

The 8th Global Conference on Gender in Aquaculture &
Fisheries

Precarity, Gender and Wellbeing in the Dried Fish Processing in Bangladesh

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Presented By
Md Mahfuzar Rahman,
University of Manitoba

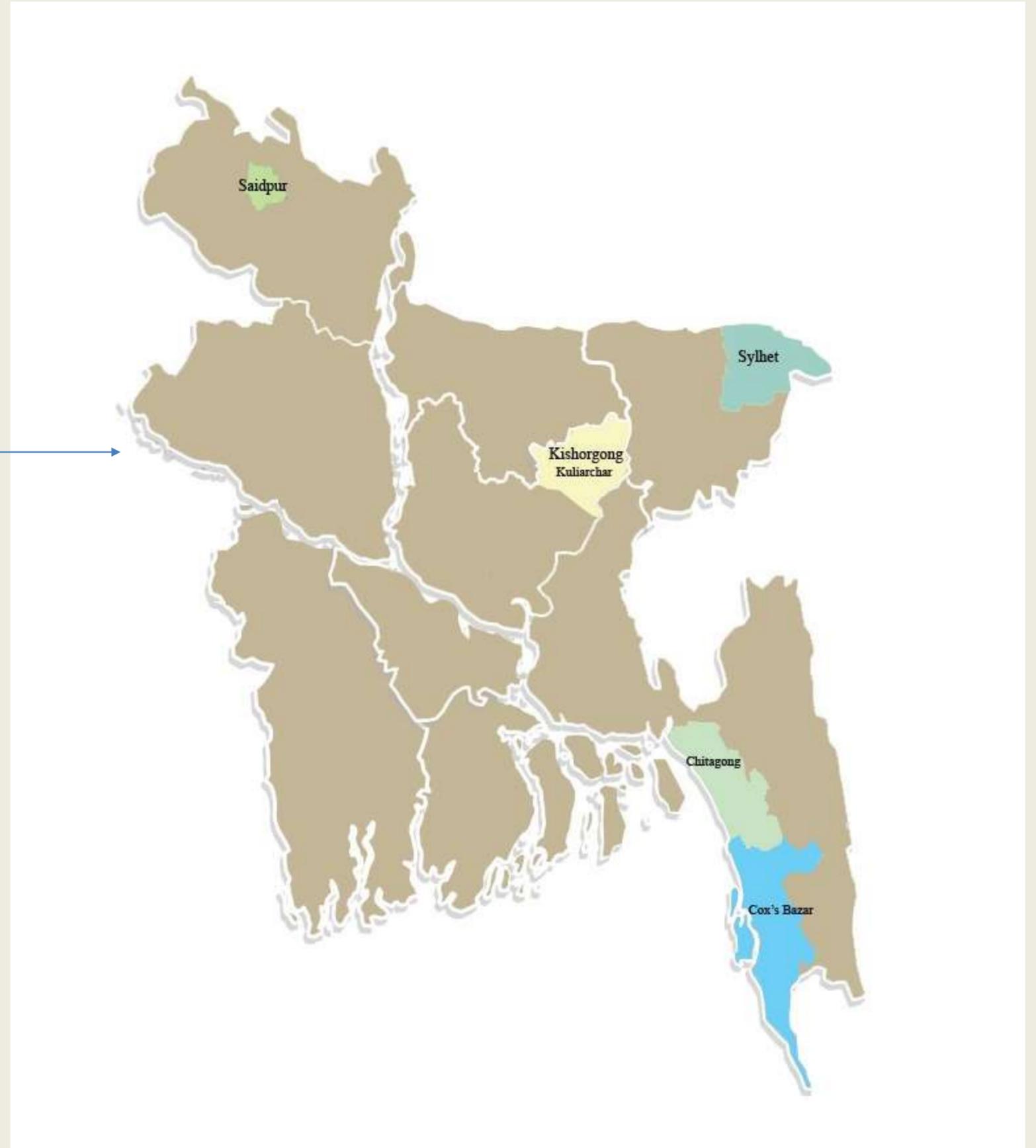


Dried Fish in Bangladesh

- ❑ Comprises marine and freshwater fish.
- ❑ Dried fish are of critical nutritional, economic, and sociocultural value to millions in the country.
- ❑ Produce 62,561 metric tonnes of dried fish in 2019-20 (DoF, 2021)
- ❑ Exporting dried fish primarily to the Middle East, the UK, Hong Kong
- ❑ Import dried fish primarily from India, Myanmar, Thailand, and Oman.



Study Sites





Dried Fish Processing

Labour intensive

Highly gendered

Male and children

Roles are specific

Migrated

Labour Arrangements

- ❑ Diverse labour arrangements are practiced in the fish processing sector that critically impact labourers' rights and wellbeing.
- ❑ Major labour arrangements are-
 - Season-contract: all season-contract labourers are male
 - Daily wage labour: the majority of the daily wage labourers are female
 - Fish contract: all contractors are male, whereas the labourers are predominantly female
 - Casual workers: typically, the casual workers are either children or females who are hired for a limited time or processing particular amount of fish



Recruitment



Absence of any uniform and standard recruitment system.

Informal and depend on processor's wish

Family and locality ties play critical roles

Recommendation of existing labour

Absence of any formal recruitment agreement

Compensation for termination of contract labour depends on the employer's wish.

Working Hours & Schedule

Season-contract labourers work 24/7

Daily labourers typically work 11-12 hours daily

No overtime payment

No fixed work schedule, especially in the marine sector.

Workers have to report to work whenever the processor calls.

Any denial or missing work call affects future work calls.

Work schedule depends on the supply of raw fish.



Wage criteria and Payment Systems

Wage criteria

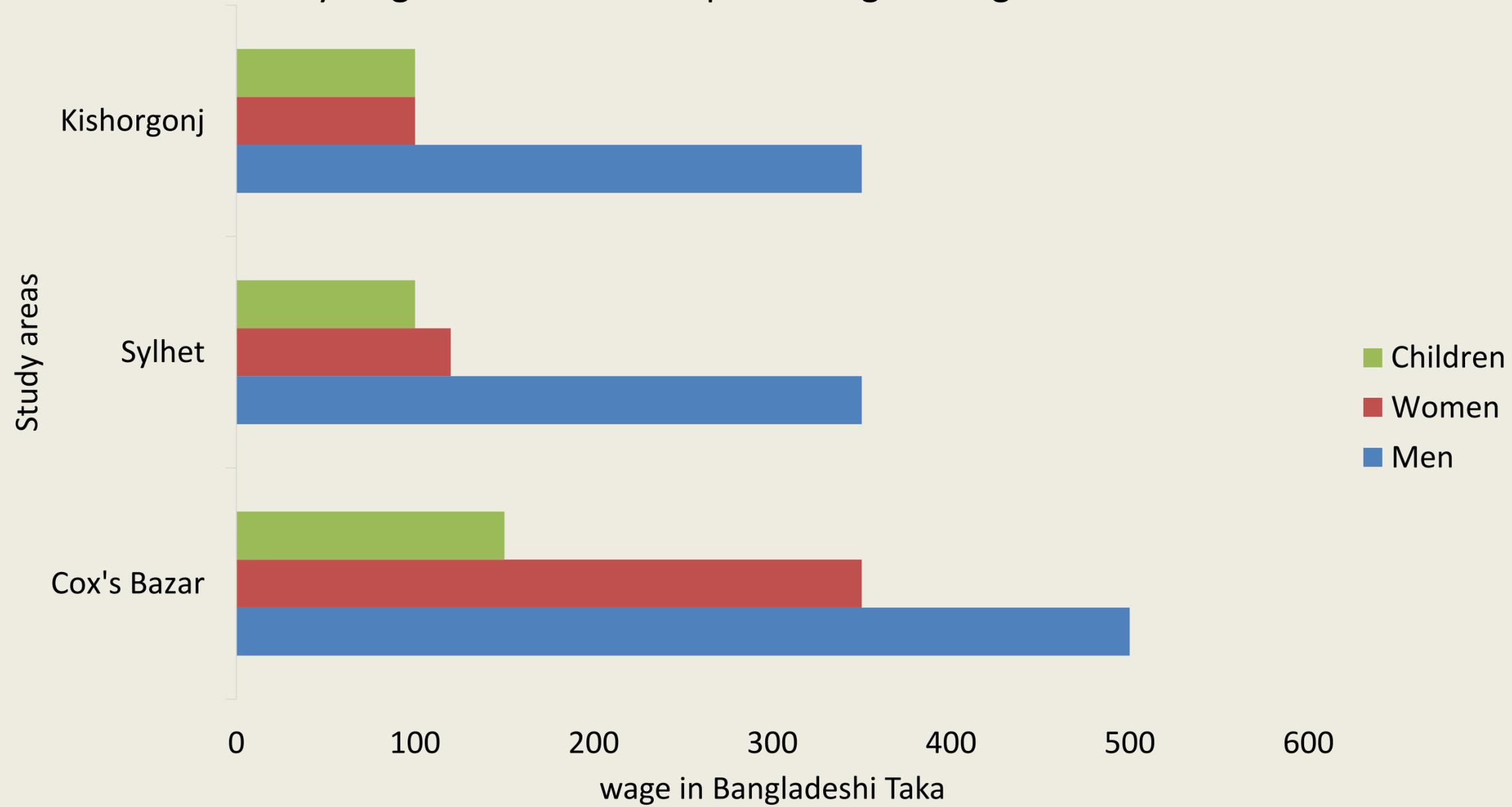
- The payment criteria are highly diverse and complex; a single processing unit can have multiple payment criteria.
- Major criteria deciding the wage -
 - Day
 - Fish
 - Bag
 - *Motka* (earthen pot)
- The employer typically decides the payment criteria and the wage.

Payment system

- Wage is paid in –
 - Cash
 - Kind
 - Partial cash and partial kind
- Processor decides the mode of payment

Wage & Benefits...

Daily wage in the dried fish processing in Bangladesh



Wage & Benefits...

- **Benefits in addition to wage/salary:**
 - Accommodation
 - Meals
 - Advanced payment
- These benefits are only given to the season-contract labourers, all of whom are male.
- Many labourers found these benefits a way of further exploitation of the labour





Working Conditions

- Work long hours under the sun causing frequent headache
- No supply of protective equipment, e.g., hand gloves resulting in skin diseases
- Lack of proper sanitation facilities
- Work in an unhygienic environment
- Many processing units lack a supply of pure drinking water
- No space for rest during the break

Living conditions

- Living an inhuman lives
- Lacks basic livelihood essentials
- Struggle with meeting daily needs
- Recent commodity price hikes make their survival struggle more difficult
- Majority of the processing labourers especially live in a rented house or in the *Khas* land surrounding the processing zones



Rights mechanism

- Lack of execution of existing labour law and standards
- No effective in-formal rights mechanism
- No effective dispute resolution mechanism
- For any dispute resolution, labourers have to go to the processors association which typically favours the processor.
- In the absence of a labourers association, there is no institution of bargaining on behalf of the labourers



Summary



Processing labourers

- Labour intensive
- Most marginalized group of the society
- Discrimination in recruitment based on gender
- Absence of any work agreement



Working & living conditions

- Long working hours
- No overtime payment
- Unhygienic environment
- Skin & urinary diseases
- Exploiting oneself for survival



Job security

- Highly unstable
- Irregular
- Lack of suitable alternative livelihood



Discrimination

Discrimination in wage and benefits based on-

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity

Thank You

