

Kaiputra

A Pig Rearing
Community



Kaiputra

A Pig Rearing Community



Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

2019

Imprint
Kaiputra
A Pig Rearing Community

Text

Philip Gain and Sabrina Miti Gain

Cover Photos and Design

Philip Gain

Photo Credits

Philip Gain: All photos except those contributed by Prosad Sarker and Limon Hira.

Prosad Sarker: Pages 1, 29, 51, 57 (bottom); Limon Hira: Page 73

Page layout

Borsha Chiran and Prosad Sarker

Published by

Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

Green Valley, Flat No. 2A, House No. 147/1 (2nd Floor)

Green Road, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

T: 88-02-58153846, F: 88-02-48112109

E: sehd@sehd.org, www.sehd.org

Published: 2019

Printed by: Jahan Traders

ISBN: 978-984-94339-1-0

Price: Tk.100 US\$5

Copyright © Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD)

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union and ICCO COOPERATION. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the publisher and can no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union and ICCO COOPERATION.

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotes used in connection with reviews and articles written for publication in magazines or newspapers, no part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced, stored in retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without prior written permission of the author and the publisher.

Contents

Imprint	ii
Preface	iv-v
Key Words	vi
Executive Summary	3-5
Why is this Study	5-6
Study Locations	6
Location Map	7
Methodology	8-9
Limits of the Study	9
Findings	11-45
Annexes	
Annex—A: Basic data on the Kaiputra villages surveyed (At a glance)	46-48
Annex—B: Kaiputra villages studied	49-51
Annex—C: Kaiputra villages turning into fishing hamlets	52
Problem Analysis, Changes, Needs and Aspirations	59-67
Case studies	
Dilip Mondol: A Bona Fide Kaiputra Trader	33-37
Kajulia Beel: A Haven for Pigs	43-45
From Pig Herding to Fish Farming	53-55
Nikhil Mondol Wants to Say ‘No’ to Herding Pigs	56-58
Non-traditional Pig Herders of North-center	68-69
Gilbert Boiragi: An Outsider in Pig Trade	72
Pigs’ End Consumers	73-74

Preface

Kaiputra is new to the lexicon of the pig rearing community. Kaiputra replaces widely-known word Kawra, a derogatory term to identify the pig rearing community. The Kaiputras are generally despised in the society because they rear pigs, an animal ‘filthy’ to the Muslim majority. They are considered ‘untouchables’ to the majority and to the upper caste Hindus. This community, basically Hindus, is concentrated in 41 villages in the South-western districts of Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna. Their guesstimated population is 12,000.

No matter wherever you see a herd of black swine in the open field of Bangladesh, which may not be owned by someone from the Kaiputra community, the rakhals (herders) in almost all cases are sure to come from the Kaiputra villages in Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna districts. The rakhals are the ones who perform the most difficult job to manage the herds of pigs in the open. Unlike any other job, they spend day and night in rains and cold and under the scorching sun in the open field to feed the pigs. They must also guard the pigs while feeding or sleeping.

The pigs normally feed on wildy grown weeds, roots, tubers and insects. A herd of pigs consume these wild foods in beels (swamps) and roadside from dawn to dusk (12 to 14 hours), while the rakhals generally eat twice a day. They walk with the pigs all day and retreat in makeshift tents to rest for the night. One of them [by rotation] keep watching the pigs all night so that no pig can slip out of the herd. There are other troubles in the field. Every rakhal in his life time encounters robbers, local thugs and harassment of land owners. Their money can be robbed, they can be scolded and beaten.

There is a very little research attention or interest to this tiny community that remain mostly invisible. People in general are taken aback or amused when they see a herd of pigs feeding or en route from one place to another. The pigs—the new-born and the older ones—feed and keep walking. A herd may be in Gopalganj beels from November to April and then in Kushtia, an elevated district, during the monsoon. The pigs are raised in the open mainly for meat that is in high demand in Dhaka. Of course, relatively cheap pork is consumed by the non-Muslims throughout the country.

We had an objective to study the Kaiputras, the villages they come from and conditions of their villages, difficulties they face in their everyday life and in running their business, their socio-economic conditions, etc. The concentrations of our study were their villages in Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna districts. We also followed numerous herds of pigs to see and photograph them in the fields. We were stunned to see the behaviour of the pigs and how disciplined they are. There is no doubt the pigs have a social life in their herds. We witnessed first-hand how “Pigs are among the most intelligent and inquisitive mammals, second perhaps only among the great apes.” (Harari 2014: 283).

At the same time we found how the Kaiputras and their families are indulged in poverty. Rearing pigs require good sum of capital. Because it is not considered as any business like fishery or poultry, the owners of pigs’ herds are denied bank loans. They are compelled to borrow money from the money lenders (mahajan) at a very high interest rate. Both owners

of the herds of pigs and rakhals stay indebted. Then social stigma attached with rearing pigs belittles the community to their neighbours (both Hindus and Muslims). All these factors keep them falling behind in education and exploring alternative employment.

An important part of this monograph are fresh finds of the study of the Kaiputra community that are still actively involved in their traditional occupation. They are concentrated in 41 villages and their population in these villages is 6,438. There are 29 other villages where the Kaiputras have changed their occupation and have given up herding hogs in the open fields. Concentrated in Satkhira, they all have turned into fishing villages. They hide their traditional identity to escape dishonour that Kaiputras get from their neighbours.

When we planned the study, a figure of Kaiputra was talked about—100,000 (one lac). But when our teams went on the ground and gathered primary information, we found that the actual size of the Kaiputra population is much lower.

Studying the Kaiputras, their villages and the herds in the fields was not easy. Several teams worked in the three districts of Kaiputra concentration and also interviewed the rakhals in the fields where they feed the pigs. The teams comprised of Probin Chisim, Sylvester Tudu, Sanjoy Kairi, Bikash Hajong, Joseph Hasda, Prosad Sarker, Arvin Adhikary, Partha Mandal, Shakty Mandal, Devprosad Mallick and Goutam Basak. They worked very hard walking through the villages and the beels for interview of the people of the Kaiputra community, the rakhals, inventories and see for themselves their life in the field. Among them Partha Mandal and Shakty Mandal, two young educated students were from among the Kaiputra community. They deserve special thanks and appreciation for their hard work, devotion and zeal.

My other colleagues who supervised training in the field and field surveyors include Syeda Amirun Nuzhat, project coordinator and Quazi Monzila Sultana, research and documentation officer. Rabiullah, SEHD's research staff contributed a case study, proofread the entire text and checked information with great patience. I remain thankful to them.

The community members and those involved in the pig rearing business who assisted the SEHD teams with great patience include Dilip Mondol, Gopal Mondol, Paresh Mondol, Bikash Mondol, Dophamondol, Biswanath Mondol, Liton Mondol, Bipul Mondol, Sufal Mondol, Nilratan Mondol, Panna Rani, Nikhil Mondol, Nittyamondol, Paresh Tikadar, Suresh Tikadar, Tanu Halder, Nripen Mondol, Sripoti Bala, Bikash Mondol, Gilbert Boiragi and many others.

In the production of the book, Prosad Sarker and Md. Mozharul Haque have worked in setting up pages, organizing photos and printing. Babul Kumar Boiragi and Borsha Chiran have assisted the survey team in the field and the production team in the office. Tanvir Ahmed, a data analyst, skilfully entered and analysed the data. Dr. S. G. Hussain, a cartographer prepared the map used in this monograph. Many thanks to them.

We trust that the people of the Kaiputra community and those interested in them will find information presented in this monograph useful.

Philip Gain

Team Leader

Key Words

Baukka: Carrier of beddings and utensils of the Kaiputra team. While rakhals have to guard the pigs all day and night, Baukka cooks meals for them, find a place to set tents and take of beddings and utensils.

Bigha: A traditional unit of measurement of area of a land, commonly used in Nepal, Bangladesh and in a number of states of India. However, in Bangladesh a *bigha* may consist of 52 decimals in one place and 64 decimals in another places.

Kaiputra: A pig rearing community. They take herds of pigs to feed and raise them in open fields, particularly in the swamps. A herd of up to 500 pigs requires up to a dozen of Kaiputras who have special skills to manage pigs. They use numerous sounds and words to communicate with pigs.

Khinjir: In some areas the Muslims call pigs Khinjir, an Arabic word for pigs.

Khona Chhuri: Knife to kill pigs. It is little bigger than normal knife made of iron with wooden handle.

Kawra: Kaiputras are also called Kawra, a derogatory and should be avoided.

Mahajan: Traditional money lenders in rural area. He takes a very high percentage of interest.

Mal: Slang used to mean pigs.

Pal: Bangla word for a herd of pigs.

Rakhal: Ordinary Kaiputra who keep, feed and raise herd of pigs. A rakhal's monthly pay is up to Taka 7500 plus daily allowance of Taka 65. If he has pigs in the herd his monthly pay is lower.

Sarder: Leader of rakhals in a herd of pigs (his monthly salary goes up to Tk. 8,000 plus daily allowance of Taka 65). If a Sarder shares pigs in the herd, his monthly cash pay is lower.

Swine flu: A highly contagious respiratory disease in pigs caused by H1N1 virus. It can be transmitted to humans via contact with infected pigs. This disease was first reported in Mexico. In 2009, swine flu swept through India killing 12 people. Around 200 swine flu-infected patients were identified in Bangladesh in 2009 as well. Swine flu caused severe damage to pig herders in Bangladesh.

Kaiputra

A Pig Rearing Community

The Study Team

Report Writing: Philip Gain and Sabrina Miti Gain

Field Surveyors: Probin Chisim, Sylvester Tudu, Sanjoy Kairi, Bikash Hajong, Joseph Hasda, Prosad Sarker, Arvin Adhikary, Partha Mandal, Shakty Mandal, Devprosod Mallick, Goutam Basak and Dilip Mondol.

Supervision: Philip Gain, Syeda Amirun Nuzhat and Quazi Monzila Sultana.

Data entry and analysis: Tanvir Ahmed



A research team in Bhaina Mondol para, a Kaiputra village in Jashore.

The *rakhals* with their *pal* in Narail at the end of a day.



Executive Summary

Kaiputra is a pig rearing community in Bangladesh who are generally despised in the society because they rear pigs, an animal 'filthy' to the Muslim majority. They are considered 'untouchables' to the majority and to the upper caste Hindus. Widely known as Kawra, which is considered derogatory and synonymous to verbal abuse, they have renamed themselves 'Kaiputra'. This community, basically Hindus, is concentrated in the South-western districts of Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna.

In total 46 villages have been surveyed—19 are from 12 unions, five upazilas and one municipality in Jashore district; 21 are from 17 unions in five upazilas in Satkhira district; and six are from six unions in four upazilas in Khulna district. Of these villages, five have now given up herding hogs and have turned in to fishing villages. Twenty-four Kaiputra villages have also been listed that have turned into fishing villages.

According to fresh finds under this study, the people of this community that are still actively involved in their traditional occupation live in 41 villages and all these villages have been surveyed. The population of the Kaiputras in these villages is 6,438 (1,536 households), the majority of whom live in Jashore and Satkhira districts. There are 34 villages where the Kaiputras have changed their occupation and have given up herding hogs in the open fields. Concentrated in Satkhira, they all have turned into fishing villages. They hide their traditional identity to escape dishonour that the Kaiputras get from their neighbours.

Overall, 45.21% of the Kaiputra population comprises of men whereas 43.65% are women and 11.14% are children, which is also reflected in the sex ratio at 103.59. The average Kaiputra household size is 4.19, which is little higher than the national average of 4.06 (HIES 2016).

Illiteracy rate is extremely high in the Kaiputra community at 78.41%. Only 21.59% of the Kaiputra population is literate, which is significantly lower than the national literacy rate at 70.38% (HIES 2016). On the other hand, 12.84% of the Kaiputras completed primary school, 4.48% completed secondary education and less than 2% completed Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations.

The majority of the Kaiputras lives in tin-shed houses (65.29%). The other two common structure of houses are *kutchha* and semi-*pucka*. Only 3.45% of the Kaiputras have *pucka* houses whereas 11.3% households have *pucka* houses at the national level (BBS 2018: 62). Moreover, 6.56% Kaiputras still live in *jhupri* houses.

An average of 89.02% of Kaiputra families drink water from tube wells. Overall, 2.98% of the Kaiputra families drink water from deep tube well whereas Kaiputras in Satkhira district do not have access to deep tube wells at all.

The majority of the Kaiputras (86.55%) use ring or slab and 7.03% of them use *pucka* latrines. A portion of the Kaiputra families (4.35%) still use *kutchha* latrines, which are not sanitary and 2.3% of Kaiputras defecate in the open spaces or drains. A significant percentage of the Kaiputra families (31.98%) share one toilet with two or three families. Some families have to share their toilets with four to five families (10.94%).

There is no electricity supply in 18 out of 41 Kaiputra villages, which consists of 33.37% of the total Kaiputra families. In comparison, 24.08% families do not have access to electricity at the national level (HIES 2016). The majority of the Kaiputra families (66.63%) have access to electricity but a critical concern is interrupted electricity supply; electricity is available in Kaiputra households for less than 17 hours in all three of the districts.

The most common energy source for Kaiputra families is wood (98.24%). The Kaiputras use firewood mostly for cooking purposes (98.24%). Kerosene is used mainly as an alternative to electricity for light (81.02%) and the rest 18.98% families use it as fuel for cooking. Kerosene, cylinder gas, solar energy and even firewood are used as a source of light due to the frequent power cuts. Overall, 34% Kaiputra families use solar energy, which is used as a source of light.

The main occupation of 60.46% of the Kaiputra families is pig rearing or pig business but nearly 39.54% families have changed their traditional occupation. The other main occupations of the Kaiputras are agricultural labour (10.75%) and rickshaw or van pulling or *nosimon* (motorized rickshaw) driving (9.12%). Overall 3.11% families shifted to fishing business. Overall only 1.22% Kaiputra families provide government or private services.

The majority of the Kaiputra women are housewives (90.45%) in the three districts but overall 4.83% women are involved in the pig rearing business. Women are involved in other occupations such as agricultural labour, begging, non-agricultural labour, etc. in less than 5% families.

The monthly income from rearing pigs is Taka 8,925 on average. Only the Kaiputras who are service holders, village doctors and lawyers earn more than pig herders. On average, the highest monthly income of the Kaiputras was found to be Taka 14,243 and their lowest monthly income is Taka 5,046.

The percentage of the Kaiputra families who are in debt is considerably high, which is 43.41% on average. Nearly 37% of the Kaiputra families have savings in local associations or banks. On the other hand, only 4.22% of the Kaiputra families have bank accounts. The average amount of loan taken by the Kaiputra amounts to Taka 30,065 and average savings is only Taka 5,003.

On average, 64.56% of the Kaiputra families own only their homestead and no agricultural land. The average size of homestead is only 4.15 decimals. On average, 14.44% of the Kaiputras are completely landless. On the other hand, 13.89% of them live on *khas* land in Jashore and Satkhira, which means they do not own any homestead or agricultural land.

The common problems of the Kaiputra community are dearth of capital, debt and *dadan*, inequality in rights, lack of employment, insecurity, limited open market, lack of access to electricity, occupational hazards, social discrimination, intimidation from the influential, problem related to *smashan* (cremation ground), pig diseases, landlessness, little access to government stipends and services and malnutrition among others.

Why is this Study

- The Kaiputras are one of the excluded communities of Bangladesh, least attended in research and human rights work. They are also least visible. They become visible in the open fields or on the road side when they feed the herds of pigs. People generally see them from a distance and despise them because they deal with a ‘filthy’ mammal—pig or swine. The research was initiated to make the Kaiputra visible.
- Mapping the Kaiputras and their villages. Information about their population was highly controversial. When the research was initiated, a population figure that was talked about was around 100,000 (one lac). But there was no reliable sources of such claim. So the research targeted to map all the villages inhabited by the Kaiputras. The finds were stunning—the population of the Kaiputra does not exceed 12,000 who live in 75 villages. In 34 of these villages Kaiputras have given up their traditional occupation of pig rearing and have been engaging in fishing and fish business.
- Expose the unique difficulties the Kaiputras face in their business and in the field when

they keep the herds of pigs in the open fields. It turns out that pig rearing requires a large sum of money. The Kaiputras who have herds are denied bank loans, one reason being pig rearing is not any recognised occupation. The daily toil of the Kaiputras who keep and feed the pigs in the open field is extremely difficult and hazardous.

- Linking the Kaiputras with other excluded groups and actors through the research, capacity building efforts, networking and interaction.
- Identification of credible community representative(s) from within the community to facilitate access and provide advisory inputs.

Study Locations

The Kaiputra, actively involved in their traditional occupation, have been found living in 41 villages. In addition, 34 villages have been found with Kaiputra population but they are no more involved in rearing pigs commercially. The research teams reached all these villages and they found no other village with Kaiputra community. However, they carried out inventory and FGDs in 46 villages and gathered general information on other villages.

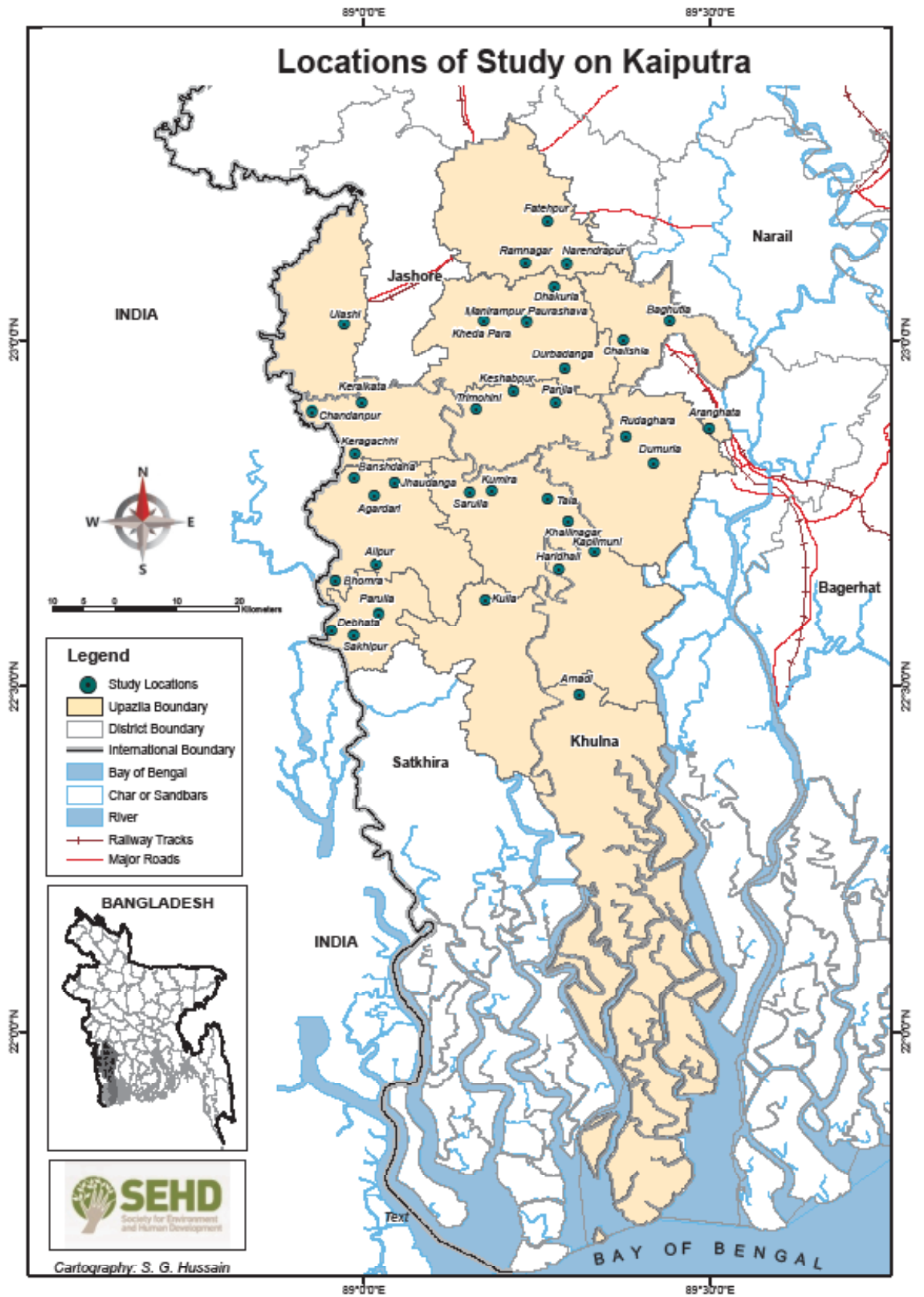
Jashore district: The Kaiputras live in 19 villages in 12 unions, five upazilas and one municipality in this district as seen in Annex-B. Their households in Jashore number 851 with a population of 3,582. They own 45.9 acres of land and 12,281 pigs in herds or in households.

Satkhira district: The Kaiputras live in 21 villages in 17 unions in five upazilas in Satkhira district. In total 626 households with 2,585 Kaiputra people live in this district. They own 37.07 acres of land and 1615 pigs in 10 herds.

Khulna district: The Kaiputras live in six villages in six unions in four upazilas in Khulna district. In total 206 households with 863 kaiputra people live in this district. They own 14.53 acres of land and 2400 pigs in 14 herds.

In addition to the Kaiputra villages that are still active in pigs' business, there are 34 villages—23 in Satkhira, eight in Khulna and three in Jashore. All these three districts with Kaiputra villages that supply most of the *rakhals* are located in the South-west of Bangladesh. This area is close to India and in the past had significant percentage of Hindus. Traditionally the people of this region are used to seeing pigs' herds from time immemorial. The Kaiputras live alongside Rishi, a community considered untouchables.

Locations of Study on Kaiputra



Methodology

A research team visited several Kaiputra villages in Jashore to begin preparation for the study on the Kaiputra. They spoke to the elderly people and village leaders to get an idea about the number of Kaiputra villages, their locations and the locations of the herds of pigs in the field. They also assisted in locating possible young people from among the Kaiputra community who could be recruited for the study. A number of herd keepers were also consulted in the field to understand the work condition and difficulties they face at work. As part of preparation for the study, *rakhals* (herd keepers) were interviewed in the open field. At the same time they were photographed quite extensively.

The research team was composed of 10 project staff and two young educated members from the Kaiputra community. They used an eight-page structured questionnaire developed in consultation with the Kaiputras. It was tested in the field prior to final use. The questionnaire was used primarily in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). At the village level FGDs, the questionnaire was used to gather primary information on locations, demography, occupations, income status and its sources, education, history and culture, housing, health and sanitation, land status, assets other than land, access to services, financial status, access to potable water, electricity and other energy sources, access to social safety nets, strengths or capacities of communities, participation in local government and citizens' organizations, changes that have taken place, problem-tree, needs and aspirations of the community.

Before an FGD in a village, the team of surveyors did a quick inventory to gather names of heads of household, number of family members, number of children, size of land the entire village owned, size of *khas* (public) land the entire village occupied and number of pigs and herds of pigs the villagers owned. With basic information on a village in hand, a research team conducted FGDs effectively.

What was special of the FGDs was that a team of at least two members spent at least a day in a village. Given there was no comprehensive list of Kaiputra villages available, the research teams consulted the people of any Kaiputra village they visited about Kaiputra villages nearby. When a team visited a village, it engaged knowledgeable persons of the village to guide and gather information. They were financially compensated for their time.

The research teams had their base in Jashore and Satkhira towns. They used to spend their nights at guest houses of NGOs and dine in hotels and guest houses. They encountered no difficulties in gathering information. The community people were cooperative and spontaneous in giving information and in taking part in FGDs. Given the FGDs were organized in open space in a village, 15 to 30 individuals would assemble.

Around 50% of the FGD participants were women.

The case studies on the individuals—owners of herds (both Kaiputra and non-Kaiputra), and *rakhals* in particular—were carefully and meticulously done. For case studies, the team members visited different locations and followed some herds of pigs. The case studies help understand the pains the herders undergo in their daily life.

The Kaiputra villages, herds of pigs feeding in the fields, herds en route from one place to another, the *rakhals* and the owners of the herds were quite extensively photographed and filmed. While some photographs have been displayed in a photography exhibition and used in this monograph, a large number of photographs remain in stock for future use.

Limits of the Study

- The study was based on FGDs. A household survey could have generated even more concrete and detailed database.
- Only two from among the Kaiputra community could be recruited in the research teams because no other educated persons could be located.
- Family heads could not be found in many cases because they were out in the fields with herds of pigs. Family members particularly women gave information. In some cases information were gathered from the neighbours.



A herd of pigs in Narail.



The pigs follow a *rakhal*.

Findings

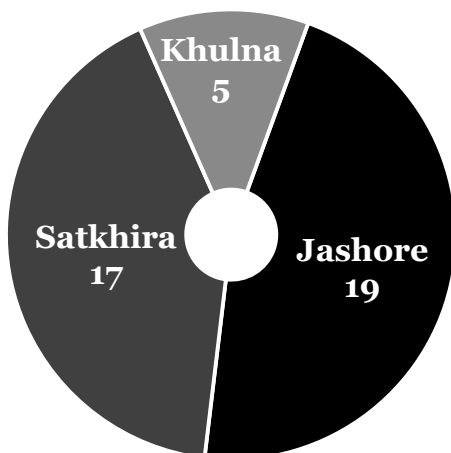
Population

The Kaiputra community is concentrated in three South-western districts of Bangladesh—Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna. The Kaiputras are still actively involved in their traditional occupation of rearing pigs in 41 villages of these three districts. The total population of Kaiputras in these villages is 6,438, the majority living in Jashore district. There are 1,536 households that are still involved in rearing domesticated black pigs. An average Kaiputra household size is 4.19, which is little higher than the national average of 4.06 (HIES 2016).

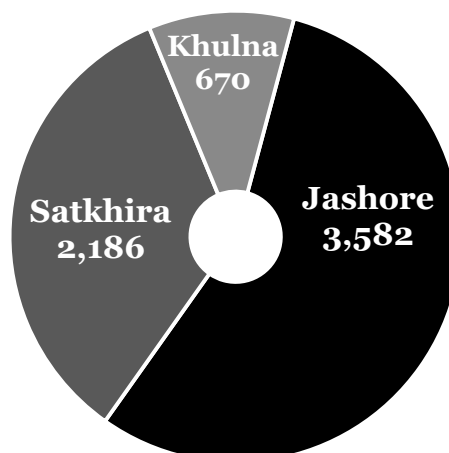
Table 1: Villages, households, population and average size of households

District	No. of villages	% of villages	No. of HHs	Population	Average HH size
Jashore	19	46.34	851	3,582	4.21
Satkhira	17	41.46	531	2,186	4.17
Khulna	5	12.20	154	670	4.16
Total	41	100	1,536	6,438	4.19

No. of villages



Population



No. of HHs

■ Jashore ■ Satkhira ■ Khulna

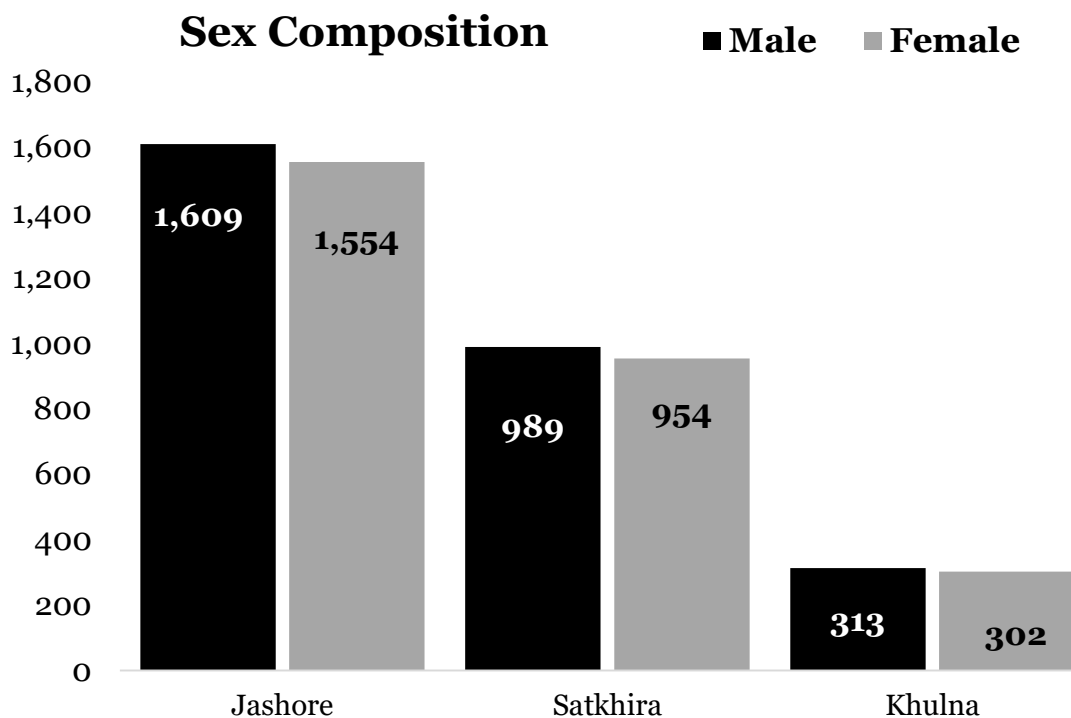


Sex Composition

Overall, 45.21% of the Kaiputra population comprises of men whereas 43.65% are women and 11.14% are children which is also reflected in the sex ratio. The sex ratio of men and women, determined by calculating the number of male against every 100 female, is 103.59 for Kaiputras, which is slightly higher than the sex ratio at the national level. According to the BBS census report of 2011, the ratio of men and women is 100.3 at the national level. In all three of the districts, there are more men than women in the Kaiputra villages.

Table 2: Sex composition

Sex	Districts			Total	%
	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna		
Male	1,609	989	313	2,911	45.21
Female	1,554	954	302	2,810	43.65
Children	419	243	55	717	11.14
Total	3,582	2,186	670	6,438	100
Sex Ratio	103.54	103.67	103.64	103.59	



Education

Illiteracy rate is extremely high in the Kaiputra community. Nearly 78.4% of the Kaiputra population is illiterate and 21.59% is literate, which is significantly lower than the national literacy rate at 70.38% (HIES 2016). The lowest literacy rate among the Kaiputras is 17.01% in Satkhira whereas the overall literacy rate in the district is 52.07% (Statistical Year Book Bangladesh 2015: 36).

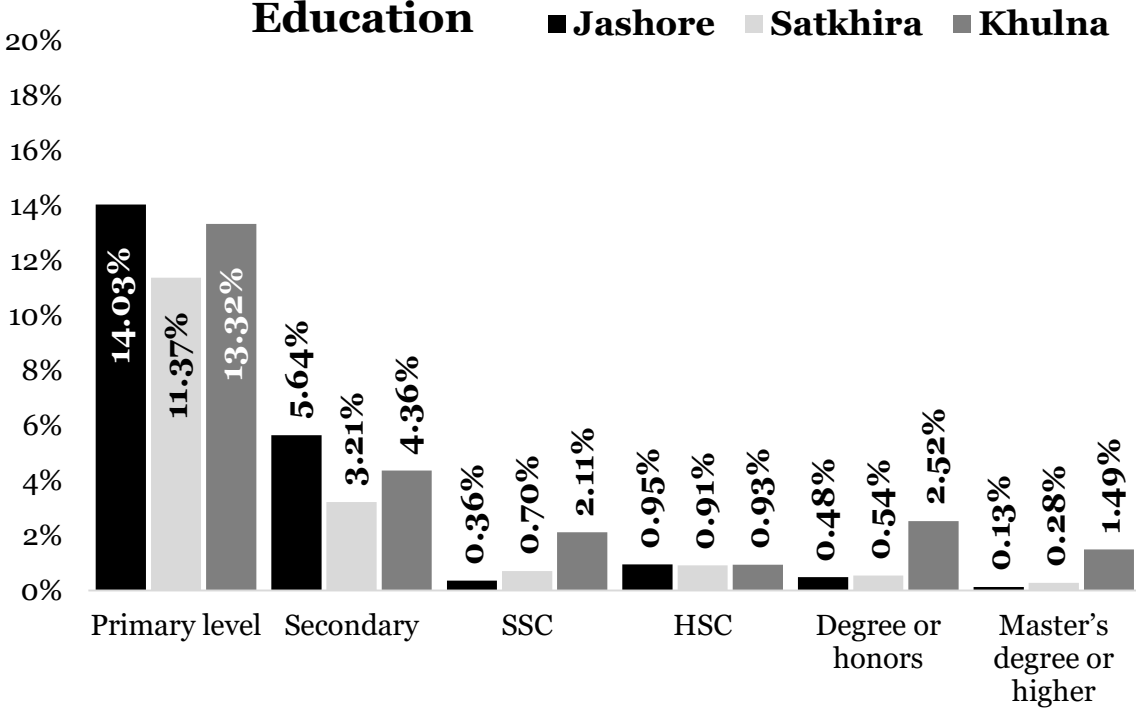
Only 12.84% of the Kaiputras are studying in primary school whereas primary education rate is 48.52% at the national level (BBS Census 2011). Education rate of the Kaiputras in the secondary school and above is even lower. Only 4.48% Kaiputras have completed secondary education and less than 2% completing Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations. In comparison, 31.9% have completed secondary and SSC examination at the national level (BBS Census 2011). Education rate at different levels is the lowest in Satkhira except in the case of completion of SSC examination, which is the lowest in Jashore (0.36%).

Overall, a meagre 0.76% of Kaiputras have completed under-graduation studies and 0.36% have a Master's degree. In both cases, the highest percentage of Kaiputras who have completed honours (2.52%) and Master's studies (1.49%) is in Khulna while 12.68% people have attained a honours degree or above at the national level (Statistical Year Book Bangladesh 2018: 471).

Table 3: Education

Status	District			Total (%)
	Jashore (%)	Satkhira (%)	Khulna (%)	
Studying	21.59	17.01	24.73	20.08
Illiterate	78.41	82.99	75.26	79.92
Primary level	14.03	11.37	13.32	12.84
Secondary	5.64	3.21	4.36	4.48
SSC	0.36	0.70	2.11	0.71
HSC	0.95	0.91	0.93	0.93
Degree or honors	0.48	0.54	2.52	0.76
Master's degree or higher	0.13	0.28	1.49	0.36

Education



Illiteracy and studying





Bhaina, a Kaiputra village in Jashore.



A child taking care of sandals of other kids outside a classroom in Bhaina, a Kaiputra village.

Housing

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), there are four categories of housing structures—*jhupri* (temporary structure made of plastic, polythene, board, scraps, etc.); *kutchra* (semi-durable structure with wall and roof made of bamboo, wood, leaves, etc. that require some annual upgrading); *semi-pucka* (semi-permanent structure with brick wall and corrugated sheet roof) and *pucka* (permanent structure with brick wall and concrete roof). Another category of housing structure—tin-shed—has been added in the study, which has corrugated sheet roof and wall.

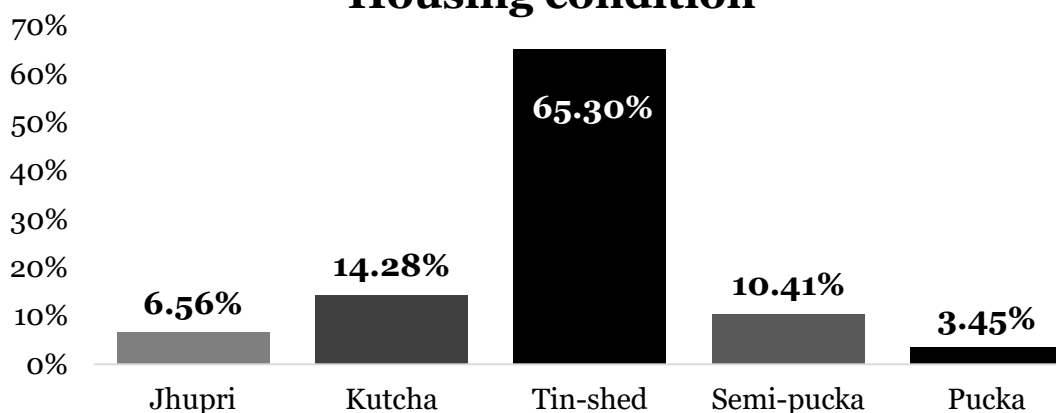
The majority of the Kaiputras live in tin-shed houses (65.30%). The other two common structure of houses are *kutchra* and *semi-pucka*. Only 3.45% Kaiputras have *pucka* houses whereas 11.3% households have *pucka* houses at the national level. Only 2.9% households have *jhupri* houses at the national level (Statistical Year Book Bangladesh 2018: 62). In comparison, 6.56% Kaiputras live in *jhupri* houses.

The highest percentage of Kaiputra families that have *jhupri* (10.27%) and *kutchra* (16.71%) houses live in Satkhira district. On the contrary, 70.11% of the Kaiputra families in Jashore live in tin-shed houses. Kaiputra families in Khulna have the highest percentage of *semi-pucka* (26.53%) and *pucka* (9.59%) houses.

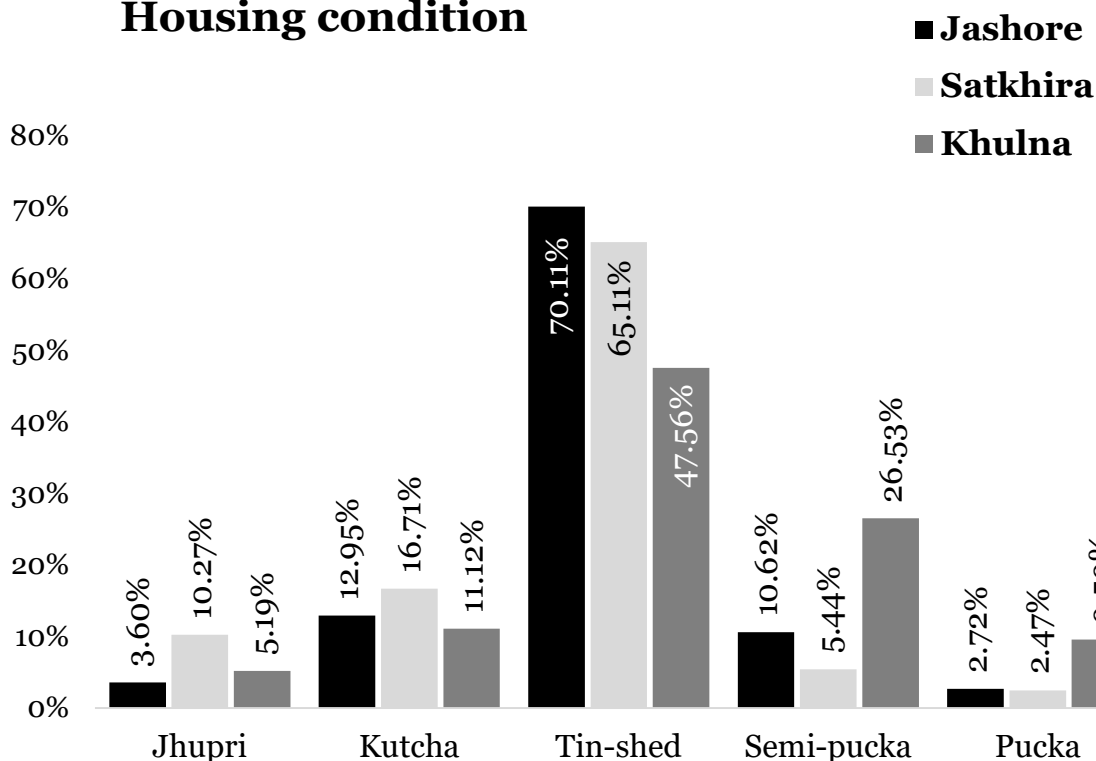
Table 4: Housing condition (% of families)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Jhupri	3.60	10.27	5.19	6.56
Kutchra	12.95	16.71	11.12	14.28
Tin-shed	70.11	65.11	47.56	65.30
Semi-pucka	10.62	5.44	26.53	10.41
Pucka	2.72	2.47	9.59	3.45

Housing condition



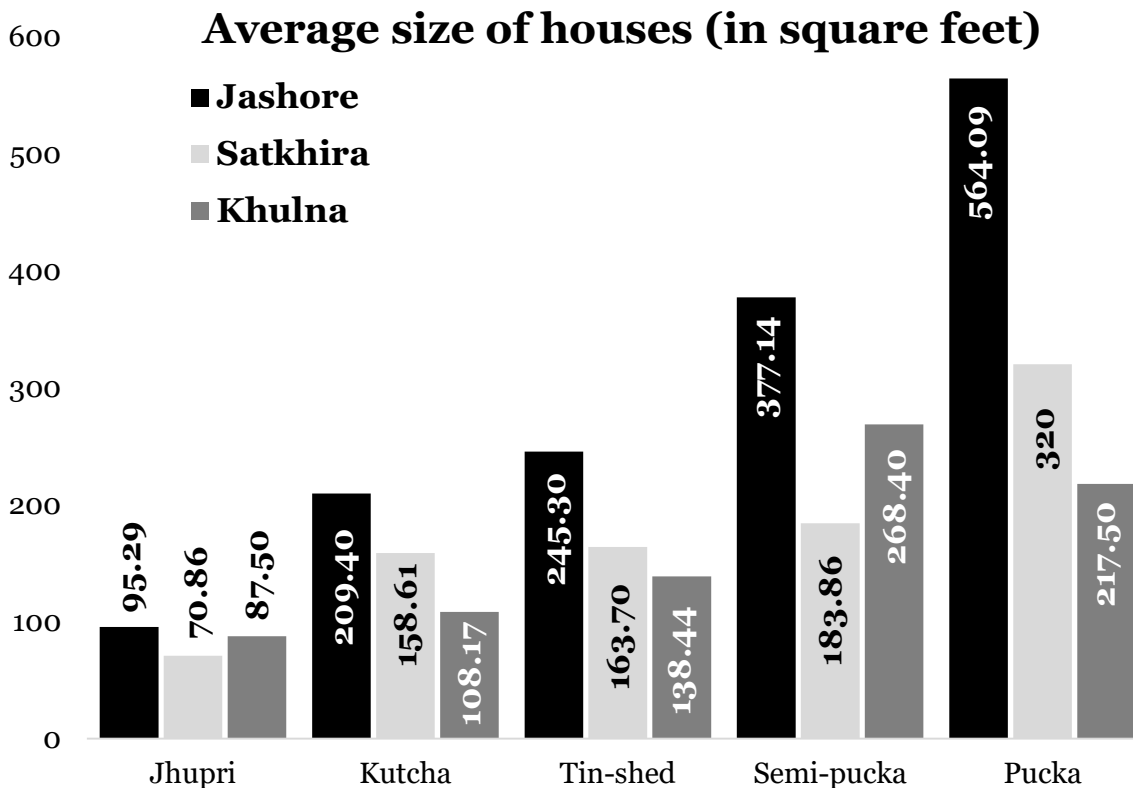
Housing condition



The size of a house usually increases depending on the durability of the house. In Kaiputra villages, *jhupri* houses are the smallest in size (80.98 square feet) while *pucka* houses are the biggest (475 square feet) on average. The majority of the Kaiputras live in tin-shed houses, which are on average 201 square feet. All types of Kaiputra houses in Jashore are bigger in size in comparison to houses in the other two districts.

Table 5: Average size of houses (in square feet)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Jhupri	95.29	70.86	87.50	80.98
Kutcha	209.40	158.61	108.17	178.53
Tin-shed	245.30	163.70	138.44	201.84
Semi-pucka	377.14	183.86	268.40	299.73
Pucka	564.09	320.00	217.50	475.00



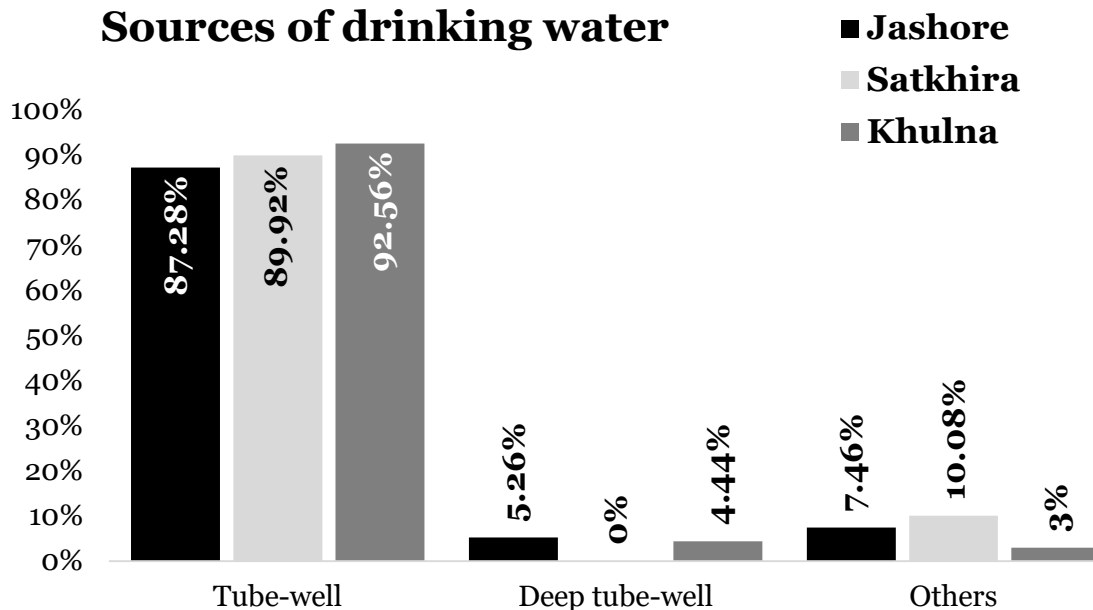
Health and Sanitation Facilities

According to the BBS Census 2011, tube well is the main source of drinking water for 91.1% of the families in the rural areas and 58.6% in the urban areas of Bangladesh (Statistical Year Book Bangladesh 2018: 62). In comparison, on average 89.02% of Kaiputra families drink water from tube wells. Overall 2.98% of the Kaiputra families drink water from deep tube well whereas Kaiputras in Satkhira district do not have access to deep tube wells at all. No Kaiputra family use water from pond for drinking purposes. Since Kaiputras live in villages they have no access to pipeline water.

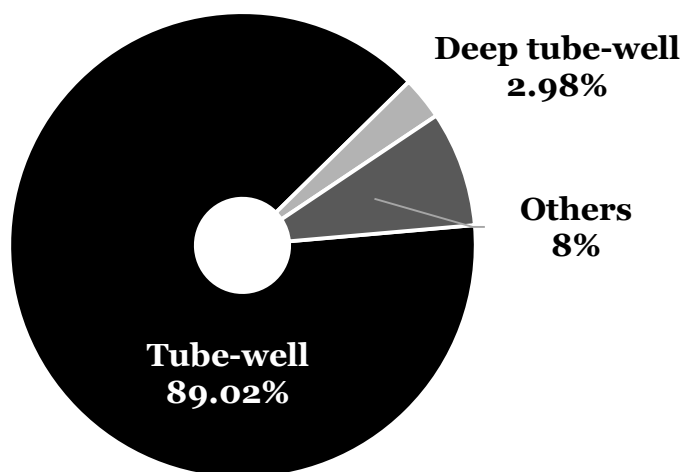
Table 6: Sources of drinking water (% of families)

Sources	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Pond	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Tube-well	87.28	89.92	92.56	89.02
Deep tube-well	5.26	-	4.44	2.98
Pipeline water	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Others	7.46	10.08	3.00	8.00

Sources of drinking water



Sources of drinking water

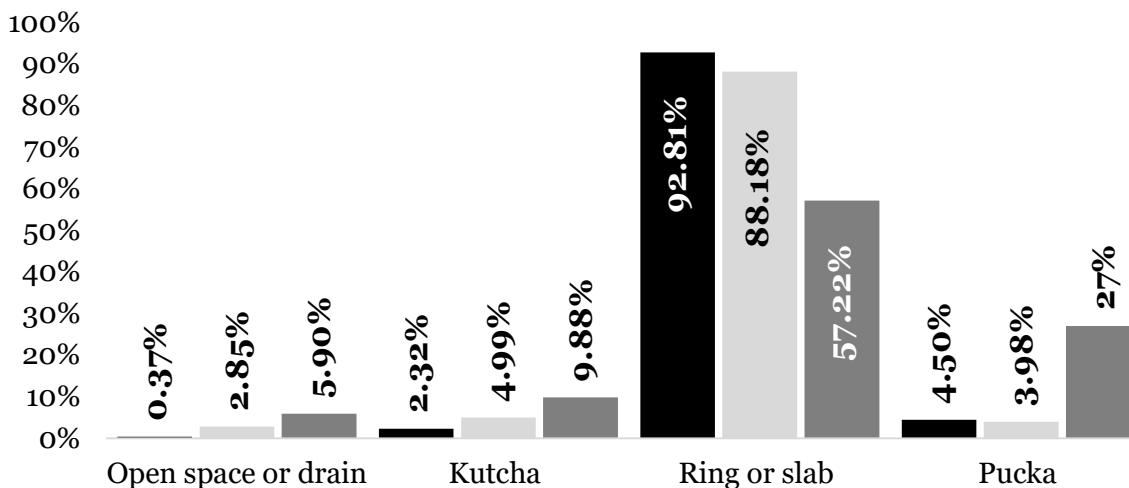


A national average of 61.37% households use sanitary latrine in the country (HIES 2016: xiii). In comparison, the majority of the Kaiputra families (86.55%) use ring or slab and 7.03% of them use *pucka* latrines, which are usually sanitary. However, 2.3% of Kaiputras defecate in open space or drains. In Khulna district, the highest percentage of Kaiputras defecate in the open (5.90%) and at the same time highest percentage of Kaiputras use *pucka* latrines (27%). Access to sanitary latrine is a crucial issue because the Kaiputra pig herders or *rakhals* spend a significant time in the fields while rearing pigs. A portion of Kaiputra families (4.35%) still use *kutchha* latrines, which are not sanitary.

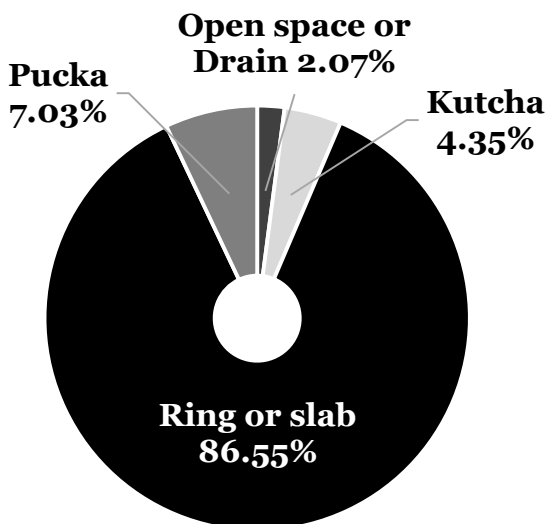
Table 7: Latrine facilities (% of families)

Facilities	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Open space or drain	0.37	2.85	5.90	2.07
Kutchha	2.32	4.99	9.88	4.35
Ring or slab	92.81	88.18	57.22	86.55
Pucka	4.50	3.98	27.00	7.03

Latrine facilities ■ Jashore ■ Satkhira ■ Khulna



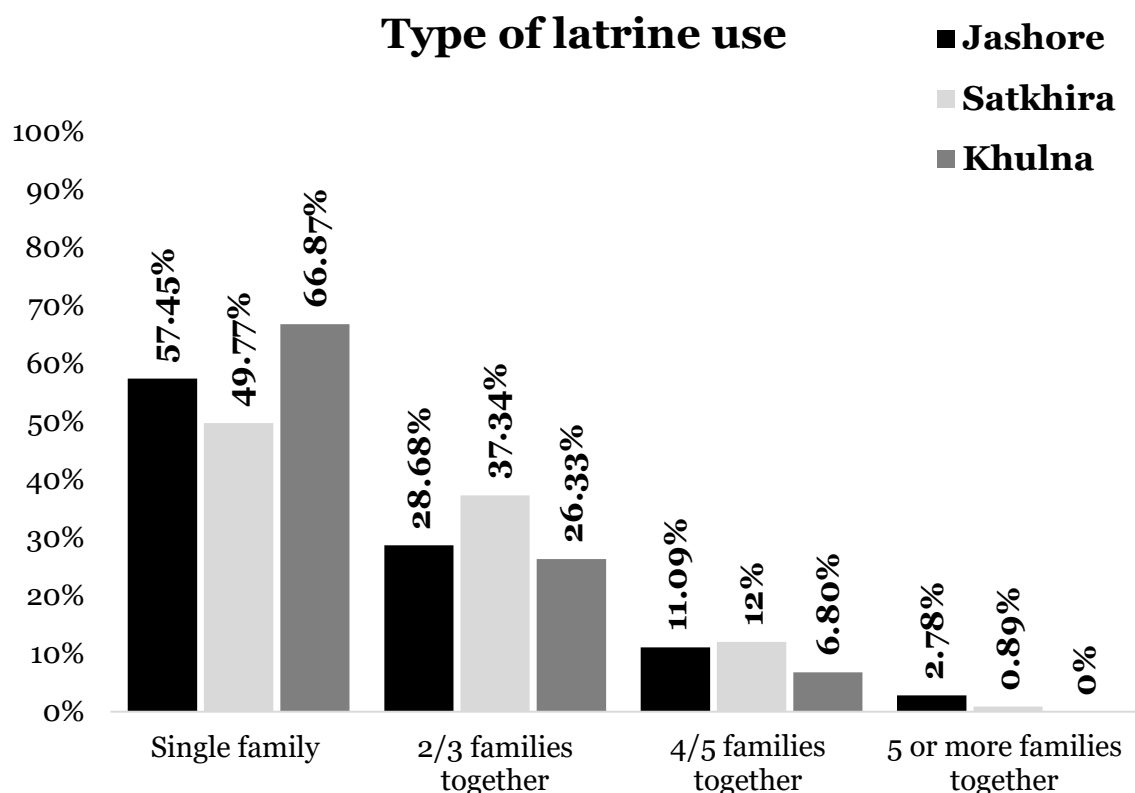
Latrine facilities



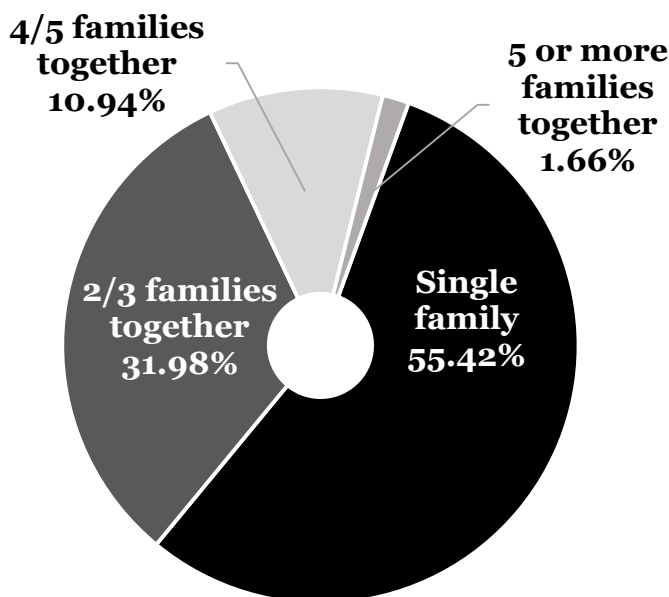
The high percentage of Kaiputras using ring or slab latrine does not necessarily indicate the quality of latrine use because toilets are often shared among multiple families. A significant percentage of the Kaiputra families (31.98%) share one toilet [with two or three families]. Some families have to share their toilets with four to five families (10.94%). On the other hand, more than half of the Kaiputra families (55.42%) do not have to share their toilets with others.

Table 8: Type of latrine use (% of families)

Facilities	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Single family	57.45	49.77	66.87	55.42
2/3 families together	28.68	37.34	26.33	31.98
4/5 families together	11.09	12.00	6.80	10.94
5 or more families together	2.78	0.89	0	1.66



Type of latrine use



Electricity supply

There is no electricity supply in 18 out of 41 Kaiputra villages that comprise 33.37% of the total Kaiputra families. In comparison, 24.08% families do not have access to electricity at the national level (HIES 2016). The majority of the Kaiputra families (66.63%) have access to electricity but the critical issue is interrupted electricity supply. Electricity is available in Kaiputra households for less than an average 17 hours in all three of the districts.

Table 9: Electricity supply

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	(%)
No. of villages with electricity connection	13	6	4	66.63
No. of villages without electricity connection	6	11	1	33.37

Electricity supply

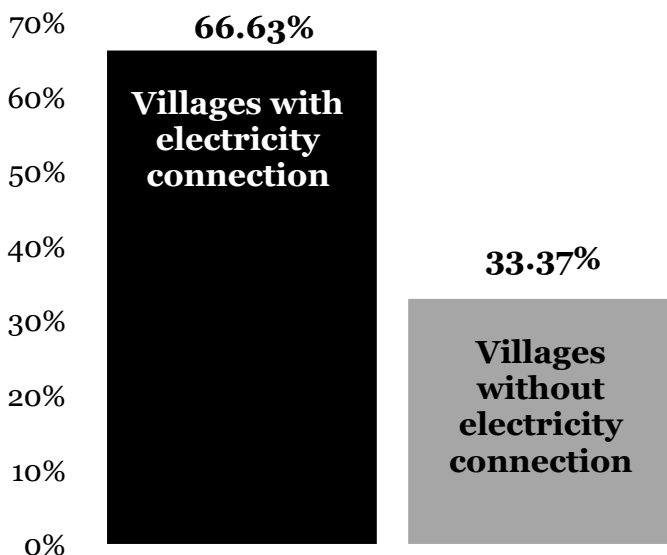
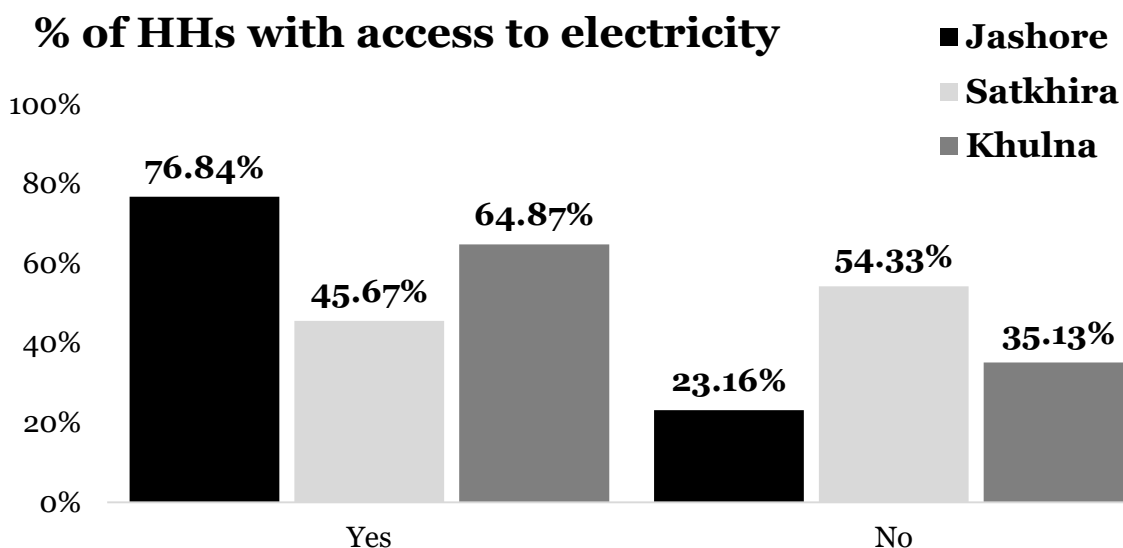


Table 10: Electricity supply

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	(%)
% of HHs with access to electricity	76.84	45.67	64.87	66.63
% of HHS without access to electricity	23.16	54.33	35.13	33.37
% of HHs with solar power	1.56	53.74	9.29	34.41
Average time of electricity supply (hours per day)	16.65	16.83	15.25	



The most common energy source for Kaiputra families is wood (98.24%). The Kaiputras use firewood mostly for cooking purposes (98.24%). Kerosene is used mainly as an alternative to electricity for light (81.02%) and the rest 18.98% families use it as fuel for cooking. Kerosene, solar energy and even firewood are used as a source of light due to the frequent power cuts. Overall, 24.84% Kaiputra families use cylinder gas and it is only used for cooking purposes. All Kaiputra families use solar energy as a source of light. It should be noted that no Kaiputra household use bio-gas as an energy source.

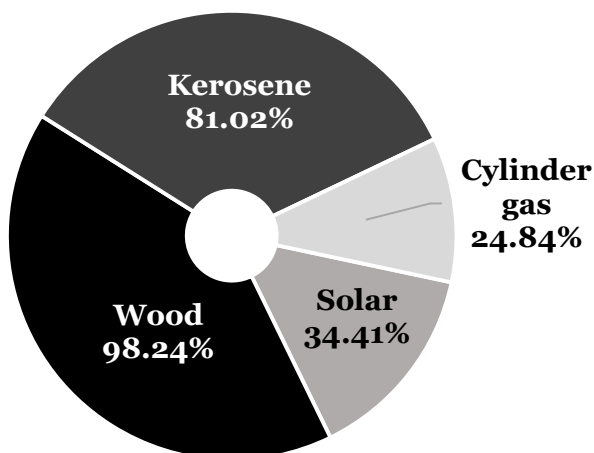
Table 11: Other energy sources (%)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	%
Solar	1.56	53.74	9.29	34.41
Wood	100	100	82.89	98.24
Kerosene	88.40	81.83	42.73	81.02
Cylinder gas	6.06	Nil	34.23	24.84

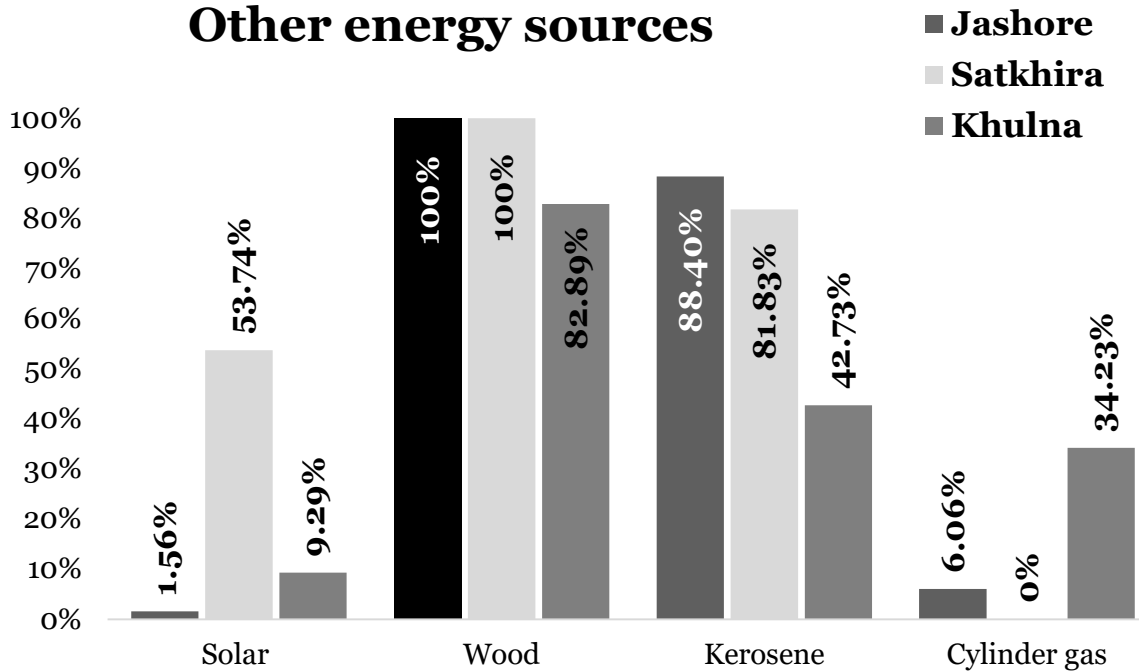
Table 12: Main purposes of use of energy (%)

Status	Alternative to electricity for light	Cooking
Solar energy	100	00
Wood/fire wood	1.76	98.24
Kerosene	81.02	18.98
Cylinder gas	00	100

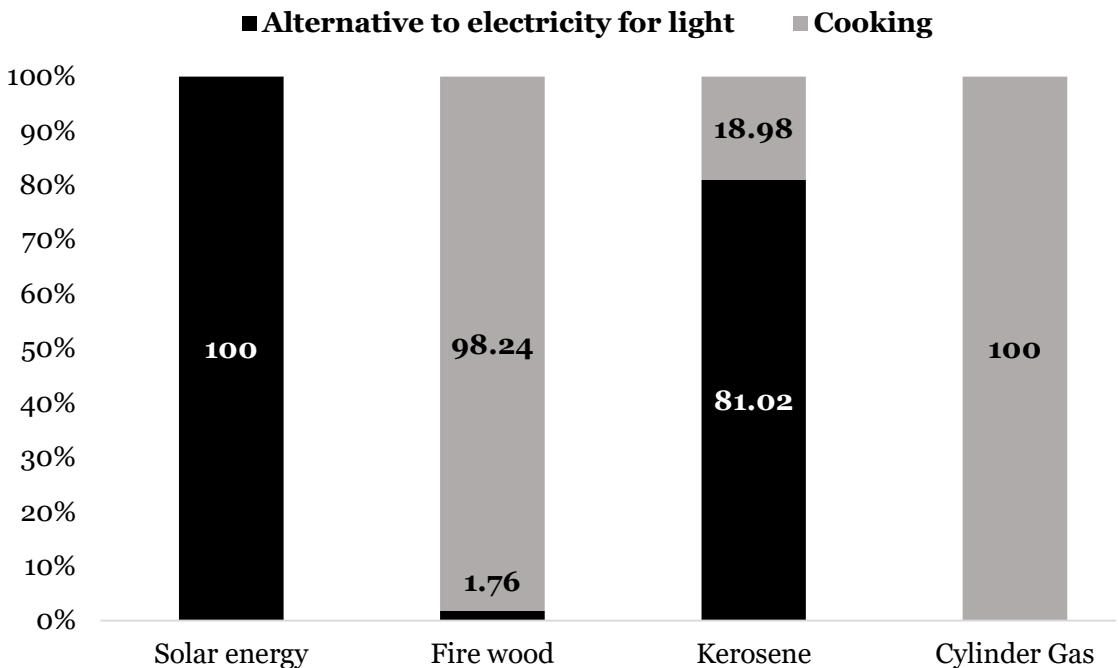
Other energy sources



Other energy sources



Main purposes of use of energy (%)



Occupation and Income

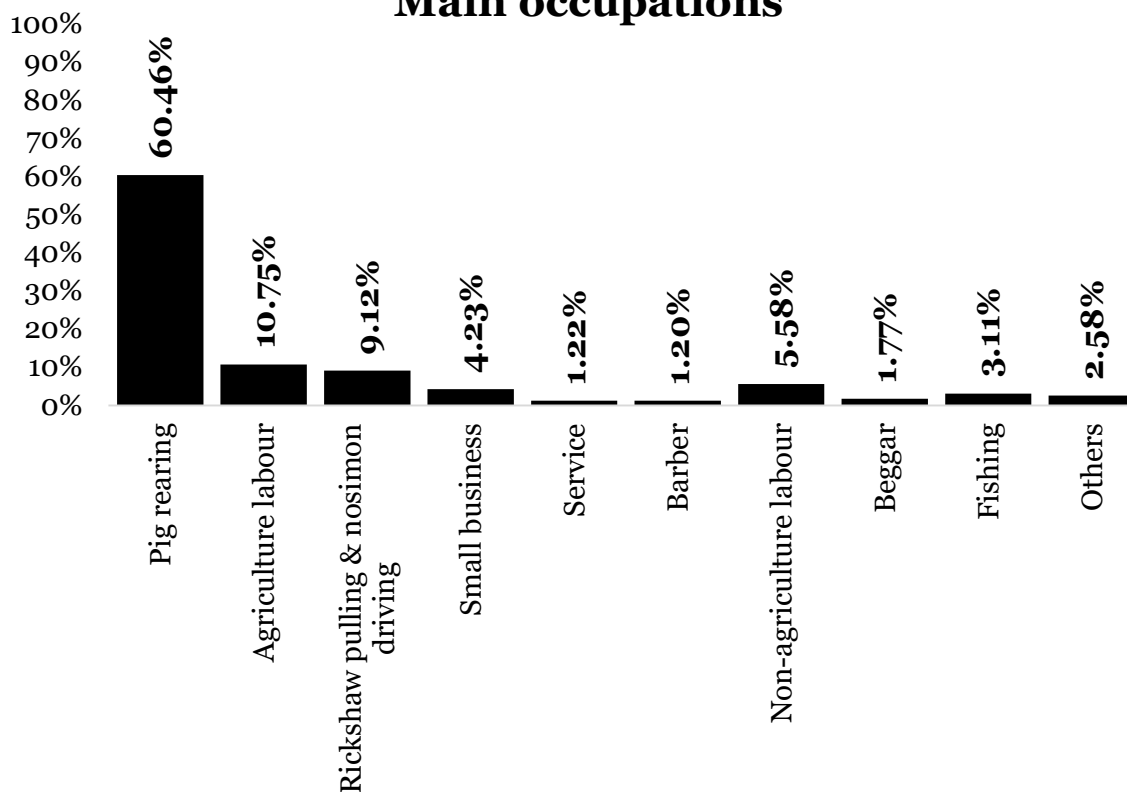
The main occupation of 60.46% of the Kaiputra families is pig rearing or pig business. Usually only men become pig herders because they have to stay in the open field day and night to feed the herds of pigs. The highest percentage of pig-rearing Kaiputra families (65.76%) is found in Jashore district. The majority of the people in the 41 Kaiputra villages are involved in pig rearing but 39.54% families have changed their traditional occupation.

The other main occupations of the Kaiputras are agricultural labour (10.75%) and rickshaw or van pulling or *nosimon* (motorized rickshaw) driving (9.12%). Overall 3.11% families shifted to fishing business. In Khulna, nearly 10% of the families changed their occupation to fishing from pig rearing. It should be noted that there are 34 Kaiputra villages which have turned into fishing villages that are not included in the study (only general information on these villages are found in this report). Overall only 1.22% Kaiputra families provide government or private service. Some of the Kaiputra families are involved in small business and non-agricultural labour among others.

Table 13: Main occupations (% of families)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Pig rearing	65.76	62.52	33.31	60.46
Agriculture labour	8.95	14.21	5.81	10.75
Rickshaw pulling & nosimon driving	9.95	9.30	5.38	9.12
Small business	2.39	1.71	19.80	4.23
Service	1.24	1.23	1.07	1.22
Barber	0.92	1.67	0.62	1.20
Tailor	0.10		16.10	0.05
Non-agriculture labour	4.98	3.17	2.22	5.58
Cycle garage & mechanics	1.03			0.48
Barrister or self-employed	0.06			0.30
Beggar	1.69	2.27	0.38	1.77
Fishing	1.53	2.67	10.58	3.11
Kabiraj	0.29	0.95	2.50	0.84
Unemployment	0.48			0.22
Village doctor			2.22	0.27
Electrician or mason	0.63	0.31		0.42

Main occupations



The majority of the Kaiputra women are housewives (90.45%) in the three districts but overall 4.83% women are involved in the pig rearing business. In Khulna, 20.01% of the Kaiputra families include women who rear pigs. Women are involved in other occupations such as agricultural labour, begging, non-agricultural labour, etc. in less than 5% of the families.

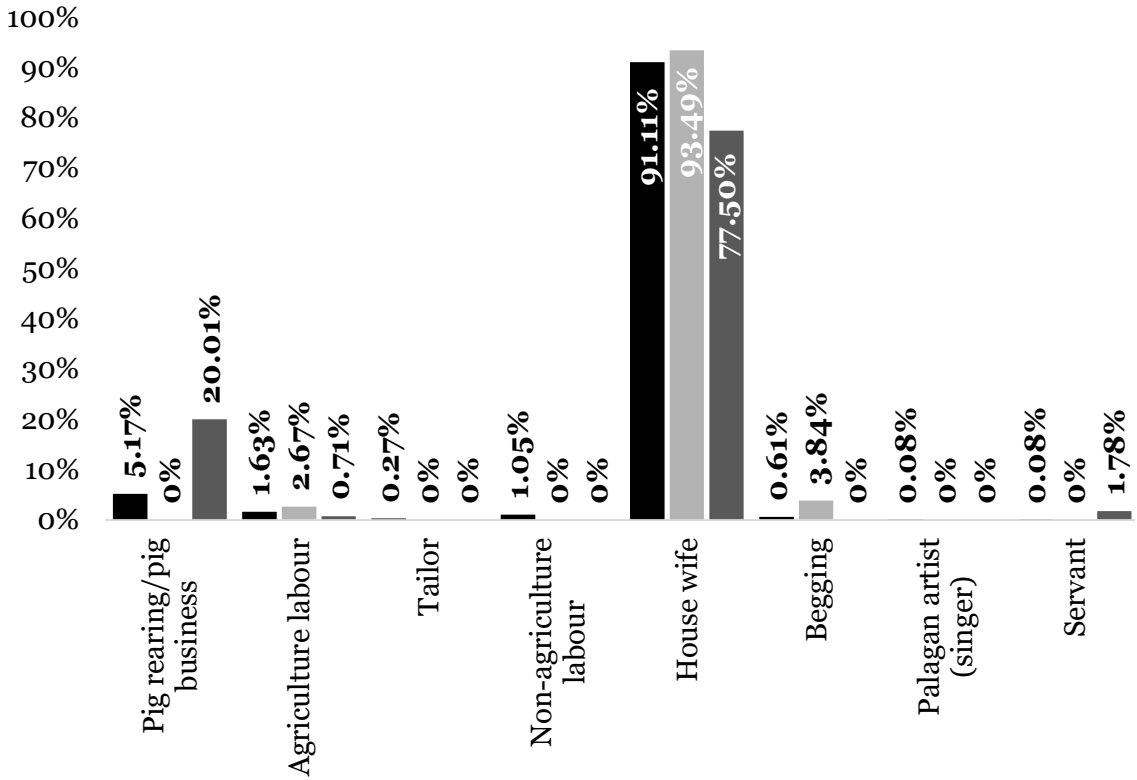
Table 14: Female occupation (% of families)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Pig rearing/pig business	5.17	-	20.01	4.83
Agriculture labour	1.63	2.67	0.71	1.95
Tailor	0.27	-	-	0.12
Non-agriculture labour	1.05	-	-	0.49
House wife	91.11	93.49	77.50	90.45
Begging	0.61	3.84	-	1.87
Palagan artist (singer)	0.08	-	-	0.04
Servant	0.08	-	1.78	0.25

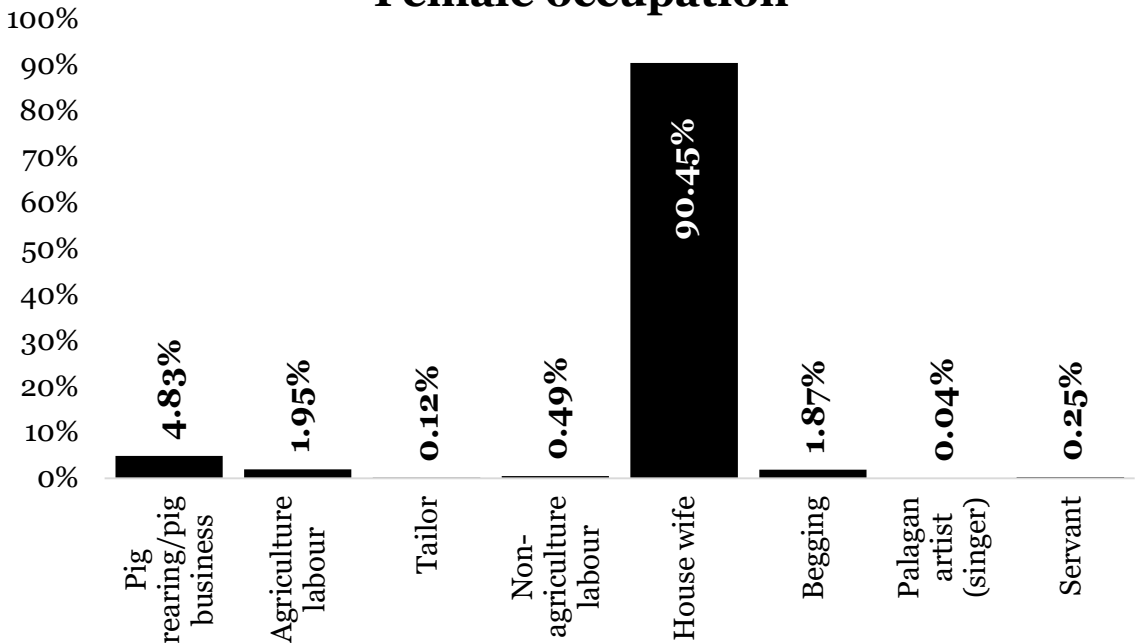
Female occupation

■ Jashore

■ Satkhira



Female occupation



The income source of the majority (62.58%) of the Kaiputra families is pig rearing. The other income sources are agricultural labour, rickshaw or van pulling, non-agricultural labour, small business, etc.

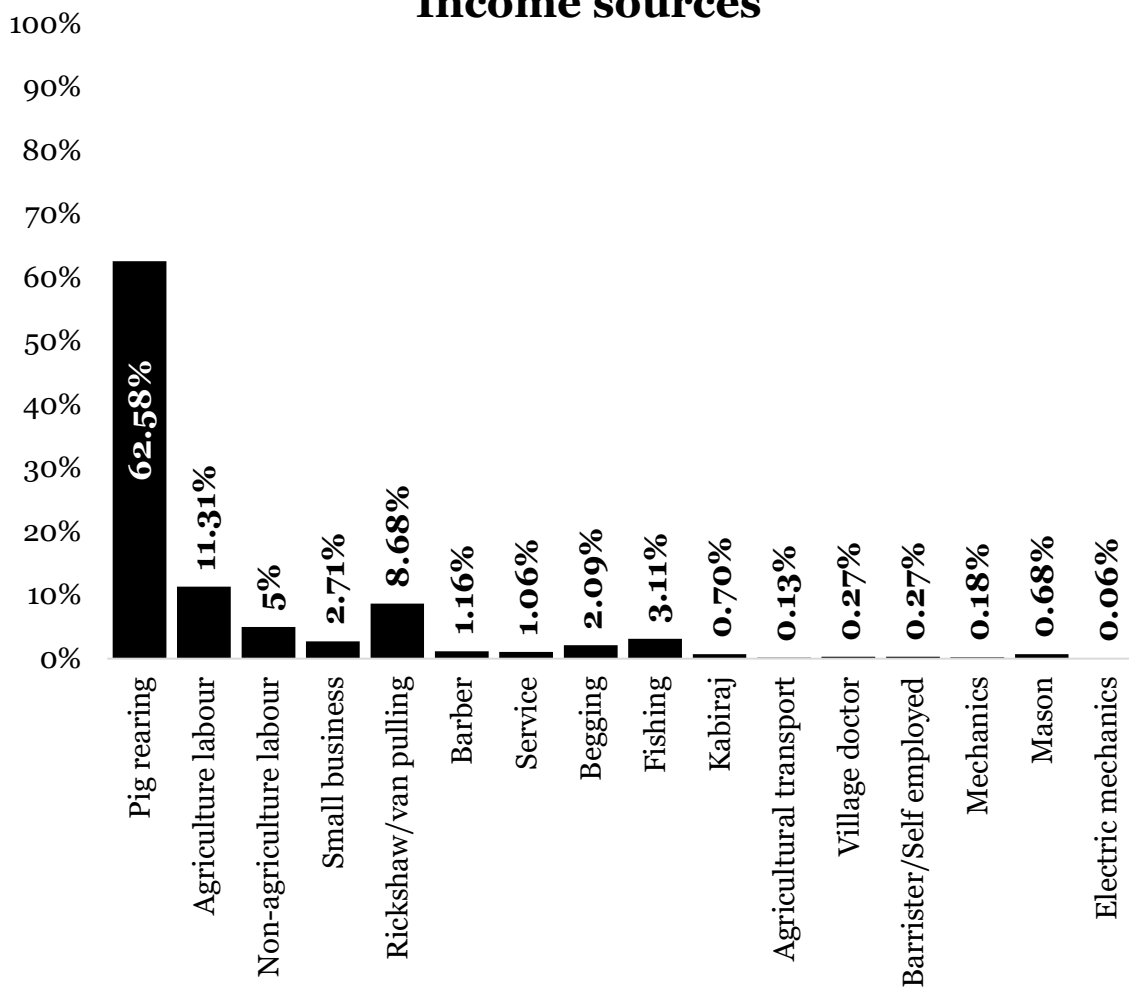
Table 15: Income sources (% of families)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Pig rearing	67.51	62.50	44.15	62.58
Agriculture labour	9.30	14.44	8.31	11.31
Non-agriculture labour	4.30	2.14	17.37	5.00
Small business	2.29	1.71	7.71	2.71
Rickshaw/van pulling	10.18	8.52	3.50	8.68
Barber	1.00	1.67	0	1.16
Service	1.24	0.86	1.07	1.06
Begging	1.68	3.06	0.36	2.09
Fishing	1.53	2.67	10.58	3.11
Kabiraj	0	0.95	2.50	0.70
Agricultural transport	0	0.31	0	0.13
Village doctor	0	0	2.22	0.27
Barrister/Self employed	0	0	2.22	0.27
Mechanics	0.40	0	0	0.18
Mason	0.56	1.02	0	0.68
Electric mechanics	0	0.15	0	0.06



Kaiputra woman in Bahirghoria village in Monirampur upazila, Jashore district.

Income sources



The monthly income from most of the other occupations available to the Kaiputras are less than the average monthly income from rearing pigs, which is Taka 8,925. The income of the pig herders is considerably less than the average monthly income at the national level, which is Taka 15,945 (HIES 2016: xvii). Only a few Kaiputras who are service holders, village doctors and lawyer earn more than pig herders. However, the Kaiputra fishers in Jashore earn Taka 12,500 a month. The highest monthly income of the Kaiputras was found to be Taka 14,243 on average and their average lowest income is only Taka 5,046.

Table 16: Average monthly income (in Taka)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total income
Pig rearing/pig business	8,923	8,924	8,940	8,925
Agriculture labor	5,866	5,000	6,250	5,562
Non-agriculture labor	5,863	5,500	4,675	5,538
Small business	6,100	6,000	5,566	5,982
Rickshaw/van pulling	6,500	5,416	6,000	6,046
Barber	5,583	6,200	0	5,863
Service	8,666	8,000	18,000	9,714
Begging	3,800	3,571	3,000	3,615
Fishing (kuchia)/fish business	12,500	7,333	4,233	7,850
Kabiraj	0	5,000	3,000	4,333
Agricultural transport	0	5,000	0	5,000
Village doctor	0	0	40,000	40,000
Barrister/Self employment	0	0	60,000	60,000
Mechanics	9,000	0	0	9,000
Mason	8,000	7,000	0	7,333
Electric mechanics	0	8,000	0	8,000
Total	7,030	6,486	9,622	7,159

Average Monthly Income (Taka)

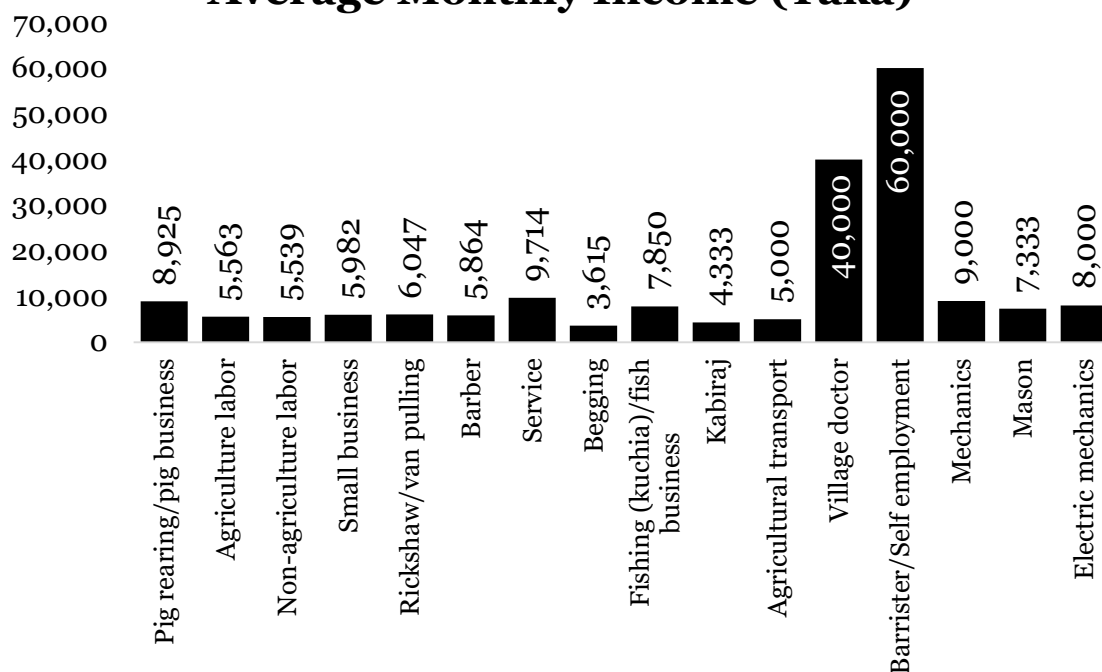
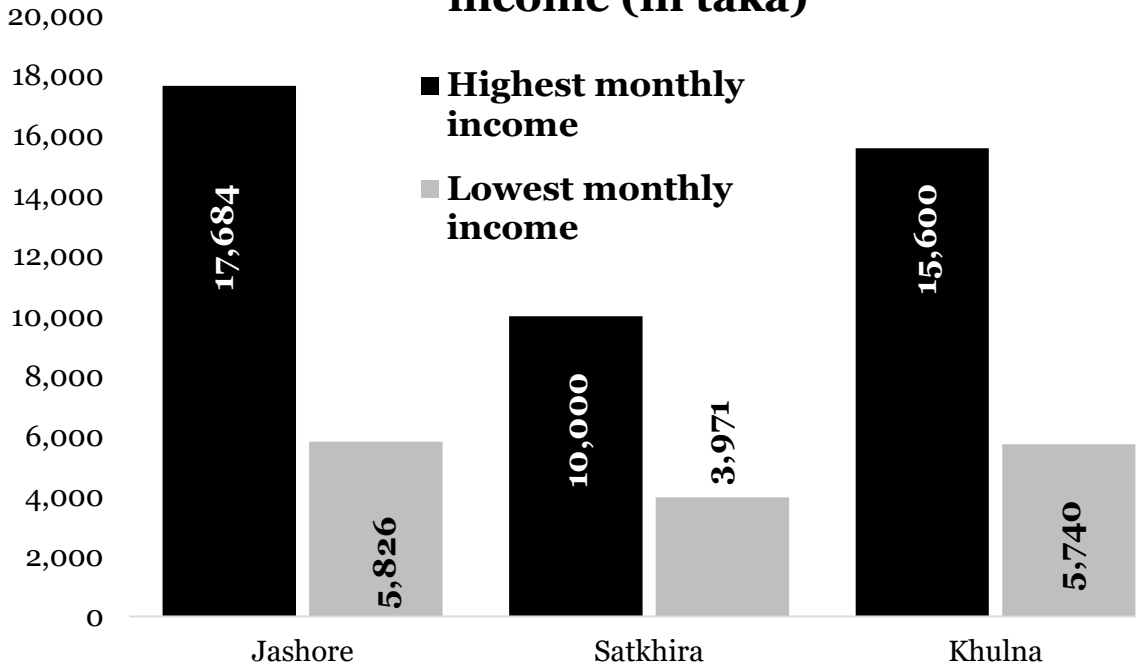


Table 17: Average highest and lowest monthly income (in Taka)

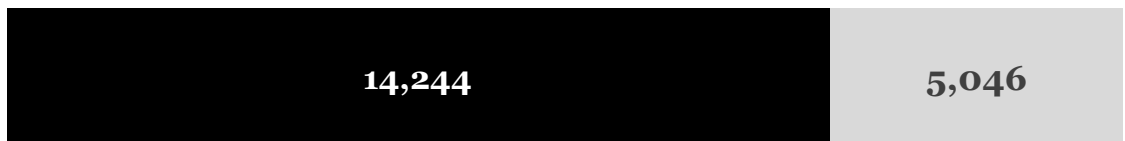
Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total income
Highest monthly income	17,684	10,000	15,600	14,243
Lowest monthly income	5,826	3,970	5,740	5,046

Average highest and lowest monthly income (in taka)



Average highest and lowest monthly income (in taka)

■ Highest monthly income
 ■ Lowest monthly income



DILIP MONDOL

A Bona Fide Kaiputra Trader



Dilip Mondol in a visit to his
pal in Gopalganj.

December 27, 2016. It was a foggy and cold morning. Dilip Mondol picked us up from Ramdia Bazar. We walked with him about two km through the wet field to reach his pig herd. The mud in the beel (marshland) that goes under water for six months was still soft. Nothing could be seen from a distance. The sound of shallow engine that the farmers had set to pump groundwater out for irrigation came from different directions. The houses under the shroud of winter fogs were still sleeping.

When we reached the night station of Dilip Mondol's pig herd and the herders in the open field, the *baukka* was busy cooking in the temporary dug-stove on the ground. The tent they spent the night in was spread on the ground. The bed and bedding of about a dozen men were having a fog bath. No worry they will dry up again under the sun soon!

To see the pigs, we walked another few minutes. There we found Dilip Mondol's men guarding the hungry pigs that started feeding at about 6:00 am. Five hundred pigs feeding together with a peculiar orchestration. They were actually digging the ground for anything alive and edible—from earthworm and ghugra to all kinds of roots food such as *ghechu*, *kachu*, *shaluk*, *chichre* and *bhadla* (wild plants grown in the marshland during the monsoon). The pigs, raised in the open, consume these from dawn to dusk.





Dilip Mondol's *pal* is feeding in Gopalganj beel.

Dilip Mondol explained how the pigs are kept organized in the open field, the hard work of the *rakhals* (men who rear pigs), their routes through the southwest and south-central districts of the country and everything else involving the Kaiputra.

Dilip Mondol is a born trader in pigs. His other three brothers—Simul, Bipul and Liton, all younger to him—also trade in pigs as their main family business. Their father Gopal Mondol (known as Sadhu), grandfather and great grandfather were also pig traders. They all are residents of Mondol para in Bhaina village in Jashore Sadar upazila.

In 2016 season Dilip Mondol had 500 pigs in two *pals* (herds). We found one *pal* feeding in Ramdia beel (marshland) in Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj district on 27 December. His another *pal* was in Agailjhara in Barishal district.

In the *pal* feeding in Ramdia, he had 300 pigs of his own and another 100 belonging to four of his 10 *rakhals*. In Agailjhara, he had 300-pig herd of which 100 belonged to 12 *rakhals* (eight from Agailjhara and four from Ramdia). Of these 12 *rakhals* four were *sardars* (leaders) who got a monthly salary of Taka 3,000 plus 10 pigs each season each. Eight other *rakhals* got monthly salary of Taka 2,000 plus eight pigs each season each.

Each of the *rakhals* had a debt to Dilip—ranging from Taka 15,000 to 40,000. This is money paid in advance for maintenance of the *rakhals*' families. They will clear these debts by the end of the year when they sell their pigs.

The *rakhals* usually sell their share of pigs to Dilip Mondol or parties from Dhaka.

“The owners of *pals* share pigs (the kaiputras call them *mal*) with *rakhals* so that they stay interested in rearing pigs and taking their good care,” says Mondol. “It is in their best interest that the *rakhals* take good care of pigs.”

“It is a very risky trade to engage in. We are still in it because we are not skilled in other jobs,” says Dilip.

The thugs in Shariatpur, Barishal, Madaripur and Kajulia Beel in Gopalganj cause serious troubles to the *pals*, asserted Dilip. The *pal* owners try to avoid these places. “The thugs demand big cash, which we cannot afford,” says Dilip. “So we avoid these places.”

Keeping a herd of 300 to 400 pigs in order is not an easy job. Pigs are restless and will go helter-skelter if not constantly guarded. Responsibilities are therefore delegated among the *rakhals*—two *sardars* are assigned in case of a big *pal*. One *rakhal* known as *baukka* takes care of cooking and moving the belongings of the *rakhals* from one place to another. “We, the owners, have to rely on the *rakhals*, trust them and maintain good relationships with them,” believes Mondol.

Cash investment in staying in traditional pig business is significant. Dilip Mondol invested Taka two million (USD 23,000) for his two *pals* of 500 pigs (excluding those of the *rakhals* raised together with Dilip Mondol's pigs). "I have borrowed 75% of this sum from *mahajans* (traditional money lenders). Every month we pay Taka five for each hundred Taka," reports Mondol. This means the yearly interest is 60% on the amount borrowed. If Dilip Mondol could borrow the money from the bank, the interest would remain below 20%.

Dilip Mondol's monthly expenditure for 18 *rakhals* is Taka 150,000.00 (USD 1700). "For me this is a large sum," says Mondol.

Dilip Mondol is disappointed because he does not get loans from the banks. "We want loans from agriculture bank," demands Mondol. "Loans from NGOs are not helpful for us because of the stringent condition they impose."

Unpredictable scourge can also come as a big shock. "Some ten year ago swine flu severely damaged our business," reports Mondol. "We could not sell our pigs. The prices dropped dramatically. We still suffer from its effects."

The price of pork is quite low compared to other meat. People eating pork prefer poultry to pork nowadays.

"The pigs herded and fed in the open field give us pure and tasty meat," asserts Mondol. "Even the sick people can eat pork. The foreigners, Buddhists and Christians like our meat."

Mondol routinely visits the *pals* in the fields—for sale, for supervision and for dispute resolution. "I visit my pals at least once every month for routine check-up," reports Mondol.

The parties to buy pigs come mainly from Dhaka and Chattogram. There are also local buyers and butchers.

Dilip Mondol, a healthy man with extraordinarily bright eyes, is very swift in his work, be it in the field or in his home village. In the field he carries a *jhola* (double-knotted bag hanging from shoulder). One day towards the end of the season in 2017 he sold all his 300 pigs that were feeding in Kajulia beel. He stuffed his *jhola* with large sum of cash and headed for Bhaina in Jashore in a bus. The *rakhals* also disappeared suddenly.

by Philip Gain

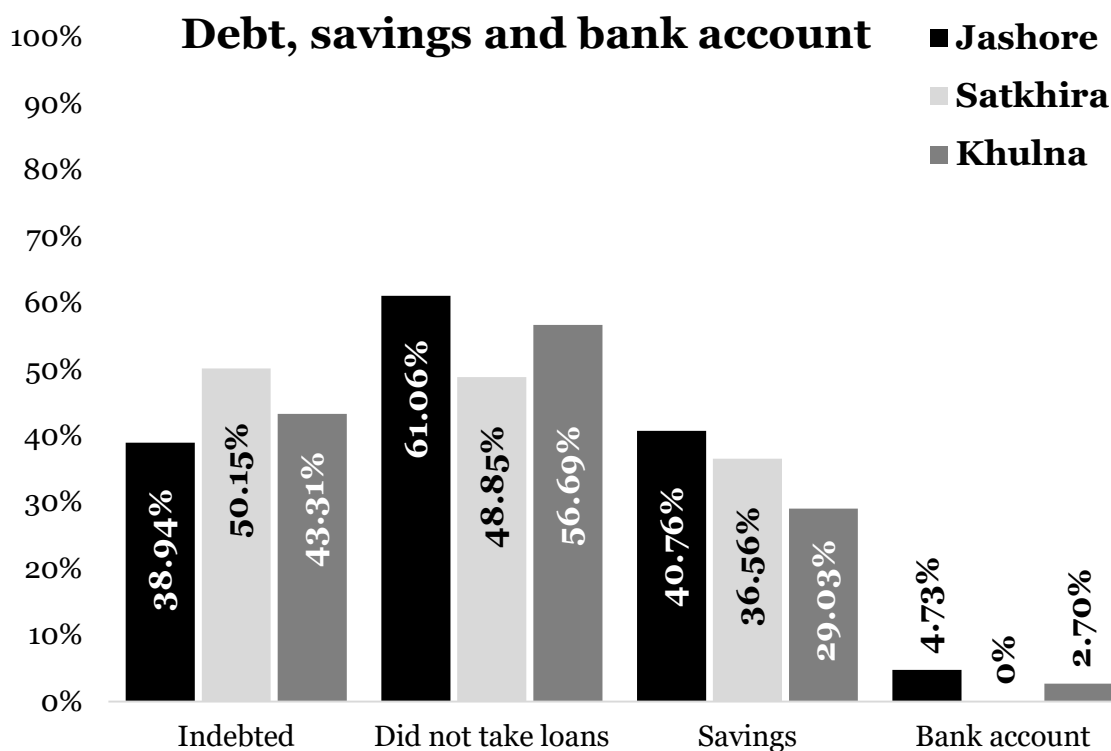
Credit Needs

The percentage of the Kaiputra families who are in debt is considerably high, which is 43.41% on average. Notably, half of the Kaiputra families in Satkhira are indebted. Nearly 37% of the Kaiputra families have savings in local associations or banks. In Jashore district, 61.06% of the Kaiputra families did not need to take loans and nearly 40% of them had savings as well. On the other hand, only 4.22% of the Kaiputra families have bank accounts. No one from the Kaiputra community in Satkhira has a bank account.

The average household loan taken by the Kaiputra amounts to Taka 30,065 and average savings is only Taka 5,003. In Khulna, the amount of loan taken by Kaiputras is significantly higher than loans taken in the other two districts. The small percentage of people having bank accounts have Taka 38,020 on average in their accounts.

Table 18: Debt, savings and bank account (% of families)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Indebted	38.94	50.15	43.31	43.41
Did not take loans	61.06	48.85	56.69	56.59
Savings	40.76	36.56	29.03	37.34
Bank account	4.73	0	2.70	4.22



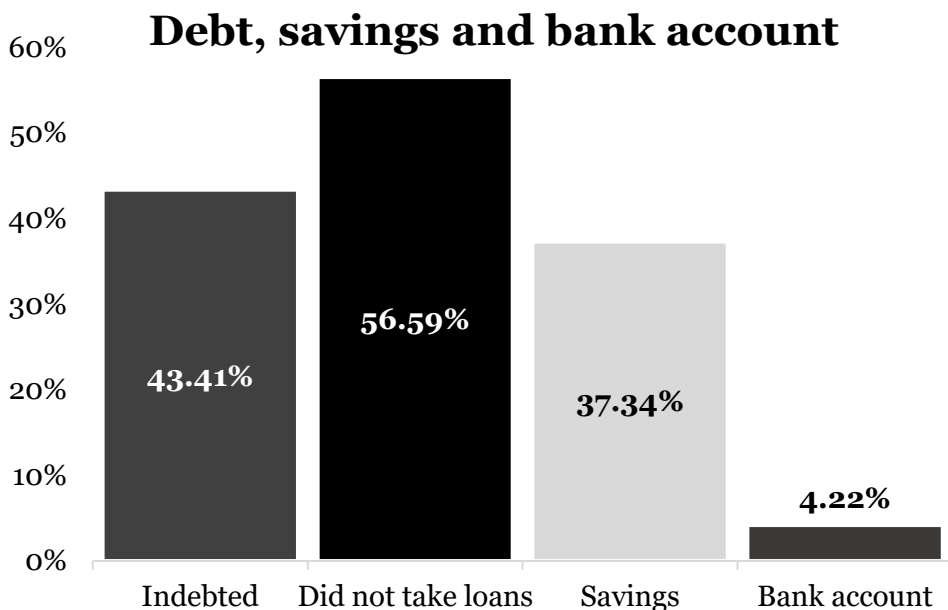
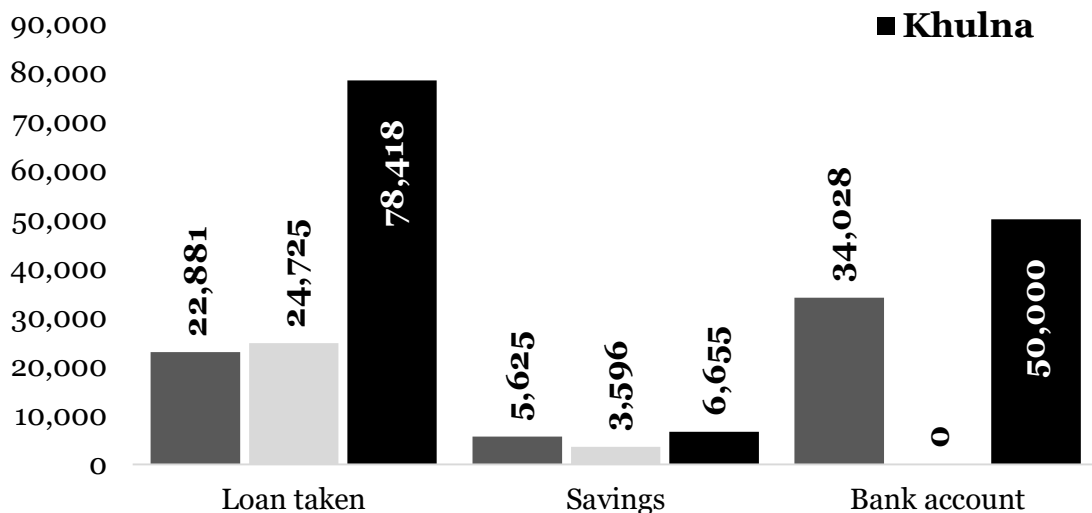


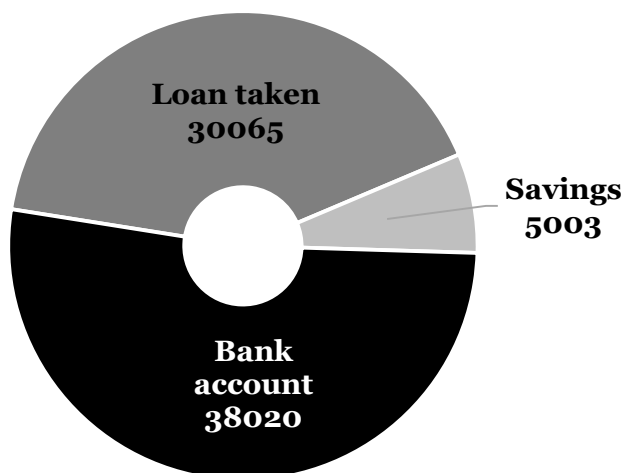
Table 19: Average debt, savings and bank account (in taka)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Loan taken	22,880	24,725	78,418	30,065
Savings (samity, bank and others)	5,625	3,595	6,655	5,003
Bank account	34,027	Nil	50,000	38,020

Average debt, savings and bank account (in taka)



Average debt, savings and bank account (in taka)



Land Ownership

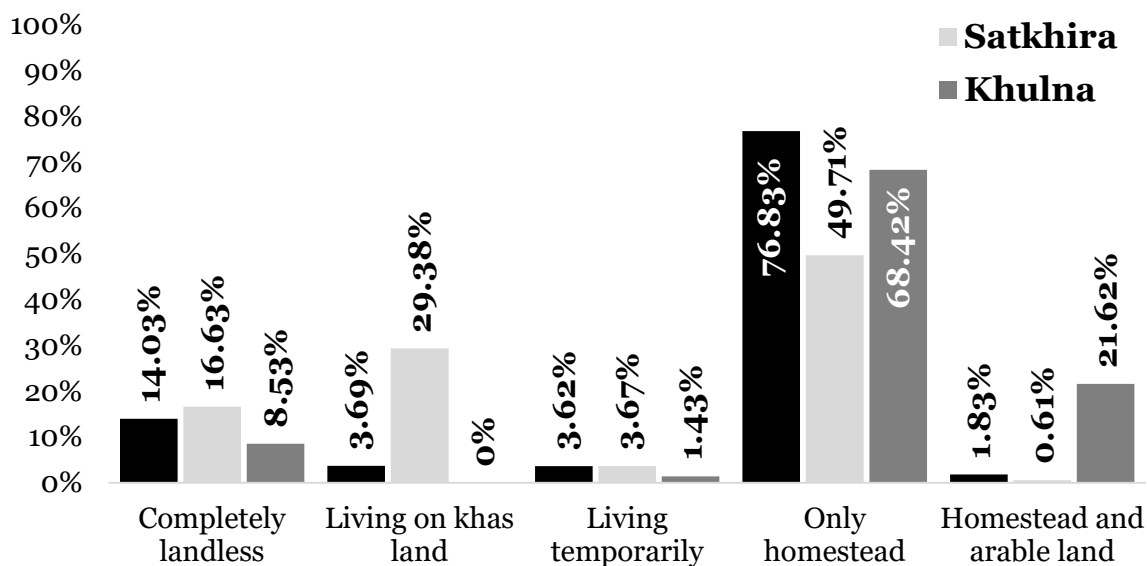
The majority of the Kaiputra families herd pigs in the open fields. A substantial percentage of them is also directly involved in agriculture. However, the percentage of Kaiputra families who own agricultural land is negligible. On average, 64.56% of the Kaiputra families only own their homestead and have no ownership of agricultural land. They own only 4.15 decimals of homestead on average. Nearly 77% of the Kaiputra families in Jashore owns no other land except their homestead.

On average, 14.44% of the Kaiputras are completely landless and nearly 29% of them in Satkhira live on *khas* land. On average, 13.89% of them lives on *khas* land in Jashore and Satkhira, which means they do not own any homestead or agricultural land. The *khas* land they occupy is 5.23 decimals on average. Less than 4% of them owns both homestead and arable land with land size of 89.39 decimals.

Table 20: Land possession (% of Households)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Completely landless	14.03	16.63	8.53	14.44
Living on khas land	3.69	29.38	0.00	13.89
Living temporarily	3.62	3.67	1.43	3.37
Only homestead	76.83	49.71	68.42	64.56
Homestead and arable land	1.83	0.61	21.62	3.74

Land possession (Households)



Land possession (Households)

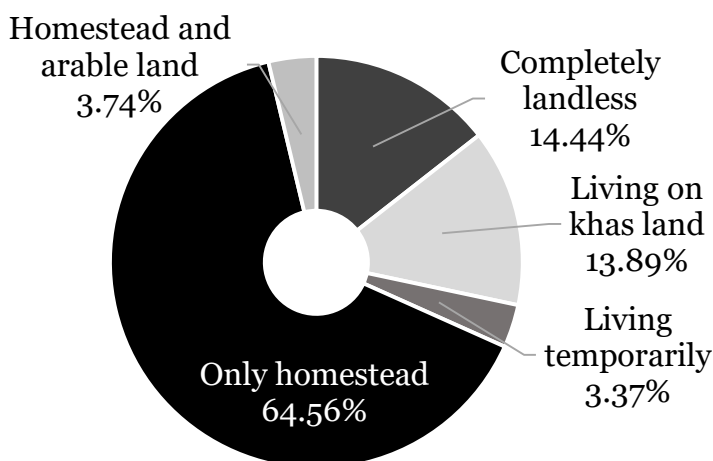
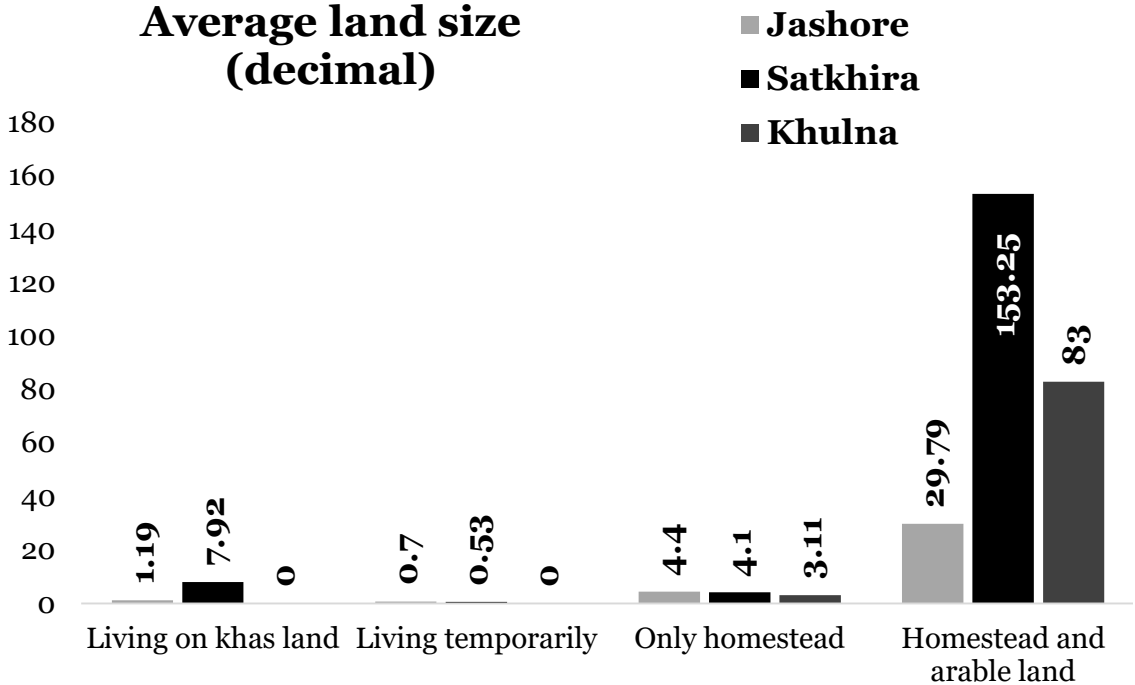


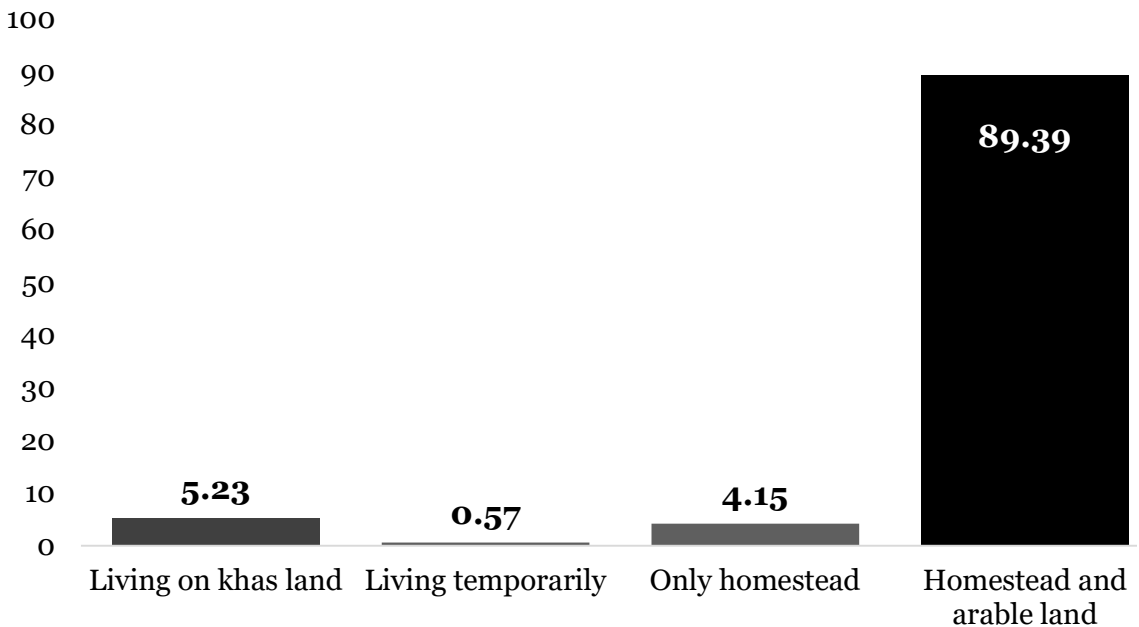
Table 21: Average land size (decimal)

Status	Jashore	Satkhira	Khulna	Total
Living on khas land	1.19	7.92	0.00	5.23
Living temporarily	0.70	0.53	0.00	0.57
Only homestead	4.40	4.10	3.11	4.15
Homestead and arable land	29.79	153.25	83.00	89.39
Total	4.32	18.00	16.22	10.92

Average land size (decimal)



Average land size (decimal)



KAJULIA BEEL: A Haven for Pigs

A herd of pigs was devouring fast in a winter morning on 13 January 2017 on cropland in Khelna village in Kati union in sadar upazila of Gopalganj district. The low-lying area was under water for many months and the soil was replenished with massive quantities of grass, roots, wild tubers and insects—delicacies to the pigs.

The herd belongs to Nripen Mondol of Pithabari village in Kajulia union, also in Gopalganj sadar upazila. We were watching the healthy pigs ploughing the soft soil with their amazing nose and devouring all that edible in their path. Pigs make the locals—Hindus and Christians—equally happy.

“Pigs feed on the roots of *chichre*, a notorious weed and thus help clean our cropland of weeds,” announced Poli Sikdar, a housewife of Khelna village. She and many others were watching the pigs in a nice chilling morning. The Kaiputra rakhals were having their breakfast of rice and hot curry of fish, vegetable and chillis, of course by rotation. The pigs have to be guarded so that they stay disciplined.

Bani Sikder, another woman of Khelna village said, “Pigs are good for cropland. They feed on *chichre*, *ghechu* and *shaluk* and help in controlling weeds without chemicals.”

Having seen Nripen Mondol’s herd of some 250 pigs, we proceeded to see Suresh Tikader’s herd in nearby Manihar beel at one corner of huge swamp. Suresh Tikader, a Bangalee Hindu of Pithabari village in Kajulia union, Gopalganj, has been in pig business for many years now.

Part of the swamp that extends into Kajulia Beel, a bigger swamp, remains uncultivated because of weeds that cannot be cleaned off. We walked over a bumpy bed of weeds to reach Jamal Kazi’s plot. Jamal Kazi is a Muslim; yet he welcomed a herd of pigs on his land. He was there supervising the pigs feeding on his cropland. “I hugely benefit when the pigs feed on my cropland. The pigs consume huge quantities of weeds and make my land almost ready for planting with minimum ploughing,” said Kazi. “Pigs cause no damage.”

Many farmers are not interested to cultivate paddy or other crops on their land for two factors—one being the low prices of rice and the other is the weeds. Some parts of Kajulia beel remains under water and are not cultivated at all.

Basically a farmer, Suresh Tikader himself cultivates paddy (IRRI) on one and half big has of his five bigha (64 decimals) plot. The rest remains uncultivated.

Suresh Tikader has been in pig business for the past 20 years. He was inspired by Kaiputras who used to bring herds of pigs in Kajulia beel, a pigs’ haven. “The Kaiputras come to our area to feed their herds every year. We gradually got interested in the business with pigs.”



A *pal* is feeding in Kajulia Beel and cleaning a field of weeds.



A group of *rakhals* is eating morning meal of rice and vegetables with fish.

“I first bought nine pigs from Sukumar Mondol of Bhayna village in Jashore in 1996. I raised and sold them and got good profit. Next year I bought 100 pigs from him. This is how I got into pig business,” says Suresh Tikader. “From then on I always have 150 to 200 pigs.” In 2017 Suresh Tikader and two others shared a herd of 376 pigs. They bought 288 of them from Dilip Mondol of Bhayna village for a cash of Taka 17 lacs and 13 thousand.”

Suresh Tikader and his partners hired seven Kaiputra rakhals to look after the herd. Business in pigs is generally profitable; but at times it may incur loss.

What hurts Suresh Tikader and others in Pithabari most is want of cash. The banks do not give them loans. “We take loans from the moneylenders at a very high interest rate—Taka 4,000 to 5,000 per lac per month,” reports Suresh.

The business in pigs is a year-round affairs. But the pig traders have a big sale in April right before Easter. The buyers from Dhaka buy trucks of pigs and take them to Dhaka. During Easter time, Christians consume pork in large quantity. The trucks of pigs are first taken to Nagori union in Kaliganj upazila of Gazipur district and then the slaughtered pigs are sold in capital Dhaka.

Some herds of pigs are still kept in Kajulia Beel until the monsoon water begins to flood the swamp. After pre-monsoon sale, the rest of the herds are moved to higher places—Kushtia and Jashore districts in particular to keep them away from water. However, some herds of pigs could be seen on highland in Faridpur, Rajbari and other districts.

With monsoon water receding, Suresh Tikader and around 25 other herd owners in Pithabari alone begin to buy the pigs and organize herds.

The advantage of pig traders in Pithabari and other swampy places in Gopalganj is that a large percentage of population here is Hindus who consume pork. There are also some Christians. Then Gopalganj district has many swamps that provide perfect condition for the pigs feed on wildy grown weeds, tubers, roots, grasses and insects. “Kajulia beel has no match for feeding the pigs,” asserts Suresh Tikader.

The key occupations of the people of Pithabari are agriculture, fishing and raising poultry. Keeping herds is a new addition to some of the Hindu entrepreneurs. There is also a local market of pigs. Some herd owners slaughter pigs in local markets and sell pork. On 12 January 2017 one herd owner slaughtered two pigs in Satpar market that he retailed the pork to the public for Taka 17,000. Satpar is a union in Gopalganj sadar upazila with Hindu majority and slaughtering and selling pigs is no problem. But in other areas with Muslim majority, slaughtering pigs in the markets and sale of pork is restricted. However, the prime target of the Pithabari herd owners remains to be Dhaka.

by Philip Gain

Annex-A: Basic data on the Kaiputra villages surveyed (At a glance)

Jashore District

Upazila	Village	HHs	Population	Literacy Rate for all ages (%)	HH with Sanitary Latrine	HH with Electricity Supply	No. of families before 10 years	
Jashore Sadar	Fatehpur Union							
	01. Bhaina Mondol Para	103	446	72.11	103	102	70	
	02. Fatehpur	72	297	25.00	68	68	55	
	Narendrapur Union							
	03. Narendrapur	39	217	17.00	17	35	31	
	Ramnagar Union							
	04. Sirajsinga	26	88	12.50	26	15	20	
		240	1048	31.65	214	220	176	
	Abhaynagar	Chalishia Union						
		05. Ektarpur	42	177	9.55	42	00	32
06. Bagdah		36	192	28.64	36	00	27	
Baghutia Union								
07. Bibhagdi		22	91	16.48	21	00	20	
		100	460	18.23	99	00	79	
Manirampur	Dhakuria Union							
	08. Dhakuria	52	258	19.30	39	42	40	
	09. Brahmapur	64	292	10.54	64	16	52	
	Durbadanga Union							
	10. Bahir Gharia	84	415	13.67	59	84	68	
	11. Kajjara	45	198	17.32	35	45	30	
	Manirampur Municipality							
	12. Taherpur Mondol Para	67	173	14.18	66	56	55	
	Kheda Para Union							
	13. Helanchi	56	211	13.25	36	00	46	
	368	1547	14.71	299	198	291		
Sharsha	Ulshi Union							
	14. Lautara	11	48	12.50	6	8	7	
	15. Rampur	47	196	9.62	46	19	32	
	16. Dhalda	15	63	21.88	15	00	9	
		73	307	28.68	67	27	48	
Keshabpur	Keshabpur Union							
	17. Altapol	12	44	21.42	12	00	10	
	Panjia Union							
	18. Panjia Madardanga	42	127	16.51	11	24	30	
	Trimohini Union							
19. Sreerampur	16	49	10.20	4	16	7		
Total		851	3582	21.25	717	486	641	

Satkhira District

Upazila	Village	HHs	Population	Literacy Rate for all ages (%)	HH with Sanitary Latrine	HH with Electricity Supply	No. of families before 10 years
Satkhira Sadar	Jhaudanga Union						
	01. Waria	33	147	42.17	14	00	21
	Agardari Union						
	02. Indira	35	135	12.58	19	24	22
	Debhata Union						
	03. Parulia	8	46	15.21	8	00	6
	Alipur Union						
	04. Mahmudpur Borobari	19	91	11.88	19	00	50
	05. Mahmudpur Badamtala	22	109	14.68	22	00	15
	06. Mahmudpur Maddhya Para	17	80	10.00	17	00	8
07. Dakshin Alipur	45	186	6.56	25	00	35	
		179	794	16.15	124	24	157
Assasuni	Kulla Union						
	08. Kulla	7	21	14.28	1	00	00
		7	21	14.28	1	00	00
Debhata	Sakhipur Union						
	09. Sakhipur	29	112	12.61	30	00	30
		29	112	12.61	30	00	30
Tala	Khalilnagar Union						
	10. Gangarampur Ghoshnagar	7	27	11.11	00	00	0
	11. Gangarampur	28	126	16.54	26	4	10
	Khaliskhali Union						
	12. Kashiadanga	125	483	18.53	122	8	100
	Kumira Union						
	13. Kumira Talpukur	27	92	20.65	27	00	20
	Tala Union						
	14. Baroihati Sarker Para	38	163	32.10	37	27	30
	Sarulia Union						
15. Choto Kashipur	41	167	14.38	41	00	32	
		266	1058	18.89	253	39	192
Kalaroa	Keralkata Union						
	16. Satputa	42	177	19.29	26	32	30
	Chandanpur Union						
17. Chandanpur	8	24	16.65	2	3	6	
		50	201	17.97	28	35	36
Total		531	2186	17.01	436	98	415

Khulna District

Upazila	Village	HHs	Population	Literacy Rate for all ages (%)	HH with Sanitary Latrine	HH with Electricity Supply	No. of families before 10 years
Dighalia	Arangghata Union						
	01. Arangghata	32	168	23.21	25	18	25
		32	168	23.21	25	18	25
Paikghacha	Kapilmuni Union						
	02. Nasirpur	56	207	11.43	48	23	40
	Haridhali Union						
	03. Nagar Sreerampur	20	80	11.11	12	00	22
		76	287	11.27	60	23	62
Dumuria	Dumuria Union						
	04. Araji Sajiara	9	43	58.13	9	9	0
	Rudaghora Union						
	05. Shalghatia	37	172	19.77	36	23	25
		46	215	38.98	45	32	25
Total		154	670	24.74	130	73	112



A woman in Bhaina village casting water on her pigs she is raising in a cage.

Annex-B: Kaiputra villages studied

Jashore District

Sl. No.	Names of Village	Upazilas	Unions	HHs	Pop.	Land Owned (dec)	Pigs	Herds
1	Bhaina Mondol Para	Jashore Sadar	Fatehpur	103	446	1274.99	1500	12
2	Fatehpur			72	297	251	1570	8
3	Narendrapur		Narendrapur	39	217	143	100	1
4	Sirajsinga		Ramnagar	26	88	28.5	0	0
5	Ektarpur	Abhaynagar	Chalishia	42	177	262	690	3
6	Bagdah			36	192	130.5	100	1
7	Bibhagdi		Baghutia	22	91	90	0	0
8	Brahmapur	Manirampur	Dhakuria	64	292	425	1970	7
9	Dhakuria			52	258	105.64	250	1
10	Bahir Gharia		Durbadanga	84	415	310.5	960	6
11	Kajiara			45	198	143	1100	13
12	Taherpur Mondol Para*		Manirampur Municipality	67	173	825.5	200	6
13	Helanchi	Kheda Para	56	211	223	2116	8	
14	Lautara	Sharsha	Ulshi	11	48	42	240	3
15	Rampur			47	196	174	870	7
16	Dhalda			15	63	33	525	2
17	Altapol	Keshabpur	Keshabpur	12	44	16.5	0	0
18	Panjia Madardanga		Panjia	42	127	80.82	0	0
19	Sreerampur		Trimohini	16	49	34.5	90	0
* Included in Manirampur Municipality; Upazilas: 5 Unions: 12				851	3582	4593.45	12281	78

Satkhira district

Sl. No.	Names of Village	Upazilas	Unions	HHs	Pop.	Land Owned (dec)	Pigs	Herds	
1	Waria	Satkhira Sadar	Jhaudanga	33	147	61.33	120	1	
2	Indira		Agardari	35	135	179.7	0	0	
3	Parulia		Debhata	8	46	12	0	0	
4	Mahmudpur Borobari		Alipur		19	91	260.74	150	1
5	Mahmudpur Badamtala				22	109	42	0	0
6	Mahmudpur Maddhya Para				17	80	55	100	1
7	Dakshin Alipur				45	186	9	100	3
8	Banshdaha (Fishing Village)			Banshdaha	26	105	205.83	0	0
9	Boichona (Fishing Village)			Bhomra	14	79	254	0	0
10	Kulla	Assasuni	Kulla	7	21	740	0	0	
11	Sakhipur	Debhata	Sakhipur	29	112	5	45	2	
12	Komarpur (Fishing Village)		Parulia	29	122	96	0	0	
13	Gangarampur Ghoshnagar	Tala	Khalilnagar	7	27	0	0	0	
14	Gangarampur			28	126	70	200	1	
15	Kashiyadanga		Khaliskhali	125	483	936.56	550	5	
16	Kumira Talpukur		Kumira	27	92	127.4	0	0	
17	Baroihati Sarker Para		Tala	38	163	338.48	100	1	
18	Choto Kashipur		Sarulia	41	167	41	0	0	
19	Satpota	Kalaroa	Keralkata	42	177	174	100	1	
20	Chandanpur		Chandanpur	8	24	23.95	150	1	
21	Keragachi (Fishing Village)		Keragachi	26	93	75.7	0	0	
Upazilas: 5; Unions: 17				626	2585	3707.69	1615	10	

*Wairia is not in the union list of LGED website but the local representatives claim it as union.

Khulna district

Sl. No.	Names of Village	Upazilas	Unions	HHs	Pop.	Land Owned (dec.)	Pigs	Herds
1	Aranghata	Dighalia	Aranghata	32	168	129.95	1200	6
2	Nasirpur	Paikgachha	Kapilmuni	56	207	75.97	300	3
3	Nagar Sreerampur		Haridhali	20	80	34	0	0
4	Araji Sajiara	Dumuria	Dumuria	9	43	740	300	2
5	Sholgotia		Rudaghora	37	172	245.95	600	3
6	Amadi Sarker Para (Fishing Village)	Koyra	Amadi	52	193	227	0	0
Upazilas: 4; Unions: 6				206	863	1452.87	2400	14

Number of villages surveyed: 46 (including five fishing villages)

Housholds: **1,683** (including five fishing villages); **1,536** (excluding five fishing villages)

population: **7,030** (including five fishing villages); **6438** (excluding five fishing villages)

Number of pigs: **16,296** (There are no pigs in the fishing villages)

Number of herds: **102** (There are no herds in the fishing villages)



Mud hut of a Kaiputra family in Brohmapur, Dhakuria, Jashore.

Annex-C: Kaiputra Villages turning into fishing hamlets

Sl. No.	Name of Village	Upazila	District	HHs (approximate)
1	Banshtala Kestopur	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	--
2	Bangshipur	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	50
3	Mukundapur	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	12
4	Jahajghati Khanpur	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	13
5	Moutala	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	14
6	Nurnagar	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	5
7	Badhkata	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	--
8	Banshdah	Satkhira Sadar	Satkhira	26
9	Boichona	Satkhira Sadar	Satkhira	14
10	Nabiki	Shyamnagar	Sathkhira	--
11	Katu Hata	Ashashuni	Satkhira	9
12	Ujjalpur Chhyahati	Kaliganj	Satkhira	15
13	Meserali	Kaliganj	Satkhira	12
14	Champa Phul	Kaliganj	Satkhira	5
15	Chardaha	Kaliganj	Satkhira	8
16	Hadipur	Debhata	Satkhira	--
17	Kamarpur	Debhata	Satkhira	29
18	Karagachhi	Kolaroa	Satkhira	26
19	Nalta	Tala	Satkhira	--
20	Chhoto Kachari Para	Koyra	Khulna	21
21	Amadi Sarker Para (Fishing Village)	Koyra	Khulna	51
22	Hardakomkhali	Paikgachha	Khulna	22
23	Paddarganj	Dakop	Khulna	23
24	Bajua	Dakop	Khulna	24
25	Dhopadi	Dakop	Khulna	24
26	Ramnagar	Dakop	Khulna	20
27	Khajur Kanthaltala	Keshabpur	Jashore	--
28	Phultala	Noapara	Jashore	--
29	Nangla	Noapara	Jashore	--

From Pig Herding to Fish Farming

In a foggy winter morning, Dulal Chandra Mondol (45) and Ananta Mondol (30) were fishing in their *gher* near the entrance to Boichona village. Both of them belong to the Kaiputra community. Twenty-five Kaiputra families live in this remote village, two kilometres away from Bhomra land port in Satkhira Sadar.

The Boichona village is not similar to other villages of Kaiputras that are still in herding pigs. Unlike other Kaiputra villages, there are no pigs in Boichona village. Yet, they still prefer to introduce themselves as Kaiputras. Most of the houses in the village are *pucca* or semi-*pucca*. There are a few mud houses. All the families use sanitary toilet and drink pure drinking water. There are many different-sized *ghers* around the village, most of which are owned by the Kaiputras.

The word *gher* means enclosure or an enclosed area. It is a type of traditional farming in any land along the banks of tidal rivers. The land is encircled with low earthen dikes called *baandh* or *bheri* to control the flow of water. The fishes thus trapped inside a *gher* are allowed to grow until they attain harvestable size (Banglapedia). Different types of fish such as *ru*, *catla*, varieties of carp as well as freshwater giant prawn are farmed in *gher*.

The ancestors of the Kaiputras were palanquin-bearers by occupation. The Kaiputras have three *gotro* or clans—upper-clan Kaiputra (palanquin-bearers), middle-clan Kaiputra (pig-herders), and lower-clan Kaiputra (midwives). Most of the residents in Boichona village claim themselves to be upper-clan Kaiputra. “However, most of the forefathers of our families used to rear pigs at home along with bearing palanquin as their occupation. The need for palanquins eventually reduced because of modernization and extinction of *zamindari* system. The upper-clan Kaiputras became jobless. So they started to rear pigs commercially. Back then, a few of them had big herds of pigs,” said Dulal Chandra Mondol.

Regarding their change in occupation, Lakshmi Kanto Mondol (45), said, “Rearing pigs requires grazing land with sufficient foods for the pigs. Because of insufficient grazing land, commercial pig rearing in the open fields has become difficult. So many of us gave up herding pigs in the open fields. Besides our neighbours hated us for herding pigs and would call us *kahar* or *kawra*.”

Socially the Kaiputras were not given any respect for being pig herders. They had to face discriminative behaviour as they were considered as an untouchable community. High caste Hindus and Bengalis did not even drink water from them, let alone eating food cooked by them. Influential Hindus did not involve them in different *pujas* and festivals. They thought rearing pigs in the house or village spreads bad smell and pollutes the area. Thus they did not go to the houses or villages of Kaiputras.

Therefore, the main reasons behind Kaiputras changing their occupation are the need to be a part of the bigger mainstream community, gain social respect, be free from discriminative behaviour, lack of grazing land for pigs and extinction of palanquins. The families in Boichona village chose new occupations nearly 30 years ago, which are business of baby fish (*machher pona*) and fish farming.

Similar to Boichona village, 34 other villages were found in Satkhira, Khulna and Jashore districts, which used to be traditional Kaiputra villages.

Another similar Kaiputra village is Mukundo Modhushudhonpur in Bishnupur union of Kaliganj Upazila in Satkhira. Fifty Kaiputra families live in this village. Radhakanta Sarker (60) is a resident of this village who used to work as a palanquin-bearer 30 years ago. "I am not competent at work anymore for old age. Now I earn a living by playing dhol (drums) in a local musical group," said Sarker.

Unlike Boichona village, poverty is evident in this village. Most of the houses are made of mud, golpata and sungrass. The majority of the Kaiputra families of this village do not have any cropland; they only own homestead. "In addition to carrying palanquins as their occupation our ancestors used to play dhol in weddings. They never had the need to buy land. So we inherited no land for cultivation," said another resident of the village, Dilip Sarker (65). "Most of the families are now involved in farming young fish."

The Kaiputras of this village buy young fishes from local hatchling stockings. Then they carry the alive young fishes inside water-filled containers and sell these as fish hawkers in different *ghers* in Satkhira and Aolia, Kubot, Joynagar, Kashimari, Padmapukur of Koyra upazila of Khulna, Shivbari of Paikgacha, Shilkhali, etc. areas in Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira district. In order to sell these in different areas, they have to travel 15 to 20 kilometres everyday on bicycles. One of the fish hawkers, Bappi Sarker (30) informed that they sell young fish in villages from Bangla month of Ashwin (September-October) to Boishakh (April-May). And during the rest of the year, they sell these in local *ghers*. A capital of Taka 10 to 15 thousand is required to buy and sell young fish.

"Profit from selling Taka 2,000 to Taka 3,000 worth of young fish is Taka 500 to Taka 550. In days when some of the young fish are not sold, the remaining ones are preserved for sale in the next day inside enclosed ponds encircled by net. The young fish can be kept like this for two to three days," said Dilip Sarker.

Regarding changing occupation, Radhakanta Sarker said, "Carrying people in palanquin is physically exhausting as well as socially disrespected. The society looks down upon such occupation. We have to keep pace with the mainstream perceptions. Besides young men of the new generation do not want to bear palanquins anyway."

The Kaiputras who own land chose fish farming as their main occupation and those

who have only homestead land, lease other people's land to make *ghers* for fish farming. Even after the change in their traditional occupation, most of them are very poor.

Usually giant prawns are farmed in *ghers* of the coastal areas. Besides fish farming in *ghers*, rui, katla, carp, etc. fish are farmed in small ponds and swamps near their houses. However, prawn farming is more profitable than fish, informed Dilip Sarker. "Even if you take a small quality of prawns to the market, you can sell it. But other fishes cannot be sold in this manner."

Thus fish farmers prefer prawn farming. During dry season when water dries up, they cultivate rice on highland *ghers*. In such *ghers*, rice is cultivated for six months and fish is commercially farmed for the remaining six months. However, fish is farmed throughout the entire year in *ghers* of low-lying land.

Regarding the overall situation after Kaiputras changed their occupation, Lakshmikanta Mondol (45) from Boichona village said, "Our financial condition is now better than before. Some of our children are doing different governmental and non-governmental jobs. One or two of them are even studying abroad. Our social dignity has improved. The greater society now respects us more. Now we are included in pujas and other religious festivals."

by Bikash Hajong

References: Fisheries. Banglapedia. Retrieved from: <http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Fisheries>



A group of *rakhals* spent many nights on this muddy road in a Gopalganj Beel. The pigs feed well in this marshland.

Nikhil Mondol Wants to Say ‘No’ to Herding Pigs



Nikhil Mondol (35) is a rakhhal, a traditional pig herder. He comes from Altapol village in Keshabpur upazila in Jashore, a Southwestern district of Bangladesh. He belongs to a community known as Kawra or Kaiputra that herds pigs in the open agricultural fields and swamps. The guesstimated population of the Kawra community is 12,000 concentrated in some 74 villages in Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna districts in the Southwest.

Nikhil Mondol has been keeping herds for the last three years. Keeping herds is a tough choice to make. “It is tedious. It requires at least 16 hours of work every day with no holiday. The pigs are fed at least for 14 hours a day in the open field,” says Nikhil Mondol. “We live with the pigs all day and night. We spend the day under scorching sun. We get soaked in rains and some have died in thunder storms.”

Managing a herd of pigs of two to five hundred is a big deal. Nikhil is member of a team of rakhals. Everyone passes a busy day from dawn to dusk with great attention in keeping the pigs together and feed them on wildy grown root foods and insects. “The owners of the pigs’ herds are not good at us. Sometimes a pig may get lost. We have to find it and bring it back. If a pig is finally lost, we have to compensate for our ‘mistakes’,”

says Nikhil. “The wages for this traditional work is really low.”

A rakhali like Nikhil Mondol is recruited on monthly or yearly basis. Monthly pay ranges from Taka 5,000 to Taka 7,000 plus food allowance, basic clothes and some toiletries. A rakhali may be recruited for a year and is paid Taka 24,000 plus 10 pigs at the end of the year. Such arrangement gives a rakhali incentive for taking good care of the pigs. Nikhil complains that the owners of herds deceive them in many instances. “One herd has many pigs; but the number of rakhals may not be sufficient. Then it is difficult to manage the herd,” says Nikhil. “One of us has to guard the pigs all night. Sometimes some pigs escape and damage nearby crops. We, the outsiders, then digest verbal abuses and sometimes come under physical assault.”

“Once, while guarding a herd of pigs at night in Jashore, the rakhali, watching the pigs, fell asleep. The pigs escaped and consumed all taros of half an acre of land. The owner of the crop got angry. The owner of the herd paid a fine to settle the dispute. Occasionally, it is not the owner, we compensate for the damage done,” Nikhil explains.

Nikhil is annoyed at this traditional business with pigs. “It is not an honourable occupation. Many children are also employed as rakhals. We should bring an end to rearing pigs in the open fields,” says Nikhil who studied up to class eight in Keshabpur school.

Some 34 Kaiputra villages in Satkhira and Khulna districts, have indeed, given up this traditional occupation and have turned into fishing villages. They do no more want to go back to their traditional occupation, which they consider disgraceful.

Nikhil, father of two children, is determined to give up his traditional occupation. Instead, he wants to work in a rickshaw repairing garage. He wants to educate his children. He wants to see his children become skilled and get into respectable work so that they do not have to face neglect, deprivation and hatred of others because of this traditional occupation.

Eventually, the occupation of herding pigs is shrinking. The key factor, says Nikhil, is the empty land to feed the pigs in is shrinking. In the past there was plenty of food in rivers, swamps and other water bodies. Now, these have dried up. In Bangladesh, the demand for pork is very low and there is little scope for its export. Moreover, there are risks associated with this business. If an epidemic such as anthrax or swine flu hits, an entire herd perishes in a few days. There is also no government support for this business.

No matter wherever in the country a *bathan* (herd of pigs) is seen, the rakhals are Kaiputras. The Kaiputras who have special skills to manage herds of pigs in the open fields. However, nowadays most of the owners of *bathans* are Shudra (the fourth category in Hindu casteism) and some Christians. The Kawras are thrown into the fifth category of Hindu casteism, viz. Dalit.

The number of Kaiputra families are on the decline in many of their villages. In Nikhil’s village there are only 12 Kaiputra families nowadays. Thirty years ago the

number of Kaiputra families was around 100 in this village. Families that have some land to cultivate and other property stay in the village. Those who were landless and did not have any other income opportunities other than keeping herds have left the village and settled elsewhere. Some have migrated to nearby town Jashore.

Other factors that motivate them to leave are lack of social respect, hope for job security and better living condition. They face harassment everywhere for being Kaiputras. Their neighbours keep them aloof. Even the Hindus belonging to any of the four castes consider them untouchables. They are not welcome in marriage ceremonies and other social and religious festivities. They stay confined within their community.

There has been little research on the Kaiputra community. People in general know very little about them. The pigs they herd in the agriculture fields and swamps do no harm to agriculture and environment. Instead, pigs' herds are welcome to fields because a herd of few hundred pigs can clean an acre of land of unwanted weeds and roots in two to three hours. Even the Muslim farmers welcomed the Kaiputras with their herds of pigs to their land. A herd of pigs can plough a piece of land quicker than tractor! The manure it leaves behind also fertilizes the land.

by Goutam Basak with Philip Gain



A herd of pigs in Narail district returns to night halt after a long day of feeding.

Problem Analysis, Changes, Needs and Aspirations

Problem Analysis

Dearth of capital: A large sum of cash capital is required to commercially raise herds of pigs. An amount of Taka eight to 10 lacs is a normal investment for a herd of 200 to 300 pigs. However, all pig herders (Kaiputras and non-Kaiputras) reported they do not get any loans they require from the public or private banks. The amount of loans they get from NGOs is insufficient. Even though there are different types of credit allocated for the agricultural sector, the Kaiputras are deprived of such loans because pig rearing is not considered to be any formal sector and agriculture. With no option left, they take loans from local moneylenders (*mahajans*) with very high interests. They run into serious difficulties when an epidemic such as swine flu and other diseases attack herds of pigs. There is no insurance or bail-out for them if such calamities happen.

The majority of the Kaiputras living in Satkhira, Jashore and Khulna districts are involved in their traditional occupation, viz., pig rearing. However, a large percentage of them living in 34 villages have changed from rearing pigs to fishery. Fishery is not as capital-intensive as herding pigs as long as it is small scale. Because the Kaiputras have hard time accumulating capital, opportunists and influential people are taking away their business. However, for large-scale fish and prawn culture, big amount of capital is required. So even in fishery they remain indebted to the local moneylenders.

Debt and dadan: Most of the herd owners and rakhals remain in debt. While borrowing money is normal, the herd owners take sizeable loans from the traditional moneylenders at high interest rates. The rakhals take smaller loans from the herd owners, moneylenders and NGOs. They also pay high interest rates. The owners of the pigs sometimes make advance sale of their pieces of pigs, which is known as *dadan*. The prices that the *dadandar* (who buy pigs in advance) fix for pigs they buy in advance is lower than the market price and they cannot do anything about it. Debt and dadan combined is a serious problem for the Kaiputras.

Inequality in rights: The Kaiputras face insurmountable difficulties and discrimination in society due to their occupation. They are looked down upon and live a life of indignity. The Kaiputra villages that are still actively involved in piggeries and herding pigs in the open, live largely isolated from the Hindus including Shudras and the Muslims. They are considered truly Dalits and untouchables. They hardly join the societal festivities with

other Hindus and Muslim neighbours. They celebrate their religious and social festivities among themselves.

Often the Kaiputras face outbursts of profanity without any particular reason and they cannot talk back or protest against it. In some areas they cannot even move around freely. The Kaiputra students are discriminated in the schools as well. They face discrimination in receiving stipends to access proper education. The Kaiputras report that their children have to sit at the back of the classroom because “they think we are untouchables”.

What hurts most is that they have hard time getting jobs in government and private sectors. They are neglected for their lower class status. They cannot also exercise their fundamental right of freedom of speech.

Lack of employment: There are many factors that contribute to high unemployment among the Kaiputras. The major factors are: (i) They are socially isolated from the majority Muslims and also from the upper caste Hindus. In fact, the majority Muslims and upper caste Hindus have negative attitude towards them. Many people consider them as untouchables. So they do not want to employ Kaiputras. The men and young boys engaged in keeping herds in the fields stay away from their villages for most of the year. Their villages are also away from city centres and towns. Thus their social network, a prerequisite for employment, is very weak. (ii) A third of the Kaiputra households are completely landless and most of them have no agricultural land. Their landlessness and work conditions keep them away from modern-day jobs that others access. (iii) They hardly know anything about vocational training facilities of the government. Without vocational training, they have limited job opportunities outside their traditional work. (iv) In comparison to the majority population, the education rate of the Kaipuras is extremely low. Therefore they have almost no access to other employment opportunities except for manual work.

Pig rearing itself does not provide employment to all rakhals round the year-round. After sale of a pal (herd), the entire rakhhal team may sit idle for months before they get recruited for a new herd.

Insecurity: Insecurity of the Kaiputras particularly the *rakhals* is obvious because they herd pigs in the open fields and spend their nights in the flimsy tents also in the open fields. The local thugs and robbers easily rob them. Because they keep floating from one place to another, they hardly go to police station and can take advantage of legal systems when they are abused or robbed. The rakhals often face verbal and physical abuse when the pigs damage crops of farmers in the areas they take their herds for feeding. The rakhals

are the one who suffer most from the brunt of natural calamities such as storms, rains, heat and cold waves. The Kaiputras in the fields stay worried about their family members, away from them. Families living on the khas land face eviction threats. Rakhals from families living on khas land remain very worried about their families. The Kaiputras living in areas near to the Indian border feel even more insecure. Illegal smuggling of different prohibited Indian products and trafficking of women occur in the border areas. Usually non-Kaiputras are directly involved in smuggling, but the Kaiputras are often tricked into crimes they have not committed. So they remain concerned about false court cases.

Limited open market: Pork cannot be sold freely in the open markets in rural areas because Muslims do not like it. Therefore the Kaiputras have difficulties in retailing pork in the open markets. Selling pork in a corner of *hat-bazar* (local market) is seen in some Hindu and Christian areas of Jashore, Satkhira, Khulna and Gopalganj districts. In most of Bangladesh slaughter and sale of pigs in the open market is restricted like slaughter of cows in India. This keeps the price of pork low. However, the wholesalers openly sell pork in some markets in Dhaka and elsewhere. The Kaiputras report that selling pork in the local market is more profitable than selling it in wholesale markets in Dhaka and elsewhere. “Thus we are deprived of fair price,” said a Kaiputra.

Social discrimination: The Kaiputras are a completely different occupational group in the country. Raising herds in the open fields, swamps and road sides is tradition of the Kaiputras. Sometimes the pigs are seen feeding on filths in cities. This is seen as disgusting by the majority Bengali population. The majority of the population also have a negative attitude about them and Kaiputras have no social respect. This constructs underlying factors for social discrimination and neglect to the Kaiputras.

Intimidation from the influential: The Kaiputras are generally a minority in the villages they live in and the majority of the villagers are Muslims and Hindus. They generally feel intimidated and live in a sort of isolation from their Bangalee neighbours. Sometimes they cannot move very freely especially in areas populated by Muslim Bangalees. Rearing and herding pigs is generally a degrading work to the Bengali Muslims. Many do not allow the pigs to pass by their yard. Sometimes they are made to clean the streets if the pigs have defecated on them. Social relationship between the Kaiputras and the Shudras (the fourth category in the Hindu Casteism) has improved little bit, but the marriage of the Kaiputras is still limited within their own community.

Problem-related to *smashan* (crematorium): One third of the Kaiputra families living in Bangladesh are landless or live on *khas* land. Hindus by religion, ninety five percent of the Kaiputras have no *smashan* (crematorium) land to cremate their dead. As a result, they face a recurring crisis every time someone dies in the Kaiputra community. They have to seek permission to use the *smashan ghat* of the fellow Hindus in the face

of objections and refusal.

Pig diseases: A herd of pigs usually consists of 200 to 400 pigs of different sizes. The Kaiputras sometimes face huge financial crisis for not knowing enough about animal diseases and being unable to provide modern veterinary treatments to the pigs. If an infectious disease occurs in a herd, many pigs die. Pigs are denied access to well-managed public veterinary facilities. Swine flu in the recent past had caused serious trouble and financial loss to the owners of herds. In the absence of access to proper veterinary treatment the owners of herds are losing confidence in commercial pig business.

Landlessness: The majority of the Kaiputra families are landless. Many own their homestead but have no agricultural land. The families who are completely landless live on *khas* land. Their houses are congested in all of their villages for limited homestead land. Usually family members of different ages live in one small house. In some cases, members of more than one family live in one house. The Kaiputras do not know much about family planning. Hence their population increases undesirably, which has been overcrowding the Kaiputra villages. If the Kaiputra population keeps increasing unplanned, the landless Kaiputra families will have greater difficulties in future with their living condition.

Lack of equal access to government stipends and services: Kaiputras are one of the most underprivileged people of the country. They get no special attention from the state. The main reason for them being socially excluded is lack of education. They know very little about government stipends and different other services to improve education. The local representatives are also not considerate enough towards the pig-rearing community.

Lack of nutrition: The owners of the herds provide meals to the rakhals twice a day in the field. The foods they eat are very basic and not nutritious enough. They do not have access to pure drinking water and nutritious food as they work afar from human settlements. They spend months eating only rice, pulse and minimal vegetables. The Kaiputra family members left behind in the villages also cannot afford healthy food items in their diet because the income of the rakhals is minimal, which is not enough to buy decent foods.

Access to electricity: Eighteen out of 41 Kaiputra villages (33.37%) had no electricity connections in 2017 because they are located in remote areas, away from district and sub-district towns. As of 2018 the electricity coverage in Bangladesh was 95% and in 2019 electricity reached 93% of the population (World Bank reported by BSS, 26 May 2019). The Kaiputra families are deprived of many modern facilities because their access to electricity is not satisfactory compared to the national level access.

Occupational hazards: Because the Kaiputras work in the open fields [that belong

mostly to private owners], they are defenceless when natural calamities strike. The Kaiputras informed that during the past few years five-six rakhals died in the fields from thunderstorms. The number of people killed in thunderstorms has increased in recent times indeed. Some rakhals have also died from stroke in the field. Securing potable water is a challenge for the rakhals. They herd the pigs afar from villages and they have to collect at least tube well water from these villages. Sometimes they are denied use of tube-wells. They often drink water from beels (swamps) and ponds, which is not safe. Day's foods for the pigs are not always enough in one place. So the rakhals have to find more than one place to feed their herds in a single day. The hungry pigs sometimes go helter-skelter for foods and can maraud crops causing a great concern to the rakhals. In some areas and districts pigs are restricted from entering private land. The rakhals have to avoid those places and stay limited to friendly areas. Extortion by the local thugs and tax imposed by the land owners for feeding the pigs is reported to be a serious issue for the rakhals to move freely. The rakhals have to stay alert and watch their pigs round the clock so that a single pig is not lost. A lost pig can cause penalties. If it feeds on crops, the rakhals have to compensate the owner of the crops. If it gets lost in the end, the owner of the herd has to be paid for the pigs from their wages. A pig can also be stolen and penalty is unavoidable.

Organizations: The Kaiputras do not have their own organizations to mention. They remain unrepresented in general in civil society events and in events organized by the government agencies. They remain largely unheard of and their voices hardly reach state and non-state actors who can assist them in dealing with the difficulties they face.

Want of educational institutions: Educational institutions, especially the government primary schools, are not enough for the Kaiputra children. Many of the schools they attend are also far away from their villages. Distance sometimes discourages children to attending schools and contributes to drop-out.

Government attention and services inadequate: The attention of the concerned government agencies that deal with the well-being of marginal and excluded communities is very insignificant for the Kaiputras. Business with pigs is a kind of taboo in the Muslim majority country and there is hardly any interest about this community at the government level. The interaction of the Kaiputras with the government agencies that are responsible for khas land distribution, oversight of social safety net programs, etc. is almost non-existent.

Water logging: Waterlogging is a difficulty in some areas of the coastal districts of Khulna and Satkhira in particular. Embankments, unplanned construction of roads and highways and prawn aquaculture among others contribute to water-logging. The Kaiputras are affected when the problem of water-logging surfaces in an area.



A baukka is moving tents and all other belongings of his group from one place to another.



A rakhal on guard of his pal.

Changes

Bangladesh has been making significant progress in many fronts—education, health, economy, creating new job, fisheries, etc. But the changes that are taking place in the lives of the Kaiputras are not happening in the same tune. In exploring new jobs many villages (34) have completely given up pig herding in the open fields and have changed to fishing villages. Migration to the river bank by those who have changed from piggeries to fisheries is also a change to take note of. Shifting from piggeries to fisheries is a big change for the Kaiputra in these villages. They find themselves socially and economically better off as fishermen. Some of the Kaiputras in these villages have also changed their family titles to Tarafdar, Biswas, Sarker, etc. from Mondol or other typical family titles. This is an indication that they want to forget their identity as Kaiputra or Kawra. Other works they are getting in are driving rickshaw vans and *nosimon* (van or other small vehicles propelled by shallow engines), work in the shops and some other menial work. Thus they supplement their family income. Such changes in occupations have contributed to decreasing the number of rakhals.

Enrolment of the children in schools has also increased during the past 10 years. A small percentage is studying from SSC to Masters' degree level. Most parents who are involved in pig rearing want their children to become educated and get into gentlemen's occupations that will bring them dignity. The Kaiputras report that discrimination has decreased little bit and social dignity is on the increase. They have started socialising with other Hindus particularly the Shudras although their marriages are confined within the community with some exceptions.

Information technology has improved communication within the community and also with others, as indicated by increased use in mobile phone. This has also contributed to increasing communication with nearby city centres.

Needs and Aspirations

Support to sustain the occupation: As long as herding pigs in the open field exists and unless alternative works have been explored, the Kaipuras demand support from the government and non-government organizations to keep their occupation without trouble. They also want patronage from the police and administration. The Kaiputras are not always secure in the fields and their occupation is not recognized and well-accepted. On the one hand the Kaiputras want high level directive for their protection and on the other they want that their work to be recognised so that they are not harmed and can herd their pigs without trouble. Some have recommended for trade license to raise pigs.

Bank loans: Public and private banks ought to consider giving bank loans to the Kaiputras

who own herds of pigs and are in pig business. Rearing pigs is part of agroindustry and those involved—the Kaiputras and others as we see in Pithabari of Gopalganj district—pay 50% to 100% interest to the traditional money lenders. This is a severe exploitation of an occupational group that belong to the lowest rung in the society. The state can play an important role in it by formulating appropriate policies and regulations.

Access to social safety net programs: The Kaiputras want greater access to social safety net programmes. Relevant Social Safety Net Programmes for them include: Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Old Age Allowance, Allowances for the Widow, Allowance for Disabled, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD), Open Market Sales (OMS), Gratuitous Relief (GR), Food For Work (FFW), Work For Money (WFM), Employment Generation Program for the Poorest (EGPP), Health Card for Pregnant Women, Maternity Allowance Programme for the Poor, Special Fund for Assistance to Women Development & Entrepreneurs, Primary School Stipend, School Feeding Programmes, Reaching Out of School, Secondary Education Stipend, Higher Secondary Stipend, Community Based Health Care, National Nutrition Services, Skills for Employment and Productivity, Development of the Living Standard of the Marginal People of Bangladesh, Test Relies, National Legal Aid, etc.

Education: The Kaiputras, like others, want to catch up in education. They want more government and non-government primary schools in their villages or close to their villages so that their children can study there. They want appropriate government and non-government agencies to assess their needs and take necessary measures. Along with more primary schools they want more stipends for the children and free education up to HSC level. They also feel the need of more technical education.

Quota: Quota in the government services and higher education (technical institutions, universities, etc.) is a need and demand of the Kaiputras.

Government grants and services: The Kaiputras have little access to government grants and services. The government, under different safety net programmes, offer financial aid and services to the marginal communities. The Kaiputras deserve government attention in this regard. The government and non-government organisations should assist in linking the Kaiputras with the government grants and services.

Training: Women who try to supplement family income want to scale up their engagement in poultry, livestock [other than pigs], sewing, etc. They need training to scale up their skills.

Access to *khas* land: Those who are completely landless (14.44%) want to have *khas* land settled to them. Those who already live on *khas* land (13.89%) also want settlement

of such land not yet in their names. It is not easy to get settlement of *khas* land. In the process of *khas* land settlement, offices involved are those of Deputy Commission (DC), Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), AC land and Tahsil. Besides, an applicant must secure clearance from Union Council chairman and Upazila Khas Land Distribution Committee for submission of an application for *khas* land. In this long process, they need support from local NGOs such as UTTARAN, which assists the Dalits including the Kaiputras to get settlement of *khas* land.

Potable water and improved sanitation: Most of the Kaiputras drink water from tube-well. Nearly 3% drink deep tube-well water. The Kaiputras living in the coast want safer sources of drinking water; they want more deep tube-well. Those who still use kutchra latrine (4.35%) and defecate in the open (2.07%) need at least latrine of ring and slab. The majority (86.55%) who use latrine of ring or slab want improved or pukka latrines.

Access to veterinary treatment for pigs: Treatment for pigs is not adequate in Bangladesh. When a pig falls sick or an epidemic strikes a herd of pigs, veterinary doctors have to be called in into the field. The owners hardly take pigs to veterinary hospital. Sometimes many pigs die for lack of medical care. The herd owners stay very concerned at the time of epidemic and want veterinary care to their pigs along with other livestock.

References

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). October 2017. *Preliminary Report on Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2016*.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). December 2014. *Statistical Yearbook Bangladesh, 2013*.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). *Statistical Year Book Bangladesh, 2015*.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). *Statistical Year Book Bangladesh, 2018*.

Rahman, Md. Mojibur. 2009. *Pig Rearing for Poverty Alleviation of the Kawra Community: An Action Research*. Published by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB).

Harari, Yuval Noah. 2014. *Sapiens, A Brief History of Humankind*. Penguin Random House, Uk, 2014.

Power coverage reaches 93pc people in Bangladesh—says Word Bank, BSS reports. The Daily Star. May 26, 2019. <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/access-to-electricity-in-bangladesh-coverage-reaches-93-percent-1748935>. Access date: 18 September 2019.

Non-traditional Pig Herders of North-center

The traditional occupation of ‘commercial pig herding’ is not limited to the Kaiputra community anymore. There are Hindus, not Kaiputra, found in different regions raising herds of pigs. One such pig herd was found in Sholakura village of Kalihati Upazila in Tangail District. What was unique about the herd was that of 175 pigs in the herd, 125 were piglets age from half to two months. Four *rakhals* of Das community had been looking after the herd.

Some of the *rakhals* of the herd get monthly pay and others work on yearly contracts. Anukul Chandra (50), the owner of the herd, lives in Silpur village of Phulpur Upazila in Mymensingh District. There are three more herds in Phulpur in addition to his herd. These herds breed piglets or run piglet farm besides commercially raised pigs.

The *rakhals* of the North-center usually herd pigs in different areas of Kalihati, Sakhipur and Ghatail upazilas of Tangail district; Bhaluka, Trishal and Haluaghat upazilas of Mymensingh district; and Durgapur upazila of Netrokona district throughout the year. The pigs mainly scavenge for different plants and grasses in the fields as well as garbage and leftovers dumped on roadsides.

Uttom Kumar Das (22) joined the herd of Anukul on a yearly contract for Taka 150,000 (USD 1760). He is from Gojpur village of Tarakanda upazila in Mymensingh district. He dropped out from class nine and became a *rakhal* due to poverty. “Commercial pig rearing is not our traditional occupation,” said Uttom. “But for the last 20 years three to four Das families of Phulpur upazila have been involved in commercial pig rearing.” Uttom’s father had his own herd and he used to take loans from *mahajans* (traditional money lenders) for lack of cash capital to run his business. Once an infectious disease (swine flue) caused sudden death of 400 pigs in his herd. “Our family fell into a huge debt and we gave up the business of our own; and I became a *rakhal* in the herds of others,” reports Uttom.

Three other *rakhals* in the herd of Anukul Chandra Das are Ujjal Kumar Das (18), Kamakkha Charan Das (35) and Swapan Das (15). All of them are from Gojpur village of Tarakanda upazila in Mymensingh district. About experience of herding pigs in field Kamakkha Charan Das, *sardar*, said, “The owner gives four of us Taka 300 as daily allowance for food. We can afford two meals a day and some snacks for lunch with this

money.”

The *rakhals* learn the skills of rearing pigs in the field. To be a *rakhal*, one just needs to join others in a group. Most *rakhals* start off at very young age. Ujjal Kumar Das comes from an extremely poor family. He couldn't go to school for his family's financial condition. He took some training on mobile phone servicing, not sufficient to be in phone business. He has been working in the pig herd of Anukul Das for the last eight years now. His monthly pay is Taka 10,000 (USD 120). “This helps,” says Ujjal.

Rakhals who work on a yearly contract receive additional facilities. The herd owner pays them Taka 40,000 in advance [before they start working]. At the end of the year, they have to pay the money back to the owner and in exchange they get four pigs worth the same amount. According to Kamakkha Charan Das, commercial pig rearing is profitable. So many families of the Das community choose this informal business as their main earning source despite pig herding not being their traditional occupation.

by Bikash Hajong



A herd of pigs, Kalihati upazila, Tangail district.

A big herd of pigs feeding in a beel in Muksudpur Upazila, Gopalganj district. The swamps of Gopalganj with plenty of wildy-grown plants are very attractive for the pig herders.





GILBERT BOIRAGI: An Outsider in Pig Trade

Gilbert Boiragi is a landless farmer. He is basically a sharecropper. The only land he has is his homestead of 4.5 decimals. He is a father of three sons and one daughter. His wife is a homemaker.

He tried his luck with pig business. In 2016 he had started his business with 400 pigs. He bought pigs from Manirampur upazila in Jashore and other places. His business partner, Ishahak Falia (58) of neighbouring Kaligram, is also his brother-in-law (wife's brother). Ishahak has been in commercial pig business for 15 years now.

In monsoon of 2016 the number of pigs in their herd came down to 30. They sold out most of their pigs to avoid any colossal damage during monsoon when epidemic can attack the pigs. After monsoon they would begin to purchase piglets and develop a herd.

'The pig business is seasonal, generally for one year,' says Gilbert.

Gilbert, a Christian, is not a traditional pig trader.

Because he is a landless, he chose to get engaged in this trade for an income.

'This is a profitable business if you can invest a large sum of money,' says Gilbert. 'Maintenance of pigs requires cash payment every day.'

Those who raise pigs in the field are the Kaiputras or kawras who all hail basically from Jashore and Satkhira. They are hired by anyone who want to get engaged in herding pigs. However, 'the majority of the owners of commercial pigs' herds also come from Jashore and Sathkhira.'

The consumers of the pigs are Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

'We sell pigs to buyers who come from Dhaka, Mongla and Khulna. However, pigs are slaughtered and sold only in Hindu-Christian areas,' says Gilbert.

In Gilbert's area two other big businessmen in pigs are Paresh, a Hindu of Ullahbari village and Nikhil Boiddya, another Hindu of Shanpukuria.

'We rear pigs in the open field under many kinds of pressure. We get raw deals from people who own cropland,' says Gilbert. 'On the other hand, availability of foods for pigs in the field has become short in supply.'

The Kaiputras are very knowledgeable about the country. They know where to go to feed pigs and when. They have the skills to communicate with the pigs.

Gilbert Boiragi does not take much risk raising pigs. He keeps the number of pigs low particularly during monsoon. He also slaughters pigs on Sunday to sell meat to the Hindus and Christian customers who come to Baniarchar Bou Bazar.

During monsoon in 2019, in the month of September, he has just seven pigs. For such a small number, there is no rakhal. He takes care of these pigs in a cage. The number may drop to zero. He will begin collect fresh piglets after the monsoon.

by Philip Gain



Gilbert Boiragi's herd of pigs feeding in a beel near his village, Baniarchar.



Gilbert Boiragi selling pork from his herd in a local market.

Pigs' End Consumers

Five small retailers, located behind Ananda Cinema Hall at Farmgate, sell pork. These are the key shops in the city selling pork that has demand primarily to Christians. The owners of these shops—Robin Bernard Rozario, Shaymol Gomes, Provat Purification, Sajal Gomes and Kanchan—have been trading pork for many years now. Of them Kanchan is Hindu and others are Christians.

The sellers report that they do not slaughter the pigs in Dhaka; they slaughter pigs in Nagori, 30 km northeast of Dhaka. Then the meat is supplied to Dhaka in covered vans. The five retailers in Dhaka also have shops in Nagori, a Christian-inhabited area with 27 shops selling pork in the open. The retailers buy slaughtered pork from whole sellers.

The supply of live pigs come primarily from Gopalganj, Barishal, Khulna, Satkhira and Jashore districts. Some come from Rajshahi and Rangpur districts. In these districts the pigs are raised mostly in the open agricultural field that get flooded during monsoon. The whole sellers buy these from pig traders belonging to Kaiputra and Hindus. Then they truck-load these domesticated animals and bring them to Nagori of Kaliganj upazila in Gazipur district. The consumption of pork among Christians is significant particularly during religious festivities such as Christmas and Easter.

The pork from Nagori is transported to Farmgate six days a week. The pigs are not slaughtered on Monday and there is no supply of pork on this day. It is on Monday that the retailers clear all their refrigerators and clean the premises. Shayan Das who works

at Robin Bernard Rozario’s shop informed, “The retailers of pork in Farmgate buy pigs in large number (around 100 pigs) from paikars (whole sellers) in districts where pigs are raised and bring them to Nagori. Each day [except for Monday] a retailer may slaughter three to four pigs for one shop in Farmgate”.

If you visit a pork shop at Farmgate you will see a price list hung on the wall of a shop. The meat cost Taka 360 per kg. But the undercut (special part of the pig) is sold for up to Taka 840 per kg. Sausage made from pork costs Taka 530 per kg and Bacon Taka 650 (these prices are as of 2019) .

The business is entirely confined to the Christian and Hindu communities. Some hotels and restaurants at Gulshan buy pork from them. A retail shop in Farmgate sells around 65 kgs of pork a day on average. The sale is much higher on Friday and special days for Christians and Hindus.

The supply and sale of pork decline during the monsoon, when the pigs do not feed well. It is during monsoon that the pigs are caught with diseases and many die. The price of pork goes high during monsoon.

by Rabiullah



A retailer shop in Farmgate area selling pork.

Kaiputra: A Pig Rearing Community

The Kaiputra is a small pig rearing community concentrated in 41 villages in the South-western districts of Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna. Their guesstimated population is 12,000. The Kaiputras, basically Hindus, are generally despised in the society because they rear pigs, an animal 'filthy' to the Muslim majority. Many consider them as 'untouchables'.

No matter wherever you see a herd of black swine in the open field of Bangladesh, which may not be owned by someone from the Kaiputra community, the *rakhals* (herders) in almost all cases are sure to come from the Kaiputra villages in Jashore, Satkhira and Khulna districts. The *rakhals* are the ones who perform the most difficult job to manage the herds of pigs in the open fields. Unlike any other job, they spend day and night in rains and cold and under the scorching sun in the open field to feed the pigs. They must also guard the pigs while feeding or sleeping.

People in general are taken aback or amused when they see a herd of pigs feeding in the open fields, road side or en route from one place to another. But there is little research attention or interest to this tiny community that remains mostly invisible. This monograph compiles fresh finds from a study and investigation into the life and struggle of the Kaiputras in the open fields where they raise pigs and in their villages. The Kaiputras are poor, indebted and burdened with social stigma attached with rearing pigs. All these factors keep them falling behind in education and exploring alternative employment.



ISBN: 978-984-94339-1-0

Price: Tk.100 US\$5

