

PRCPB Working Paper No. 9: Abstract

Kabeer, Naila (2005). *Snakes, Ladders and Traps: Changing Lives and Livelihoods in Rural Bangladesh (1994-2001)*. PRCPB Working Paper 9. Dhaka/Manchester: PRCPB/Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, CPRC/University of Manchester.

This paper examines national-level explanations for poverty decline in Bangladesh in micro-level detail, in order to better understand the nature of the causalities at work and why some households have gained, while others have failed to gain, in the processes of change involved. The analysis is based on empirical data on the lives and livelihoods of rural households in two locations: Chandina thana in Comilla district and Modhupur thana in Tangail district. The data is drawn from panel data on 1184 household in 1994 and 2001, and qualitative data collected by the author at various points during the period covered by the study. The paper demonstrates that the distribution of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ is not determined purely by chance; it also reflects differences in endowments and efforts.

Following on from the introduction, Section 2 of the paper provides background information on the study locations. Section 3 presents a preliminary analysis based on descriptive statistics of the key factors that might explain changes in poverty status during the study period. Section 4 continues the analysis using multiple regression techniques to establish the relative importance of these factors for households with differing experiences of economic change. Section 5 draws on the qualitative data to interpret these findings and throw further light on the nature of the snakes, ladders and traps faced by households in our study locations. Section 6 reintegrates this micro-level analysis with the macro-level explanations for poverty decline in Bangladesh, and draws out what it has to say about policies for the further reduction of poverty.

N.B. Also published as CPRC Working Paper 50.