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Post MFA Effects on Women's Jobs in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh enjoyed a tariff free multi-fibre agreement with the US which was supposed to expire in December 2004 and there was a prediction that many garment workers would be jobless and join informal sectors such as domestic work or sex work. This longitudinal study was undertaken during the period of June 2004 to Dec'05. The objective is to look at the effects of post MFA on the working women in the urban slums of Dhaka and also identify correlates of change in employment.

The study followed 300 women from the urban slums of Dhaka collecting data in four equally spaced rounds. These women are from four categories garment worker, sex worker, domestic worker and housewife, the latter being the reference category. Logistic regression (for clustered data) was used to model the outcome variable `change in employment' on various correlates. The study finds that, 95% women remained in garment work and none went to sex or domestic work, although some became housewives. This implies that post MFA employment change was not significant and the findings match the national situation. Most factories diversified themselves and shifted to knitwear. Further diversification of the garment industry is recommended along with creation of more jobs.

Keywords: Multifibre Agreement, Longitudinal Study, Logistic Regression, Urban Slums, Garment Workers

INTRODUCTION

The effect of global economic restructuring on women's lives has received much attention in the literature (Durano, 2002; Fontana & Wood, 2000; Oxfam, 2002 ; Pyle & Ward, 2003). Lucrative trade agreements of the developed nations with the members of the developing countries, bear positive fruits for women

workers, enabling the country to have greater participation of women in the labour market and thus improving the status of women. However, the effects of withdrawal of trade agreements may have negative impacts on their lives (Bhattacharya & Elliot, 2005). This is mainly because some of the industries utilize the cheap labour of formerly unemployed women, thus providing a steady income for them and their families. Once these jobs are curtailed or lost due to global restructuring, the immediate effect is on the lives of these women and their families who have grown to rely on this income (Pabio, 1999; Pyle & Ward, 2003). This is specially the case where the state does not come forward with any benefits or compensation, neither have they invested in providing alternate sources of employment. The ensuing situation forces the women workers to accept informal jobs through which they are able to maintain themselves and their dependants (Parennas, 2001; Ward et al., 2004).

The case is exemplified by Bangladesh, one of the developing countries exporting large quantities of readymade garments. In Bangladesh, ninety per cent of the garment factory workers are females and they support an estimated ten million dependents (Star Business Report, 2001). Bangladesh economy has grown increasingly dependent on the seventy-six per cent of national export earnings generated by garments and knit wear. Changes in trade agreement have threatened the competitive position of Bangladesh garment industry. Declines in garment orders accelerated rapidly after September 11, 2001. By November 2001, two thirds of the factories had no work orders (Sobhan, 2001). Following this, an estimated 400,000 women lost their jobs (Staff Reporter, 2001c). Many female garment workers had few options for employment other than seeking domestic and sex work. In fact, in one study, Ward et al. (2004) report that after November 2001, an influx of former garment workers have been known to enter sex work in Bangladesh. With lack of other parallel industries in the formal sector, Bangladesh has the lowest rate of women's employment in South Asia (World Bank Report, 2008).

Under the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA), duty free and tariff privileges and quantity quotas for garments and textiles were provided to certain developing countries in their exports to developed countries. Since the early 90's Bangladesh has started developing its garment industry. From the late 90's it is one of the developing countries enjoying the MFA. The garment industry boomed there as local and international investors took advantage of this agreement. In December 2004 the MFA agreement ended, which meant that all the countries (including China) could compete with one another without quantity quotas or trade barriers. With no MFA, the Bangladeshi garment industry was expected to experience a major reduction in the orders and this would result in shutting down of many industries (Star Business Report, 2001). The resultant effect would be the loss of jobs for women workers who were neither trained for any other form of

employment, nor had there been any provision made by the Government for their alternative employment in the formal sector. It was predicted that approximately 1.3 to 1.8 million women would lose their jobs after December 2004 (Staff Reporter, 2002). This leads to the possibility that many women who were former garment workers would take up either domestic work or sex work or some other informal employment.

To study the effect of post MFA, the current study had been undertaken to follow the changes in women worker's lives. This study presents the findings from a longitudinal survey of women workers in Bangladesh, conducted over a period of one and half years, from June 2004 to Dec 2005. The study followed three hundred women in Dhaka slums (the capital of Bangladesh) and the changes in job categories through this period was documented in four different rounds of survey. Each survey was conducted at six month interval beginning June 2004 and ending Dec 2005. The three hundred women were equally divided amongst garment work, sex work, domestic work and housewives (serving as a control group with no cash employment). Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study attempts to look at the patterns of changes from one job category to another following the end of MFA The study also investigates the correlates of job change amongst the four category of women chosen in this study.

Study Objectives

The MFA was to end in December 2004. China had joined the WTO and from a very humble origin rose to be the world's major producer and exporter of clothing (CAFOD,1998). The steep competition in the world market is expected to reduce the orders for Bangladesh in which case many garment workers would lose their jobs. This study had been undertaken to follow garment workers, sex workers, domestic workers and housewives living in the urban slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh and observe the changes in their jobs which would be the post MFA effect. It is posited here that during post MFA more garment workers would be likely to change jobs and enter sex work or domestic work. The housewife category has been taken as a control group who have no cash income and the job changes in other categories could be explained with reference to the housewives.

This study has two major objectives:

- To study the change in job categories following the end of MFA.
- To study the factors which prompt change in categories amongst the various subgroups of women studied.

BACKGROUND

Since its independence in 1971, the economy of Bangladesh has been dependent on agriculture as most of the people live in the rural areas (Rahman, 2004).The export sector was principally dominated by jute and tea. Following a significant decline in the demand for jute and jute- related products in the world market, the price of jute fibres was negatively affected. Coupled with that was the constant threat of flooding, which led to a substantial decline to the national revenue from the jute oriented exports (Spinager,1986). Attention was thus thrust towards the garment industry which showed signs of a lucrative future.

In Bangladesh, the garment industry has become the main export sector and in year 2002, it was responsible for eighty- one per cent of the total exports (Bhattacharya & Elliot, 2005). According to Rahman (2004) two non–market factors have played a crucial role in ensuring the garment sector's continual success namely (a) quotas under Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) in the North American market and (b) preferential market access to European markets (Bhattacharya & Rahman, 2001).

According to Bhattacharya and Elliot (2005), 'The MFA was a complex system of country- and product-specific quotas on textiles and clothing; it was an institutionalized aberration under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)'. Rahman (2004) defines MFA as "MFA is a series of bilaterally negotiated quota restrictions on trade in textiles and clothing between individual developed country importers and developing county exporters. Under the quota, the exporter is allowed to supply a certain volume of textile and clothing products up to a specified ceiling, and it is up to the exporter to allocate the quota allowance among its domestic producers". As a result of MFA, there was a major relocation of production where firms of developed countries shifted their interests to developing countries.

The wage structure in the garment industry, all over the world can explain the reason of this shift. According to Werner International (1998), hourly apparel labour cost (wages and fringe benefits, US $) of USA is 10.12 whereas it is only 0.30 in Bangladesh. Because of this difference, world apparel exports grew from a modest $3 billion in 1965, with developing countries accounting for just fourteen per cent of the total, to $119 billion in 1991, with developing countries supplying fifty nine per cent (Murray, 1995). In 1991 the number of employees in the readymade garment sector of Bangladesh was 582,000 and it rose to 1,404,000 in 1998 (Quddus & Rashid, 2000). Currently, the industry employs about three million workers of whom ninety per cent are women (Begum, 2001).

In Bangladesh, garment workers are primarily females who are employed for very low wages, thus enabling the products to be sold at a very modest price. Shirts produced in Bangladesh are sold in developed countries for five to ten

times their imported price (Custers, 1997). However, the working conditions are appalling for the workers. Not only do they receive low wages, they have an unhealthy workplace, lack of safety, no job security and forced labour (Rahman, 2004). A study by Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) finds that there is no law for the national minimum wage in Bangladesh garment industry and most of the garment factories do not follow the labour law and ILO conventions. The study further documents that there is no weekly holiday, gratuity or provident fund for the garment workers (SDNP, 2003). In most of the cases there are no transportation facilities, accommodation arrangement and provision for maternity leave. The study adds that the management has not provided doctors, first aid, sufficient light and ventilation and even pure drinking water and toilets for the workers. Most of the factories do not have day care centres.

Even with such appalling conditions, almost three million women are forced to accept garment work because of lack of any alternative, saturation in agricultural sector, lack of skills and education. Studies have shown that young, unmarried girls are usually employed as garment workers (Salway et al., 2003). Marriage being the most desired form of social stability, studies find that many unmarried garment workers save their earnings with a hope of paying the dowry towards their wedding (Amin, 1998).

During the period before and after the nine eleven (9/11), Bangladesh lost some garment orders resulting in a period of job loss for garment factory workers. There is no database that lists the fate of women who lost their jobs, but sociological studies based on a few sample observations found that as an alternative, former garment women had resorted to sex work and domestic work (Ward et al., 2004). Studies in other parts of the developing world have also found that 'For survival, many women must resort to earning a living as domestic or sex workers or run small businesses using microfinance' (Pyle & Ward, 2003).

Urban Slums of Dhaka

Dhaka is one of the fastest growing cities of the world. Its growth has been particularly rapid since 1972, after its transformation from a provincial capital to the national capital of the newly independent country, Bangladesh. The average annual growth rate of the city's population was six per cent during the 1974-2001 period (World Bank, 2007). Rural-urban migration remained the most dominant factor of the population growth, although natural increase has also been high.

Dhaka (or Greater Dhaka) is currently the eleventh most populous city in the world with over twelve million people and is projected to move up to the sixth position with 18.4 million people in 2010 (UN, World Urbanization Prospects, 2001).

A recent mapping of slums in Dhaka show that slums are located all around the city.

In comparison to other cities in the region (India), the proportion of slum dwellers in Dhaka is similar to Kolkata, less than that in Mumbai and greater than three other major Indian cities Delhi, Chennai and Bangalore (World Bank, 2007).

Islam (1985) found that slum dwellers in Dhaka city were paying higher rent per square meter than non-slum households, even though the latter usually benefited from a much better physical environment and level of services. As a consequence of tight budget constraints and relatively high rents, the poor in Dhaka usually live in very small accommodations (2 or 3 square meters per person). Currently thirty five per cent of the total inhabitants of Dhaka live in urban slums. The population density is 200 times higher than that of the rest of Bangladesh. One study finds ninety per cent of the people living in the slums having an income below the poverty line (CUS et al., 2006).

The government does not have any structured health facility for the poor, and all the indicators including Infant Mortality Rate, Total Fertility Rate are worse than the national estimates. Non Governmental Organisations are the primary providers of various services but none include housing (World Bank, 2007). However, their services are criticized to be selective (Jamil et al.,1993).

Sex Work

According to one study there are 100,000 sex workers in Bangladesh whose customers represent all socio-economic segments of society (MOHFW, 2001). Another study claims that there are 19 brothels and 15,000-30,000 sex workers in Dhaka alone (BSS, 2002). These figures are only rough estimates as the majority of sex work in Bangladesh is clandestine due to unfavourable legal discrimination against commercial sex workers (CSW).

Extreme poverty, environmental degradation, lack of skills and absence of gainful employment for females in the rural areas forces women to become sex workers in Bangladesh. Additionally, rural women who are promised lucrative jobs, often fall prey to vicious operating circles who traffic these women to various countries such as India and Pakistan, Middle East and compel them into performing sex work. Some legal agencies have been operating in bringing back trafficked women, as well as preventing such practice. There is no documentation as to what happens to the sex worker women once they are legally brought back from these countries. According to Jenkins (1999) 'These women are almost never able to marry and be accepted in the main society'.

There are two kinds of sex workers: the *formal* ones who are organised in brothels or residences or the *informal* ones who are the floating sex workers (working in streets, parks, hotels and other variable locations) (Dandona et al.,

2005). The formal sex workers work in brothels and other locations which are known to local people as 'red light areas' (Ex Tanbazar in Narayanganj, brothel in Dauladia). Locating sex workers in these areas is much easier than locating sex workers residing in urban slums of Dhaka who work clandestinely and their actual trade is unknown to the immediate members of the family or neighbourhood. Needless to mention that 'sex work' carries an element of stigma for the women who accept this profession. According to Ward et al. (2004), in Bangladesh, the sex workers' economic status ranged from floating street workers, hotel, residence and brothel based workers to highly paid entertainers.

In 1999, several brothels around Dhaka city were evicted, resulting in higher number of floating sex workers who were more visible in parks and street corners of Dhaka (BSS, 2002). Few studies have documented the exact path of evicted sex workers, it is predicted that many return to sex work.

Domestic Work

Female domestic workers are very common in Bangladesh. Not only do the urban elite employ young rural women as domestic help, the same is common even in the remotest rural areas. Families in abject poverty offer their daughters and other female members as domestic aid in other relatively more affluent households, thereby incurring some form of economic gain even at the subsistence level. The salaries of the domestic workers do not follow any wage market pattern and the workers are completely at the mercy of their employers. They have no weekly/annual leave, medical care and are often abused by the male employers. They suffer long working hours and there is no intervention by the government unless someone is killed/assaulted by the employer. In Dhaka city, an estimated half a million domestic workers are expected to be working (Akhter, 2006). The maids are migrant workers who arrive from the rural areas, driven by poverty and need to feed other members of the family. Their families are unable to visit them while they are working in the well to do homes, the employers take advantage of this situation and deprive the young girls of proper wages, food and free time. Many domestic workers had shifted to garment work for better wages and the freedom to live amongst peers (Islam, 1997). Hence, there has been evidence of shifting from domestic work to garment work. In fact, during the early days of the garment factory (during the late 80s), there was a marked scarcity of domestic workers as most young women from the rural areas preferred garment work to domestic work. Currently, entry to the garment industry has become more competitive than earlier. The networks that allowed new migrants to work in garment industries were mainly through sisters, cousins and other fictive ties from their neighbourhood (Opel, 2000). Young girls who did

not have such networks were sometimes forced to work as domestic worker at first.

Currently, however, some negative aspects of the garment industry have deterred women from taking up garment industry jobs. The lack of fire escape and other safety regulations in the garment industry had caused many deaths causing many parents from the rural areas to be cautious about garment factory work for their wards. Moreover, some cases of sexual harassment, irregularity of pay and tenuous working conditions have prompted another group of workers to prefer domestic work over garment work.

One study documents that among the working women in the urban slums of Dhaka, thirty per cent work as domestic workers and twenty seven per cent as garment worker (Salway et al., 1998).

Housewife

Couples in rural Bangladesh who live in abject poverty are often forced to leave their homesteads and arrive in the capital Dhaka in search of jobs. Although, marriage as a social contract means that the husband provides for all expenses, in real life the picture is quite different for women living in the urban slums. For majority of these women, their husbands have poor education, inadequate income from odd jobs, lack of job security, ill health and no scope of improvements in their current positions. One aggregate comment from the Salway et al. (2005) fieldwork summarizes the role of women in the urban slums 'Women want to live under the shade (security) of a man. In this way, other men cannot harass her. Though in fact, most of the women feed their husband with their own earnings'. Studies have noted that 'traditional' roles of patriarchy are more relaxed in the urban slums and women are more likely to seek employment for cash. In one study, Salway et al. (1998) found forty- four per cent women in the urban slums of Dhaka working for a living. In another study in the urban slums of Dhaka, thirty- three per cent women were found to work for a living (Kamal & Rashid,1999). However, women's work is considered supplementary and when better times prevail, women are usually taken off from work (Salway et al., 2005). A considerable proportion of women are therefore not working and staying home as housewives.

The slum women suffer from great marital instability (Salway et al., 2005; Wood & Salway, 2001). In many cases, men desert their wives and leave them to fend for themselves along with their children. The government does not provide any safety net for such single/divorced/separated/widowed women and they have a particularly difficult plight. In many situations, the deserted women look for job openings to provide for themselves and their dependants. Additionally, women from stable unions also seek jobs to supplement their income.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study was collected in the urban slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh during a period of one and half years starting June 2004 and ending December 2005. It was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF SES-0243215). The study was designed to collect longitudinal data from the respondents every six months to observe the post- MFA effects on women workers.

A total of 300 women were followed up for a period of one and half years. They were equally divided among four employment categories viz sex work, garment work, domestic work and housewives. The latter was used as a reference category of women who, at the beginning of the study, did not work for cash. In each round, along with their categories women were asked questions on their socio-economic and demographic correlates.

From a previous study, conducted by Ward et al. (2004), former sex workers were recruited as field workers for the *sex worker group*. The field workers identified both floating and non floating sex workers who were personally known to them from their experience in this area. According to Ward et al. (2004) 'Floating sex workers are referred to women who contacted their work in the streets, parks and public places of Dhaka rather than their homes, residences or brothels'. Equal number of women were chosen from ages 15-19, 20-24 and 25 years and older.

For *garment factory workers*, the Wahab colony (a slum in Dhaka) was used as a base and snowball method was used to locate seventy five garment factory workers. The same age scheme was followed to have equal number of respondents from ages 15-19, 20-24 and 25 and above.

For *domestic workers*, the study took the help of the list of members of Shoishob, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has organized domestic workers.

The domestic workers come from diverse backgrounds in Dhaka, which provides heterogeneity to the sample. The same age stratification was followed for this group.

For *housewives*, another slum Korail was chosen as the main population. This is a slum located in a twelve acre area in north central Dhaka in Ward 19, Gulshan Thana. Korail is a relatively stable but growing slum of 13,000 households, a total population of 65,000 people consisting of 33,800 females and 31,200 males. The first author of this paper had already established some baseline research in this slum (Kamal & Rashid,1999). Random sampling was utilized to locate

households and women were sampled according to the age stratification mentioned above.

The field office was based in Dhaka in one of the premises of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). For each category of the respondent three female field workers were recruited. Each field worker had twenty-five women in her group. Each study group was headed by a supervisor (four in total). The field workers were responsible for contacting the respondents, obtaining data for structured questionnaire as well as detailed qualitative study including life cycle analysis. The supervisors aided their field workers with filling in the questionnaire, case studies, locating respondents when they moved residences, accompanying field workers during untimely interviews at night or in the early mornings or in unusual settings including hotels and park corners where sex trade is common. The supervisors and field workers held weekly debriefing meetings with PI and co- PI and discussed the field work at every stage. The quantitative data was entered into the computer using the assistance of a computer operator. A research assistant oversaw the entire research and was responsible for data entry, cleaning, editing etc. The statistical analysis of the data was conducted in the Dept of Statistical Science, University College London (UCL), UK during the period Jan-March'08.

Quantitative Methods

The data collected from four rounds of survey, recorded three changes in job category. This study, has used a logistic regression model that relates the probability of a change in job from period j to j+1 for the i^{th} person as a function of explanatory variables x_{1ij}, etc. measured at period j and expressed as

$$\text{Log}\,(p_{ij}/1\text{-}p_{ij})=\beta_0+\beta_1 x_{1ij}+\ldots$$

Where p_ij is the probability of a change in job between periods j and j+1 for individual i, where i=1,2,3... 300 and j=1,2,3

X_{ij} is the ith explanatory variable in the j the round

β_i= is the regression coefficient of the i^{th} explanatory variable.

The change of 300 respondents were recorded three times, resulting in a total of 900 observations. The sex worker group made no changes during this period and were excluded from the quantitative analysis, resulting in 675 observations. Out of this sixteen women were lost to the study and eleven women did not have

complete information, resulting in a total of 648 observations for the final analysis. The model was adjusted for repeated measures using robust standard error which allows for estimation of cluster data. This method uses a sandwich estimator of variance, which has a long tradition of being used in the survey literature (Huber, 1967; White, 1980).

Firstly, each explanatory variable was tested in a univariate logistic regression model. The outcome variable was binary, change in category (coded 1 if yes, 0 otherwise). Those variables which were significant (p value less than equal to twenty per cent) were retained as independent predictor variables for the final logistic regression model. These variables were used as independent predictors to model the change in category using binary logistic regression. Forward selection method was employed to choose variables for the final regression model.

Separate files were constructed for the different job categories to investigate whether there were other variables associated with category change in specific groups. Since the sex worker group had recorded no changes in category, there were three regression results for domestic maids, housewives and garment workers. This has resulted in very small number of observations for each group. Several models were investigated, all of which contained (i) type of worker (ii) *one* other variable due to sample size constraints. The additional predictor that most improved the model was then included in the final model. The results of the final models are presented in Table IV.

STUDY VARIABLES

Dependent Variable

In this article, the main variable of interest is the change in job category experienced by the women during the period of the survey. There are four observations in this study, recorded over a period of two years, allowing us to study three changes in category. For the sex worker group no changes were recorded. During this period, no sex worker left their trade and neither did any woman from this study enter the sex trade. For other categories, the changes are discussed below in a chronological order.

Table I. Distribution of Changes in Job Category of Women Workers from the Three Rounds of Survey June 2004 –December 2005, Bangladesh

ROUND 1	**G**	**D**	**H**	**O**
Garment	-	-	-	3
Domestic	-	-	8	-
Housewife	-	1	-	1
ROUND 2				
Garment	3	-	-	1
Domestic	1	-	9	2
Housewife	1	2	-	2
ROUND 3				
Garment	-	-	-	1
Domestic	1	-	9	2
Housewife	1	2	-	2

"O" stands for others and includes categories such as embroidery work, packet making, cleaner and small trade.

Independent Variables

Several individual level independent variables were investigated in this study as correlates of change in category. They include the woman's age, education, initial category of occupation according to the first round of survey, marital status, husband's education, total household income and number of household members.

Additional variables, which are termed 'background variables' for this study are enumerated below with some rationale of being chosen as correlates of change in this study.

Status of Migration

The length of stay in the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka is an important differential of change in category. It is posited that women who have lived in the capital for greater length of time have more networks, more information about possible job availability and are more likely to have more changes in categories (Opel, 2000). Women who have recently migrated from rural areas are more helpless and lack negotiating skills as well as any capital and may be less likely to change categories (ibid). In the urban slums of India, Mitra (2005) finds that 'With a rise in the duration of migration, the probability of getting employment in manufacturing and repairing increases'. In this study, status of migration is therefore considered to be a plausible predictor of change.

Father/ Mother's Educational Level

Father/mother's educational level is considered a differential of 'change of category'. The parent's educational level here is a proxy for her socio-economic condition. It is posited that when the father/mother's educational level is high, his socio-economic condition is better and his daughter is in a better position to change categories. Women whose father/mother have low levels of education are less likely to change categories as they are unable to receive any parental support during the transitory phase of giving up one job and looking for another, or getting married by fulfilling dowry requirement of the bridegroom.

Number of Brothers

In Bangladesh, where patriarchal society prevails, in the absence of parental support (or over and above), brothers are expected to provide for their sisters. The natal ties are very important for women living in the urban slums (Salway et al., 2005). Many women are partially supported by their brother's economic contribution. The presence of a brother(s) implies some form of economic support for the woman. Thus, this variable is therefore considered as a correlate of category change.

Ownership of Land

Women who own land in their native village or elsewhere are in a more advantageous position, compared to those who do not own land. Income from their land enables them to have more bargaining power in life and they may be more likely to change categories because they are able to sustain themselves through the transition/or pay for the dowry for marriage. Thus, this variable is considered a predictor of change in category.

Round of Survey

This study started in June 2004 and ended December 2005. The MFA ended in December 2004. Thus the 'round of survey' is a very important correlate of category change. In the first round, the workers are expected to be in their respective categories. As the MFA ended December 2004, the next two rounds of survey were conducted for this study. The effect of post MFA was expected to be captured in the second and third round of the survey. Thus this variable is an important determinant of change of category.

PROFILE OF THE STUDY RESPONDENTS

In this study there were 300 respondents, seventy five each from garment work, sex work, domestic work and housewives who were followed over a period of eighteen months starting June 2004. The independent variables and their

frequencies are presented in Table II, according to the study group to which they belong.

Table II. Distribution of Respondents According to Selected Individual-level Variables

Variable	Garment Work	Sex Work	Domestic	Housewife	P value
Age of Woman (years)					
≤ 19	28(37.3)	25(33.3)	25(33.3)	25(33.3)	
20-24	24(32.0)	25(33.3)	25(33.3)	25(33.3)	
25-29	5(6.7)	19(25.3)	5(6.7)	5(6.7)	
30-34	9(12)	5(6.7)	10(13.3)	4(5.3)	
35+	9(12)	1(1.3)	10(13.3)	16(21.3)	<.001
Marital Status					
Unmarried	31(41.3)	32(42.7)	5(6.7)	0	
Currently Married	32(42.7)	20(26.7)	55(73.3)	74(98.7)	
Currently Single	12(16.0)	23(30.7)	15(20)	1(1.3)	<.001
No. of Living Brothers					
None	9(12.0)	14(18.7)	10((13.3)	9(12.0)	
1	22(29.3)	21(28.0)	20(26.7)	23(30.7)	
2	23(30.7)	22(29.3)	15(20.0)	22(29.3)	
3 or more	21((28.0)	16(21.3)	30(40)	21(28.0)	<.001
Total Household Income in Taka					
None	1(1.3)	4(5.3)	0(0)	75(100)	
<361	15(20.0)	0(0.0)	55(73.3)	0	
362-770	53(70.7)	4(5.3)	20(26.7)	0	
771+	6(8.0)	67(89.3)	0(0.0)	0	<.001
Status of Migration					
Lived Here	23(10.5)	84(37.3)	1(0.5)	17(7.1)	
1-10 Months	72(32.9)	30(13.3)	69(36.3)	78(32.6)	
≥ 11 Months	124(56.2)	111(49.3)	120(63.2)	144(60.3)	<.001

No of Household Members					
None	4(5.3)	25(33.3)	4(5.3)	1(1.3)	
1	16(21.3)	16(21.3)	26(34.7)	23(30.7)	
2	19(25.3)	16(21.3)	19(25.3)	15(20.0)	
3	19(25.3)	12(16.0)	9(12.0)	9(12.0)	
4	17(22.7)	12(16.0)	17(22.7)	27(36.0)	
5 or more	19(25.3)	6(8.0)			<.001
Respondent's Education					
None	21(28.0)	7(9.3)	60(80.0)	47(45.0)	
Primary	41(54.7)	28(37.3)	14(18.7)	107(35.7)	
Post Primary	13(17.3)	40(53.3)	1(1.3)	58(19.3)	<.001
Ownership of Land					
Yes	23(30.7)	18(24.0)	38(50.7)	22(29.3)	
No	12(16.0)	8(10.7)	27(36.0)	53(70.7)	<.001
Husband's Education					
Primary	16(7.3)	9(4.0)	35(18.4)	62(25.9)	
Post primary	64(29.2)	57(25.3)	25(13.2)	63(26.4)	<.001
Father's Education					
None	26(37.3)	14(18.7)	51(68.0)	36(43.0)	
Primary	21(28.0)	13(17.3)	10(13.3)	11(14.7)	
Post Primary	25(33.3)	16(21.3)	4(5.3)	5(6.7)	
Father not Alive/Missing	9(12.0)	24(32.0)	10(13.3)	23(22.0)	<.001
Mother's Education					
None	53(70.7)	23(30.7)	69(92.0)	58(77.3)	
Primary	10(13.3)	31(41.3)	1(1.3)	5(6.7)	
Post Primary	6(8.0)	8910.7)	1(1.3)	3(4.0)	
Mother not Alive/Missing	6(8.0)	13(17.3)	4(5.3)	9(12.0)	<.001

The age distribution is similar for garment workers, domestic workers and housewives, clustering more (66%) towards ages below 19 and 20-24. For the sex workers, there is a markedly low frequency in ages 30-34 and 35 and above (8%), while the age group 25-29 has higher frequencies compared to other groups.

For educational attainment too, the sex workers differ markedly from the other groups. Table II shows that, compared to other groups, sex worker category have higher percentages of women with both primary (37.3%) and post primary education (53.3%). The garment workers have highest number of women who have primary education (54%), while the domestic worker group has the highest number of women with no education (80%). Compared to the housewife category (62.7%) the sex workers have the lowest percentages of women with no education at all (9.3%).

With respect to marital status, the three categories of women were compared with housewives, where by definition all women were married. Among garment workers, there were almost equal percentages of unmarried and married workers. Among the sex worker group, we observed the highest number of unmarried workers (42.7%), while among the domestic worker group there were the highest number of married workers (73.3%). Highest number of 'currently single' women were also found in the sex worker group (30.7%). 'Currently single' category includes ever -married women who are divorced, widowed, abandoned.

Regarding number of members in their current household, this study finds that the highest percentages of women who have a single member household are the sex workers (33%). This group also has the lowest percentages of women with more than five members in the household (8%). 'More than five household members' was higher in the garment workers group (25.3%), although the reference group of housewives have the highest amongst all (36%). Single member households are few both among domestic workers and garment workers (5.3%). On the average the average size of a household for this group of women in the study is three.

RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

The 300 hundred women were observed in four surveys. Three records for change were available from the four rounds of survey. This gave us 900 observations to record if any change had occurred in the job situation, compared to their status at previous round. The merged file thus started with 900 observations. Bivariate table showed that the sex worker category made no changes during these three rounds. They were excluded from this analysis and we

had 675 observations. As mentioned earlier, due to lack of information, twenty-seven observations had to be deleted. The final model consists of 648 observations.

The variables tested in univariate logistic regression models as predictors of change in category were :age, education, initial category, total income, number of household members, land ownership, has a brother, father's education, mother's education, round of the survey and marital status. Variables found to be significant at the twenty per cent level of significance were: round of the survey, initial category, total income, land ownership and mother's education.

Multivariate Analysis

The final parsimonious model presented in Table III finds that the initial category, total income and round of survey, are significant predictors of change in category.

Table III. Logistic Regression of Change in Category, All Women Combined (Except Sex Worker), Bangladesh 2004-5.

Variable	Odds Ratio	CI	P value
Initial category			
Housewife[a]	1		
Garment	0.13	0.05,0.35	
Housemaid	0.58	0.23,1.49	<.001
Round of Survey			
First[a]	1		
Second	1.92	0.92,4.02	
Third	2.89	1.47,5.70	<.001
Total HH Income			
None[a]	1		
Below 1400	8.18	2.47,27.03	
1400-2100	7.27	2.02,23.99	
Above 2100	24.9	3.74,166.63	.007
Total N=648			

Final Model

From the model, one can find that compared to housewives, garment workers are less likely to change categories. They have an estimated 87% (95% CI: 0.1, 0.4) lower odds of changing category. Regarding changing category, the domestic maids did not show significant difference from housewives.

Compared to the first round of the survey, women were more likely to change category in the third round of the survey, estimated log odds was 2.9 (95% CI: 0.5, 5.7). However, women interviewed in the second round did not have significant difference from the first round.

Compared to women who had no income, those who had total household income below Taka 1400 (USD 20) were more likely to change categories. The estimated log odds was 8.2 (95% CI: 2.5, 27.0). For those whose total income was between Taka 1400 and 2100 (USD 20-30), the estimated log odds were higher than those with no income, (OR=7.3, 95% CI: 2.0, 24.0). In this model, compared to women who had no income, women who had total income above Taka 2100 (USD 30+) had the highest estimated log odds of changing categories (OR= 24.9, 95% CI: 3.7, 166.6).

Domestic Workers

There were a total of 190 women with complete information in this category. Out of them only thirty-five category changes were recorded. Each variable was evaluated separately to see if it had a statistically significant association with outcome variable in a logistic regression model. Due to the small sample size and the relatively few category changes, multivariate models were not considered. Two variables were significant at the 5% level and one at 10% level. These are 'father's education', 'mother's education' and 'round of survey'. In Table IV we find that compared to women whose fathers have no education, women whose fathers have post primary education have an estimated 4.7 (95% CI: 2.1, 10.9) times higher odds of changing categories. The model also finds that women whose fathers have primary education have an odds ratio nearly equal to one and the confidence interval (0.4, 2.8) includes one.

Compared to women with mothers having no education, those with both primary (OR=4.6, 95% CI: 3.2, 6.6) and secondary education (OR=4.6, 95% CI: 3.2, 6.6) have higher odds of category change and the results are significant at the five per cent level. For the variable 'round of survey' the results are significant at the ten per cent level . Compared to women in the first round, those in the second round have 2.5 times higher odds of change (95% CI: 0.9, 6.4) to women in the first round those in the third round have 2.6 times higher odds of change (95% CI: 1.9, 7.2).

Table IV. Logistic Regression of Change in Category (Individual Models), Bangladesh 2004-5

Variable	Odds Ratio	CI	P value
Domestic workers N=190			
Father's Education			
None[a]	1.0		
Primary	1.1	0.4, 2.8	
Higher	4.7	2.1, 10.9	<.05
Mother's Education			
None	1.00		
Primary	4.6	3.2, 6.6	
Higher	4.6	3.2, 6.6	<.05
Round of Survey			
First	1.0		
Second	2.5	0.9, 6.4	
Third	2.6	0.9, 7.2	<.10
Housewives N=239			
Total Income			
Below 1400[a]	1.0		
1400-2100	16.3	5.4, 49.4	
2100+	8.2	1.6, 41.5	<.001
Garment Workers N=219			
Education			
None[a]	1.0		
Primary	1.7	0.3, 8.5	
Post Primary	5.7	0.9, 33.4	<.10

Housewives

In this category there were 239 women, and 20 category changes were recorded. Once again, due to the small sample size and the relatively few category changes, multivariate models were not considered. Only one variable was found to be statistically significant at the five per cent level. This was 'total household income of the woman'.

The models are presented in Table IV compared to women who had the lowest levels of income (Below USD 20), those with income (between USD 20 and 30) had an estimated 16.3 (95% CI:5.4, 49.4) times higher odds of category change. Additionally, those with income above USD 30 had an estimated 8.2 (95% CI: 1.6, 41.5) times higher odds of changing category.

Garment Workers

In this category there were a total of 219 (after deleting those who were lost to the study) women and only twelve category changes were recorded. Each variable was evaluated separately to see if it had a statistically significant association with the outcome in a logistic regression model. Due to the small sample size and relatively few category changes, multivariate models were not considered. Only one variable was found to be significant at the ten per cent level, none being significant at the five per cent. This was the educational level of the woman. The model presented in Table IV finds that compared to women with no education, those with higher than primary education had 5.7 (95% CI: 0.9, 33.4) times higher odds of category change. For the other group who had some education the odds ratio is near one and the confidence interval includes one (95% CI: 0.3, 8.5).

DISCUSSION

This study finds that contrary to what had been posited, the garment workers had not made significant changes during the period of study. Out of seventy five workers, only five had shifted to other categories. In fact, the study finds that, compared to the housewives, the garment workers are less likely to change categories. Bangladesh garment industry fared well after the MFA and very few factories had to be laid off. According to Faiz (2006), one of the reasons was that 'The competitive position of China became so important that the developed countries decided, soon after the official phasing out of MFA, to use safeguard measures to continue to impose some restrictive quota on their imports until the end of 2008'. Additionally, in the post MFA period Bangladesh was able to increase exports. This was mainly due to the knitwear industry, exports of which increased by about twenty seven per cent during the same period, while that of woven garments slightly decreased (ibid). Many factories shifted to knitwear and did not need to lay off their workers. Thus, in this study, following post MFA the researchers do not observe a large exodus of former garment workers shifting to either sex work, domestic work or housewives.

In this study, among three hundred women, one fourth were from sex worker category. During the two year period of this survey, not a single change was observed in this group. The study finds that among the study groups, the 'sex worker' group has the highest percentage of women with education above primary level and highest household income. Highest household income for this group is plausible and has been found in other studies (Yang & Xia, 2006). About their educational levels being higher than other study groups, two explanations maybe offered. Firstly, in Bangladesh, since 1991 girl's education has been made free for all and has resulted in higher literacy rates among females as a whole. One study conducted in 1999 had found eighty-five per cent illiterate women in

the brothels of Bangladesh as compared to the twenty one per cent in the current study (Jenkins, 1999). This study was conducted in 2004/2005 and maybe reflecting the higher levels of enrolment of women in general (during this period adult literacy has risen from thirty- eight per cent to forty-one per cent, but primary school enrolment of females compared to males has been 101%). Such instances have been found in a study conducted in Ghana where forty four per cent of the respondents (sex workers) had primary education and the rest had post primary education (Adu-Oppong et al., 2007). Secondly, the respondents included here were selected by the field workers who were erstwhile sex workers with post primary education (the criteria was necessary for conducting the study) and may have been biased by their known associates who are from a more educated group than those in general.

Ward et al. (2004) had remarked in their paper that for this group change of profession is very difficult as they suffer a social stigma and the earnings from other sources are nowhere near what they earn as a sex worker. For example, *Rani (28) became a sex worker from age 11, because she was born to one. She met Sumon and she decided to get married and leave sex work. She moved to a rented premise in the slums of Dhaka, but once her daughter was born, Sumon left her. She was so weak that she could not go out to work, she borrowed money from her neighbours and survived a few days. Then she looked for some job so that she could raise her daughter as a normal human being, she tried domestic work, but the income was not sufficient. Not finding any other alternative, she went back to prostitution.*

However, about the shift to sex work, there is one word of caution, that in case someone had joined the sex trade it would be very difficult to ascertain as the respondent may not willingly provide this information. In this study, the field workers for the original 'sex worker' group were former sex worker themselves. They had privy knowledge of who were in this trade. The sampled sex workers resided in different urban slums, they were not from a single brothel, as has been the case of other studies on sex workers (Jenkins & Rahman, 2002). Thus, the field workers in this research who were employed for this group were able to trace the sex workers for the period of two years. If any respondent (from garment work or other category) joined the sex trade in some other location of the country, which is not within the purview of our field workers, they may have gone unnoticed. However, in this study almost ninety-five per cent of the garment workers remained in their jobs from the beginning until the end. Hence, the possibility of misclassification is minimal.

In view of no change being recorded in this group, they were excluded from the analysis and the remaining analysis pertains to the two groups only viz garment worker, domestic help, with reference to housewives.

The study (excluding sex workers) finds that the women with the lowest levels of total household income are less likely to change categories, while women with higher total household income are more likely to change. It is possible that women from the latter group have some economic ability to sustain themselves during the period of change and thus more bargaining power compared to their counterparts. One study conducted in the urban slums of Dhaka, finds that sixty three per cent of the migrants had no income immediately before their migration from rural areas (Opel, 2000). 'This suggests that migrant people cannot afford to bring with them any financial capital to invest in the urban market' (ibid). In this study, those with lowest total household income would be synonymous to this group and unable to take the risks of changing categories (either seek alternative job or get married by paying dowry). Moreover, the networking which is needed to obtain information about openings in the labour market can only be developed after a sufficient period of time has been spent in the city . Opel (2000) comments about workers in the urban slums of Bangladesh that 'Those who are rich in social relations are also rich in information and gain opportunities in the labour market'. Mitra (2005) writes in the context of women workers in India 'Constrained choice, limited contacts of women and physical segmentation of the labour market perpetuate forces that entrap women workers in a low-income situation'. The findings from this study also support the same.

The study finds that women are more likely to change categories during the last round of the survey, which means that for the period June 2004 to June 2005 there were few changes and the changes mainly occurred during June 2005 to December 2005. This also indicates that the changes may not be due to the post MFA effect which should have been evident in the first or second round of the study. This finding also supports the statement that the 'Bangladesh garment industry fared well after the post MFA'.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The main objective of this paper was to follow the garment workers through the period of phasing out of the MFA. It was posited on the basis of earlier qualitative research that once they were jobless, they were likely to become domestic workers, sex workers or housewives. With this hypothesis in mind, equal numbers of sex workers, domestic workers and housewives were also followed, not only to observe job change among garment workers but also to observe the change of women from one category to another.

The study finds that out of the total 219 garment workers who were followed over a period of two years (starting number was 225 and 6 women were lost to the

study), only twelve women had made any change. None of them shifted to sex work, although some shifted to housewife or domestic worker category.

Because of the phasing out of MFA, it was predicted that around 1.3 million garment workers would lose their jobs. This study finds that only five percent of the observed garment workers left their jobs for various reasons and they were not laid off. This finding supports the fact that Bangladesh garment industry did not suffer after the post MFA. In fact, it matches the overall countrywide picture where none of the garment factory workers had to be laid off. Many factories shifted to knitwear which increased production and fared better after phasing out of MFA. Additionally, in the international scene, fearing the aggressiveness of China as a garment producing country, some sanctions were still imposed on them until 2008. Thus, for Bangladesh, the apprehension of thirteen per cent unemployment proved wrong and no garment worker was forced to lose job or submit to abject poverty.

Having established the fact that Bangladesh fared well in the post MFA situation and garment factory workers were not laid off in huge numbers, we now turn to the situation of women's work and livelihood in Bangladesh. This study finds that the sex worker category has the highest number of women with primary and post primary education. This may indicate scarcity of employment for women with some education. Amin et al. (1998) find that in the garment factories, at the entry point there is no gain for literate women over illiterate ones. Since garment work does not give an edge to literate women over illiterate ones, it prefers unmarried young women and requires networks for entry into one, this possibility may be ruled out for those who seek higher wages, have some form of education and have no network with other garment factory workers.

For example, in her native village of Chapainawabganj Anowara (30) became a widow with two small children. She came to Dhaka city and arrived at Mohakhali bus stand where she was just standing by when the police started rounding up street sex workers and she happened to be one of the bystanders. In the prison, her only friends were the fellow street workers and upon release from jail (after eight months) she looked for a job. She had completed primary education but did not find a suitable job. She took the help of her friends from jail and became a sex worker. She sends her money to her mother to support the two sons, but does not reveal her work to anyone.

This case study reveals the vulnerability of Bangladeshi women, faced with poverty, widowhood, lack of social security benefits or any kind of organised form of recruitment for factory jobs.

This study recommends that policy makers should make provisions for vocational training of currently jobless rural women. Currently the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturer and Exporter's Association (BGMEA) has set up some centres in various districts of Bangladesh, where they are providing skill

development training to women. These efforts which involve training of only 600 (per month) women for joining garment industry per year, is only a miniscule contribution to the future predicted labour force (predicted need per month 25,000 workers). These efforts need to be replicated many times and in many remote locations of Bangladesh, so that the number of skilled workers can rise and women can get gainful employment. Increase in vocational training for garment work or otherwise will also work towards reducing the number of women joining sex work or domestic work.

In the next decade, Bangladesh will experience a huge growth in the number of women entering the work force. This study recommends that apart from garment sector, the policy makers should concentrate on the expansion of the backward linkages (to the garment industry) which could also accommodate women workers with low levels of education and vocational training (Hate et al., 2005). Additionally, there should be an increased investment in the growth of other industries. Some of the areas that hold potential for strengthening Dhaka's labour market include food processing, assembly industries such as electronic goods, toys, construction, etc. and in the services sector, the development of data processing and telecommunication both for domestic and export markets (World Bank, 2007).

The study finds that currently single women' meaning divorced, separated or widowed are more likely to join the sex trade. The study recommends expansion of the safety net to provide 'benefits' for women under this category. Currently the new government has announced several schemes under which garment workers will be getting some food subsidies. These schemes cover a very small percentage of the population and the amount provided is scanty. The policy makers may consider housing and benefit schemes targeted towards single mothers with small children (below five) and more comprehensive safety networks covering all geographical locations of Bangladesh.

All the findings from this study have implications at the local, national and global level for countries and regions contesting with changing trade and production regimes, development strategies and socio-economic lives of men and women. The lesson from the experience of Bangladesh after post MFA is very positive. Other countries facing similar situations may initiate diversifying their production sector at an early stage so that the change in global restructuring does not have an effect on the lives of women workers.

Strengthening skill development and educational skills for both men and women, providing social security to destitute women and single mothers can be a common recommendation for women of the region where low education, poverty and low opportunities compel women to work in the informal sector and experience bitter discrimination in wages as well as face unemployment when economic restructuring takes place.

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