed fish of small size. Normally the amount of mixed small fish is small in volume and these fish are dried all together. After ribbon fish are tied into bundles, they are packed into plastic or jute sacks for transportation to the market.

Figure 20: Truck to carry dried fish to adot

Figure 19: Packaging dried fish

Figure 21: Fermented fish packaging in South Jaliapara

Figure 22: Fermented fish packaging in Dorgachora

Fermented fish (mitha fish) need special care as they are relatively soft and thus break easily. Khola owners depend on female laborers to package the fermented fish, because they do it carefully. Women have a special technique to pack them in protective crates or baskets. Fish are carefully layered in a circular pattern in the containers with heads facing out. The best-looking fish are separated out and added to the top layer of the crate. Broken fish are separated out and go into a different container to be sold at a lower price. They also sell the mitha fish with the crate and do not expect to get it back. Both South Jaliapara and Dorgachora use the same technique to pack fermented fish. In Dorgachora, the mitha poa fish were carried by the Rohingya male child laborers and the local adult male laborers from the machang to the crate while female laborers layered the fish in the crates. Once packed, the mitha fish are ready to sell. Male laborers did not take great care while transporting the fermented fish. I observed them tossing it into the plastic crates because the fish size was not big. But female laborers are very cautious while packaging mitha fish. In Dorgachora they used plastic crates and a black polythene inside it which would entirely cover the whole crate of fish. The polythene sheet is then tied together with a jute rope. In South Jaliapara, women spread a square piece of paper at the bottom of the plastic crate and after filling the crate they cover it with a piece of square white plastic sack and sew it to the crate. The size of the mitha poa was very big in South Jaliapara and they were very cautious while carrying and packaging them. Each one

of the *poa fish* was half a kilogram in size. Once poa were properly dried, male laborers carried loaded machang to the packing area, taking great care so as not to break the fish on them. The weight of crates of *mitha poa* are in the 30-40 kilogram range in both Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. In response to my questions about why there are different packing techniques in the two different processing sites, workers in each khola claimed that their technique is best to save the fish from breaking, as mitha fish are very fragile.

I learned that khola owners do not always sell mitha poa immediately when I asked one when he was going to sell his stock. He replied that, "I will not". I thought that was a joke. Then he said that he will preserve the fermented poa in a cold storage and wait for a better price in the market. At that time, the price of this size of mitha poa (half kilogram each) was 400 taka per kilogram in the market. He said he would wait until the price reached 600 and sell then. The khola owner said he needs to pay 7 taka per kilogram per month to the cold-storage owner. He said that mitha poa could be stored at normal room temperature for 15 days and after that it should be preserved in a fridge.

4.1.4 Owners' wives

Besides the female laborers, all the wives of the owners are involved with dried fish processing whether they are wealthier or poor. The difference is that the wives of wealthier owners work at home and the poor owners allow their wives in the khola

to be involved in the dried fish processing directly. I have seen four wives owners working in two processing sites in person. One was from Dorgachora, and the other three were from South Jaliapara. The differences between female laborers and wives are not great. All perform the same activities in the khola together, but laborers are paid and wives are not. They scale, gut, and slice the fish. They spread the fish to dry, flip the fish, collect the fish from the machang and take them inside the hut where they sort and package them. According to the wives, "It saves the cost of one laborer, and it is hard to find someone trustworthy". Khola owners' wives work is distinguished from women laborers in that the wives choose to do less heavy work, but they take care of other work too. They oversee the khola whenever their husband is not in the khola. They buy and grade fish, hire laborers, guide the laborers to do different activities, scare away crows and other birds, compare the price of the same fish from other khola owners, and sell dried fish in retail settings. They grade fish considering the size and freshness. If the fish are not fresh, then they offer them for a lower price. The wives pay more attention to the task of scaring away the birds and crows than the laborers. Processing site owners are in different financial positions in the Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. Wives work in the khola only when the owner does not have that much capital to invest in dried fish and laborers. I have found two owners' wives who perform all types of work in the khola all day long with their husbands. One thing that amused me was how they thought about the khola. When

I asked them about the owner of the khola, they answered without hesitation, “This is my khola”. When I first heard I was amused but later I learned that the owner was their husband. Even though they work in the khola all the time, no matter day or night, but financial matters are handled by their husbands. They sacrifice their sleep, rest, comfort, purdah for their “family”. They mentioned that it is not always easy. One of the wives of the owner from Dorgachora, Atia Khatun (40) shared,

> I come to the khola every morning with my two-year-old son. I need to do all the work alone in the khola often. Often, I hire laborers if my husband and I cannot manage. Besides, I cook for us in the khola, I feed my son and husband. It is not easy to maintain everything all alone.

She is doing this work for her son, she said. Other wives of the owners depend on their daughters to cook for the family and take care of the younger children. Their daughters also help with various tasks including gutting fish and tying the tails of ribbon fish together. They do this from home. Male laborers bring the fish home in this case. However, the daughters are also not paid. They need guidance from their mothers about everything.

The wives of the owner who stay at home are not seen but their responsibilities are not less than those who go to the khola. Their husbands have more capital and thus they can maintain purdah by staying at home. From home they support their

husbands in every way they can. They hire female laborers who will not go to the khola because of purdah reason but can work at home. Wives also join with them to scale fish and tie ribbon fish tails together if the owner has insufficient female laborers in the khola. Wives also cook for the laborers, make tea 4-6 times daily whenever there is a guest coming to visit their husbands. If they do not find enough laborers, then they are responsible to complete everything alone. Thus, she forgets about rest and meals. According to Rehana (32), "The hours of work for female laborers end at 6pm. At the end of their work day, they go to rest[5] at home. But I do not have any fixed working hours. I must complete all the pending fish processing work anyhow after doing all the housework." Sometimes she asks her mother to come and take care of her son so that she can finish all the work. These contributions of the wives of the owner are not seen or mentioned by participants in the dried fish value chains in Dorgachora, or South Jaliapara, but are necessary for the value chains to run.

4.2 Recruitment procedure

The recruitment of women dried fish laborers directly reflects the social, religious, and economic context of Teknaf and Bangladesh more generally. In general, the female laborers are women who face intersectional disadvantages and who are most

[5] Rehana's comment about 'rest' should not be taken literally as female labourers' work days don't end when their khola work is over as they surely have lots of home work to do when they get home.

prone to social stigmatization. This category includes widows, abandoned women, women without sons or children (*banja*), and women whose husbands are unable to work or are in jail. There are three broad categories of female laborers in the two dried fish processing sites: seasonal, temporary, and permanent. Khola owners are dependent on their permanent female laborers, and their wives, to search and hire other female seasonal or temporary laborers during the peak season and whenever they buy large number of fish. The permanent female laborers have all the mobile phone numbers of possible female laborers willing to work in the khola. Normally women who work as a maid are willing to work in the khola but not everyone. According to Farzana Akter (38), "Not everyone can tolerate the bad smell of dried and fermented fish. It always smells. That's why we always chew betel leaf to avoid the smell." The permanent female laborers also have the mobile numbers of the Rohingya female laborers too. Wives of the owners also have mobile numbers of all the seasonal female laborers and call them when they need. I will discuss these three broader criteria below.

4.2.1 Permanent laborers

By saying permanent laborer, I mean those who only work in the khola for their livelihood if there is no fishing ban. If the processing site owner has fish in the khola during the ban, the permanent female laborers will join the khola and leave other work. They said that during the rainy season they work in betel-leaf and chili fields

and in the plant nursery during the fishing ban but not every day. That's why they take *dadon* from the khola owner (sadar) and survive during the fishing ban. Dadon is an advance loan taken by the laborers at the beginning of the fishing ban period from the processing site owners. Dadon loans are repaid in small amounts. For the entire period when dadon is outstanding, laborers should work for the owners in return. By taking dadon, vulnerable women are unofficially forced to work under the processing site owner whenever they need them. A few of the permanent female laborers shared that they do not like to work as a maid in other houses because their bosses will scold them, and they must wear a veil all the time. The also said that, "maid is not a prestigious job category." That's why they prefer to work in the khola. They work hard when there is lots of work, but they get time to rest when they are tired or there is less work. A few laborers said that they do not take dadon and thus can work in plant nurseries and betel leaf fields with higher pay (400 taka per day rather than 300 in the khola). But they never become permanent laborers. Male and female laborers both take dadon from the processing site owners, but the owners only call those who are skilled in dried fish processing. In that case, permanent female laborers are given priority access to dadon and are called first when there is work in the khola.

4.2.2 Seasonal and temporary laborers

Seasonal laborers are those women who work in the khola during the peak season, and temporary laborers are those who work in the khola whenever there are large volumes of fish that need to be processed. Seasonal laborers are mostly female Rohingyas. Temporary female laborers include women who work as maids the rest of the time. These women do not work as a permanent maid in individual houses and that's how they manage to work in the khola. These women come from distant villages, so that no one would recognize them in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. Thus, they will avoid the social stigma they have to face in their own community of working in the khola without maintaining proper purdah. They do not take off their burqa or veil while working all day in the khola. Sometimes the temporary female laborers are simply housewives. I witnessed the recruitment of temporary laborers in the South Jaliapara on the last day before the ban on the 19th of May 2022 in order to deal with a peak moment of work. Khola owners recruited as many temporary laborers as they could, one who worked as a maid, others who stayed at home. The recruits were a young Rohingya boy and two young girls aged 12 and 16. Normally woman work in the khola when they do not have a husband or if their husbands cannot work or are in jail. But this was an unusual scenario during my research and also from the point of view of the local people. I asked the 16-year-old girl how long she had been working in the khola. She said that was her first day and she came from

North Jaliapara, another village. I asked about the salary she will be paid. She didn't know, she replied. She had come with her aunt and her aunt would deal with the question of payment. She said the 12-year-old girl was her neighbour. The processing site owner said that he would pay 100 taka to each as they are not skilled laborers. This shows a scenario of how the processing site owners manage temporary and seasonal laborers during extreme moments of their work.

4.3 Working hours and payment system

Working hours in both processing site are 7 am to 6 pm. But that does not work during peak season and moments of huge workload. There are no fixed working hours during that time in both of my field sites. Laborers need to work until activities are completed. They also need to come to the khola whenever the owner buys fish. One of the female laborers from Dorgachora, Farzana Akter (38) shared, "I worked 3 days continuously without any break or sleep during peak season." The permanent laborers are expected to work if there is work in the khola. This not the case for seasonal laborers. Permanent laborers will complete all the work in the khola, and then leave. Sometimes the female laborers leave at 12 am, 3 am, may be 6 am. There is no fixed time. The permanent female laborers all live nearby the khola, and that's how they manage to continue their work until midnight and longer. Patriarchal Teknaf does not accept their night work in the khola and spreads rumors about them that they shared. But they also said, "We work the whole day, society will not

provide food to us. That's why we do not listen to them." Their family members cannot say anything either because the female khola workers are helping their family financially.

The working hours in both processing sites are the same for male and female laborers. But the payment system is different for male and female laborers. Payment is fixed based on their gender, not on their activities. In Dorgachora female laborers get 300 taka per day and male laborers get 400 taka per day. If a female laborer works until 2am or 3am in the night, then she gets paid overtime equal to a day's 300 taka wage. But if they work less than 2am, then they get 200 taka for the night. Sometimes all the work is done by 12am, and then they get 100 taka. But if they work until 11pm, then they get nothing. This is considered free. This exploitation does not happen with the male laborers. They take 200 taka for working until 12am and 400 taka for working until 3am. New Rohingya child laborers (aged 10-15) get 5000 taka per month. When they work for 1 year they get per month 6000 taka.

In South Jaliapara, female laborers are also exploited financially but less than Dorgachora. Here female laborers get 350 taka per day and male laborers get 500 taka per day. If they work until 12am at night, then they take 200 taka and 400 taka for working until 3 am. Here, women do not work for free, but payment is still based on their gender. Khola owners and women workers said that they perform less heavy activities and men do the heavier ones to justify the unequal payment. Female

laborers here have another source of income in the processing area. They cut the big fish into slices. This work is paid a per-mound basis. Even though they work for one processing site owner, they can cut fish for another khola owner if the workload is not too great. Later, after 6 p.m., they compensate for that time. They get 100 taka per mound (40 kilograms). This income only becomes possible if female workers keep a good relationship with their khola owners. .

But there is another problem regarding payments; they do not get their payment daily and sometimes not even monthly in both processing sites. The laborers need to wait until the owners sell the dried fish and get money from the arotdar (Wealthy wholesaler merchant who buys fish from hundreds of processing site owners) of Asadgonj, which takes one or two months sometimes. But the female laborers wait because the khola is the only earning source for them and they will get paid at some point, they know it. The female and the male laborers have received their payment like this for years and thus they trust the khola owners. This trust-based relationship works beyond the financial exploitation and is a surety of their continued work in the khola.

4.4 Life and livelihood during fishing ban (20 May to 23 July)

Life goes on even during the fishing ban when there is no work available in the khola but the female laborers have a difficult time. The scenario is different for my two different field sites and for different laborers. In both of my field sites, there is a lot

of processing backlog to complete during the start of the fishing ban. Anticipating the ban period, the khola owners buy as much fish as they can by investing all the capital they have. They even take loans to buy fish. When I was in Teknaf, the first 15 days were a very busy time in both processing sites. The kholas were drying and fermenting large volumes of fish. After that, when I visited South Jaliapara to talk or conduct interviews, I couldn't find them at home. Some of them went to their son-in-law's house or to visit their daughters. One of the participants visited to see her sister from Jaliapara.

One of my participants, Shamsunnahar (60), was at home but doing the pending backlog of work in her house. She was repairing her kitchen and house, which had been broken for months. She couldn't talk to me because she had lots of work to complete. The next day she planned to visit her daughter in Cox's Bazar. Her daughter had been in huge trouble for several months because of her husband and mother-in-law. They were giving her daughter a very tough time, beating and scolding her. Shamsunnahar's daughter was seven months pregnant and could not eat or work. But her husband could not tolerate this 'laziness' and beat and scolded her all the time. Shamsunnahar was planning to go to her daughter for months but couldn't make it because of khola work. She needs to earn, to feed her family and try to solve their financial problems. Now that Shamsunnahar is free from the khola, she was able to go to try to solve her daughter's crisis. "I will not hesitate to bring

her back if I need to" she decided. She earns money to feed her family, and she was able to feed one more mouth, she added.

Other female laborers were also not at home for days. A few of them went to see their sick relatives or parents. These are their social responsibilities, they explain. "Our work starts wherever we go, at home or khola" Rehana (54) mentioned when I asked about their never-ending work. A few of them were called by the khola owners from their relatives' house when fish became available to dry or ferment. Even during the fishing ban, they were either busy in the khola or went to visit relatives' houses.

In South Jaliapara, female laborers cannot find any other work to do and depend on dadon from the khola owner during the fishing ban. They repay their debt slowly working under the owner when there is work in the khola. Dorgachora is different in that, they still have work in the betel-leaf field and chili field. They continue to work in the betel-leaf field until the heavy monsoon when the betel bush dies. The female laborers in Dorgachora also planned to visit few places after the end of betel-leaf and chili season. Shahina (62) a permanent female laborer, chose not to work in the khola under another khola owner for 300 taka per day; rather she chose to work in a betel-leaf field for 400 taka per day. But she still comes to khola if the khola owner she works under has fish to dry or ferment. "I got this chance to get higher payment only for a few days, I am taking it"- she responded to a

permanent worker who called her to come to the khola. She is a permanent worker of another khola owner who has no fish to dry right now and thus she is not bound to work at khola now. Even though they work in the betel leaf field or chili field, the work is just for a few days which means they need to take dadon from the processing site owners.

The dadon system during the fishing ban works as a trap by the khola owners to force them to come to the khola whenever the owner calls. Permanent khola laborer Peyari (26) said that she did not take dadon from the khola owner but rather started to work at a nearby tree nursery. She was criticized by her relatives and other family members for that choice. She has no husband and has two children to feed, that's her logic: "Why would I take dadon and sit at home with burden if I can work?"

Khola owners offer dadon to the permanent laborers in Dorgachora processing site too. They expect them to come to the khola whenever they call during fishing ban or after. Some of the workers even end up repaying dadon for the whole year. The female laborers who do not take dadon and work far from home face several patriarchal obstacles. The relatives of Peyari (26) scold her for going to the tree nursery to work and check every day if she travels anywhere from the tree nursery "to meet any man". When I visited her house, one of her relatives said that she does not like to work for the tree nursery as it is so far. It is situated two villages beyond

Dorgachora. I asked, why did Peyari (26) go then? She replied, “She cannot live without seeing a man’s face or meeting them”. Her relatives also said that she went to Teknaf Sadar (Municipality) the previous day after work to meet a man and stayed until 10:00pm. Her maternal uncle scolded and threatened to prevent her from working in the nursery the next day, but she didn’t listen. One of Peyari’s aunts then started blaming her mother for letting Peyari go to Teknaf Sadar with a few of her co-workers and said she should call Peyari on her mobile phone to return. Thus, while female laborers try to explore other jobs during the fishing ban, patriarchal society tries to prevent them because of their gender identity.

The male laborers of Dorgachora are busy in the rainy season collecting dadon to repair their houses. One of them is Hassan (45) who, during the fishing season, couldn’t repair his house but was able to turn his hand to it after the rain arrived. Hasan also searched for jobs to feed his family but wasn’t successful. Other seasonal women laborers have started to work as maids in other houses because they have no other way to feed their babies. They cannot take “dadon” from the khola owner because they are not skilled permanent laborers. The khola owners only offer dadon to skilled permanent laborers.

4.5 Conclusion

The types and levels of engagement of women within the social economy of dried fish in Teknaf, Bangladesh are significant to sustain the economy. Paid and unpaid labor by female workers is important. The local knowledge of the female laborers about drying fish, fermenting, and weather is not officially part of their job responsibilities and they do not get any direct payment for it, but that knowledge is significant for Teknaf dried fish value chains. The women in the families of the processing site owners are also unseen throughout the economy but perform a valuable part of the processing. They manage laborers and perform different processing related tasks without any payment. This unpaid job will bring various advantages for them in return, they hope. But their gender identity has a significant impact on their socio-economic position within Teknaf dried fish value chains. They face economic and social challenges. Economically, they receive unequal payment and access to appropriate workplace infrastructure, sometimes women's work remains unpaid, and they suffer undefined working hours more than male laborers. Socially, women face negative perceptions of their work and stigmatization of their responsibilities due to patriarchal constraints. Intersecting identities sometimes make them more vulnerable in society and in the khola. Sometimes they are being exploited through the dadon system and forced to continue working under unequal payment. Even though women are exploited by the khola owners and discouraged

by the religious society of Teknaf to engage in dried fish processing related activities, they negotiate with that obstacle through all their activities and keep working in the dried fish economy. Women continue to engage with Teknaf dried fish value chains as economic actors and contribute to the social economy of dried fish as laborers and as household members to achieve their and their family's wellbeing.

Chapter Five: Patriarchal constraints on women

5.0 Introduction

Patriarchal constraints on women within dried fish value chains is the focus of this chapter which focuses my second research question. Patriarchal constraints on women in my research means gender-based obstacles women face, or the barriers they experience within the dried fish value chains in patriarchal Teknaf society because of their gender identity. The patriarchal constraints are faced by the female laborers only, which have immense negative impact on their objective, psychological and subjective wellbeing. Patriarchal constraints mean unequal wages, sexual harassment inside and outside of the khola, restrictions on certain age groups of women, gender specific slang, negative societal perceptions about them and their employment, controlled mobility, and sometimes female (older) coworkers are also against them which creates further constraints in their personal and work lives. Patriarchal settings always compel them to be concerned about aspects of their lives including their clothing, religious norms, societal perceptions, familial dignity, communication with men, working late or night, and visiting coworkers. As a result, their objective wellbeing, meaning their livelihood and earnings (Coulthard & McGregor 2015), is affected negatively.

Some other constraints exist in both of my study sites that men and women laborers face, but patriarchal constraints are the most burdensome and have

significant negative impacts on female laborers' daily lives. Male and female laborers work in unsafe work environments, are exposed to chemicals used in fish drying, and face unhygienic work settings without protective clothing or equipment to shield them from risks. Both groups must deal with the lack of a sanitation system, excessive overtime, and variable working hours, which affect their quality of work in the processing sites. Their social and family lives are also compromised because of unlimited working hours and overtime during the peak season or when there are lots of fish bought by the owners. This type of overtime not only hampers their everyday regular lives but they also suffer from different chronic diseases because of the unsafe work environment. These obstacles and barriers affect them mostly physically and affect both male and female laborers.

Patriarchal constraints that women alone face prevent them from focusing on their job responsibilities as they must constantly ensure that their behavior fits their patriarchal setting. Unequal wages for female laborers is one of them, which is validated by the patriarchal ideologies by devaluing their job responsibilities. When gender intersects with other identities, women face other kinds of structural constraints in the society too (Galappaththi et al. 2021). For that, restrictions also prevail for certain age groups of women who are young and not married. Society has strict restrictions over their working in the processing sites which, if violated, would

create questions about their eligibility for marriage. They are even called as a 'whore' by the society, the female laborers shared.

Working in the kholas bring bread to their plate for the female laborers. They are the only breadwinners of their families in most cases. The female laborers are happy that they can feed their children and themselves by working hard in the dried fish processing sites. They have options to work as a maid but choose to work in the khola as it is a job, not 'cheaper employment' like maid. Maids are seen very lower-class employment. Hence, employment in dried fish processing sites is a source of their subjective and objective wellbeing. The female laborers continue their job in the dried fish processing sites through maintaining social relationship with the khola owners which reflects their relational wellbeing. When the female laborers are called as 'whore' by the society for working in the dried fish processing sites, or working late in the kholas, that affect them in many ways. This sort of patriarchal obstacle affects their subjective, objective and psychological wellbeing at the same time.

As women are expected to stay at home and in purdah, there is socio-cultural stigma about women's employment in the dried fish processing sites in Teknaf, which are sometimes far away from their homes. The socio-cultural stigma about their work affects their relational and subjective wellbeing, which often pushes them to leave their employment. The women who are engaged in dried fish value chains in Teknaf as a household member, also face patriarchal constraints but those

constraints are different from the women laborers of the processing sites. Even though they work as a household member, the man owns the money, land, equipment, and the income from dried fish production. Women become more vulnerable when they are divorced or abandoned by men (husband, brother, son) in their households. Eventually, their subjective, objective, and relational wellbeing is affected by the patriarchal constraints because of their gender identity. It is true that, patriarchal constraints restrict female laborers in a various ways, but they also try to bargain with these constraints as I will discuss in the next chapter.

This chapter concentrates on two major categories of constraints faced by laborers in the dried fish value chains of Teknaf. The first section explains the constraints and challenges faced by both male and female laborers in the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. But female laborers are the major victims of those constraints. The second section presents the patriarchal constraints faced solely by the female laborers because of their gender identity in the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. The negative consequences of these patriarchal constraints on female laborers and female household members are also explained in this section.

5.1 General constraints faced by labourers in dried fish value chains

Male and female laborers in the Teknaf dried fish processing sites share some common constraints. In both of my study sites, I saw unhygienic work environments. There is no proper waste management system in the kholas. As a result, workers

discard waste around the khola. The refuse around the kholas likely creates breeding conditions for the flies that swarm all over the khola. As workers eat in the open khola, flies land on their food, which risks spreading disease. Another hygienic issue is mud in both kholas which causes health problems. As workers wash fish every day in the kholas, the kholas are filled with mud. They cannot wear shoes in the mud, so they work barefoot in the kholas all day, which causes sores on their feet. Both male and female laborers said that they catch colds and fever very often as a result of working in the muddy conditions. During the monsoon season, the situation becomes worse in both kholas. Of the two khola locations, Dorgachora is less muddy than South Jaliapara, as water easily flows into adjacent saltwater lagoons and then to the sea in Dorgachora. During the monsoon, the South Jaliapara khola is filled with water and mud. Sometimes the water is up to the workers' knees. But the khola owners cannot construct drainage infrastructure to prevent mud and flooding as they are not the landowners. "We can do nothing about the mud, if the owner doesn't allow it" khola owner Shishir (30) explained to me while looking at the son of the landowner. They both smiled but didn't take the conversation further. But the laborers never get used to the mud and waterlogging. They burst into anger after hearing Shishir's comment. Heena Bibi (55) said, "This is not fun, working through the water and mud all day is not fun for us. Solve this problem to save us". Her comment was directed to both khola owner Shishir and the landowner. The laborers

are worried that it will cause a serious accident one day. They are afraid that they might fall and break their hip or leg.

The salt they use to ferment fish also is harmful. Often it gets into workers' eyes and leaves them teary, red, and itchy for several days. They do not know of a treatment for the problem and have no money to spend on medicine or to see a doctor. The salt also makes their hands white and itchy all day after salting the fish. But they do not think that salt is harmful to them. Sheuly Begum (65) said, "Salt is medicine. It cures our diseases through coloring our hands white." But the itchiness is irritating, and I saw no evidence that salt prevented sickness among the workers.

Infrastructure-based constraints also exist in both of my study sites which is another challenge for both male and female laborers. Hossain et. al (2013) indicated that drainage and toilet facilities do not exist in most of the processing sites in Bangladesh. Weeratunge et al. (2010) also mentioned the absence of toilet facilities in the dried fish sector in Bangladesh. Likewise, sanitation systems are absent in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. Male laborers go to urinate wherever they feel comfortable, in an open place or in a house nearby. The male laborers do not ask for permission when they leave to urinate. They just inform the khola owner after coming back. But female laborers have a big problem in this case. They ask permission from khola owner to go to the toilet, and owners of nearby houses for access to their toilets but do not always get permission from both. As it takes several

minutes to go to nearby houses, women workers try to hold their urine and go to the toilet only when they are finished their work. As a result, female laborers suffer from several ailments. A female laborer from Dorgachora, Renu Begum (57) said, "I used to resist the urge to go to the toilet. But one time, I could not pee for 3 days and then I had to go to the doctor. I was cured after that." The female laborers also try to drink less water, but they get dehydrated as a result.

There are other infrastructure-based constraints also exist in the khola that apply to male and female laborers. In South Jaliapara khola, there is no hut to take rest during the heat of summer days. Workers told me that they sweat and get headaches every day because they have no shady places to rest. The chemicals (dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane) that they use in dried fish processing also affect them physically. They call it DDT. They find it hard to breathe after using this chemical. Sometimes they feel their skin burning while touching the chemicals.

There are few other consequences laborers experience because of working in the dried fish processing sites. They cannot taste any of the food they eat because the smell of dried fish permeates everything. Workers chew betel leaf to get some relief from the smell. They noted that even washing their clothes with sand and soap does not take away the smell. All the male and female laborers agreed that the smell of the dried fish is the reason why there are not enough male and female laborers to work in the khola in both of my study sites. Not only that, they even must listen to

complaints from the local people about the bad smell (see also Kubra et al. 2020). In the South Jaliapara processing site, a local man complained to the khola owners that they are killing all the local fish as chemical effluent from dried fish processing washes into the saltwater lagoon.

5.2 Patriarchal constraints in the dried fish value chains

As is the case elsewhere (Kalabamu 2006), , gender identities and relationships are shaped by patriarchy in Teknaf. Female dried fish workers experience intense patriarchal constraints at home and in their workplace. Religious conservatism in Teknaf adds further constraints. Woman's gender identity and religious norms are used to stigmatize their job responsibilities, exploit them financially, control their mobility, abuse them, and sometimes block them from employment in Teknaf dried fish value chains. The case study below shows various types of patriarchal constraints affecting female laborers in Teknaf dried fish value chains-

> *Farzana Akter (38) has worked in the Dorgachora dried fish processing site for 20 years. When she started working here at age 18 that was not a 'normal' age for a woman to work outside as a laborer. She was forced to work because her husband abandoned her, and she had a young daughter to feed. Her brothers refused to help financially but helped her to get the job in dried fish processing site where her brother used to work. Her brother protected her when she started working against patriarchal norms. Nobody 'looked badly' at her in front of her brother. But when her brother went to market or outside of the khola to buy fish or sell fish or wash fish in the nearby lake (a saltwater lagoon), then men tried to harass her sexually, tried to touch her, and used slang. And these were very normal everyday incidents with her. Back then all the women were older, between 55-65, and without husbands. She was younger than the 'ideal' age to work outside in Teknaf. She said, "I was not allowed to work outside according to society, but I had to feed my*

daughter and me". Those incidents toughened her over time. She said, "I started to use slang, frown, talk loudly all the time with everyone as protection against all the bad things around me. After that, people feared me. They didn't try to come near me or say anything unless it was an emergency." Even now everyone is scared of her. Nobody wants to talk to her unless it is an urgent matter. She said, "Frowning helped so much that I cannot look at people normally now". "I cannot even talk sweetly with my children anymore or with people who are close to me". That's how she survived working while so young in public. She said, "lots of old women worked here and left but I have been working for 20 years like this, I am now a permanent laborer here". She works here for the whole year. She doesn't do any other job even when there is no fish in the khola. The owner trusts her. Whenever the owner is not in the khola she looks after the khola, fish, dried fish, laborers, everything. Even if someone comes to buy dried fish, she sells it and then hands over the money to the owner. The owner never questions her about anything. In the peak season when there is an expert laborer shortage, the owner hires seasonal male and female laborers who do not have any skill to dry fish. Then the responsibility comes to her to train them and make the proper dried fish from them. She trains them well so that the owner never makes a loss. She trains them how to wash, cut, and salt the fish; how to tie the tail of the ribbon fish and package them. Packing is not easy at all, as it requires special skill to put the good-looking dried fish in the upper part of the container and then the normal or broken fish in the lower part. They need to organize the fish properly too. She teaches the new workers carefully. Whoever comes to work for the owner respects her and is even scared of her. Her reputation and her knowledge of all the tasks necessary for the functioning of the khola when the owner is absent, are why everyone 'obeys' her specially. She has the phone numbers of all the seasonal laborers in her mobile phone. Whenever the owner needs male or female laborers, then he tells her to hire them. This is another reason all laborers 'obey' her. The owner of her khola is the biggest dried fish seller and investor in Dorgachora.

She was the main actor to increase women laborer's payment in Dorgachora from 150 taka to 300 taka 6 years ago when price of all the products in the market increased. The owner was not happy with the payment at first, but she decided to not to work anymore and owner started to make a loss. So, the owner agreed to the raise in wages after one week.

Farzana's parents' house is one and half kilometers from the khola. As she couldn't tolerate the things that people were saying about her, she decided to build a house near the dried fish processing site. The owner of the khola has taken a large area (6 bigha, 10 decimal counts as one bigha) on lease to dry fish and he permitted her to build a house in that area. Now she is living there with one of her other sisters

whose husband died too. The large amount of work in the processing site means that she has to work even late at night. Sometimes she works 48 hours continuously. She said, "Village people were talking dirty talk, that I sleep with the men in the processing site, that's why I come home this late. But now I live out of sight of village society in the khola. Nobody sees when I work or go home. The khola is home now". Whenever there is fish in the khola she has to be there. The owner has a 20-year-old son who comes to the khola instead of the owner and does everything she says. Whenever someone tries to say anything to her, he says, "If you tell her anything, you are out of the khola, right now." That makes her happy.

She has sad story in the khola too. The owner sometimes uses slang saying 'bastard', 'daughter of a bitch' etc. if anything goes wrong. She said, "If I have done anything wrong then scold me, but why my mother or father? I show that I am loyal, I work hard but these are my rewards". She is mocking her khola owner by saying this. Also, she does not get paid according to her hard work. She said, "I work whenever he calls me but if I work one or two hours then they do not pay me. If I work 3 hours, then they pay 100 taka. They do not consider me as a family member, but still consider me a laborer. They exploit me whenever they want. I cannot say a word because I am afraid of losing my job. I do not know any other work to feed my 4-year-old son now". Her married life is not happy either, she said. Her first husband abandoned her with one daughter. Then she married again 6 years ago. But her second husband left her too after 3 years with a son. She said, "People say that I am a characterless, that's why men leave me. I do not care about those peoples' judgement. My life is my own. Nobody feeds me a meal. I will marry again if I wish." Her second husband calls her nowadays to come back because he is unemployed now. But she doesn't allow him. She said, "I have money now, I do not need a husband anymore".

The story of Farzana Akter (38) shows her life and livelihood experience from 20 years of working in the khola. She has had to struggle with different types of patriarchal constraints in the khola, from her coworkers, owners, family, neighbors and society. She is still enduring all these patriarchal constraints as she needs to continue her employment in the khola.

5.2.1 Patriarchal constraints toward female members of khola owners' households

Wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the processing site owners work as unpaid household members in dried fish processing. It does not matter where they are working, in the khola or at home, but they face patriarchal obstacles that are sometimes worse than those faced by paid female laborers. Women who are household members of the khola owners are treated the same as other family members who cannot contribute or do not contribute to the dried fish activities. They get clothes to wear and food to eat. And their dried fish related activities are considered as other household activities like cooking, washing clothes, cleaning house, or rearing the children. They suffer financially as their husbands, brothers, or sons who control the business and profits. The wives often argue for other benefits like gifts of golden ornaments which are a materialization of profit from kholas but most of the time they are not successful. Women household members who don't work in the family khola, however, also struggle to be given such gifts of gold jewelry. As a result, women are often left with nothing when they are abandoned. Mozila Begum (70) has 4 sons, 2 of them are processing site owners in South Jaliapara khola. She worked day and night with them for several years but now they do not look after her anymore. She said, "They changed after their marriages. Now they listen to their wives but do not look after their mother. I invested all my money and energy in them, but they forgot me. Now I have nothing". The sisters of

processing site owners faced similar suffering in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. Social perceptions regarding women who work as a household member and contribute to family dried fish economic activities is that they do not need money in their hands because they get indirect benefits from their work, such as food and shelter from the family business. As a result, they are unpaid family labour. In other words, even though they do all the activities that a laborer does in the khola, they do not get any payment.

Wives of the owners suffer different kinds of abusive behavior. Nurunnesa (45) works in the khola with her husband, but people give her 'bad look' when she works in the khola. This happens with other wives too. Sometimes the laborers of other processing site owners or random visitors sexually harass them verbally, call them 'bitch'. This is a daily incident with them. This is mostly done by the laborers who come from far and do not know them properly. Wives of the owners face various types of social exclusions too, including from their children. As they work in the khola or at home every day, they cannot maintain their social life like other women. Sometimes their relatives do not invite them to their events, saying that, "they have no time to come". Sometimes owners' wives decline to attend extended family events as they feel relatives will behave inappropriately by snubbing them asking why they continue to work in the khola when they could become a 'good

woman' by quitting the work. Sometimes their children are excluded from such events as well.

> *Nurunnesa (40) is a wife of the dried fish processing site owner in South Jaliapara. She must work all day in the khola, day or night all the time. Her house is next to the South Jaliapara processing site. Her husband took a lease on 15 decimals of land (15% of an acre) right next to his house. Nurunnesa has 3 daughters and 2 sons. Two daughters and one son go to school. The other 2 childrenchildren haven't started to go to school yet. They are still young. She manages her family and khola alone most of the time. She has been doing this for 20 years and started right after her marriage. Her father-in-law used to do this business and now her husband. They do not know any other way of earning a living. The Naf river was always the source of their earnings as long as they can remember. After her marriage, she understood that her involvement in the khola could make more profit by saving one laborer and she could manage the work of other laborers properly when her husband is outside of the khola for business reasons. She said, "I work the whole day in the khola and at home, more than any male or female laborer. The laborers count time, but I spend my day and night in the khola every day." But she feels uncomfortable about working in the khola because she believes women should stay at home with 'respect' in purdah. She cannot afford to stay at home, however, because her husband does not have that much property or profit to keep her at home. She also thinks her husband cannot manage the khola properly. She said, "He is a very innocent man, everybody can fool him, even the workers. That's why I must intervene in everything regarding the business". She decides how much money they should spend to buy fish, when to take dadon, who is the best arotdar to take dadon from, when they need to take loans, which fish seller provides good quality fish, etc. She keeps an eye on everything. But she always comes out of home covering herself 'properly', she said. She passes busy days every day. Whenever there is an autorickshaw coming to the khola to provide fish to anyone, she runs and checks the market from the fish seller and from the buyer. She keeps track of the price in the market of the dried fish and the raw fish so that nobody can cheat them. She argues with the raw fish seller if they ask for a higher price than another site owner. If her husband is there in the khola, she still would be there and check if everything is okay. The size of the fish, the condition of the fish, and the price compared to other owners. Her husband listens to her all the time regarding all matters of the business. She said, "At first people were looking at me when I direct my husband, but I never listened to them. I must ensure my family's wellbeing, my children's education. If I don't care for them, then who would maintain my family?" She is always very thrifty. If there are not many fish, then she and her husband do all the work and save the money of laborers. Her two daughters are grown enough now to handle the cooking and the younger childrenchildren. They also understand their financial condition. She said, "I do this because of them, they understand it and support me." Even though her two daughters are sad sometime because of toxic comments of their friends about me working in the dried fish processing site", she said. "Sometimes they feel ashamed about me that I work outside because their*

friends say negative things that I am not a respectable woman. I feel sad too, but I told them to keep silent. We do not have the ability to stay home. They understand the situation. I want to stay home too but I cannot do that and ruin my children's future." Family gatherings are not welcoming for her too. Relatives often try to keep a distance from her. They sometimes comment to her that she works in the khola with unknown men. Sometimes she feels really sad because of their behavior, or she declines to join family events. She shared that she feels sad that she couldn't study and do this work. She would not let her children do this and ruin their future like her. She thinks dried fish related work is "dirty" and always keeps her children away from it. She wants her children to be educated government officers doing office jobs in government offices with secure lives.

The case of Nurunnesa (45) shows different patriarchal constraints than the female laborers. Female laborers do not have the status crisis like the wives of the owners. They are laborers to society. But the wives must maintain their status as a khola owner, yet simultaneously work in the khola like a female laborer. Hence, the society treats the wives who work in the khola as laborers. Their status as khola owners is viewed socially as secondary to their husbands' ownership position. The effect is that societal pressure limits their authority over the business and interferes with their social life.

5.2.2 Financial exploitation

Financial exploitation is another patriarchal constraint faced by female laborers in both Dorgachora and South Jaliapara dried fish processing sites. Belton et al. (2018) also explored financial exploitation of the female laborers at the Nazirartek, dried fish processing site in Cox's Bazar based on the gendered division of labor. In my research area, this financial exploitation is based on gender too, which includes

unequal wages, overtime without payment, and the dadon system. Even though the two dried fish processing sites are different in many ways, they are similar in paying unequal wages to female laborers. In South Jaliapara, female laborers get 350 taka per day and male laborers get 500 taka daily. In the Dorgachora processing site, female laborers are paid 300 taka and male laborers are paid 400 taka for each day. Even though male and female laborers are working for equal hours and activities are similar, female laborers face discrimination because of their gender in terms of pay. Sometimes female laborers are overburdened with work and male coworkers take smoking breaks at that time.

The reason the processing site owner, male laborers and female laborers give to explain this unequal wage structure is the devaluing of the responsibilities assigned to female laborers. Processing site owner Galib (55) from Dorgachora said, "Male laborers perform the heavier activities and female laborers complete the lighter jobs. This unequal wage is valid because of that". The same reason is provided by the other owners in both of the processing sites for the unequal wages of the female laborers. Another processing site owner from South Jaliapara named Ahammod (48) justified the unequal payment by prioritizing the activities done by the male laborers. He said, "Female laborers perform the less significant jobs and male laborers take care of all the vital issues in the khola. We should pay the male laborers more than the female laborers". This explanation is heard not only from all

the owners but also from the male laborers working in the khola with the female laborers and observing the women work as hard as men, but the men do not acknowledge it. Male laborer Kuddus (57) from South Jaliapara said, “Pay is based on personal capabilities in the khola. Females are not able to accomplish our job responsibilities”. Even though he is pointing to gender as a base for unequal wages, he is also emphasizing that female laborers are weaker than male laborers. But I saw the female laborers performing all the activities which male laborers were performing in both khola. Another male laborer Hassan (40) shared, “Women do not do any tough work in the khola, just sit in one place and tie up the ribbon fish tail. They should get paid less than they are getting now.” He is not only supporting the unequal wage but also expressing negative perceptions about his female coworkers. Beside him, I have not found this type of enmity towards the opposite gender. Other male laborers also justified the unequal wages and were against women’s work outside the house but not like him.


Figure 23: Female laborer carrying heavy machang covered with dried fish in South Jaliapara processing site.

Most unexpected and interesting is the female laborer's version about their unequal wage. I was shocked that they also justify their unequal wage by providing the explanation that processing site owners and male laborers were providing. They do not think it as unequal, rather 'valid' according to the activities they perform in the same terms used by the processing site owners and the male workers. Heena Bibi (55) said, "We do the less heavy activities in the khola. Our unequal wage is logical." She also points to the difference between heavier and less heavy activities. She devalued women's activities and agreed with that devaluation. But Sheuly Begum (65), a female laborer from South Jaliapara expressed frustration saying, "We are not men, which is the reason behind this unequal payment". Everyone, men and women all laughed when they heard her explanation in the khola. Even though everyone thought it was a joke, she was serious. She said that she has worked in the

khola for 40 years and the payment has always been unequal for women, although the workload was never less. Another female laborer Farzana from the Dorgachora processing site also shared her worry about the unequal wage by saying, “I have never worked less than any male laborers in the khola for last 20 years and I do not understand the reason for this unequal payment”. She is frustrated at this gender discrimination but cannot express it to the owner as she needs the job to feed her children. Not only are they unable to express their frustration regarding this unequal pay but also, they must be careful to maintain their rate of pay by not working anywhere for less. Farzana (38) said further, “If I work anywhere else less than this amount then the khola owner will provide us a lower amount then the current wage.” Even though female laborers have different explanations and perceptions regarding their unequal wages, one thing they all are worried about is inflation in the market. They find it hard to live with such low pay and they are thinking of how to seek to have their pay increased from the processing site owners for that in both processing sites.

Another financial hurdle women workers face is not getting payment on time. This problem also reflects patriarchy. Even though they are recruited as daily laborers and should get paid daily, they do not get paid on time. Sometimes they wait for 2 months before getting paid. This is rarely faced by the male laborers but is an everyday scenario for the female laborers. Shahida Begum (53) from South

Jaliapara khola said, “The owner thinks that only male laborers have family to feed, not us”. But, in reality, they are sometimes the only earning members of their families. A processing site owner from Dorgachora, Shofik (53), noted that, “Male laborers have families to feed but female laborers have men in the family to manage financial issues”. They say this despite knowing the domestic situation of every female laborer working under them. Statements like this are evidence of their patriarchal mentality and gender-based treatment of female laborers.

Working without a wage is an additional patriarchal constraint on female laborers in both kholas. Often, the processing site owners keep the women until 10:00 pm at night but do not pay any money for the extra labor. This happened to all the female laborers in Dorgachora but not in South Jaliapara. If the female laborers work until 12:00AM then they will get 200 taka but they do not get any money if everything is done before that. While male laborers will get 250 taka if they work until 12:00AM. If they complete all the activities before that then they will also ask money for the time they have worked, 100 taka or 150 taka. Female laborers do not ask for the money if work is completed late but before 12:00 am. They are afraid that they might be fired if they ask.

The dadon (credit) system is a more indirect mechanism to financially exploit female laborers. Dadon is connected to the continuation of their jobs and to payment in both kholas. I see it as indirect because dadon is not specific to women laborers.

During slow periods or during the fishing ban whenever there is no work in the khola, the owner from both khola opens the dadon system for the laborers. The owner mainly keeps their laborer bonded to him through dadon. Whenever the owner gets fish, then laborers who have taken dadon and not repaid it are bound to come and work under him, no matter wherever they were working at that time. Male laborers take dadon and complete whatever they need to complete. But female laborers are not 'allowed' by the Dorgachora processing site owners to work anywhere lesser than the amount they get from the khola. Otherwise, their payment will be lessened by the owner as well. But the scenario is, there is no available work for the women that fulfill that condition. They cannot work as a maid because that is monthly work. The processing site owner can ask them to come anytime, so they cannot commit to a monthly contract as a maid. There is tree nursery work, but for lower pay than in the khola. Work in betel-leaf fields provides higher payment, but it is seasonal and is only available 7-10 days in a month. In South Jaliapara, the only available work for female laborers is working as a maid. For these reasons, women dried fish laborers are forced to stay at home and pass their days by doing household work. In summary, in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara, the dadon system is financial exploitation that is particularly acute for female laborers and can thus be said to be an outcome of the patriarchal society of Teknaf.

5.2.3 Sexual harassment

As Belton et al. (2018) found, sexual violence and exploitation affects women with intersectional identities (young women, widows, divorced and abandoned women, and Rohingya women) by the male khola managers within dried fish value chains at Nazirartek. Similarly, in Dorgachora and in South Jaliapara, young women who have intersecting identities face sexual harassment and exploitation from other khola owners, male coworkers, local villagers, and often random visitors. Sexual harassment is mostly verbal but is also sometimes physical. It includes sexual comments, gestures, inappropriate looking at women's bodies, and often touching them without consent. Sexual harassment is a daily occurrence for the young female laborers working in dried fish processing sites. And older female laborers recall their experiences of sexual violence when they were young and started working in the khola. One of the laborers Aleya Begum (40) said, "If you are coming out from home to work, you have to face these kinds of harassment." Women face harassment not only in the khola from male coworkers but also from other khola owners, visitors to the khola, relatives of the khola owners, and strangers who harass them sexually in the street. This sexual harassment is faced by the women khola laborers who are comparatively younger (26-45). This sort of experience hampers their productivity in the dried fish processing site. Female laborer Peyari (26) shared, "Male coworkers and visitors stare inappropriately at my body, I have to keep ensuring that my clothes

cover me properly rather than working." The elder woman laborers (50-72) shared their experiences of sexual harassment too when they were young. Sheuly Begum (65) had worked in the South Jaliapara khola for 40 years when her husband died. She shared, "Things were not like this all the time. Male coworkers used to make dirty comments to me, proposing to do dirty things as I am a laborer. I passed those days silently to continue my work in the khola. I had to feed my two children". She tolerated the sexual violence because she needed this job as she has nobody to help financially and no place to get another job. Renu Begum (57) faced a similar type of sexual violence when she was younger. She started working in the Dorgachora khola 17 years ago when her husband abandoned her, as she was unable to give birth to a child. Society and relatives were harsh with her but the khola was an additional trauma for her as she had to face sexual harassment every day. She shared, "When I was young, male laborers used to ask me to have sex with them. They said, you have physical needs because you have been abandoned, invite us sometime." But she had to continue working through this to earn for herself.

During my fieldwork I saw men who came to converse with the processing site owners. They had tea and biscuits and stared at the female laborers. They may have been boat owners, fish traders, or the relatives of the khola owner or the landowner of the khola. Even though they made harassing comments to the female laborers, the processing site owners were silent because they could not rebuke them

as the visitors were connected with their dried fish business. One day men in the South Jaliapara khola tried to flirt with my research assistant. They asked her for her mobile number and asked if she was married or not. During that time, one of the wives of the khola owner joined with those men to harass the laborers. She said to one of the visitors, "You need a wife urgently as you have physical needs. Why don't you search here?" My research assistant was offended by this conversation. After that we left the khola that day. My research participants also said that the local people of Dorgachora and South Jaliapara visited the khola frequently to make inappropriate comments and sometimes stared at them improperly, and whistled at them. These actions made the female laborers "uncomfortable".

Figure 24: Visitors conversing with the wife of the owner.

The female laborers who come a long way to work in the khola have different types of experiences of sexual harassment in their way to work or back home. One

of the female laborers of Dorgachora khola Aleya (40) shared, “I hear lots of negative comments from men in the street. They call me whore, bitch. They call me that I earn by selling myself in the brothel every day. I know how I earn, how hard my job is in the khola but still men do not spare me and say whatever they think.” She was crying when she shared this incident.

Women also often sexually harass the young woman laborers in the khola. Some of them are the wives of the owners who join with other men who sexually harass the young woman laborers. The wife of the owner in South Jaliapara joined with few young men to harass two young women laborers who were working under another khola owner. The young men were from the locality and the son of the landowner was also with them. This sort of patriarchal constraint limits young women from working in the dried fish processing site even though they are in dire need of work. Also, we were the victims of that group on the day that my research assistant was harassed. The looks of the visiting men were not very respectful, and the wife of the owner said that, “Young women nowadays cannot stay at the house without seeing men.” She joined the men to harass us sexually.

Another common sexual harassment that happens in the khola is gender-based slang. The slang is mostly used by the khola owner. According to the female laborers those dirty common expressions are not tolerable at all. Permanent laborer Farzana (38), shared her experience with the khola owner, “He calls me daughter of a slut or

daughter of a bitch; I can put up with an insult to myself but not to my dead mother. Still, I have to work to feed my children and so I have to tolerate everything". She also shared that, "When he cannot find a laborer he requests me by grabbing my legs but after that I become slut and whore". She also shared that the owner always swears at the women laborers all the time whenever he finds out any fault. There are other khola managers in the khola who also swear but not with the laborer rather at their sons. Their anger passes quickly. Laborers do not feel upset at those owners. Khola owners also swear at the male laborers, mentioning their father and mother in disrespectful terms. Men similarly still must work to feed their family despite the abuse they receive. Sexual harassment not only belittles women, but also how their hard work contributes to dried fish value chains in Bangladesh.

Female laborers who weigh more than other male and female laborers in the khola also go through body shaming in the dried fish processing sites. Peyari (26) weighs more than any male or female laborers or processing site owners in the khola. Her weight is always a concern for the relatives, neighbors and now co-workers. They often ask her, "What do you eat", by pointing her weight. The co-workers call her 'elephant'. One co-worker calls her that, and everyone laughs. She does not answer, does not say a thing, just keeps silent. Sometimes she bursts into anger, but everyone laughs at seeing her anger. Suraya (38) a wife of the owner from South Jaliapara goes through the same body shaming by her relatives and neighbors. She

weighs much more than her husband, which she thinks upsets her relatives and neighbors. She shared that, “My in-laws are worried that I eat everything my husband earns”. There are men who weigh more than other men in the khola but nobody points their finger at them by saying they are overweight. Only women are targets of body shaming.

Various types of verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment affect women laborers psychologically and affect their subjective wellbeing by creating frustration, anger, and depression. It forces them to limit interactions with their male co-workers and owners, which affects their relational wellbeing. Sexual violence not only affects women’s relational/psychological wellbeing but also objective wellbeing by hampering their productivity within dried fish value chains. The socio-cultural stigma often forces them to leave their employment too. Permanent laborer Renu Begum (57) has a widowed sister Razia (35) who lives with her and is dependent on her. She brought her sister in Dorgachora processing site to work as a female laborer 3 years ago. After 15 days she left the job as the male co-workers were verbally sexually harassing her. Now she works as a maid.

5.2.4 Age based constraints

Age is a weapon of patriarchal constraint in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara kholas. In the same way that Deb et al. (2015) found that young women lose social marriageability or face sexual harassment if take up fish trading, young women in

South Jaliapara and Dorgachora who work in the dried fish processing sites face similar consequences. Older women also face aged based patriarchal constraints when they engage in dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

The day before the 65-day fishing ban in South Jaliapara, I saw two young girls from another North Jaliapara village working under khola owner Shishir (30). They were 12 years and 16 years old and came with their aunt to work as seasonal laborers. Young women are not allowed to work by the society and their family members in both of my study sites in Teknaf. So, I was curious by seeing them in the khola. I asked the older sister, Nargis, (16) about why they suddenly started working in the dried fish processing site. She said, "People of my village will not know that I am working here, so it will not ruin my marriageability in my society. I needed money for my family, that is why I am working". Even though they are working as laborers, and they will get paid for their work, still they are worried about their reputation because they are not married yet they are working outside their homes. The next day there were lots of fish to gut and dry in the khola but I did not see the two young girls. I asked the owner about them. The owner Shishir (30) shared, "Yesterday I was in loss. Because all the man were staring at the young girls and not working properly. I told them not to come." The processing site owner blamed the two young girls and punished them because the male laborers were staring at them. Not only that but also the owner shared that, "The people of North

Jaliapara are not honorable. They would send their daughters anywhere and ask for money. Their guardians will never ask the source of the money. Their daughters work outside as prostitutes too. That's why I sacked them". Not only him, all the man in the khola and in the society I talked with think the same about young and unmarried women working outside of their homes as maids, in the processing sites, or in other jobs. Some families in Teknaf even forbid their daughters to go to school to protect their marriageability. There is one degree college in Teknaf but the number of women is only a handful there. The largest number of girls drop out after class 7 and class 8.

One of the processing site owners from South Jaliapara Khola, Hakim (58) shared, "We should protect our daughters from the dirty looks of men and keep them at home." He also shared a story about his daughter, "My younger daughter is very beautiful. One day one of her schoolteachers said, she looks pretty as heroine from cinema. I forbade her going to school the next day and married her off within six months". He thought this type of 'dirty' comment would hamper her marriageability. He believes that education is important, but the afterlife is more important. He said that if this sort of comment about a woman comes from a man, then woman will go to hell for sure. This represents the core belief of Islam regarding women's purdah to cover herself for defending men from their desire and protecting men's character. That is why woman should always stay at home, he explained.

Older women experience other kinds of age based patriarchal constraints. After a woman's sons become old enough to earn a wage, they provide money for food and ask their mother to stop working in the khola and stay at home in purdah. But food is not everything women need once their sons start working. They want to have access to money that they earn and over which they have discretion for purchases such as tea, snacks they like, tobacco for smoking, and on gifts for their grandchildren. Sometime their grown-up sons are worried about their social prestige and order them to stop working without providing any financial help. Heena Bibi (55) said, "I have reared my sons by working in the khola. But now they are ashamed of my work. That's the irony of my fate". Not only their sons, often their daughters force them to stop working in the khola as their daughters feel a loss in status in their in-law's house.

5.2.5 Clothing

Patriarchal constraints related to clothing are a matter of tension for women working in kholas. Even though they are working in the khola under the sun and sweating all the time, they are expected to cover their body according to Islamic beliefs. Some women are even forced to maintain purdah in the khola.

Figure 25: Female laborers wearing thami.

Figure 26: Female laborers wearing purdah and salwar kamij in the khola.

It is not that women do not cover themselves 'properly'. There are four types of dresses worn by the women in the khola which cover their bodies. One is *thami*, which has three parts, an upper part (long blouse to waist), a lower part (skirt) and the head cover. They also use a *dupatta* (long scarf) to cover themselves properly.

This is mostly worn by women aged above 50. But sometimes younger women wear *thami* as well. Another one is *saree* and blouse, which is rarely worn by the women working in the khola because it is hard to maintain while working. The third type of dress has three pieces: *salwar*, *kamij* and dupatta. The kamij is like the upper part of the thami but longer below knee. Salwar is different than the lower part of thami as it is like a pant. This is mostly worn by the women aged 20-40. The older women are not as strict as younger women about covering their bodies but strict about covering their heads as Muslim women are required to cover their heads. As evil hides on women's hair if it not covered, according to Islam. It does not matter which dress the female laborers are wearing, they strictly maintain purdah according to Islam by covering their head, chest and all parts of their bodies. I have even seen women wearing *burqa while* working in the khola to maintain religious purdah. Burqa is another two parts of clothing worn after wearing the normal dress inside. It has another head covering to cover the head and face, with just the eyes visible. These are mostly seasonal female laborers. And all women use burqa whenever going anywhere far from the house. Even though women are aware about the importance of maintaining 'proper' clothing in the processing sites, family, society, neighbors, and owners still pressure them to cover their body properly. Modina (20), a female laborer from Dorgachora processing site said, "My mother-in-law ordered me to wear burkah in the khola all the time. It is unbearable to work wearing the

burqa in the khola." But she cannot disobey her mother-in-law's order as it would cause harm to her marriage. Sometimes they are forbidden to wear certain kinds of dress as it would compromise purdah. Farzana (38), for example, shared her experience when she started working in the Dorgachora khola. She said, "My khola owner forbade me to wear a saree as my skin could be seen through the gaps in it which would bring shame for him." The clothing of the female laborer is connected with the shame of the khola owner just as it is to her husband, family, and society. Clothing is thus another patriarchal constraint for women who work in the dried fish processing site in Teknaf.

5.2.6 Controlled mobility

According to Salagrama and Dasu (2021), young women in India face social and familial restrictions to travel at night to the market for fish trading purposes. This is also common in Teknaf dried fish processing sites for female laborers. Another patriarchal constraint on woman laborers in Teknaf dried fish value chains is attributed to their mobility. Younger female laborers (20-40) who must work due to being widows, abandoned, or married to men who are in jail are forced to work in the processing sites to earn for their childrenchildren and themselves face surveillance from their relatives and other members of society. They always have an eye on them to check whatever they are doing or wher they are going. It is 'normal' for their neighbors and society members to ask, "Where were you yesterday?", "Why

were you late?", "Did you really go to work? Or did you go somewhere else?" And they are bound to explain their movements and activities. Otherwise, women run the risk of being labelled as a 'filthy whore" who makes an excuse to go to work but actually goes to some 'dirty place".

A seasonal female laborer of Dorgachora dried fish processing site Modina (20) shared, "When you do not have husband then everyone becomes your guardian to control your mobility. My husband has been in jail for 2 years and nobody gives me a penny to run my family and to feed my children. Yet, everyone spies on me to see if I am selling my body while coming to work at the dried fish processing site". Other younger women shared similar experiences. Not only men but also the women are curious and control the mobility of younger women who work in the kholas. During the peak season, they do not have fixed working hours. One of the women laborers worked for 48 hours before the fishing ban when there were mounds and mounds of fish in both khola to dry and ferment. She was only able to go home after doing all the fish scaling and salting. When the young female laborers work in the khola night after night, most of the days until midnight, society does not accept this as a 'normal', rather as a 'sin'(*pap*). They are asked by the relatives and neighbors, "What do you do at night?" Female laborer Peyari (26) said, "They know what we do in the khola, but expect that we will say, we had sex with all the men in the khola." She was angry that people not only question her intentions behind working late but

ignore her hard work and spread dirty rumors about her. Modina also works at night to earn money for her two children. Her neighbor asked her, “Do you earn more at night?” The meaning was bad behind the question, she said. They are told not to work at night by their family members and their neighbors. Aleya Begum (35) said, “Nobody gives a penny, but everyone becomes our guardian in this case.” She said so because her neighbors, even other villagers, suggest that she not work at night in the khola. But she needs to earn as much she can to feed her 7 children and pay for their education because her husband is paralyzed, and she is the only earning member in the family. Spreading rumors is an indirect way for the patriarchal Teknaf society to control female laborers from working into the night at the dried fish processing sites.

During the peak season, they work in the khola but, whenever there is not much fish, then the seasonal laborers need to seek other jobs in betel-leaf or chili fields or as a maid. When they change their daily work, however, they need to explain to their mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, neighbors, shopkeepers, or any other curious people why they changed their job and the reason for choosing that specific job. Women who live in their parents’ house must explain a change in job to the family members they live with. Women have a degree of freedom to shift jobs when necessary, under the close eye of people close to them

but they cannot dare to suggest going somewhere to travel with their co-workers and friends.

Peyari Akter (26) has worked as a day laborer at Dorgachora dried fish processing site for 2 years. She started working here after her husband died. Her husband was a fisherman who worked in the boat of the khola owner she is working under. The boat was new, went only 3 days in the sea and the third day a big trawler collided with it and her husband died. Her husband was an illegal immigrant from Myanmar during the mass Rohingya influx in 2017. She had nothing after her husband died for her and her two daughters. She had no land, no help from her in-laws and no money from anyone. Her elder daughter is 4 years old, and another one is 3 years old now. Her parents do not have much money either. Her father died 17 years ago, and her brothers sold everything the family owned. She works hard every day from dawn to dusk to feed her two daughters and herself. Also, the medical cost for 2 children is huge. "God knows where these diseases come from. See the medicine packet, just look at the amount, how could I save money? Today I went to the doctor for my elder daughter's ear treatment, but came back without treatment, because I didn't have enough money".

Her age is not 'normal' as a laborer in the dried fish processing sites. It's because her husband was one of the employees of the boat of the dried fish processing site owner. But now, seasonal young women laborers also come here to work seeing her. But they only come when there is no work available in other sectors like betel-leaf field, chili field, and as maid. Because this is daily labor, they can come here and work and then go back to their regular work. Peyari must be very careful while she is working. Peyari tries to work comfortably but must cover her body properly all the time so that people do not stare at her. "This processing site is next to the marine drive, with lots of people passing all the time. I should work as a proper woman. Otherwise, people would say dirty things about me", she said. Also, her brothers and aunt live near her house which gives her security but takes her freedom. She cannot go anywhere because her relatives and brothers keep an eye on her so that she cannot go anywhere to do any 'dirty' thing. Even when there is no work in the dried fish processing site, she is not allowed to go to work anywhere else. "But I have two daughters to feed. Who would feed them?", she shared with anger.

One day she didn't listen to them and went to work in a nursery which is two kilometers away. Her aunt came and told her mother and brothers to check if she had gone to meet a man. "They were calling me again and again to check if I was in the nursery or not. My aunt even claimed that I went to the nursery because I cannot live without seeing man."

She also shared that, "I don't know if my widowhood is a curse for me or what. People think of me as a cheap prostitute. I have my daughters to feed. I cannot even

send them to school because of my financial crisis". She has no one to help financially. Her mother takes care of her daughters when she goes to work. But whenever her brothers and mother need money they take it from her. She cannot say no. She said, "They know I have money; they always count my money. They ask for money as if it is theirs, not mine. And they never return what they take." She has 5 brothers-in-laws living in the Rohingya camp. She often visits them. They feed her and her daughters but give her nothing else. She is always worried about her life and her daughters. She cannot think about a second marriage because of her daughters and because there is no one to look for a groom for her. She said, "I hope for a family with husband one day, but I know this is just a dream".

Women in Teknaf, as in Bangladesh more broadly, are expected to be subordinate to men in their families. When women lose their husbands and do not have any other male guardians, they are forced to work to survive but society always controls their mobility. As in the case of Peyari, members of the broader local society become women's guardians. Society members always surveil women's mobility, which limits access to various types of work even though women might be eligible to do them. Women's relatives force them to leave work yet somehow mothers must continue to feed their childrenchildren. Society controls women's interactions with others to meet their needs and life satisfactions, in other word society controls women's relational wellbeing.

5.2.7 Societal perceptions

It is clear in both of my research sites that society assists and constrains action (Hays 1994). Even though female laborers work hard in their dried fish processing sites under the sun and "dry themselves with the fish", society does not hesitate to talk negatively about them. Not only female laborers but also women who go outside of

the house to study or for work are perceived negatively in Teknaf and treated badly. My research assistant was an immediate victim of this negativity as she is young, unmarried and still moving outside in front of men. My respondents were very negative about her ongoing studies and asked lots of questions about why she wasn't yet married. The female laborers of the khola are perceived more negatively as they work in an open place with 'unknown men' and strange men can see them. This visibility of work is against local religion beliefs. As a result, the most common perception about the female laborers is that "They do not have shame", "They have made a habit to stay surrounded by the men". There are tendencies to label them as outsiders (not Bengali) too. A woman in South Jaliapara who lives beside the processing site shared that, "These female laborers are not one of us, they all are Burmaya (Rohingya). Our women do not go out." She said this even though there were women working in the kholas who have migrated from other parts of Bangladesh and local women too. In the beginning of my fieldwork, I asked one man sitting next to the South Jaliapara khola if women work in the khola. He said, "Yeah, yeah, few ungodly (bidhormi) women work in the khola, they are not good women." He was pointing to the wife of the owner who works in the khola everyday with her husband. His words reflected the social perception regarding of women who work in the khola. Another man said, "They are unable to keep a husband. None of them have husbands because of their character." I found it common for local people to

blame female laborers if they were abandoned, even though they started to work in the kholas only after being abandoned by their husbands. A few of the women laborers are widows too. Not only are female laborers perceived negatively but so are their parents when the female laborers are young and unmarried. Seeing two young and unmarried women working in the South Jaliapara dried fish processing site, one male laborer said, "This is their family business. Their parents send them anywhere to earn money; it does not matter if it is prostitution or work in the khola". This perception creates further patriarchal obstacles for the young women.

As has been observed elsewhere globally (Stone 2014; Shyam and Geetha 2013), work itself can be negatively judged as itself gendered. In Teknaf, the responsibilities that female laborers perform in the khola are linked to their gender identity and categorized as inferior to male laborers' activities. I heard their work often labelled as 'insignificant' in relation to male laborers' work. Most of the male laborers, a few processing site owners, and all the local people that I talked with think that female laborers are replaceable and not vital within the dried fish value chains. This perception reflects broader patriarchal notions of women's worth and has negative consequences for their income and the quality of the work contracts they are given.

Some men argued that women did not need to work in the kholas but, rather, did it as a hobby. A male laborer from Dorgachora khola, Hassan (40) said, "Women

need to buy cosmetics with the money they earn from the khola. Otherwise, they do not need to earn". This patriarchal perception not only rejects their hard work, but also the struggle they go through within the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh. These negative social perceptions about the female laborers and their employment within the dried fish values chains are the outcome of patriarchal Teknaf society which creates direct obstacles to their work, to continue in their employment, and sometimes forces them to leave their employment.

5.2.8 Negative perceptions about own work

Women dried fish workers' perceptions of their work mirror Bourdieu's (1972) view that most people just reproduce the behavior they are used to. All the female laborers from both kholas think that the dried fish processing activities performed by the female laborers, "are inferior to those performed by male laborers". They also think that "their work should not earn the same pay as male laborers' work". Some female laborers also think that male workers can easily replace them in women's processing work. Women themselves think that their work is inferior to and less difficult to that of men thus they should be paid less. This is the echo of the khola owner and their male coworkers' opinions about women's work.

Women laborers also reflect broader social perceptions in thinking that they are not doing a "good thing" by working in the khola and not maintaining religious

norms by violating purdah out of the home. They think that they are not "respectable" women.

Nurunnesa (45) is a wife of the owner of the khola in South Jaliapara and she works every day in the khola with her husband. But she thinks that it is not good for a woman to work with men in the khola. She said, "I know I am sinning by working in the khola. God will punish me I know, but we are poor. We have no option to sit at home". I heard women laborers reiterating the widely expressed view in Teknaf that working outside the home is contrary to Muslim religious teachings for women. One of the female laborers from South Jaliapara, Sheuly Begum (65) said, "I can work as a prostitute, but why would I let my daughter to do that?" It is clear from her that she compares her need to work outside the home as prostitution. Her statement is a direct reflection of dominant patriarchal views in Teknaf society. Sheuly Begum illustrates the unconscious power of habitus in Bourdieu's (1972) terms. Similarly, female laborers are reproducing broader social structures in the negative perceptions they voice about their own work as female laborers in the dried fish sector. Women workers are, in effect, creating patriarchal constraints for themselves and for other woman who are interested to contribute laborers within dried fish value chains.

5.2.9 Exclusion from policy

Women fish vendors and processors in Teknaf who are also dependent on fish for their livelihood do not get any kind of financial compensation from the government during the fishing ban period, unlike women in Andhra Pradesh in India (Selagrama and Dasu 2021). But women, like fishermen, are affected by the fishing ban. Men who work in the dried fish sector, whether laborers or owners, have fisherman identity cards and they get rice and other benefits from the government during the fishing ban. They get the cards after paying bribes to fisheries officers. But no financial compensation is provided to women laborers working in the dried fish processing sites. These female laborers do not have full employment during the 65-day marine fishing ban (20 May to 23 July). I asked an officer named Diluar (56) from Teknaf Upazila Fisheries Office about compensation offered to female laborers during the fishing ban. He said that there is no scheme offered for the female laborers from NGOs or the government. He also thinks that "it is logical that there is no scheme for them as they get indirect benefits from men in their roles as mother, wife, sister, or daughter". The scenario was the same for female laborers during the covid-19 lockdown. For the whole two years they lived by eating one meal a day and gleaning leaves from here and there in nearby fields. They did not get any financial help from the government or from NGOs. Sometimes there was fish in the khola to dry but the price was very low and so was their pay.

The fisheries related policies of the Bangladesh government exclude women by mentioning "fishermen" in all of their policies (Halim 2004; Shamsuzzaman et al. 2016; Siason 2002), which excludes the female laborers who are engaged in dried fish value chains. Similarly, a few NGOs in the study areas offer training for the women regarding drying fish. But female laborers never got or heard about the training they mentioned. As a result, women dried fish workers are excluded from the NGO and government policies. Women are excluded from the fisheries related policies as fishing is perceived as men's work by society and policy makers. Worse is that there is no sign of changing the situation or reversing discriminatory government policies in the near future. The fisheries officers in Teknaf said they have had no policy proposal or discussions regarding inclusion of women into fisheries related policies.

5.3 Conclusion

The patriarchal constraints faced by the female laborers and the wives of owners, are a common phenomenon in Teknaf dried fish processing sites. These constraints are not occurring to them only at processing sites but are an extension of those they are facing at home or in social gatherings. Women dried fish workers' everyday patriarchal constraints are heightened by their employment. Women dried fish workers and the wives of khola owners are scared and annoyed by the patriarchal

constraints they face but tolerate them every day as they need to continue their employment within dried fish value chains to survive.

Patriarchal constraints in Teknaf are particularly strong because Teknaf is a remote part of Bangladesh and very religious. There are 98 mosques in Teknaf Sadar Upazila for a population of 64453[6]. Religiosity among the Muslim men in Teknaf is seen as they are committed to keeping their women inside, away from "*beganah purush*" (unknown men), and in purdah and veil in public places according to Muslim religious law (the entire body covered with black burqa, with only the eyes visible). Men do not 'allow' their women in public places except in an emergency in keeping with Islamic ideologies. Teknaf society is against women's general education and allows madrasa education as there is no reason for educating girls. Islam in Teknaf imposes strong gender-based constraints on women's mobility, education, and employment in the area. As general education is not accepted in remote Teknaf, there is a lack of educational institutions too. There are twenty educational institutions in total in Teknaf Sadar Upazila. Among them, Government primary schools are 10, madrasa 6 (3 girls and 3 boys), secondary school 2, lower secondary school 1, and one technical school and college in Teknaf Sadar Union[7]. But the number of girls in those schools and colleges is a handful. This is a different

[6] https://teknafsadarup.coxsbazar.gov.bd
[7] https://teknafsadarup.coxsbazar.gov.bd

scenario compared to other parts of Bangladesh. In Teknaf, general education for boys and girls is discouraged, only madrasa education is encouraged. When the girls reach puberty their education and mobility outside is stopped. This creates a further barrier to education and is a clear patriarchal constraint for women. Despite this challenging environment, women continue to work and to negotiate with patriarchy in Teknaf's dried fish value chains.

Chapter Six: "Patriarchal bargaining"- exploring women's agency

6.0 Introduction

The agency of female laborers in Teknaf dried fish value chains is far more constrained than women involved in fisheries in some other parts of the world (e.g. Cole 1991). Nonetheless, women dried fish laborers in Teknaf continually bargain with, resist, and sometimes outwit the patriarchal constraints they face (Kabeer 1999). Female laborers' negotiation strategies are their choice of course, which is the core factor of agency (Hay 1994). This chapter on patriarchal bargaining is interlinked with the previous two chapters, because female laborers' patriarchal bargaining strategies are visible in their everyday engagements and in responses to the patriarchal constraints they face within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. They have specific bargaining strategies for the specific patriarchal constraints they face in the different kinds of work they do across dried fish value chains. They produce, modify, and engage with the existing social structure while bargaining with the patriarchy within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. These actions (Hays 1994) are how they express their agency and continuously make and remake culture and society (Ortner 2006) as "conscientious resisters" (Malik 2019). Their bargaining and negotiation with the patriarchal Teknaf society within the dried fish value chains is to achieve subjective, objective, and relational wellbeing.

The patriarchal bargaining strategies of the female laborers include and relate to numerous facets of their lives. In this chapter I highlight some those aspects of their lives that were most apparent during my research: female laborers' skills and knowledge, networking capabilities, women's associations, laborer scarcity, age, habits, clothing, place of residence, savings in the form of belongings, single women as heads of the family, negotiation of wife of the owner, women's perspectives regarding their contribution, and everyday resistance. Among these, age is a significant factor to bargain with the patriarchal ideology in Teknaf, as younger women are not 'allowed' to work in the open dried fish processing sites according to the norms of patriarchal Teknaf society. Most of the women laborers working in the Dorgachora and South Jaliapara kholas are as old or older than the processing site owners which saves them from sexual harassment and helps them to argue with the owners for their benefits and needs. These older female laborers have established few 'manly' habits too, such as smoking (a few women laborers), having tea, betel leaf, drinking soft drinks, etc. Through these habits, they get short a break like their male co-workers. Even though they are old, they still adopt a few symbolic strategies to bargain with the patriarchy by wearing a burqa if the processing site is far from the house, or to go to the market or a relative's house, or other places away from home. They also always wear a head covering too working in the khola for acceptance from patriarchal society. Their financial situation is also the basis for a

negotiation strategy, because it helps them to explain the reason why they must work in a stigmatized occupation: they are poor, without a husband, or with a husband who is unable to work. They have no earning man in the family and no way to survive without working outside the home. But still they cannot just come and get a job in the khola, rather all the female laborers working in the processing sites have a story behind their engagement in the processing sites. They are somehow connected with the owners or male or female co-workers which helps them to bargain with the other male co-workers and preserve their 'dignity'. These linkages or connections have helped them to survive in the dried fish value chains for long periods of time. The permanent female laborers have been working in the processing sites for 15-40 years. This long period of their employment is another major factor in their patriarchal bargaining. The women laborers have built their space over this time and have gathered the trust of the owners. Now, they manage to get employment in other processing sites, if there is no job in their permanent processing site. Thus, they manage to keep up their employment and earnings continuously through their strong networking capabilities with all the processing site owners in the khola. They are also connected with the other seasonal female laborers and can recruit additional female laborers whenever the processing site owner is in need. Through their long-time engagements with the processing sites, the women laborers have built

connections amongst themselves and created an unofficial association to argue for their financial and other benefits from the processing site owners.

Female laborer scarcity, low payments for women laborers, and stigmatization of women's responsibilities also assists them in their patriarchal bargaining. They have a few bargaining strategies specific to their location. As Teknaf is a religiously conservative area and women are forced to stay at home maintaining purdah, there is laborer scarcity in both Dorgachora and South Jaliapara dried fish processing sites. There is just a handful of women laborers working in both kholas and women laborers use this situation for patriarchal bargaining to establish their agency. Indigenous knowledge and skill are another strategy of their bargaining which women laborers have achieved through their lengthy work histories. Processing site owners rely on the women laborers to dry the dried fish exactly to the market demand and to save the dried fish from rain, and for other related specialized tasks. They are also trainers for both new male and female laborers so that the owners can minimize losses during the less productive training period.

Beside these capabilities, women laborers have a few behaviors to bargain in their patriarchal context. Women laborers working in the dried fish processing sites are known to be foul mouthed and rude. They swear while communicating with their co-workers and frown to show their rudeness and keep away would-be harassers. They are also rude to people who ask why they work outside their homes. Deb et. al

(2015) also mentioned this behavior as a negotiation strategy with patriarchy among women living coastal Bangladesh. Often these behaviors are not enough to offset the patriarchal constraints on their employment. Women workers' residential patterns help in this regard. Permanent women laborers have a place to live near the dried fish processing sites, far from their neighborhood. In this way, they avoid regular interactions with the members of society and associated patriarchal barriers. Social reproduction of social relations helps to keep women dried fish workers safe in the areas where they work while allowing them to continue their engagement with dried fish value chains. This is true for both the women laborers and the women engaged in the dried fish value chains through household-based support work. Women in both categories of work try to keep their extended families together or create new social relations to continue their engagements. Even though the patriarchal constraints and bargaining strategies of the women who work in the household context are different and sometimes more limited because they are not earning a wage, they ask for gifts of gold jewelry as their personal belongings that can be useful if they are abandoned. Women who work in dried fish value chains are empowered in the household and among their relatives. Women dried fish workers contribute to family decision making. As most of the women laborers are single parents, they are the decision makers of their family. They have ultimate power to decide how to spend the money they earn.

These various patriarchal bargaining strategies are not separate from each other but are used to negotiate for women's collective agency in different times and situations. Through patriarchal bargaining, women in Teknaf continue their engagements with the dried fish value chains after facing different kinds of patriarchal constraints, which becomes the source of patriarchal bargaining for other women to engage in dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

This chapter includes three sections. In the introduction, I have briefly explained the connection between the positioning of female laborers and patriarchal bargaining. In the second section, I analyze in more detail the bargaining strategies employed by female laborers within the dried fish value chains for their social wellbeing. They mostly try to fit into the value chains and continue their employment through their everyday bargaining strategies. I also explain those strategies for the female laborers and other female family members of the processing site owners. Thirdly, in conclusion, I put together their bargaining strategies which transforms into agencies for other women in the society to come out and engage in value chains and continue bargaining with patriarchy for their existence. I characterize this proactive approach to patriarchal bargaining as potentially revolutionary following Hays (1994).

6.1 Patriarchal bargaining strategies

Patriarchal negotiation strategies for the female laborers and for the other female family members of the processing site owners are different and context based. As patriarchal constraints are not limited to the workplace but also apply at home, their negotiation encompasses both spaces. All women dried fish laborers must bargain with patriarchy to sustain themselves within the dried fish value chains using combinations of the strategies that I discuss in detail in the next section.

6.1.1 Skill and knowledge

The skill and local knowledge of the permanent female laborers are a significant source of their patriarchal bargaining power within dried fish value chains in Teknaf. They have achieved dried fish processing skills and knowledge through years of experience and engagements with the dried fish sector. Their command of dried fish knowledge makes them different from other female laborers and has sustained them for years in the sector. Processing site owners, male coworkers, and society members are aware of and appreciate their skill. That knowledge and skill allows them to continue their employment within the dried fish sector even though lots of female laborers come and go because of lack of expertise in dried fish processing. The women laborers' skill has made them permanent. Even the processing site owners depend on their opinion on dried fish related issues. Skill and knowledge strengthen their negotiation with the patriarchal constraints of the dried fish sector.

Their skill in and knowledge of drying fish is better than the owners and their wives. The khola owners in both Dorgachora and South Jaliapara khola depend on their permanent female laborers to dry the fish properly. Different species and sizes of fish, such as ribbon fish and phaissha, need different periods of time for proper preparation before drying. Owners depend on the permanent female laborers to assess the appropriate duration required. According to the permanent female laborer Heena Bibi (55), "Proper preparation before drying the fish make them tastier after drying". Shohida Begum (50) added to this saying, "There is a time limit for preparation. If it is too rotten, then there is no choice but to throw it away." The entire dried fish business depends on this knowledge that women permanent laborers have acquired through their long experience. The Dorgachora khola owner Shofik Ahmed (53) said, "Permanent female laborers are our life saviors in how best to prepare dried fish." That's why he values his permanent female laborer, he added. The drying process is managed by the female laborers too. They decide when to flip the dry fish and when they are dried sufficiently for sale in the market.

Their local ecological knowledge about weather also helps the khola owner to continue their business during the monsoon season. One minute of delayed decision can destroy all their fish and cause hundreds of thousands of taka loss. The female laborers know which cloud is a false signal and which one is not. No one argues with them or tells them what to do in this matter. The permanent female laborers are

responsible to signal when to collect all the fish from the khola. “And they are never wrong” said the khola owner Shishir (30) from South Jaliapara. Their skill and knowledge make them the trainers of the new male or female laborers too. As the owner trusts their knowledge and skill, they become the trainer assigned to train new male and female laborers. They have become permanent laborers because of their skill and knowledge. The female laborers are the decisionmakers of the khola when the processing site owners are absent. The female laborers also sell dried fish on a retail basis from the khola, buy fish from fish sellers, manage the temporary laborers, recruit laborers, and take care of the khola in the absence of khola owners.

The statement of a female laborer from South Jaliapara, Heena Bibi (55) is relevant in this section. She said, “Our knowledge, skill, and labor are not replaceable”. The khola owners from both processing sites agree with this statement too. As a result, whenever women negotiate about pay raises, snack breaks, and leisure time, the owners have no choice other than agreeing with them. If the female laborers threaten to stop working, owners have no choice other than to agree to their demands.

6.1.2 Networking capabilities

By networking capabilities, I mean how women connect with male and female coworkers, processing site owners, landowners, and with the local people living around the processing sites. They maintain regular connections with all the

processing site owners, even though they work for a specific khola owner. But their connections with other owners helps them to continue their employment in the khola if there is no fish in the processing site of a woman's permanent place of employment. Women laborers also maintain strong networks with other permanent female laborers which helps them to work if the other sites have work available. It also helps them to negotiate for financial benefits and other benefits from the processing site owners. These networks form an informal association which is strong enough to make claims and achieve them. Women maintain networks with their male co-workers too as doing so helps them to ensure a comfortable work environment. I have seen them laughing and joking with each other while working. Renu Begum (57) said, "If you maintain a friendly relation with your co-workers, you will not feel much pain while working. Drying fish is a hard job". They are even connected with seasonal female and male laborers to provide laborers to their khola owner whenever they are in need. Not only do the female laborers maintain connections with local seasonal female laborers but also with the Rohingya female laborers.

They maintain networks with landowners too. The land of the processing sites belongs to landowners, and the khola owner takes the land on lease and pays rent every six months. Two female laborers from the Dorgachora dried fish processing site live on the land taken on lease by the khola owner. So, they maintain a good relationship with the landowner to stay on the land. Farzana Akter (38) said, "Not

only can the khola owner remove us from the land we stay on, but the landowner also holds the power to kick us off the land anytime if we show disrespect. It is important to maintain a good relationship with them for that." The permanent female laborers from South Jaliapara maintain a good relationship with the landowner who tells them the lease amount and payment date. Later they tell their khola owner or correct their owner if he tries to use that information to delay their wage. Shohida Begum (50) said, "The owner always tries to delay our payment by offering various excuses. Land lease money is one of those excuses. If they use this excuse, I correct them that you didn't pay yet, or you have already paid. Now give us our money. We are not that dumb anymore!" They shared that they were tricked in this way several times earlier. They learned only after that they had been cheated and survived by borrowing money during a period of three months when their wages were delayed.

Another social relationship they prioritize is their connection with local people living nearby the khola who own shops. There is one shop near the Dorgachora processing site and three shops near the South Jaliapara processing sites. The shop near the Dorgachora processing site is run by a young boy aged 14 years and the female laborers go there without hesitation. The two shops near the South Jaliapara processing sites are run by two husbands and wives. They are 60-70 years old. The permanent male and female laborers go to those shops to have tea,

cigarettes, soft drinks, *paan*[8] and to watch television while having their snacks. While having snacks or tea, they gather information about local people and current local tensions in the village. They try to identify unknown faces they see in the village too. Among other things, they collect unshared information about their khola owner, their coworkers, and any conflicts going on with anyone in the village. They collect information about their khola owners and coworkers to stay alert about what is going on in their family and personal life if they need to use it anytime.

Figure 27: Shop near the South Jaliapara khola.

Another type of networking gives female laborers a basis to resist patriarchal barriers within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. Female laborers often have connections with their male coworkers and owners. Typically, female laborers are kin of, or are connected to, khola owners. Khola owners prefer to recruit women

[8] Paan is a digestive women laborers take with betel leaf, betel nut, calcium carbonate, katha powder and sometimes dried tobacco.

workers they know, and the owners depend upon reliable workers for that. Farzana Akter (38), for example, started working in the Dorgachora khola through her elder brother who was working as a daily laborer there. He left 6 years earlier after a conflict with the processing site owner, but she continued to work in the khola. Heena Bibi (55), a permanent laborer, in the South Jaliapara processing site started to work after her husband, who was a daily laborer in the khola, fell ill. Such connections not only are important for owners so that they can trust their workers, but also strengthen the confidence of the female laborers to argue for a comfortable work environment. Their networking skills and personal connections have positive impacts for their wellbeing. Women workers try to be up to date on the current business situation and all the people they are surrounded with. This knowledge helps the business of their khola owner, but it is mostly in their own self-interest as it strengthens their value to the business and supports their social wellbeing.

6.1.3 Women's association

As is the case in the African fishing community context (Bennet 2005), women laborers' collective associations in Teknaf enhance their social wellbeing by strengthening their bargaining capabilities. Women in the Teknaf dried fish sector have informal associations based on their interpersonal networking capabilities. Kabeer (1999) explains the sort of agency that collective action brings as "power with" that amplifies women's negotiating capacity. Women's associations help them

to argue for financial and other benefits with khola owners. Informal association begins the day women start their work in the khola. Every time the permanent female laborers have led negotiations to increase the wages for all the female laborers. The permanent female laborers are the leaders, even though they get no extra benefit for acting as leaders. Their association is informal, but connection is strong among them. Every time they met at the house of one of the female laborers to discuss the problem and the amount they wanted as a raise. The permanent laborers requested all the temporary and seasonal female laborers not to work in the khola as well until the khola owners fulfilled their demand. Permanent laborer Farzana Akter (38) in Dorgachora was the main leader to raise their wages and Heena Bibi (55) was the leader in South Jaliapara processing site. The scarcity of female laborers available to work in the dried fish value chains in religious Teknaf has strengthened their argument in this case. The female laborers explained that they have come a long way until now. They said that they had argued for increased pay several times earlier through their informal association of female laborers.

Permanent laborer Heena Bibi (55) from South Jaliapara dried fish processing site said that, 15 years ago, she was working at home, cutting the fish in slices and fish gutting. The khola owner used to pay 10 TK for 40 kilograms (1 mound) of fish. Heena Bibi (55) and Sheuly Begum (65) were the only permanent female laborers that time. All other women were seasonal Rohingya laborers. They took 10 TK until

2015, but it was not enough for them given high prices for the staple goods they purchased from the market. So, they together asked for 100 TK per mound. Sheuly Begum (65) has been working in the khola for 40 years and started working for the daily rate of 120 taka per day. So, they argued for daily pay rise twice, at first 250 taka in 2010 and then 350 taka in 2015. The latter is the amount that they were being paid at the time of my research. The female laborers negotiated for daily pay raises and to raise the pay for cutting per mound at the same time. The permanent female laborers of South Jaliapara sat together and went on strike. They also informed the temporary laborers not to work in the khola until their pay was increased. After 15 days of their negotiation and strike, they were successful. The khola owner agreed to pay 100 taka more for each mound. Female laborers are now arguing for another pay raise as the price of all goods has increased. They will argue for 500 taka this time. Heena Bibi (55) said, "We cannot afford to buy basic food nowadays. We need to increase our payment right now; we will stop working otherwise. We have done that before."

The number, experience, and networking ability of permanent female laborers affects the strength of their informal associations. While the female laborers in Dorgachora are also informally organized and have been able to argue for pay raises, the number of permanent female laborers is less than in South Jalaipara (three versus six) and they are not as old or experienced. Their age and number affected their

argument for payment, and they get paid only 300 taka daily while South Jaliapara women workers get 350 taka per day. Farzana Akter (38) took the initiative to negotiate a raise in their daily wage from 150 taka to 300 taka in 2016. It took 7 days of negotiation before the owner finally agreed to the increase. Women refuse to work in dried fish processing elsewhere for lower wages out of a concern for not giving a reason to the owners to cut their wages.

Male and female laborers bargain separately for pay increases. But last time men bargained for a pay raise after the women's strike and pay raise. Female laborers were aware of the men's wage negotiations that were taking place with khola owners at the time of the field research, however, and were planning to negotiate at the same time. Male co-workers do not negotiate for pay raises for women. Women workers argue for their pay raise separately. In both processing sites, women's networking capabilities and informal association are very strong as all the female laborers united with the leading of permanent female laborers and went to strike knowing that they would be unemployed for days. They knew the uncertainty of getting the pay raise. But still they went on strike together which helped them to argue for their financial and other benefits.

Women also bargain for dadon from the processing site owner like their male coworkers. Usually, laborers do not repay dadon but rather work under the same khola owner whenever the owner needs them. The amount is not high as well. Male

and female laborers normally take dadon during the 65-day fishing ban. Male laborers take at most 10000 taka but women laborers take no more than 3000 taka as women's wages are lower than the men's. Also, khola owners do not give the female laborers as much dadon as men by giving the excuse that male laborers have more family members to feed. Laborers negotiate for dadon individually with the khola owner.

6.1.4 The scarcity of female laborers

In the context of religiously strict Teknaf, there is a scarcity of female laborers willing to work in the open spaces of dried fish processing sites with male laborers. Even though khola owners need more female laborers and are willing to pay them, they cannot recruit sufficient female laborers. Female laborer scarcity thus becomes one of women's negotiation strategies with the patriarchal working environment. It helps them to argue for and achieve a few benefits from the processing site owners. This is a place-specific type of agency for female laborers, according to me, as the women are not allowed to work elsewhere in patriarchal Teknaf, but dried fish processing needs female laborers to accomplish the work. The gender-based division of labor prevents the male laborers from performing certain activities within the dried fish value chains. Stigmatization of woman's work prevents male laborers from performing those activities. The processing site owners even try to recruit Rohingya female laborers, but they do not come to work this far from the camp. This

scarcity of women workers has a positive side for the female laborers who work in the dried fish processing sites. When they have successfully argued for pay raises in the past, women have argued to the khola owners that the women are very hard to replace due to their scarcity.

6.1.5 Age

As has been noted by other researchers (Belton et al. 2018 and Deb et al. 2015), the age of female laborers in the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh is a significant factor shaping women's agency in my research area. For these women, age is central to their strategies to negotiate with patriarchy. Research has shown that young female laborers are victim of sexual harassment and other types of social stigma within dried fish processing sites (Belton et al. 2018 and Deb et al. 2015) but that the scenario for older female laborers is the opposite. Some patriarchal constraints, like verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment, are stopped by age itself. Older women still face other types of patriarchal constraints, but their age provides them the authority to fight against those constraints occurring at home, from the family, neighbors, relatives, society and throughout the khola. Their age empowers them to bargain with patriarchy about all the constraints they face while continuing their employment in the khola.

Figure 28: Female laborer arguing with men.

Figure 29: Female laborer smoking.

The processing site owners also choose older women as their permanent laborers as a way to bypass patriarchal norms and continue their work in the khola, something which is not possible with younger female laborers in patriarchal and religious Teknaf society. All the permanent female laborers are aged more than 50

in both processing sites. A processing site owner from Dorgachora, Galib Sheikh (55), said, “Society always disturbs the younger female laborers, it is safer to choose older ones as permanent laborers for the khola”. He thinks that permanent female laborers should be aged as they are safe from patriarchal constraints, which mean they can challenge the patriarchal constraints hampering their psychological and objective wellbeing. There is only one younger permanent female laborer I found in Dorgachora khola, Farzana Akter, aged 38, but who has worked in the khola for 20 years. She started to work as a seasonal laborer at first, but she thinks her dedication to the khola earned her a place as a permanent laborer. On the other hand, the son of her khola owner who also takes care of the khola said, “Farzana Akter is different, she knows the khola as if it were her own and she does everything she is assigned. This made her a permanent female laborer in our khola.” Another dried fish processing site owner Shishir (30) shared, “It is risky to recruit young female laborers, we have to deal with lots of trouble.” He prioritizes older female laborers as that reduces the social difficulties that khola owners face.

The female laborers similarly think that age has changed them and lots of other things around them. When they were young and working in the khola, they faced sexual harassment, restrictions on their movement, being spied on, and financial exploitation from the family happened. But aging has stopped most of these constraints on them. Now their need to challenge constraints has reduced

considerably. Sheuly Begum (65) said, “When I was a young laborer, men were always sitting beside me and making lewd comments, but now men come to me to ask for advice about dried fish. Age has changed my position in the khola and in society.” Heena Bibi (55) explained her age-related experience within the dried fish value chains in a different way. She said, “All the khola owners are my junior in age now, like my children. They cannot order me around, but they must request me to do things instead. They obey whatever I say.” According to her, age has privileged her now that she has become older than the processing site owners she works for.

It is clear from the processing site owners and the female laborers that the age of the female laborers is a vital element to challenge patriarchy in Teknaf. Sometimes, their age smooths over the obstacles they face to continue their employment in the dried fish processing sites. Now they have the voice to argue with anybody who creates constraints on them to continue their work. Age is a significant element allowing older female dried fish workers to survive in the dried fish value chains of Teknaf.

6.1.6 Habits

Female laborers in the dried fish processing sites have developed a few habits though years of work experience that help them with efforts at patriarchal bargaining. Cigarette, tea, and *paan* breaks are significant among their habits. The female laborers noticed that their male coworkers demanded cigarette breaks and tea breaks

and got a little bit of time to rest. The female laborers from both Dorgachora and South Jaliapara khola said that they started to take tea, *paan*, and cigarette breaks on seeing their male co-workers do so. A few of them do not smoke but take tea and paan breaks instead. They take at least two breaks a day. In the morning, around 11:00 AM and in the afternoon, around 4:00 PM. They also take another break if the workload is light. In South Jaliapara, the female and male laborers go to the shop nearby and sit under the fan. They drink, smoke, or have *paan* while watching television. They can go to the shop as the South Jaliapara khola has no shade or rest hut for the laborers. But the laborers of Dorgachora khola cannot go far, rather they bring tea and cigarettes and have them while sitting in the hut of the owner. Renu Begum (57) from Dorgachora khola said, "This is the little break time from hard work". She also smokes but not openly. Whenever she takes a break, the khola owner knows that she will be smoking.

These acquired habits are part of women's patriarchal bargaining with khola owners. The habits give them a little break from fish drying work under the sun. But the habits are not seen as normal for them as for their male coworkers. They had to argue for it with the processing site owners over time. Their tea break time was not allowed by the khola owner at first but was normal for their male co-workers. They created the excuse for breaks by the need to have tea, smoke, or chew *paan*. They had to argue for years to establish this, but their eventual success shows that patriarchal

bargaining with khola owners can bear fruit. 6.1.7 ClothingPatterns of dress for women in the khola exemplify Kandiyoti's (1988) symbolic bargaining strategies to navigate patriarchal restrictions. Clothing is a symbolic negotiation strategy for the female laborers or the wives of the owner to work in the dried fish processing sites in Teknaf. Often women adopt one patriarchal ideology to bargain with another one (Kandiyoti 1988), as is visible through the clothing of the female laborers in the dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

Figure 30: Female laborers in purdah packing fermented fish.

Figure 31: Wife of a khola owner working in khola in purdah.

Women wear three types of clothing in the khola: salwar kamiz, saree blouse, and Thami (traditional dress of Garo ethnic community of Bangladesh) containing three pieces. Whatever dress style they wear in the khola, women always cover their heads with a saree or dupatta. The permanent female laborers work in the khola wearing the dress worn at home. They work comfortably as they are elder women now and no one gets offended by their appearance. They do not care even if their bra straps are seen. They are not worried about what their male co-workers or the owner think. But whenever they see any unknown men in the khola or are asked to be photographed then they say to wait until they are ready. They cover their head and other parts of the body properly so that nothing is seen and then permit the taking of photos. They always wear burqa when they go to the market or to a relative's house. But the seasonal female laborers and the younger female laborers always wear salwar kamiz, covering their whole body properly. I have seen the seasonal female

laborers working in the khola wearing burqa under the hot sun. They often work the whole day wearing a burqa. And if they feel very tired or sweaty then they take off the burqa but cover their body properly before working. Even though women must be attentive to how they dress, and sometimes wear the uncomfortable burqa, they are not dismayed by this as managing the way they dress allows them to work outside of their homes and earn income to support their families.

6.1.8 Places of residence

Where they live is a vital factor for the female laborers contributing to the dried fish value chains in Teknaf. Place of residence is connected with women's employment, as they face social pressure not to work in the kholas. There are three places of residence normally seen among the female laborers: 1) a house near the khola, 2) a house built near the khola after beginning to work there, and 3) commuting from another village. The first two types are seen among the permanent female laborers and the third one is practiced by seasonal and temporary laborers. All three house locations help women laborers to negotiate with patriarchy to continue their jobs in dried fish value chains.

The permanent female laborers usually reside near the khola because it is easy for them to continue their work in the khola as their houses are nearby. Patriarchal and religious Teknaf society tries to control the mobility of women. But female laborers whose houses are adjacent to the khola are not subject to such control as

they are not going far from their houses to work with 'unknown men' who could destroy 'family dignity'. They are negotiating with patriarchy through the location of their house in that their workplace and coworkers (men) are known to them and their society and 'harmless' for their family dignity. A few of the female laborers recall other female coworkers who started working with them but could not continue as their houses were far from the khola and they had to quit due to social pressure. Heena Bibi (55), a female laborer from South Jaliapara dried fish processing site said, "I have seen lots of women come and quit because their houses were far from the khola. Their family eventually forbade them to come here to work." It was clear to her that a nearby place of residence is a strong negotiation strategy for female laborers.

A few permanent female laborers have even built houses near the khola, far from the village, as an extension of this patriarchal bargaining strategy. Although their parents' houses are not far, they built their houses near the khola to avoid social pressure. They said they are out of the village now and thus do not need to listen to or follow what the villagers tell them. They can continue working without any worry. I asked Farzana Akter (38) about social perceptions regarding women's employment in the khola. She responded by saying, "I do not live in the society anymore, I do not know their perceptions about me. I had to build my house here in the khola to exclude myself from their continuous gossip about my employment". That means she is also

using her house location as a patriarchal bargaining strategy to maintain her employment uninterrupted by society. She used to face patriarchal constraints while working and she chose this strategy to give her the ability to work uninterrupted.

The third residence arrangement is to work as an unknown female laborer who comes from another village. These women who come to the processing sites occasionally, when there are lots of fish in the khola, are known as seasonal or temporary laborers. This strategy is helpful to hide from their community that they are working in dried fish processing with unknown men which would otherwise bring shame for their family and relatives. They can come to the khola and go back to their community without giving away their employment in the open khola with unknown men. I have seen young girls working in the khola who were coming from another village to earn some money while still safeguarding their family dignity. If they work in their own village, then it will create problems among their relatives about their marriageability. But now by working in another village they are hiding their employment and protecting their marriageability among their community. This is another strategy to sidestep patriarchal restrictions on their opportunity to seek work in dried fish value chains.

6.1.9 Savings as belongings

In the patriarchal society of Bangladesh, property is inherited and controlled by the male family members most of the time. Female members can own property and be

legal owners, but they often do not have the control to sell, buy, or donate it without the permission of male family members, such as a husband, father, brother, or son. Savings as belongings is a negotiation with this patriarchal system where they have made a way out to control, sell, buy, and donate their own property.

Savings as belongings is an interesting bargaining strategy in both of my field areas for the female laborers and the wives of the owners. This is also used by the female laborers as direct resistance or as a bargaining strategy in the context of patriarchal constraints on property entitlement. Sometimes women refuse to provide free labor and ask for some sort of payment in return for their work (Kandiyoti 1988: 276). In patriarchal Teknaf, women are not the owner of the property bought by the male family members, even though they have made equal or partial contributions to it. Women own nothing when they are abandoned by male family members. To avoid these consequences, they try to save money as belongings, such as gold jewelry, mobile phones, cows, hens, or goats. Through this, they can get control over money as belongings controlled and managed by them rather than by male members of the family. They can sell such items whenever they need to and take them along if they move somewhere else. Renu Begum (57) is a divorced female laborer in the Dorgachora dried fish processing site. She has no children and is living with her brother's family. She has no land and does not want to buy land either. She has bought a cow and a few pieces of gold jewelry as assets. She said, "If I buy land, my

brothers will control and manage it, but my gold earrings and bangles are mine. Even I can take care of the cow I bought by myself."

The wife of a khola owner, similarly, asks for gold jewelry as a gift for her work. Rehana (32), a wife of a dried fish processing site owner, does dried fish related work at home, as all the women do not want to go to the khola and she can supervise them if they work at her house. She asks her husband to give her gold jewelry every month, but he gives it to her instead after 3 or 4 months. She said, "I work the whole day and night on dried fish, but nothing is mine. Money goes into his account. My brother-in-law has married another woman and the previous wife who built that house working in the dried fish khola, she owns nothing now. I do not want that fate." She is saving her jewelry as an asset for herself in this patriarchal society where women's future remains always uncertain.

6.1.10 Single woman head of the household

Being a single woman without a husband (widow or abandoned) is a barrier for the female laborers within the society on the one hand but also the basis to bargain with patriarchy in Teknaf as well by providing a reason to work. Even though the female laborers cannot decide everything by themselves in patriarchal Teknaf society, being a single female head of household does give some capacity for autonomous decision making for them and their children. Single women are the decisionmakers regarding the allocation of money for different purposes, including on children's education,

their own nutrition, and medical purposes. As they are single mothers, they have no husbands at home to stop them choosing where to work or at what time. They can decide how long they need to work to address financial needs. Even though working at night is a problem for society and neighbors, no one is at home to stop them.

Renu Begum (57) has worked in the Dorgachora processing site for 17 years. She started working when her husband abandoned her. She said, “It is peaceful to work by myself as I do not have husband. No one decides when I work”. But Peyari (26) has a different experience of being a single woman with two children. She said, “I can work and spend money on my own as a household head, but my relatives always spy on me. Sometimes I fight with them or ignore them. Some days I feel it heavier to manage everything alone.” Being a young female laborer exposes her more fully to patriarchal constraints by the society and her relatives, but she deals with those constraints as a household head by herself.

Another female laborer from the South Jaliapara dried fish processing site, Sheuly Begum (65), on the other hand, enjoys her single status and managing everything alone. She said, “I earn and spend my money. I know better where to spend money for me. A husband is sweet, but his anger is not sweet. I have been through that. Spending my own money brings another level of peace.” She is a widow, her husband died 40 years ago. Although she has been through various types

of trauma and constraints by the society, but she has enjoyed the autonomy of becoming her own guardian.

Being a single woman with or without children empowers them to decide more for themselves as the head of the household. Even though society still constantly imposes patriarchal obstacles on their everyday movement, they negotiate with those obstacles continually on their own terms. Sometimes being a single woman adds new patriarchal barriers but also provides freedom in different ways.

6.1.11 Negotiation strategies of the wives of the owner

Alam (2018) has presented a different type of negotiation strategy with patriarchy practiced by women in Bangladesh where they gain power from their husbands, fathers, or brothers. This tactic is visible among the wives of the owners in both dried fish processing sites. They practice power equally as do their husband. They command the laborers and assign them their jobs. They shout at them without any reason. They make them do other work beside dried fish processing, like bringing snacks, making tea, and taking care of younger children. They are treated with great respect by female and male workers as they can save their jobs or sack them anytime. If the wife of the owner is convinced of the quality of their work, then they can stay as daily laborers whenever there is work at the dried fish processing site. Similar to how Deb et. al (2015) showed that the wives of moneylenders are more powerful than other women in coastal Bangladesh, the wives of the khola owners are more

powerful than other female laborers and sometime exercise more power than the owner within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf.

Asma (40) is not a laborer, rather she runs her own dried fish processing site. When I first asked her, "Who is the owner of the khola?" She replied, "me." I was amused. Everything I read about the dried fish processing site scenarios in Bangladesh was changing in front of my eyes. But after a while she shared that this land is taken as lease by her husband, but her husband is busy maintaining other things related to dried fish business, such as selling dried fish, buying raw fish, buying salt, searching for laborers, buying other materials needed to dry fish like bamboo, drums, net, twine etc. During the time her husband is not in the khola they needed a trusted person who would maintain everything but they could not find anyone appropriate. One day a young man who had worked for them for six months stole a lot of money and dried fish from their khola. After that she started to work in the khola daily and did this for 4 years.

Now her husband is her second husband. Before this marriage she was married for 10 years but that man was brutal. He used to beat me every day, he was a drug addict, a brutal human being. "He didn't listen to anybody and never did any good. After putting up with him for 10 years, I told my brothers to take me back because it was impossible for me to tolerate the situation anymore. Then my brothers brought me back and I filed for divorce. After that they married me off with this man"- she shared. Her current husband is a good person but older than her. He is 71 years old. His previous wife died 5 years ago, his 3 sons are now self-dependent. He needed someone to take care of him and he was searching for a wife too. She said, "I was a divorced woman, and this husband is enough for me. Who else would marry a divorced woman?" He still can walk and do his own work. But he is slow. She has a son who is one year and a half old. For her son, she started to manage the business seriously. She needs to secure her son's future. She maintains everything in the khola; she recruits male and female laborers; directs their work, ensures that they are working properly; she checks the quality of fish that her husband has bought that is brought to the khola from the fresh fish seller; she sells dried fish to traders who come to buy fish from the khola or at home. Also, she does all the work that a laborer would do too. She said, "If I work then we could save the money of a laborer. That's why we both work all the time in the khola." In addition to supervising her workers, she does all the work in the khola such as washing, sorting, cutting, salting, gathering, and packaging fish, tying ribbon fish tails and hanging them to dry.

Their khola is not that big, covering only 10 decimals of land but this is the oldest khola in the Dorgachora. Her husband started to dry fish here 30 years ago and is still doing so. At first, he had a khola covering a huge area but now his sons are grown up and they have taken their shares of the property and are doing their own business. One of his sons has a khola beside his father's khola. Now he does not have capital like before. That's why he invests a small amount of money and earns

less than before. He doesn't even sell dried fish at Asadgonj dried fish market because of their delay in payment. He sells in Ramu, Ukhia, Shamlapur instead. Because they pay within seven days, and they can invest the money again to dry fish.

Asma Khatun's negotiation strategy with patriarchy is defined by her husband's position in society. As the wife of an owner, she is protected from most of the harassment and patriarchal constraints faced by the female laborers in the khola. Her position is what matters here, not her age. Other owner's wives in both dried fish processing sites negotiate with patriarchal constraints by using their position as a wife of the owner. That position gives her as much authority as the owner to, for example, recruit and replace laborers.

6.1.12 Women's perspectives on their contributions to dried fish production

Women's contributions in the khola are perceived as irreplaceable by the older female laborers in Dorgachora and South Jaliapara. To me, this is a key part of their bargaining strategy with patriarchy in Teknaf. South Jaliapara laborer Sheuly Begum (65) said, "we are saving them from the workload." According to her, the owner needs her labor more than she needs the job. Female laborers are helping the processing site owners by working in their kholas. One khola owner in South Jaliapara Shishir is only 30 years old. His female workers say that he is blessed by having five of them. Their comments are connected to the scarcity of female labor

in Teknaf. There are processing site owners who have invested large amounts of money but struggle to find female laborers to work in the khola because of the patriarchal constraints prevailing in the religiously conservative Teknaf society. This is the why Shishir's female laborer say he is lucky. Other than him, other khola owners have only one permanent female laborer to support them the whole year round. Khadija Begum (55), another female laborer in South Jaliapara khola, said, "The owners are fully dependent on us for their entire business. They will be zero if we do not work. That's why it is our responsibility to minimize their burden." According to her, the business of the khola owner is run by the female laborers, they are the wheel that turns the business. If they do not work properly, the owner will not be able to make any profit from the dried fish business.

I had a question for everyone- are female laborers replaceable? The answer from the female laborers was strongly negative. Farzana Akter (38) from Dorgachora khola laughed at first when she hears the question and then answered, "They will be out of their business overnight without the female laborers." After 20 years of experience, she cannot imagine the dried fish processing site running without the female laborers. Renu Begum (57) from Dorgachora replied very calmly, "How can the khola run without female laborers? It cannot." Her answer was specific and short but expressed the obviousness of the answer for the female laborers in the khola. Heena Bibi (55) from South Jaliapara khola shook her head several times saying-

“no, no, no, no, no”, and said, “We do not think this as a job but our own work, just like the owner. And they know it very clearly”.

Surprisingly, women dried fish workers do not think that they are contributing to another person’s business but rather doing their own work just like their other family responsibilities at home. The owners observed that this makes them different from the male laborers. The owners also acknowledge the contribution of the female laborers. Processing site owner Shishir (30) said, “I can complete all the khola activities with female laborers but not with the male laborers. They refuse to perform activities done by the female laborers.”

I see the perspectives of the female laborers about their contribution to the dried fish value chains as their negotiation strategy with patriarchy in Teknaf. While the whole society is aware that female laborers are working in the khola, the women explain themselves as an inseparable part of the khola. They say that they are not doing a job, rather that they are helping the owner. While Teknaf society is always trying to control the movement of the female laborers, they say that the dried fish processing site owners are unable to run their businesses without them. With this affirmation of their value, women workers are making the argument against patriarchy that they should continue their employment in the dried fish sector.

6.1.13 Everyday forms of resistance

Besides the strategies I explained above, the female laborers from both processing sites have a few indirect and everyday forms of resistance to argue with the patriarchal constraints that affect them every day. Some of them are symbolic in type. There are two types of symbolic bargaining strategies used by the female laborers within dried fish value chains in Teknaf. One is used to argue with patriarchal society as represented by neighbors and relatives through strategies around veiling and purdah (Kandiyoti 1988) to continue their employment while maintaining their 'dignity' in it. A second symbolic bargaining strategy takes place in relation to the patriarchal work environment in the khola. The two strategies intersect as the khola as working place is a part of the broader patriarchal society of Teknaf.

Deb et al. (2015) has noted how the foul-mouthed language and masculine behaviors of the women within fishing communities of Bangladesh work as a 'self-guarding system'; they are a symbolic strategy to negotiate with women's patriarchal work settings. Deb et al.'s argument is relevant for female laborers within the dried fish value chains in Teknaf as well. All female laborers with whom I interacted used uncouth language. They swore and frowned even while talking normally. They said that aggressive language and expressions had become a habit to safeguard themselves within patriarchal society. These behaviors defend them against the

"dirty looks" of men, abusive behavior, and belittling attitudes towards them using bad language and frowning. Not only the female laborers but also the wives of the owners are foul mouthed as well. Similarly, if anything goes wrong, women workers and khola owners' wives shout; if anyone disagrees, they shout. Owners warn others to behave properly with the women who work in their kholas. If a male laborer tries to answer women's cursing and shouting, the owner shuts them up. Once I saw a khola owner of the Dorgachora processing site saying to a male laborer, "She is like that. Never argue with her in future. Even we do not dare to talk to her unnecessarily." The owner was talking about her permanent female laborer Farzana Akter (38). Farzana Akter was correcting one of the male laborers when he was drying fish improperly. I saw the owners were scared to talk to their permanent female laborers and requested them carefully to do certain things. If they said anything unnecessary, the female laborers shouted at the khola owners and their wives too. In South Jaliapara, the permanent female laborers are older than the khola owner. If the owner says anything unnecessary, or tries to guide them, they swear at them loudly. According to a permanent female laborer Shahida Begum (50) from South Jaliapara, "We have taught them everything about drying fish, but still the son of the bitch tries to override us. How can he know better than us? Never." Her khola owner was hearing everything sitting in a corner of the khola. The khola owner was laughing in response, suggesting his agreement with her assessment.

Beside this, women employ other acts of resistance in the manner Scott (1985) described in peasant societies. The female laborers also resist the oppressions occurring to them in the khola through their everyday actions. The khola owner does not allow them to rest even though they get tired and thirsty. So, the female laborers take rest whenever the owner is not around and run to work if the owner comes back suddenly. Modina (20) from the Dorgachora dried fish processing site said, "The owner will swear and shout if he sees us resting in the middle of a day. But we cannot stand under the hot sun for hours. The owner does not care about that." Also, they take fresh fish and dried fish from the khola without letting the owner know most of the time. Sheuly Begum (65) from South Jaliapara dried fish processing site said, "The owner will not allow us to take fish often from the khola, but we cannot eat meals with salt and chili every day. We do not let the owner know about it and everything is fine." The payment they get is not enough to cover the expenses of daily life, that's why they do that they said.

Everyday forms of resistance to the patriarchal system are ways to help women engage successfully and safely in dried fish value chains. Sometimes they protect themselves from sexual violence (verbal or non-verbal), search for a little comfort, save extra expenses, and maintain continuous work within the dried fish value chains. Everyday resistance helps them to argue with the patriarchal constraints without letting the owner know.

6.2 Conclusion

Following Hays (1994), I suggest that the female laborers of Teknaf are engaged in a form of social revolution because they are creating new structural possibilities by showing their agency within various patriarchal constraints. They are doing revolution by encouraging other women laborers to come out from the patriarchal constraints and join the dried fish value chains through continuous bargaining. They are revolutionaries by creating lifelines for other females of the society who are being encouraged by them to break patriarchal constraints. Galappaththi et al. (2021) have presented a similar explanation by mentioning that they are changing the gender norms and patriarchal barriers of the society through their continuous engagements in value chains. Equally, the continuous engagement of the female laborers within the dried fish value chains in Bangladesh is the source of their agency.

Deb et al. (2015) explains the adaptive skill of the fisherwomen as a strong bargaining strategy or agency. That is true for the female laborers engaged in the dried fish value chains in Teknaf too. As they go through everyday struggles to sustain themselves within the patriarchal constraints they face from family, relatives, neighbors, and the broader society. Considering the patriarchal and religious settings of Teknaf, all the female laborers who leave the house to work have bargaining capabilities, but their strategies are different and connected with their employment.

As Kabeer (1999) said that empowerment is the path to achieve wellbeing, female dried fish workers in Teknaf are trying to achieve social wellbeing through their everyday patriarchal bargaining.

Chapter Seven: Discussions and conclusion

Chapter 7.0 Conclusion

This study shows the mixed characteristics of the dried fish value chains in Teknaf, considering the engagement of the female laborers, the patriarchal obstacles they face, and their day-to-day accommodations with the system. One side is the dependency of the entire dried fish value chain on the women and the other side is the patriarchal structure of trying to restrain their engagements through discriminatory ideologies and barriers. But women are not passive actors in the patriarchal system, rather they constantly argue to sustain themselves in the value chains.

Female laborers are the heart of the Teknaf dried fish value chains at both processing sites. Their male coworkers, processing site owners, family members, and the people who live around the kholas recognize their importance in dried fish work. The owners buy fresh fish to dry, counting on the availability of the female laborers next day. The general restricted availability of women to work in dried fish processing hampers the dried fish business overall in Teknaf. A strict division of labor is another reason behind their importance in the value chains. Male laborers are available to work in the processing sites but only to accomplish responsibilities specified for them by the society. Some work can be done by female family members of the processing site owners but not enough to run the entire business. As a result, the owners depend on a relatively small number of female laborers. Owners

mentioned the care taken by female laborers as another reason for depending on them more than male laborers. As broken, rotten, half dried, or over dried fish will bring less profit, care is essential during the entire drying process. Female laborers are considered to be more careful than male laborers when tying ribbon fish tails together, removing fish scales, flipping fish while drying, gathering dried fish, and packing fish.

Female laborers have responsibilities in all aspects of the activities that happen in the kholas. Even though a strict division of labor prevails in both kholas, female laborers' activities are not limited to 'female job responsibilities' only, rather, they accomplish all the work that needs to be done. I have seen them carrying heavy bamboo made machang on their heads covered with dried fish, which is defined as a male job responsibility. They are focused on activities that need to be accomplished, not whose job is specified by society. They only stop when the weight is heavier than they can carry. Otherwise, the job responsibilities of the female laborers in the dried fish value chains encompasses the entire gamut of work in the processing sites and covers all the orders from the khola owner, their wives, and guests. Often, they do unusual tasks like running back to the owner's house to bring chemicals, or making tea for the guests, or going to the shop to bring snacks. When the number of laborers is large, so is the workload. The female laborers then may

help the wife of the owner cook for the laborers as well. Sometimes, they take care of the infants of the processing site owners too as part of their job responsibilities.

The tasks of the female laborers in the dried fish value chains are not specific, nor their duration. There are no fixed working hours for the female laborers in both processing sites. They are expected to work as long as there is work in the khola. They may work 12, 36 or 48 hours (IDI of Farzana Akter) without sleep or rest, depending on the availability of fresh fish. Overtime exhausts them, and so does poverty. They are forced to work according to the time demanded by the processing site owners because they need to keep their jobs and the money they earn from them. Bonuses are paid for work at night both male and female laborers, but males get paid more than the females for their overtime. Both unequal wages and exhausting overtime affect the objective wellbeing of the female laborers in Teknaf.

As female laborers cannot be easily replaced, the owners from both processing sites take various steps to retain the female laborers who work for them. Permanent female laborers are vital as, if no one is available to work when khola owner needs work to be done, the permanent female laborers will always make themselves available. The owners similarly provide dadon to the female laborers when there is no work in the khola so that the women can avoid financial crisis. It is a huge help for the female laborers during the 65-day marine fishing ban when there are often periods of several days without employment. Female laborers slowly pay back their

loans by working in the khola for the whole year round or a few years. The owners also allow the poor female laborers who have no access to land from their husband or son to build houses on the land they have taken on lease for fish processing. They are often allowed to take fresh or dry fish from the khola, which saves them money. The khola owners also take advice from the female laborers about which male or female laborers to recruit from the network of friends or relatives of the female laborers.

Another vital actor in the Teknaf dried fish value chains are female family members of khola owners. These women are rarely mentioned by the processing site owners, nor the focus of much research. Their invisible engagement within the dried fish value chains often runs the entire khola. Owners' wives who work at home or in the khola are invisible in the value chains. Those few wives of the owners who work in the khola are unpaid like the wives supporting from home. Often, they substitute for the female laborers during the female laborer crisis which is common in Teknaf. From home, they manage female laborers to work at their house as not all women are interested to work in the open khola. They cook for the laborers, wash, sort, and salt fish, and tie the tails of ribbon fish. The wives of the owners in the khola also do these activities. They instruct male and female laborers working with them and do work as one of them. They manage financial issues whenever their

husbands are outside of the khola. Overall, they are the trusted unpaid business partners for the processing site owners.

Even though the female laborers are the vital economic actors of the dried fish value chains in Teknaf and support the owners in many ways, their engagement is not easy in Teknaf's patriarchal society. Rather they must endure various types of patriarchal constraints in the processing site, within the family, and in broader society to continue their employment in dried fish value chains. The underlying reason behind the constraints they face is patriarchal views of women in religiously strict Teknaf.

Gender based barriers from society create obstacles to continuing their employment within the dried fish value chains every day. Controlling their mobility is a barrier that hampers their regular engagement within the dried fish value chains as well as affects their relational wellbeing. As Teknaf is religiously strict and forces women to stay at home to follow purdah, working in the processing sites contradicts patriarchal notions of women's ideal behavior. Family members, neighbors, and relatives are the agents who enforce controls on women's mobility. If family members permit women to work in the processing sites, relatives and neighbors spy on them to see if they are maintaining the 'proper' idea of a 'good woman'. They check to see that female laborers do not go anywhere other than the khola to do anything 'dirty' with any man. Hence, the female laborers always must be aware of

how their interactions with processing site owners or male coworkers might negatively affect their relational wellbeing. Negative perceptions about their employment and about them are another gender-based obstacle in society. Even though they work in the khola from dawn to dusk to feed their family members, they are perceived as a 'filthy woman' for working outside the house which has harmful effect on their feelings, or subjective wellbeing. There are other more socially acceptable kinds of work that women can do such as working as a maid or tailoring because they are not working with unknown men in an open space. This kind of social stigma about female laborers working in dried fish value chains affects their subjective wellbeing as well as their material wellbeing, with some of them forced to leave their employment.

Patriarchal constraints within the dried fish processing sites are mostly the outcome of the broader societal perceptions towards the female laborers. As a result, women experience constraints from their male coworkers, the owners of the kholas where they work, from female coworkers, and from the total social environment in fact. The gendered division of labor in the processing sites is the outcome of a patriarchal system which stigmatizes female job responsibilities and privileges the activities of male laborers. This lower valuation of women's tasks means that male laborers are not expected to do them. Unequal payment is validated through the lower status of the female job responsibilities, even though they are putting in equal

effort and working hours. The norm of justifying unequal wage through the gendered division of labor restricts female laborers from claiming an equal wage and affects their relational wellbeing. This pattern is accentuated when female laborers accept the negative status given to their job responsibilities in the khola. Stigmatizing their own job reflects the social perceptions they face. They too feel that they are not good women for violating patriarchal ideologies by working with men outside of the house. Thus, their subjective wellbeing is affected. These patriarchal constraints make the younger female laborers less inclined to take up work in the dried fish value chain. They also get discouraged as dried fish work will affect their marriageability in future. Still there are a few younger female laborers who have lost their husbands and work in the khola to feed their children. They face additional obstacles, such as sexual harassment. Moreover, the villagers, relatives, and neighbors of the younger female laborers in patriarchal Teknaf society are scared seeing them in the processing sites and controls them every way they can. Besides, women dried fish workers experience other challenges because of the chemicals, unhygienic work environment, and poor sanitation system in the processing sites which affect the laborers' material wellbeing.

The female family members, and especially wives of the khola owners, are not beyond patriarchal constraints either. They go through financial exploitation, as they do not get any payment. Facing sexual harassment from the male laborers of

another khola is also common for wives who work in the khola. Moreover, the material, relational, and subjective wellbeing of the wives of the owners are also strained through the financial exploitation and sexual harassment they face.

Nevertheless, the female laborers in Teknaf value chains have their own strategies to bargain with the patriarchal ideologies to continue their employment and strengthen their social wellbeing. Unfortunately, the negotiation strategies and agencies of the female laborers within the dried fish value chains have not been explored in much research focusing on Bangladesh and many other parts of the world. In my research, I have observed different strategies to argue with their family, neighbors, society and in the processing sites. Bargaining strategies vary according to their age and positionalities as well. The strategies for the female laborers are different then the wives of the owner. Often, laborers accommodate some aspects of patriarchal ideology but resist other aspects. For example, some laborers wear the burqa in the khola while working. They are accommodating a religious restriction while negotiating with society for their employment at the same time. This strategy of patriarchal bargaining combines material and relational wellbeing dimensions by facilitating their work within dried fish value chains. The women who work in Teknaf's dried fish value chains are not passive members of the patriarchal structure but rather challenge it consistently. This shows their capacity for agency as well as their everyday efforts to achieve social wellbeing.

Religiously strict Teknaf creates few opportunities for the female laborers to argue with the patriarchal system, which I would name as flaws of the system itself. Female laborer scarcity is prominent in this case. As women are not generally allowed to work outside the home and the processing site owners need female laborers to continue their business, the women use this need to negotiate with the owners and enhance their material wellbeing. This scarcity of female labor has been a key element of women's efforts to negotiate pay increases in both kholas by threats of not going to work altogether. Their payment continues to be less than that of male laborers even if women did secure some raises. Negotiations for increased wages was led in both kholas by the permanent female laborers. Strong unofficial association among the female laborers worked behind these negotiations, which is another bargaining strategy.

Networking capabilities are also important to ensure continuous employment during the fishing season. Even though women work as permanent laborer for a single owner, the owner could run out of fish one day. Women will then pick up casual work with other owners. Efficient networking capabilities of the female laborers indicates their effort to amplify relational wellbeing.

Perspectives regarding their employment in the dried fish value chains is one more source of their patriarchal bargaining. The female laborers perceive that they are not working under their owners but rather helping them with their knowledge

which boosts their subjective wellbeing. Furthermore, the female laborers have distinct practical knowledge about dried fish processing which is helpful for the owners. The women workers have acquired this knowledge through their lifelong experience and from their parents and relatives who are generally all involved with drying and catching fish from the Bay of Bengal.

Besides skill and knowledge, they have other capabilities to negotiate and resist the patriarchal barriers occurring to them inside the khola. The female laborers are known as rude and arrogant to the owners and male coworkers. This attitude saves them from sexual harassment from the male coworkers, and other male visitors in the khola. The younger female laborers shared similar strategies in this regard. Their frowning eyes and rude gestures protect them from harassment. The female laborers are mostly relatives of the owners or the male coworkers which also helps them to counter sexual harassment and negative social perceptions. Age is another key tool for similar patriarchal negotiations. As most of the female laborers are older, they now have greater ability to negotiate with the patriarchal obstacles than the younger women. They face less control over their mobility and will talk back sharply if anyone tries to constrain them. They have overcome the age of facing sexual harassment and raise their voices to protect younger women who face it. If the younger female laborers still face such incidents in their way to the khola or when going back home, then they seek help from the elderly people of the society. Often,

they shout at their harassers too. Frowning eyes and rudeness are resistance to patriarchal ideology as well as a way to reinforce their subjective wellbeing and protect their relational and material wellbeing.

Few permanent female laborers have built houses near the khola to avoid social stigma, which help them to work for overtime at night as well. As most of the female laborers are single mothers, they easily manage their homes. If any relatives or neighbors still create obstacles, then they ask for financial help from those troublemakers. Their poverty in a way assists them to negotiate in this case. They also maintain purdah which is considered as proper dress by society while going to work in the khola. Some of the female laborers even wear burqa the whole day while working under the hot sun. Others work covering their body properly to avoid social shaming. Even the wives of the owners do the same to avoid social shaming. Building houses close to the processing sites, poverty, and wearing burqas in the khola help the female laborers to negotiate for their material and relational wellbeing.

Furthermore, the wives of the owners have different patriarchal constraints and so as their bargaining strategies with the patriarchal structure. I have even seen one wife of the owner arguing for the payment like other female laborers. Some wives asked for gold jewelry in return as they could be abandoned by their husband anytime. Female laborers struggle to save money. They are afraid to buy land as their

male relatives will occupy it. Therefore, they buy domestic animals and gold jewelry to keep under their possession. These negotiation strategies they have learned over time and through various lessons which strengthens their subjective and objective wellbeing by providing financial security. In addition, patriarchal bargaining includes various behavior by the female laborer's in different situation or with different people. It is not something stable, but rather changes daily according to the situation they face. It has not always been today and will not be like this in the future.

Every study has few limitations, so does my research. The main limitation of my research is the short time frame and small number of informants. Even though there are numerous dried fish processing sites in Teknaf Upazila, I had to limit my study to two sites which meant the exclusion of female dried fish laborers elsewhere who may have had different types of engagements, faced different patriarchal constraints, and exhibited varying kinds of agency in their everyday lives. Another limitation is the timing of the study. I had to conduct most of my fieldwork during the 65-day fishing ban in the monsoon season. That period is poor for drying fish. Had I been able to stay during the regular fish drying season, I could have observed more of their everyday lives and struggles. That said, the fishing ban period is a period of heightened challenges for women dried fish laborers.

7.1 Recommendations

Even though my research objectives do not include any recommendations for the study sites, I feel bound to propose a few, considering my field experiences and the insecure lives and livelihoods of female laborers in Teknaf.

Recommendation 1: Inclusion of dried fish directly in the fisheries related policies.

The Department of Fisheries under the ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of Bangladesh has mentioned "fish and fishery products" and "Fishermen" in all their policies (Halim 2004, Shamsuzzaman et al. 2016, Siason, 2002). However, the policies make no specific mention of dried fish. As a result, the laborers who are involved within the dried fish value chains do not get any benefits from the government. Thus, direct inclusion of dried fish and related explanation in the policy is a must. This could then be the basis for appropriate compensation from the government for dried fish value chain laborers.

Recommendation 2: Ensure a separate marketing system for dried fish from Teknaf.

As a remote area of Bangladesh, the dependence of Teknaf on arotdars from Chittagong is a constraint on the region's economic success. It takes a whole day for Teknaf traders to reach Chittagon, where they have to stay the night, as the market starts in the morning. The process is exhausting the traders and affects their business.

The government should take special steps to encourage more dried fish marketing from Teknaf by creating separate marketing systems for this remote and border area.

Recommendation 3: Ensure better transportation system for carrying dried fish.

Remote border areas like Teknaf have obstacles in dried fish transportation. It takes lots of money, time, and labor. That merely discourages the dried fish processors from continuing business which impacts negatively on the value chain. For that, a separate transportation system through the fisheries department should be provided to encourage and expand the business.

Recommendation 4: Cooperative relation among the dried fish producers, laborers, and the local fisheries department.

To enhance and strengthen the dried fish value chains, cooperative relations among the dried fish processors, laborers and the local fisheries department is a primary condition. I have not seen this in Teknaf fisheries department. The department has no proper idea about the processing sites and their activities.

Recommendation 5: Recognition of the importance and contribution of the female laborers within the dried fish value chains.

Despite the active participation of the female laborers in the dried fish value chains, policy and society have ignored them always. Female laborers should be included in the fisheries and dried fish related policy to ensure their social, financial,

and policy-based security. This would help to change societal perceptions towards their involvement within the value chains.

Recommendation 6: Promotion of Women's education.

A remote area like Teknaf has various crises and low women's education is one of them. This is a major drag on women's wellbeing and opportunities, while also reinforcing patriarchy. Education would also help to remove the stigma associated with women's employment.

Recommendation 7: Prohibition of child marriage through policies and its implementation.

Most of the female laborers in the Teknaf dried fish processing sites were abandoned by their husbands after getting married at an early age between 13 and 17 before they could get education or vocational training. Early marriage made these women vulnerable and prone to various patriarchal constraints within the dried fish value chains.

Recommendation 8: Ensure greater participation of dried fish processors and laborers in decision making and in the management of fisheries and water resources.

Even though they are active economic actors, dried fish processors and the laborers are not part of decision making in the fisheries related policies and their implementation. Their experience-based knowledge related to the needs of fish

processing, fisheries and water, and other areas should be included in discussions of appropriate policy for fisheries and water management and public health interventions.

Recommendation 9: Special support for dried fish processors and laborers during periods of economic disruption.

Natural hazards and the fishing ban have economic consequences on fishers, dried fish processors, and the laborers who work in fish processing. Compensation should be provided not just to fishers but to all of them during periods of economic disruption like the fishing ban period or during environmental disasters.

7.2 Contributions of the study

My research contributes to the conceptual framework of the social wellbeing to study the engagements, patriarchal constraints, and negotiation strategies of the female laborers within the dried fish value chains based on my observation in the field. My thesis also proposes the critical study of the engagements of female laborers and their agency within dried fish value chains. These approaches make a major contribution to the study of the social wellbeing of women within dried fish value chains.

Key findings of my thesis are as follows:

a. Engagements of the female laborers within the dried fish value chains are elaborate and various. Those engagements demand thorough exploration singly and in combination. Women's job responsibilities and activities keep the value chains alive but are insufficiently valued. Research on dried fish value chains has identified these engagements but has not examined them in depth. Female laborers contribute to the dried fish value chains as vital economic actors. Their contribution is not limited to their defined activities only. Their activities are not comparable to the male coworkers as well. Their contribution encompasses the contribution of the male laborers and the khola owners. Their job responsibilities define them, and they own what they are doing.
b. Patriarchal constraints of the female laborers are dynamic. They face obstacles from different people and in different situations, times, and contexts. Patriarchal constraints differ for female laborers and for relatives of the owners. The constraints vary from site to site, at home, and in public places. Patriarchal constraints should be explored in relation to the social context, state policy, and religious practices of the specific area. Female laborers' voices should be heard about the patriarchal constraints they face. Their experiences are so deep and dynamic that it is difficult to observe

other than by listening to female laborers and engaging in participant observation with them.

c. Female laborers have agency. They are not passive members of the patriarchal system, but rather negotiate with patriarchy consistently for their social wellbeing. They engage in ongoing negotiations with the processing site owners, society, family members, neighbors, and relatives to continue their employment in the khola. Their negotiation strategies vary by age, financial background, connections, and their skill.

7.3 Conclusion

My research aims to understand the social wellbeing of women workers in dried fish value chains in Bangladesh through exploring their roles, the gendered constraints they face, and their patriarchal bargaining strategies. These women lack recognition from society (Deb et al. 2015), but they are legitimate value chain actors (Galappaththi et al. 2021). Research has shown their material engagements in dried fish value chains and the relational obstacles they encounter but research has not explored how they exercise agency to continue their existence within the value chains for year after year. Mirkin (1984) has pointed to this failure to consider agency as a general failure of the patriarchy concept, which sees women as passive and controlled by dominant males. I have used the social wellbeing perspective to frame the material, relational, and subjective dimensions of women's agency within

patriarchal dried fish value chains in Bangladeshi society. Deb et al. (2015) and Galappaththi et al. (2021) mention women's agency within fishing communities in Bangladesh but do not provide a thorough analysis. In response to this knowledge gap, my research has explored women's material engagements, patriarchal constraints, and their agency in advancing their social wellbeing within dried fish value chains in Bangladesh.

Although female laborers and their activities are overlooked and dismissed by the broader society and within the value chains themselves, their work is a vital basis of dried fish value chains. As Kimmel (2008) has said, the undervaluing of women's work in relation to men's work is not inevitable but rather the outcome of cultural relationships. This means that the evaluation of the work of women laborers in the dried fish value chains in Teknaf are not fixed, but can be changed for the better. Women's engagements and their bargaining strategies within the dried fish value chains have immense, if largely unrecognized, potential in the society of Teknaf to change the existing patriarchal structure and to influence other women across class. The women dried fish workers of Teknaf create space for women to overcome oppressive gender roles by continuously challenging a discriminatory patriarchal structure.

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