Conflict and Schooling of Household Members: Experience from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Region in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The region of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is characterized as a conflict torn area in Bangladesh. The study intends to assess the impact of conflict on schooling of household members in the CHT region. It also intends to examine whether the determinants of schooling of household members in the conflict-torn CHT region are different from that of household members in the non-conflict mainland region. The analysis is based on the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2005 data set ($N = 10080$). Using the descriptive and negative binomial regression results, this paper concludes that conflict has a negative impact on schooling of members of households living in the CHT region. More specifically, this paper concludes that conflict has a significant negative impact on schooling of household members in the age category of 6 to 23. The results also indicate that households in the CHT region are not that much different from households in the non-CHT region in terms of the other determinants of schooling of household members.

Keywords : schooling, conflict area, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

I Introduction

In less developed countries, civil wars and armed conflicts are not rare. Many researches, in past, have identified the damaging impacts of these conflicts on several social matters. Though the impact of conflict on communities, families and economies is well documented but the effect on education and training systems is less considered (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). This paper

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adds insights into this less investigated arena by assessing the impact of conflict on the schooling of household members in a conflict-torn area of Bangladesh, namely Chittagong.

Education is, without any doubt, one of the most important basic social needs. It enables an individual to participate fully in a society. Available evidence indicates that investment on education provides high rates of return in terms of both monetary gain and indirect social benefits (UNCSTD, 1997). Insufficient education is one of significant factors that explain poverty of individuals and households. Inability to acquire the minimum level of required education is strongly positively correlated to income inequality of individuals and households. Education is the most dominant instrument to convert the non-productive unemployed people to productive human capital. Economic growth led by the enhancement of human capital has been proved successful in the least developed countries (Jung & Thorbecke, 2001). Expenditure on education can have both the pecuniary and non-pecuniary effect on poverty. An investment of resources on education helps individuals to earn future returns not only in monetary terms, but also in the form of higher satisfaction of basic needs (Zuluaga, 2007). Human capital developed by education can reduce poverty and has positive impact on consumption. In case of Bangladesh, education and other factors, like demographics, land ownership and geographic location, affect consumption and poverty (Wodon, 1999). Dabla-Norris and Matovu (2002) found that reduction of primary education cost of the household contributed maximum to foster the growth and poverty reduction in short run. On the other hand, an increase in higher education spending fosters more growth in the long run. It has been found in India that education spending has third largest marginal impact on economic growth and poverty reduction (Fan, Hazell & Thorat, 2000).

Poverty has been recognized as the main determinant of the political conflict in the literature on civil war (Bates, 2005; Sambanis, 2002 & 2004). Conflict can lead to the almost total collapse of educational services (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007). Wars and military conflicts impair the functioning of education systems and often lead to extensive damage to the original educational infrastructure and millions of children are prevented from attending school as a consequence of violent conflicts (Seitz, 2004). Bates (2005) argues with certainty that poverty and political conflict are significantly related. Sambanis (2002) has identified poverty as the robust determinant of civil war onset. Like poverty, conflict has a negative impact on education of household members. Swee (2009) concludes that individuals affected by war are less likely to complete secondary schooling. Akresh and Walque (2008) argue that genocide has a strong negative impact on schooling of children. They also argue that children affected by genocide are likely to be less educated by one-half year compared to other children who are not affected by genocide. Similarly, Shemyakina (2006) claims that conflict has a large significant negative impact on the school enrollment of girls. Seitz (2004) mentions:

> The generally negative effect of violent conflicts on enrolment and school attendance rates in turn results from a number of causes: the requisite educational facilities have been destroyed, plundered or damaged; there are no teachers available; parents prefer to keep their children at home given the dangers of traveling to school and the risk of attacks on schools; the economic situation of the family does not permit a child to attend school; priorities have shifted given the task of ensuring survival; educational facilities are no longer accessible as people have taken flight etc.

The region of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh is characterized as a conflict torn area in Bangladesh. Considering the relationship between education, poverty and political conflict, this paper intends to identify the impact of conflict on schooling of household members in the conflict region of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Using descriptive statistics and results of negative binomial regression models, households in the region of CHT have been compared with the households in other parts of Bangladesh to examine whether the CHT region is different from other parts of Bangladesh from the perspective of the determinants of schooling of household members. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section two contains a brief description of the CHT region. Section three describes the methodology to be followed, including the survey design. Results are presented in section four. Conclusions follow in section five.

II Conflict and the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The region of Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh is characterized as a conflict torn area. It is located in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh. The total area and the population size of this region are 13,180 km^2 and 1.5 million respectively. Currently, 50% of the population are tribal and mostly belong to Buddhism. Apart from tribal population, 45% of the population are Bengali Muslim settlers. During the independence of India from the British Empire in 1947, 98.5% of the population was tribal and non Muslims. Against the backdrop of the settlement of mainland Bengali Muslim people in the region, The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), a political party representing the indigenous people in the region, started an arms struggle in 1972 for achieving independence from Bangladesh. A Peace Treaty was signed in 1997 between the Government and the PCJSS. But the Peace Treaty has been opposed by the opposition political parties as well as a fraction of the tribal rebels.

III Methodology

1 Estimating Equation and model

The factors that determine schooling of individuals at the household level have been determined by using the following equation.

$$Y_{ij} = H_{ij}\alpha_y + D_j\theta_y + CHT_i\beta + \mu_{ij}$$

where Y_{ij} is the outcome of the household i in the village j on which we want to measure (in this case schooling years of household members); H_{ij} is a vector of household characteristics; D_j is a vector of district level characteristics; CHT_i is a dummy variable, 1 if the household belongs to the CHT region and 0 otherwise, that represents the households that come from the CHT region; α_y, θ_y and β_y are parameters to be estimated; and μ_{ij} represents unmeasured household and district characteristics that determine outcomes.

The dependent variable (SCHOOLING) is schooling years of household members. Due to count data characteristic of the dependent variable, poisson regression and negative binomial regression techniques have been applied to estimate the determinants of schooling years of household members. We have conducted a test of the over dispersion parameter alpha to examine whether negative binomial regression is a better technique compared to poisson regression for this model. The test result shows that alpha is significantly different from zero, which indicates that the negative binomial regression is a more appropriate technique for this model. For this reason, negative binomial regression technique has been used for analyzing the impact of conflict on schooling of household members.

On the right hand side of the model, two variables (MUSLIM and HINDU) on the household religious status have been incorporated to control for impacts of religion on schooling of household members. In the model, two variables related to total household male and female members have been incorporated as these variables are going to control for impacts of household sizes on schooling of household members. A variable on the total number of income earners (EARNER) has been added in the model to examine whether the likelihood of having higher schooling years of household members goes up with the increase in the number of income earners. A positive relation is expected between the total number of income earners and the schooling years of household members. It is expected that the asset level of a household positively influences schooling years of household members as it increases the ability of that household to spend more on education. Considering this, three variables on the level of the asset base of a household (HOUSE, LAND AND OASSETS) have been included in the model as

independent variables.

There are two independent variables in the model that are related to the district level infrastructural facilities and economic conditions (ROAD and AGRI) as it is considered that better local infrastructural facilities and economic conditions contribute to the better schooling of household members. The variable CHT represents the Chittagong Hill Tract region in the model. It is dummy variable; 1 has been assigned if the household belong to the CHT region and 0 otherwise. This variable is going to examine whether there is a CHT regional impact on the schooling of household members.

Table 1 Distribution of Sample Households in the HIES 2005

Locality within division	Administrative Division						Bangladesh
	Barisal	Chittagong	Dhaka	Khulna	Rajshahi	Sylhet	
Rural	560	1160	1720	880	1700	380	6400
Municipality	260	460	740	440	720	160	2780
SMA	-	180	480	140	100	-	400
Total	820	1800	2940	1460	2520	540	10080

Source: BBS (2007)

2 Data

The study uses the Household Income and Expenditure Survey data set 2005 (HIES 2005) which has been generated by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), a department of the Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh. A two stage random sampling technique was followed in designing the sample of HIES 2005. The framework of Integrated Multipurpose Sample (IMPS) design which was developed on the basis of the Population and Housing Census 2001 was used in the sample design. There were 1000 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) covering the whole country in the IMPS design. In the IMPS design 640 PSUs belonged to the rural areas and the remaining 340 PSUs came from the urban areas. Each PSU consisted of around 200 households. In the first stage of the random sampling, 504 PSUs were selected out of 1000 PSUs. These 504 PSUs were selected from 16 strata; 6 strata from the rural areas, 6 from the municipality areas and 4 from semi-municipality areas (SMA). In the second stage, 20 households were randomly selected from each of the selected 504 PSUs. In total, HIES 2005 collected data from 10080 households (*N=10,080*). **Table 1** presents the administrative division wise distribution of households in HIES 2005.

IV Results

Table 2 illustrates the average schooling of all household members. A comparison has been

made between all households except CHT households (Non-CHT households) and households from the CHT region (CHT households) to understand differences between these two groups of households in terms of schooling. In the non-CHT group, the average level of schooling is 3.5 years. In contrast, the average schooling of household members of the CHT group is 3.2 years. The t test result indicates that the difference in schooling of household members between non-CHT group and CHT group is statistically significant. The results indicate that non-CHT household members are on an average more educated than CHT household members.

Table 2 Schooling of Household Members

Variable	Non-CHT Households		CHT Households		T test
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Schooling of all household members (years)	3.54	2.92	3.19	3.11	1.84*
Schooling of all male household members (years)	3.82	3.58	3.53	3.53	1.23
Schooling of all female household members (years)	3.56	3.44	2.89	3.59	2.06**
Schooling of all household members in the age category of 6 to 23 (years)	4.49	4.34	3.84	4.2	2.25**
Schooling of all male household members in the age category of 6 to 23 (years)	9	7.72	8.61	6.92	0.38
Schooling of all female household members in the age category of 6 to 23 (years)	9.27	0.18	7.58	7.94	1.53

Notes: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$
Source: Author

The average schooling of all household male members is illustrated in **Table 2**. On an average, household male members in the CHT group have 3.5 years of schooling. On the other hand, household male members in the non-CHT group have 3.8 years of schooling. The male members of non-CHT households are more educated than male members in the CHT group. But the difference in schooling of household male members between households in the non-CHT group and the households in the CHT group is not statistically significant. The results in **Table 2** indicate that female household members are on an average less educated than male household members. The average schooling of female household members in the non-CHT group is 3.6 years. On the other hand, the same schooling of female household members in the CHT group is 2.9 years. These results indicate that female members in CHT households are 0.7 schooling years less educated on an average than those of non-CHT households.

The results in **Table 2** show that the average schooling of all non-CHT household members in the age category of 6 to 23 is 4.5 schooling years. The education level of the same age category

household members in the CHT group is 3.8 years. This means that young household members in the CHT region are less educated by 0.7 schooling years than those in the non-CHT region. The young male members in the non-CHT group within the age range of 6 to 23 years have on an average 9 years of schooling. In contrast, the same young male members in the CHT region have an average schooling of 8.6 years. These results show that the young people of the CHT region are relatively less educated than the young people of the rest of the country. The same scenario is also evident from the education level of young female household members. The young female household members, in the age category of 6 to 23, of the CHT region have an average education level of 7.6 schooling years. On the other hand, the same young female household members of the non-CHT region have an average education level of 9.3 schooling years. These results illustrate that the young female members in the non-CHT region are more educated than the young female members in the CHT region.

Table 3 Variables Used in Econometric Models

Variable	Definition	Mean	Std. Dev.
SCHOOLING	Education - schooling years of household (HH) members	3.8	3.83
SCHOOLING623	Education – Schooling years of all al HH members in the age category of 6 to 23	11.73	11.61
CHT	Dummy for CHT – 1 if household belongs to CHT region and 0 otherwise	0.03	-
MUSLIM	Dummy for Muslim – 1 if the religion of the household is Islam and 0 otherwise	0.88	-
HINDU	Dummy for Hindu - 1 if the religion of the household is Hindu and 0 otherwise	0.1	-
MALE	Total number of household male members	3.03	1.56
FEMALE	Total number of household female members	2.92	1.49
EARNER	Total Number of Income Earner	1.56	0.98
HOUSE	Value of the House (in Taka)	153,321	642,523
LAND	Total Area of Cultivable Land (in decimal)	0.89	2.28
OASSETS	Value of Assets and Non-agricultural Land (in Taka)	5,786.67	45,658.08
ROAD	District Level Paved Road (in kilometers)	234.88	112.6
AGRI	District Level Per Capita Agricultural Value Addition (in Taka)	10,298.24	5,520.81

Source: Author

Table 4 shows the results of negative binomial regression models that try to determine the determinants of schooling of household members. Using the negative binomial regression technique, six regression models have been estimated. In regression models 1 and 4 (column 1 and 4) all household members[1] in the CHT region have been considered. All household members in the non-CHT region are considered in models 2 and 5 (column 2 and 5). And finally, all

household members in both groups of households, i.e. CHT and non-CHT have been considered in regression models 3 and 6 (column 3 and 6). The results in column 1, 2 and 3 show coefficients of all independent variables in models for schooling of all household members more than six-year old. On the other hand, the results in column 4, 5 and 6 show coefficients of independent variables in models for schooling of all household members in the age category of six to twenty three years. A comparison has been made between regression models for schooling of CHT household members (column 1, 2, and 3) and schooling of non-CHT household members (column 4, 5, and 6) to understand whether the determinants of schooling of individuals in the conflict region (CHT) are different from those of individuals in the non-conflict region (non-CHT). In negative binomial regression models 3 and 6, in addition to the variables included in model 1, 2, 4 and 5, a dummy variable (CHT) that represents the households in the conflict region has been included. This variable captures the impact of conflict on schooling of household members.

Table 4 Determinants of Schooling of Household Members

Variables	All household members more than 6 year old			All household members in the age category of 6 to 23		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	CHT Households	Non-CHT Households	All Households	CHT Households	Non-CHT Households	All Households
CHT			−0.0703			−0.140*
MUSLIM	0.219**	0.143	0.233***	0.309**	0.0867	0.281***
HINDU	0.356	0.217*	0.310***	0.401	0.158	0.353***
MALE	−0.130***	−0.0192***	−0.0231***	−0.145***	−0.0235***	−0.0274***
FEMALE	0.00522	−0.0184***	−0.0182***	−0.0417	−0.011	−0.0121*
EARNER	0.270***	0.0499***	0.0555***	0.241***	0.0296**	0.0353***
HOUSE	1.56e-06***	3.42e-07***	3.74e-07***	1.86e-06***	3.82e-07***	4.18e-07***
LAND	0.0993***	0.0643***	0.0648***	0.186***	0.0717***	0.0732***
OASSETS	2.24E-07	5.34e-07***	4.83e-07***	−1.88E-07	6.23e-07**	4.56e-07*
ROAD	−0.00457	0.000451***	0.000427***	−0.0100**	0.000570***	0.000545***
AGRI	−0.000244*	−3.42e-06*	−2.81E-06	−0.000503***	−6.08e-06**	−5.39e-06**
Constant	1.864*	0.966***	0.890***	3.899***	1.120***	0.926***
Observations	1206	42725	43931	566	18588	19154
LR Chi2	158.44	942.97	1041.87	158.44	942.97	1041.87
Prob > Chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Pseudo R2	0.0289	0.0046	0.0049	0.0289	0.0046	0.0049

Notes: *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1
Source: Author

The coefficient of the variable CHT shows a negative sign in both models for schooling of all household members and household members in the age category of 6 to 23. But, it is statistically significant in the model for schooling of household 6 to 23 years old members. These results illustrates that conflict has a negative impact on schooling of household member as the variable

CHT captures the impact of conflict on schooling of household members. This result is similar to the findings of Swee (2009), Akresh and de Walque (2008) and Shemyakina (2006) as these studies also find that conflict has a significant negative impact on schooling of household members.

The dummy variable (MUSLIM) that represents the religious status of Islam of households is positive in all models, but statistically significant in four out of six regression models. It means that the likelihood of attaining a higher level of education by household members goes up if the religion of the household is Muslim. However, this variable is statistically significant only in models 1, 3, 4 and 6, i.e. negative binomial regression models for all CHT households and all household from both CHT and non-CHT regions. In the CHT region, household members are more likely to have a higher level of schooling years if the religion of the household is Islam. In case of non-CHT household members, the religious status of Islam of the household has a positive impact on schooling of household members, but it is not statistically significant. However, the same variable shows a significant positive impact when households from both regions are combined together. It means that as a whole, the religious status of Islam increases the likelihood of having higher education by household members in Bangladesh. The reason might be that Muslims have a better access to education compared to Buddhists and Christians since they are the majority in the country. Similarly, the impact of the religious status of Hindu of households on schooling of household members is positive and statistically significant in models for all household members in non-CHT region and the whole country i.e. combining both CHT and non-CHT region and model for household members within the age category of 6 to 23 in the whole country. These results indicate that the religious status of Hindu increases the likelihood of attaining a higher schooling by household members. The reason may be that historically Hindus are more educated than members of other religious communities in Bangladesh. This might have made the coefficients of the dummy variable related to the religious status of Hindu in all models as positive and statistically significant.

The number of male members (MALE) in the household has a significant negative impact on the educational attainment of household members. The coefficients of the variable have negative signs in all models and they are statistically significant. Similarly the coefficients of the number of total household female members (FEMALE) have negative signs in all models and they are statistically significant in all models except the model for schooling of all household members in the CHT region and models for schooling of household members in the age bracket of 6 to 23 in the CHT and the non-CHT region. The likely reason is that the per capita income of a household reduces with the increase in the number of household male and female members and reduces the ability of households to spend more on education of household members. The number of income earners (EARNER) in the household has a significant positive impact on schooling of all

household members as the variable has a positive sign in all models under the binomial regression technique. An increase in the number of income earners increases the total income of a household that may increases the ability of that household to spend more on education of household members.

Three variables that represent the level of wealth of a household have been included in all models on schooling of all household members to examine the impact of wealth on the entitlement of household members on education. The level of wealth may have a positive impact on schooling of household members as it increases the ability of a household to spend more on education. All these three variables have expected positive signs in all models on schooling of household members except the model for CHT household members in the age category of 6 to 23. The coefficient of other assets (OASSETS) shows a negative sign in the negative binomial model for schooling of all household members in the age category of 6 to 23 in the CHT region. The coefficients of the first two variables, the value of the house (HOUSE) and the total area of agricultural land (LAND) ownership, are statistically significant in all models. In case of the third variable, the total value of other non-land assets, the coefficient is statistically significant in models for all non-CHT sub-sample household members and all household members (full sample) after combining all CHT and non-CHT households. But it is not statistically significant in the binomial regression model on educational attainment of all CHT household members and it shows a negative sign. These results indicate that household assets, especially household assets and land ownership, enhance entitlement of households on education in both CHT and non-CHT regions through increasing their ability to spend more on education of household members.

The coefficient of the variable on road (ROAD) shows a positive sign in all models for non-CHT and all households. But the same coefficient shows a negative sign in models on schooling of members of households in the CHT region. These results indicate that roads have a positive impact on schooling of household members in all regions of Bangladesh except the CHT region as it enables individuals to go to schools quickly and safely. However, roads do not have the same positive impact on schooling of household members in the CHT region. The coefficient of the variable has a negative sign. The reason might be that the conflict-induced sense of insecurity in the CHT region does not permit individuals to go to schools despite having a good road infrastructure in the locality. The coefficient of the variable on per capita district level agricultural value addition (AGRI) has a negative sign in all models on schooling of household members. And it is statistically significant in all models except the model for schooling of household members in the CHT region. It indicates that a higher level of per capita district level agricultural value addition reduces schooling of household members. The reason might be that the opportunity cost of household members going to a school goes up with an increase in the per capital district level agricultural value addition and in such a situation, household members prefer

to go to the fields rather than going to schools.

A comparison between the determinants of schooling of household members in the CHT region and non-CHT region reflects that the CHT region is similar to the non-CHT region in terms of the majority of the determinants of schooling of household members. Only in case of two determinants, the CHT region is different from the non-CHT region. These two determinants are ROAD and OASSETS. The variable ROAD shows a negative coefficient for the CHT region, whereas it shows a positive sign in case of the non-CHT region. These results indicate that road infrastructure has a positive impact on schooling of household members in the non-CHT region, but it has a negative impact on schooling of household members in the CHT region. In the same way, the value of other household assets (OASSETS) has a positive impact on schooling of household members in the age category of 6 to 23 in the non-CHT region. But, the same variable has a negative impact on schooling of household members in the same age category in the CHT region.

V Summary and Conclusion

Poverty has been recognized as the main determinant of the political conflict in the literature on civil war. On the other hand, it is considered that education helps poor people to escape poverty. The region of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh is characterized as a conflict torn area in Bangladesh. Considering the relationship between poverty, political conflict and education, this paper intends to identify the impact of conflict on schooling of household members in the conflict region of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Using descriptive statistics and negative binomial regression results, households in the CHT region (sub-sample of CHT households) have been compared with households in other parts of Bangladesh (sub-sample of non-CHT households) to examine whether the CHT region is different from other parts of the country from the perspective of schooling of household members. The study uses the Household Income and Expenditure Survey data set 2005 (HIES 2005) (*N=10080*) of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), a department of the Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh.

The descriptive and negative binomial regression results point out that conflict has a negative impact on schooling of household members. This negative impact is statistically significant in case of schooling of household members in the age bracket of 6 to 23. These results illustrate that conflict makes education less attractive in the conflict torn Chittagong Hill Tract region. The reasons might be that conflict reduces return to education and also reduces household resources for making spending on education of household members. It also might be one of the reasons that conflict increases the sense of insecurity among household members which in turn reduces the willingness of household elders to send their children to schools. The results also indicate that the

conflict torn CHT region is not that much different from other parts of the country in terms of the other determinants of schooling of household members.

Notes

1. In **Table 4**, all household members in all three binomial regression models include only those household members who are more than 6 years old.

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