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Social Capital and its Transformative Influence in Relation to Violent Conflicts: An Interpretative Study on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) have been witnessing recurring clashes between the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and the Bengali Settlers (BSs) over a long period of time. However, being a relatively new term, social capital provides a critical lens through which this paper might evaluate nature of violent conflicts in the CHTs. A thorough consideration of the notion of social capital and its application to a conflict analysis allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how violent conflict occurs and impacts on social cohesion in the region. The consequence is twofold: first, a better knowledge of how violent conflicts allows for the creation of conflict prevention techniques that not only reduce the chances of violent conflicts but also make use of existing networks to boost social capital. Second, a thorough grasp of social capital that aids in the planning and implementation of post-conflict reconstruction. This study aims to examine the literature on social capital and conflicts, as well as to present a critical analysis of how social capital influences to violent conflicts in CHTs.

Keywords: Bengali settlers, Chittagong hill tracts, Indigenous peoples, Social capital, and Violent conflicts.

INTRODUCTION:

Some new studies on the effects of violence and conflicts on social capital have emerged as researchers have understood the importance of social capital; however they have unfortunately produced inconsistent results. The disparity stems mostly from discrepancies in social capital measurement, a lack of distinction between bonding and bridging, and an ambiguous conflict measurement variable. In this paper, we attempt to develop a notion “the higher the social capital, the lower the violent conflicts and the lower the social capital, the higher the violent conflicts” and argue that social capital has a transformative influence in relation to the violent conflicts. The absence of social capital between the IPs and BSs is one of the major reasons behind the

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violent clashes. Practically, higher level of social capital among the Indigenous groups helps themselves to experience lower number of conflicts. The qualitative data will be organized chronologically with the references of the research topic. The strategy is to focus on the theoretical propositions that led to the case study which influences the design, literature review, the initial idea of thesis, the sort of evidences investigated and data assembled. Ethnic identity is one of the key sources of ongoing conflicts in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), which is home to 13 different indigenous ethnic groups (Rahman, 2021).

The CHT crisis has been one of the major governance challenges in Bangladesh since its inception. It

is a struggle over identity, ethnicity, language, land, and many other issues, as well as a conflict among Bangladesh's Hill people, government and Bengali settlers (Willem van Schendel, 2000). Though the Awami League government (2006-2011) attempted to end the issue through a peace pact in 1997, then it was expected that the violent conflicts in the CHTs would be permanently stopped, but it has not yet ended. Because of its top-down orientation and insufficient execution by the central government made in the peace accord in 1997, the peace pact failed to de-escalate the conflict. Violence is likely to continue till today due to lack of strong social capital and a comprehensive solution to the situation (Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, CHT, 1997).

Some new studies on the effects of violence and conflict on social capital have emerged as researchers have understood the importance of social capital; however they have unfortunately produced inconsistent results. The disparity stems mostly from discrepancies in social capital measurement, a lack of distinction between bonding and bridging, and an ambiguous conflict measurement variable. The goal of this study is to examine the literature on social capital and conflict, as well as to present a critical analysis of how social capital influences its link to violent conflicts in CHT. The literature on social capital is limited, because the area is still relatively young, and the arguments of the existing research have produced contradictory results. Quite interestingly, some studies have found that exposure to violence and conflict enhances social capital, whereas others have found a negative causal link. These inconsistencies exist due to discrepancies in how social capital is measured, as well as other obstacles to the conflict variable's independence. Putnam, (1993), the most well-known academic writing on social capital, defined it as "the qualities of social organization such as networks, norms, and trust that allow coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." Understanding interpersonal ties, Mark S. Granovetter, (1973) offers a vital part of social capital theory by analyzing social ties which is essential for understanding sociological macro phenomena like diffusion, social mobility, political organizations, and societal cohesiveness. Regarding the associational membership and the declining self-reported trust, De Luca and , (2011) however highlights that people are too distracted with the situation around conflict to participate in specific groups, UniversePG | www.universepg.com

which diminishes peace-building in conflict-affected areas. Colletta and Culler, (2000) use two comparative case studies to show that violence weakens social capital and the social fabric of a community, divides community members, undermines interpersonal trust and collective action, destroys norms and values, and can lead to more communal adversity, if not addressed. With some qualitative evidences Pinchotti and Verwimp, (2007) present a similar hypothesis and echo the same findings. As the term 'violence', Cramer, (2006) notes that this damages social creativity. While conflict may result in societal reform, it may also contribute to the bonding of social capital. Whitt and Wilson, (2007) conducted experimental games to see if ethnic bias has an impact on fairness beliefs. They discover that while there is preferential treatment for groups, the external bias is not as significant as projected, but there is still a fairness norm. Added to that, individuals who have been exposed to conflicts are more altruistic toward their neighbors, risk seeking, and impatient (Voors *et al.*, 2012). The literature on social capital and its relationship to the violent conflict in the CHT is extremely scarce, with social capital in the CHT being close to nil.

There are some well-known academics who have written about the CHTs. According to Mohsin, (2003) polarization between hill people and Bengali settlers has worsened since the 1997 peace pact. Several acts of violence have occurred between the two communities, ranging from land grabbing to rape. Both communities consider one other as their main enemy and there is no reciprocal relationship or trust between them. At global scale, it is reported many industrialized and developing countries with pluralistic social orders with multiple races, religions, languages, and cultures (Barua, 2001). The prevalence of ethnic minorities with unique religious, linguistic, and cultural identities in Bangladesh is the root cause of the violent conflicts. In a book, Ton Bleie, (2006) portrays the historical and present lives of indigenous peoples of the CHTs, as well as their human rights condition. She represents an attempt to include the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples into a broader human rights framework with a social capital analysis of how social relationships affect a wide range of social disputes (Ton Bleie, 2006). Several studies have examined how exposure to violence and traumatic experiences can alter an individual's choices and

behavior, frequently with long-term consequences. This research states that individuals' and communities' levels of social capital are likely to change as a result of violence and conflict; individuals experience conflict differently and thus their levels of social capital are likely to change; social capital within a community affected by violence and conflict is also likely to change.

METHODOLOGY:

This is a qualitative research based on secondary data. The conceptual framework is tested on CHTs as a particular case for analyzing the existing knowledge of the same topic. The data related to social capital and violent conflict of CHTs were collected from 1998 to 2020. To investigate the social capital and its transformative influence to violent conflict in the case of CHTs, related data were collected from journals, newspapers, research institutions and websites. Published reports and magazines of different Indigenous forums, reports of different governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental and international organizations were also collected.

Three types of data were collected and analyzed which are (a) related to violent conflicts between the Indigenous Communities and Bengali Settlers, (b) related to the developmental injustice and (c) related to violence and injustice against women by the Bengali Settlers. Multiple sources of information were used to collect and analyze data which helps to improve the reliability and validity of the findings.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data two questions were specifically investigated, why there is no social capital and how they lead to so much conflict in the research area. The defining variables related to social capital and violent conflicts are given below:

Social Capital in CHTs

Society's density and nature of organizations and networks, member's level of commitment to maintain a stable society and responsibilities to those commitments. Threenotions in this study connected to social capital in CHTs is measured, such as social responsibility, social initiative, and social capital. *Social Responsibility*- As a self-defense mechanism and a society's ability to address socioeconomic inequities and imbalances. *Social Initiative*- The potential of society to facilitate economic growth and development to manage a balanced society.

Violent Conflict in CHTs

This study considers the three indicators of violent conflicts in CHTs, such as firstly, *effects on population*-total number of casualties, either physically or mentally incapacitated; the extent to which violence has become a way of life and a means of problem-solving; the number of members of one's family who are members of the local militia; the number of persons who fled the village because of violent conflict; changes in the population's makeup and size. Secondly, *physical Damage*- the extent to which communities have been destroyed and infrastructure has been damaged. Thirdly, *nature of conflicts* the length and kinds of conflict.

Relationships between Social Capital and Violent Conflicts in CHTs

It is not easy to categorize and analyze social capital because of so many contesting definitions. Trust, reciprocity, informational or economic exchanges, and other systems that lead to or emerge from social and economic organization are commonly referred to as social capital. As already stated, there are numerous debates over what connections and types of organizations make up social capital, but there is no disagreement concerning the function of social capital in facilitating collective action, economic growth, and development by complementing other forms of capital. Woolcock's, (1998) social capital model facilitates various levels by providing a comprehensive framework that includes four dimensions: strong ties between family members and neighbors, weak ties with the outside community and between communities, formal institutions, and state community interactions. This model's implementation can aid in the direct targeting of external interventions to certain elements of social capital. Putnam's major work on social capital (Putnam, 1993) elaborates on the nature of horizontal relationships. The aspects of social organizations, such as networks, rules, and trust that promote coordination and collaboration for mutual gain are referred to as social capital. Institutional efficiency is aided by improved communications and information flow. In this sense, social capital is a resource whose supply grows rather than diminishes as a result of use, and which depletes if not utilized. Coleman's, (1988) definition of social capital is more expansive, encompassing vertical organizations marked by hierarchy and unequal power distribution among members. As a result, depending on its characteristics and

application, social capital might be valuable to some and useless or destructive to others. It is productive, like other forms of capital, allowing the achievement of specific goals that would not be achievable without it. On the other hand, trust, as the element of social capital, within a society, according to Fukuyama, (1995), is a key component in its prosperity, inherent competitiveness, and democratic tendencies.

In his opinion, trust is a fundamental indicator of successful cooperation in civic engagement networks. Uphoff, (2000) defines social capital as "an accumulation of various sorts of social, psychological, cognitive, institutional, and associated assets that enhances the amount or probability of mutually beneficial cooperative conduct that is helpful for others rather than simply oneself." Putnam and Coleman's work focuses on the horizontal and vertical components of social capital, whereas Fukuyama's work highlights the importance of trust in the building of social capital. By separating the cognitive and structural parts of social capital, Uphoff's study makes it easier to analyze. The relationship between social capital and a society's cohesiveness - expressed in the notion of social cohesion or the confluence of vertical and horizontal social capital - must be investigated to better understand the origins of violent conflict. According to Berkman and Kawachi, (2000) social capital is a subset of social cohesion. The term "social capital" refers to two interconnected aspects of a society: (1) the absence of latent conflict, such as income gaps, ethnic tensions, political participation disparities, or other kinds of polarization and (2) strong social ties, as assessed by levels of trust and reciprocity standards, the quantity of associations that transcend social divides, and the presence of dispute resolution mechanisms, responsive democracy, an independent judiciary, and independent media. The fundamental variable in the relationship between social capital and violent conflict is social cohesiveness. The higher the degree of vertical linking and horizontal bridges social capital integration, the more cohesive the society will be. The poorer social cohesion is, the weaker the reinforcing socialization and social control mechanisms are (Sen, 1999). Johan Galtung, (1996) describes three key social and economic phenomena: exclusion, inequality, and indignity, which represents the intersection of vertical and horizontal social capital. Unequal patterns of development, both in terms of investment and access to

its opportunities, have been a key source of societal cleavage in many developing countries. Conflict that arises as a result of exclusion, inequity, or indignity does not always culminate in wide-spread conflicts. When these factors exist together, the chance of violent conflict increases, further fragmenting society and intensifying the war (Nathan, 1998; Reno, 1998; Collier & Hoeffler, 1999; Berdal and Malone, 2000). The important variable in the relationship between social capital and violent conflict is social coherence.

The more vertical connecting and horizontal bridging social capital integrate, the more likely it is that society will be more cohesive. The poorer the social cohesion, the weaker the socialization's reinforcing pathways will be. Unequal patterns of development in terms of opportunities have been a primary source of societal ulceration in the case of CHT. Inequality does not necessarily lead to the emergence of broad hostility, notwithstanding the contradictory outcomes of exclusion (Mohsin, 2003). When structural conditions, such as authoritarian rule, lack of political rights, state weakness, and absence of institutional performance to manage conflict, economic disparities, unfairness of opportunity, and a weaker civil society were discovered in the system, the conflict became more obvious. These factors raise the possibility of a violent conflict, erupting in the CHT region (Mohsin, 2003). Social capital is a key factor in a society's ability to manage violent disputes. There are two types of social capital scenario: higher social capital and lower social capital. The rate of violent conflict is lower when social capital is larger. On the other hand, as social capital declines, the rate of violent conflict rises. There exist both of the situations in CHT area. Both of these scenarios can be found in the CHT area. On the one hand, the rate of social capital within indigenous communities is higher because social bonding is stronger among them. For example, they can lead movements against Bengali settlers and Bangladesh governments to achieve their goals and sustain them because they have strong bonding among them and this leads to lower rate of violence among the community's themselves. On the other hand, the rate of social capital between indigenous people and Bengali settlers is relatively low, owing to inadequate social bonding and communication between them, which leads to increased violence, making CHTs Bangladesh's most conflict-prone location. As a result, the central thesis is that "the absence of social capital between indi-

genous groups and Bengali settlers is expanding the extent of violence while decreasing the scope of conflict management." Violent conflict is considered as both independent and dependent variable in its relationship to social capital, for illustrating the current conditions of CHTs violent conflicts. That is, social capital can be beneficial and promote social cohesiveness, or it can be abused to expedite social fragmentation and the emergence of violent conflicts.

The Intersection of Violent Conflicts and Social Capital in the CHTS

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the indigenous community experience identity crises and also face innumerable humiliations at the hands of political regimes. As it is already stated the rootcauses of conflict by demonstrating how different types of social capital and violent conflict interact with a variety of conditioning factors, such as inequality, indignity, exclusion, and inadequate governance. In this study, social capital is considered as both an independent and dependent variable in its link to violent conflict, as well as a cause and a consequence. That is, social capital can be beneficial by promoting social cohesion and conflict resolution, but it can also be harmful by hastening social fragmentation and the advent of violent conflicts. Three aspects of social capital and their relationship to violent conflict are investigated. As stated in the theoretical framework, there are two perspectives regarding social conflict and its interaction with violent conflict in the CHTs. The first is that a higher degree of social capital reduces the number of violent conflicts, whereas a lower level of social capital in a community raises the probability of more violent conflict. The speculative hypothesis is that because the indigenous communities of CHTs have a high degree of social capital, they have a low frequency of conflicts among themselves. The degree of social capital between Indigenous Communities and Bengali Settlers, on the other hand, is too low, resulting in a high incidence of violent conflicts. Some situations in the CHTs are inextricably tied to social capital and violent conflicts in the region. Low level of trust, fear of oppression, alienation, unequal power distribution, polarization, and violence and injustice against indigenous women are some of them. Social conflict in Chittagong Hill Tracts and its relationship to violent conflict is analyzed and comprehended in three aspects. The study only

covers, from 1998 to 2020, the number of communal attacks by BSs on IPs, the developmental gap between them, and the rate of violence against Indigenous Women.

The below violent incidents help us to understand that there is no social bonding between IPs and BSs which agitate them to fight with each other. Added to that, violent conflicts between BSs and IPs give a clear idea that a small amount of hatred can destroy a society fully. The following sections have an in-depth presentation about these three approaches to the understanding of the current state of social capital in connection to violent conflicts in the CHTs

Communal attacks on indigenous communities

History tells us that the communal attacks on Indigenous Communities by Bengali Settlers and Army Personnel were mostly retaliatory attack full of tensions, anxieties. There are major 15 communal attacks happened from 1998 to 2020 (Reports of (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti, PCJSS) that might have connections with social capital in CHTs. Let's have a brief idea on them:

4 April 1999-Baghaihat attack

The forces from Baghahat army camp, headed by a captain, launched a fierce attack on the Jumma (minority tribal group) in Baghahat bazar, Baghachari Upazila, Rangamati district, injuring 51 Jumma people, 14 of whom were seriously hurt, and five of whom were missing (PCJSS, 4 April 1999).

16 October 1999-Babuchara Attack

The Armed Polices (APs) and BSs launched an attack on the Jumma at Dighinala's Babuchara Bazar. Three Jumma were killed, while 100 others were seriously injured (PCJSS, 16 October 1999).

18 May 2001- Dighinala Attack

The BSs premeditatedly attacked three villages of the returnee Jumma refugee of Chhota Merung under Dighinala: Shanti-Laxmipur, Kalachan Mahajan para, and Hemabrata Karbari para-of the returnee Jumma refugee of Chhota Merung under Dighinala (PCJSS, 18 May 2001).

25 June 2001-Ramgarh Incident

The BSs attacked on the Jumma Villages under Ramgarh in the Khagrachari district. The reason was that on 23 June 2001, a Bengali Truck Driver named Atar Ali was abducted and killed by Jumma Terrorists (PCJSS, 25 June 2001).

10 October 2002-Rajvila Attack

A group of Bengali numbering 200-250 attacked and burnt Rajvila Indigenous Village in Bandarban District (PCJSS, 10 October 2002).

19 April 2003-Bhuyachara Attack

The BSs of Bhuyachara under Kamalchari union of Khagrachari with the direct cooperation of APs made communal attack on Jumma Villages of Bhuyachara Mukh Chakma Para under Khagrachari Sadar (PCJSS, 19 April 2001).

26 August 2003-Mahalchari Attack

The BSs launched a horrendous communal attack on Indigenous community of Mahalchari Upazila under Khagrachari (PCJSS, 26 August 2001).

3 April 2006-Maischari Attack

100-150 BSs attacked 5 Jumma villages in the Maischari union of Mahalchari upazila of Khagrachari in a sectarian attack (PCJSS, 3 April 2006).

20 April 2008-Arson attack in Sajek

Newly infiltrated BSs with the direct support of APs attacked throughout 4 km long area of Sajek in Rangamati on 20 April at night. Recently, Bangladesh Army started settlement program of Bengali Families along the road side of Sajek. The Indigenous community of these areas protested against this. Despite the protesting, the BSs illegally constructed houses on the land of IPs. On 20 April some Indigenous community destroyed some houses of BSs. In retaliation, the BSs with sharp weapons started to attack on Indigenous community. There were some APs, but they did not prevent the attack (PCJSS, 20 April 2008).

19-23 Feb 2010-Military communal on slaught on Jumma Villages in Baghaihat and Khagrachari

Military Forces and Bengali Settlers launched a huge communal onslaught against IPs in the Baghaihat area of Sajek in Rangamati on the 19th and 20th of February 2010. On the 23rd of February 2010, BSs attacked Indigenous community-populated areas in Khagrachari with the direct assistance of the Bangladesh army and other security personnel (PCJSS, 19-23 February 2010).

17 April 2011-Ramgarhand Manikchaari attack on the Jumma people

BSs with the help of local administration committed massive communal arson attack on 5 Indigenous villages of Ramgarh and two villages of Manikchari of Khagrachari (PCJSS, 17th April 2011).

17 Feb 2011-Babuchadar Gulshakhali Attack

Following the death of aBS, the Bengali Settlers numbering 200-250 from Gulshakhali of Rangamati with collaboration of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) made massive communal attack on IPs of Gulshakhali & RangiPra (PCJSS, 17 February 2011).

14 December 2011- Communal attack made upon Jumma in Baghaichari and Dighinala

Following the death of a BS named Md.Sattar, the BSs made communal attack on IPs in Baghaichari bazar in Rangamati and Kobakhali bazar in Dighinala of Khagrachari (PCJSS, 14 December 2011).

22 September 2012-Rangamati Communal Attack

The BSs conducted a savagery attack upon the Jumma people in different localities of Rangamati district in presence of Security forces (PCJSS, 22 September 2012).

3 August 2013- Attack on Jumma Villages in Matiranga-Traindong Area

The BSs launched a large communal attack in 11 IP villages in Taindong, Khagrachari, which included fire and looting. The attack was carried out as a form of retribution (PCJSS, 3 August 2013).

2 June 2017- Longadu Communal attack

Longadu, in the CHTs' Rangamati district, was the scene of a communal attack by BSs with the active help of local Army-Police. Around 250 homes were destroyed in the raid. Tintila of Longadu sadar had 94 houses and shops, Manikjorchara had 88 houses, and Batya Para had 42 houses. During the incident, one indigenous people died named Guna Mala Chakma (75) inside a burning (PCJSS, 2 June 2017).

Human Rights and Communal Attacks in 2018

In 2018 there are lots of cases happened related to the sexual and physical violence on Indigenous women in CHT region. In January of 2018 18 years old Marma girl and her 13 year old sister allegedly raped and assaulted by security personnel in a village of Rangamati. According to the report of Kapeng Foundation from January to July almost 32 indigenous children and women were raped and physically harassed (PCJSS, 2018).

Situation of Human Rights & Communal Attacks in 2020

In the year 2020, the army, BGB, and police committed nearly 139 human rights violations in CHTs. Three people were killed extra judicially, 50 were arrested illegally and 49 were jailed indefinitely, 54

people were beaten and harassed, and six of them were gravely hurt, 104 homes were searched, and 25 homes, including 20 temporary shops, were damaged, three times, blank bullets were fired in various locations to generate fear (Annual Report of PCJSS, 5 January 2021).

Development and the Vulnerability of the Jumma People

The goal of development aids in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region as the underdeveloped region is the sole upliftment of the local people. The trend of development in CHT region is not smooth-functioning. The opportunity gap in developmental activities between the BSs and IPs are the obstacles to create a stable situation of social capital in the CHT region which enhance the chance of violence.

Development projects cause indigenous people to suffer

From the British colonial period to the present Bangladesh, CHTs were always a target of development aid. But Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) always complain that the IPs were the victims of development projects. For instance, from 2001-2005 almost 200 square miles of land owned by IPs was grabbed by the government of Bangladesh in the name of creating reserve forest and eco-park and they replaced the IPs to their so called model villages for which 1,00,000 indigenous people lost their home (Kazi, 2010).

Monopoly of Development

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) was founded by the Bangladeshi government in 1976 to encourage development projects in the area. Working with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), CHTDB, is working to foster development works in CHTs. Currently, the CHTDB is under Ministry of CHT Affairs. From its start to 2015, it coordinated and implemented about 10,000 projects at a cost of 5.8 billion taka. Complaints are received from the PCJSS that these projects facilitate for the BSs from the inception, not the indigenous CHT peoples (PCJSS, Economy and Development).

The Pros and Cons of Development Aid

There Are some 6, 00,000 BSs in the CHT who were brought from the plains. They were gathered in about 100 settlements known as “cluster villagers”. Among camps are positioned next to them. They receive monthly rations including 85 kg of rice per family from the government but it is not available for the

indigenous peoples. It is clear that providing development projects for BSs encourage them to settle down in the Hill Tracts. It is creating a psychological gap between indigenous people and Bengali peoples (Bashar, 2004).

Indigenous Peoples Participation in Development Decision Making

The CHT Regional Council (CHTRC) was founded as a result of peace accord promised to be comprised primarily by the indigenous people. But hardly any of the promised powers were given to the CHTRC and also the CHTDB run by Bengalis continuous to decide most matters related to development. The NGOs in the plains run by Bengali people also ignore the indigenous role in the decision making about development (Roy 2014).

Language, Culture, History of indigenous People and Development in Education

Though the indigenous peoples of CHTs use Bengali language out of necessity, Bengali is by no means their mother tongue. Unfortunately, Bengali is the medium of instruction at public school and the curriculum also focused on history and culture of Bengalis in the region. Activities promoting indigenous cultures, language and history are not purposely permitted. There are almost 300 primary schools were built in 3 districts of CHTs since 2008. But only 3 of them are known to promote education in mother tongue for the indigenous peoples (Badiuzzaman and Cameron, 2013).

Social Capital and Indigenous Women

It is complained from the PCJSS that indigenous women's vulnerabilities are due to Bengali settlers, who have made it more difficult to develop a cordial relationship between Bengali and indigenous groups. This obstructs the formation of any social bonds or cohesion amongst them, resulting in increased violence in CHTs regions. In Bangladeshi society, indigenous women are among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. They are a gender minority in a male-dominated society, a religious minority in a Muslim-dominated country, and an ethnic minority in a Bengali-dominated community. They confront marginalization, exploitation, and a rise in violence in every aspect of their lives. The overwhelming majority of BSs in the CHTs have established a pattern of harassment and abuse against indigenous women in what was once their second neighborhood. The exact number of women physically abused, sex-

ually harassed, or raped in CHTs is unknown. Non-indigenous men have sexually assaulted indigenous women, (Abid, 2014). Kapeeng foundation, (2014) documented in the last 7 years till April 2015, about 350 cases of sexual harassment and rape of CHTs women, 96% of the alleged perpetration of violence were committed by the settlers and 4% by law enforcement officers. It is pointed out that when someone files any case of harassment, local police officers take no action saying that arresting someone could have raised Bengali-Pahari tensions. The well-known Kalpona Chakma's abduction case still waits for effective police action (Chapman, 2014). The Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal have all but been ineffective since they came to CHTs in 2009. From January 2010 to December 2013, the CHTs commission reported a total of 215 cases of violence against women. Only nine cases were solved with no convictions out of the 166 cases that were issued with charge sheets (CHTs, 2014). Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, Karmajibi Nari, and Bangladesh Indigenous Women Network held a press conference in 2014 to draw attention to the country's sexual abuse of indigenous women. For the first half of the year, it detailed incidences of violence against women. CHTs accounted for 63% of the instances, with the balance occurring in the plains. Sexual assault, including rape, accounted for 83 percent of the CHTs cases. Children made up 86 percent of the rape victims. BSs settlers made up 92 percent of the culprits. However, none of them received a verdict or penalty.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS:

As stated that the situation of social capital between the two communities are in crisis in the CHTSs. The social coherence is low in this area. Further, the two perspectives of social capital, such as both the 'higher conflict and lower social capital' and 'lower conflict and higher social conflict' have their presence in the area. Firstly, among the indigenous group the level of social capital is higher. In every case, when any violent incident happens, IPs tried to help each other and upholds a strong level of social bonding to maintain long time struggle for the in rights. Having analyzed data from 1998 to 2015 that there is only few cases where the IPs themselves were the perpetration. On the contrary, the second assumption was 'higher number of violent conflicts results from lower level of social capital'. In the case of CHTS area, the level of social bonding or any UniversePG | www.universepg.com

other types of relationship between the IPs and BSs is low which pave the way for long term violent conflicts, but there exist hate, fear, oppression, discrimination, polarization, injustice, unequal power distribution, etc.

Level of Trust- From the overall discussion, it has been evident that the level of social bonding and trust between two indigenous communities are very low, while strong representation of trust among the indigenous community is observed.

Range of Hate- Both the communities have different views, and see each other as opponent. From the period 1998-2020, every incident of CHTs were evaluated by the BSs saw IPs as barbarize tribes. On the other hand, IPs view about Bengalis is also hateful. This situation of hate feeling creates of no social relationship between them, which ultimately lead them toward greater violence.

Fear of Oppression- From 1998 to 2014, there were a number of 5770 incidents of human rights violation in CHTs region. Of them, in 70% or above cases the perpetrations were the BSs. Every violent incident was made as a result for a small reason. In 95% cases of women violence, the perpetrations were BSs. This creates a situation of fear of oppression between them, thus lower aspect of social capital.

Alienation and Unequal Power Distribution- There exists a strong situation of alienation between the two communities. The range of power between the IPs and BSs are very wide. It is also observed that the most powerful organization of CHTs is CHTDB where BSs get the most facilities. It is further pointed out that almost 90% of the power asymmetries were dominated by BSs which creates an unbalanced power between them which doesn't necessarily create a social bonding, thus paves the way of violent conflict.

Polarization- The indigenous and Bengalis are two different communities, and no scope of being one. The identities, language, culture, are all different from that of the Bengalis. But the political regimes always tried to assimilate them into one society which is unacceptable for the indigenous communities. Thus, indigenous always saw Bengali communities as a threat to their existence, which creates a situation of hostility and leads toward greater violence.

Violence & Injustice against the Indigenous Women- Indigenous women were always the targets in

conflict-settings. From 1998-2015 these are about 500 cases of sexual violence in CHT region, of them 90% perpetration were made by the BSs. The Indigenous women communities have been the subject to violent communal attacks by the BSs.

CONCLUSION:

One of the most intractable problems confronting Bangladesh has been the lingering ethnic conflict between the Indigenous Peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) and the Bengali settlers. The major reason of the conflict is the absence of strong social bonding, social linkages and network or information; rather they hate each other and always try to oppress one another. On the other hand, the indigenous population has strong social bonding among themselves, thus they experience very lower number of conflicts among themselves. Summing up, the hypothesis adopted at the beginning of the study is positively tested that social capital has a transformative influence in relation to violent conflicts in the CHTs. Hence, inclusive approach is needed to solve the crisis between the IPs and the BSs in the CHTs. As they don't trust each other, they hate, alienate and oppress each other and Indigenous Women are being abused by the BSs, the Bangladeshi ruling parties have to articulate a sustainable CHT policy, aimed at bringing permanent peace, social harmony, and stability in the restive south-eastern part of the country. Different peace-building steps have to be taken to increase the level of social capital between the IPs and the BSs in the CHT. A further work can be done regarding the solution process specially by using alternative dispute resolution processes to resolve the crisis among the Indigenous and Bengali people in the CHT area.

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