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Lead article

Challenges of Sustainable Urbanization

Photo: Sharif Rahman

Power and Participation
Research Centre



Independent Policy Centre, Bangladesh

Contributors

Editor: Hossain Zillur Rahman

Article contributions from:
Hossain Zillur Rahman

Editorial team:
Shaer Reaz
Joyanta Kumar Paul
Ashik Adnan
Kaneta Zillur

Contact us

Website: www.pprcbd.org

Email:
pprc@pprcbd.org
jkpaul67@gmail.com
ashik_adn@gmail.com

House 77A, Road 12A,
Dhanmondi R/A
Dhaka 1209, Bangladesh

Tel: +880-2-8119207, 9146618
Fax: +880-2-8144379



www.facebook.com/pprcdhaka

Message from the Chairman



How will 2016 be remembered? Momentous on its own or curtain-raiser on changes to come in the global order of things both political and economic? With President Trump about to be inaugurated, EU's economic and ideological future in disarray, Middle East sinking into further chaos, China's infrastructural ambitions likely to rewrite growth trajectories of the global economy, Russia resurgent in the world of real politics, MDGs transiting to the SDGs and Bangladesh mid-way through its current parliamentary term, 2016 will surely go down as if nothing else a watershed year.

For us at PPRC, the challenge was one of ensuring relevance in choice of research issues and advocacy initiatives in the midst of such multi-dimensional changes. We pursued a two-pronged approach to fulfill this goal - one, to keep our focus grounded in grass-root dynamics, and the other, to embrace key emerging agendas in national and global discourses. Taking cue from the SDG theme of 'leaving no one behind', PPRC in partnership with SEHD initiated a multi-year research-advocacy project on marginalized and excluded groups. The big-push has been on our urban and health agendas. Organizing the international conference on urban poverty in September capped a year of research on the urban spectrum and has laid the foundation for the next round of PPRC's urban research which will be on the economics of urbanization. On health, we have been preparing the next round of UHC advocacy which will take off from January, 2017. A different macro focus has been a political economy look at issues of governance. For our focus on the grass-root, we are looking at coastal fishermen as well as on innovations in land and legal empowerment in the northern districts. PPRC is also engaged on a multi-year process monitoring of key safety net programs. On the advocacy front, PPRC has been a key partner in launching a civic platform - SROTA - on issues of safe roads and transport. These and others promise to mark exciting new engagement for PPRC in the coming year and beyond.

When PPRC was founded 20 years ago, our mission statement read " ...advancing the causes of empowerment and responsible citizenry, elimination of poverty, promotion of innovations and quality presence in global discourses ...". These remain as relevant as ever and will continue to guide our efforts. Happy New Year!

Hossain Zillur Rahman

Snapshots

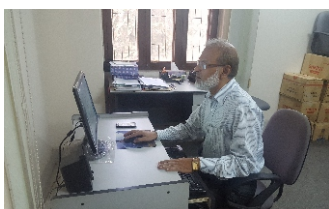


Above: PPRC staff at work



Left: Newest member of PPRC Security team.

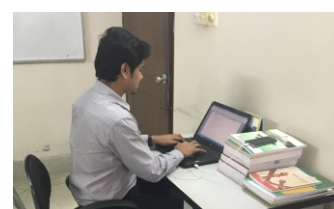
New faces at PPRC



Gazi Mizanur Rahman, retired Joint Secretary to the government, joins PPRC as Project Coordinator on Safety Net Spot Checks Project.



Uchan Aoung joins PPRC as Research Officer on the Excluded and Marginalized Groups Project, A EU-funded project implemented in partnership with SEHD, CCDB and GBK.



Ashik Adnan joins PPRC as Research Associate in the urban team.



Stay updated with PPRC by following Hossain Zillur Rahman on Twitter:
[@hossainzillur](https://twitter.com/hossainzillur)



People



New UNDP Country Director Sudipto Mukerjee and PPRC Chairman discussing transformative agenda for Bangladesh on 5 November, 2016.



Mike Robson, Country Representative, FAO impressed us simultaneously being a 'big picture' thinker and a hands-on professional. PPRC Chairman with Mike at his farewell event at FAO country office.



Ambassador Liaquat Ali Choudhury, PPRC Senior Fellow was a core member of the research team on urban spectrum study. He says “.. rapid urbanization poses many challenges for Bangladesh. PPRC is working on a very comprehensive urban agenda for Bangladesh and hopefully in the future PPRC will make important contribution in this area.”



A M M Nasiruddin, former Health Secretary and PPRC Senior Fellow, is a core member of the PPRC team on health and institutional transformation issues. He conducted the district level workshops on land and legal empowerment project of BRAC during 8-10 October at Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon as part of the ongoing PPRC study of the BRAC's PRI project.



PPRC Chairman at Aga Khan National Council organized launch of M. Keshavjee's book, *Into that Heaven of Freedom* at Jamatkhana, Bashundara R/A on 3 December, 2016.

PPRC Events



Safety Net Spot Checks project Signing Ceremony at the conference room of the Department for Disaster Management at Mohakhali on 10.02.2016.



A.M.M. Nasiruddin and PPRC team in field dialogue with women stakeholders in Natore for the assessment study on BRAC's Property Rights Initiative Project.



Launch of the UHC Conference Proceedings Volume and Policy Dialogue on “Health challenges of SDGs: Path to UHC in Bangladesh” with the Honourable Minister of Health and Family Welfare. Mohammed Nasim, MP and National Professor Brig. (Rtd.) Abdul Malik.



Pre-fieldwork orientation workshop on safety net spot checks Round 2 with Secretary, MoDMR, DG of DDM and Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed at the conference hall of DDM on 13th December, 2016.



Launch of the Policy Brief of the International Urban Poverty Conference shared with the Honourable Minister of Planning A H M Mustafa Kamal, FCA, MP.



Joint initiative by PPRC, SEHD, CCDB and JBK on mapping the 8 million dispersed and marginalized population of Bangladesh.

International conference on urban poverty

24-25 September, Dhaka

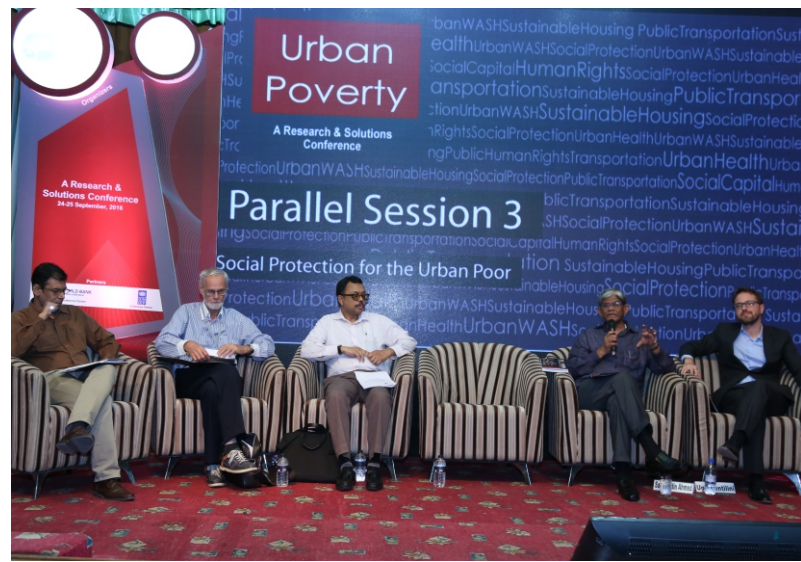


Capping the year long joint PPRC-BBS urban data-base empirical work, PPRC and BBS with support from The World Bank and UNDP organized an international conference on urban poverty on 24-25 September, 2016 in Dhaka. The conference brought together an extraordinarily rich cross-section of experts and participants with from home and abroad to review analytical perspectives, solution priorities and ways forward. Among others, Abdul Mannan, MP, State Minister for Finance and Planning, Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, World Bank Chief Economist for South

Asia Martin Rama, Ming Zhang, Sector Manager, Urban, South Asia, World Bank, Professor David Hulme, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, Architect Dr. Adnan Morshed, Catholic University of USA, Washington D.C., Nick Beresford, Acting Country Director, UNDP, Professor Nazrul Islam, Chairman, Centre for Urban Studies, National Professor Brigadier (Retd.) Abdul Malek, Chairman, National Heart Foundation, Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury, Founder, Gano Shasthaya Kendra, Professor Sekandar Khan, Vice-Chancellor, East Delta University, Dr.

Salehuddin Ahmed, former Governor, Bangladesh Bank, Edouard Beigbeder, Country Representative, UNICEF, Mike Robson, Country Representative, FAO, Dr. Khairul Islam, Country Director, WaterAid, Abdul Karim, Managing Director, PKSF as well as sectoral experts and academics from leading government agencies, development partners and national research institutions and NGO, CBO and local government leaders participated. A Policy Brief summarizing key findings and messages was subsequently shared with policy-makers.





International conference on urban poverty



Capacity Building

PPRC and BBS jointly organize capacity building workshop on research methodology for young professionals at BBS on 28-29 September, 2016



Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with support from The World Bank launched a 2-day capacity-building workshop on urban research at the BBS auditorium in Agargaon. PPRC and BBS are long-term partners in developing urban statistics for Bangladesh. The workshop follows the recently concluded International Conference on Urban Poverty hosted by PPRC and BBS. The workshop was aimed to train young researchers from universities, research organizations, NGOs, investigative journalists as well members of PPRC and BBS. Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud was the chief guest at the inaugural session which included the presence of K.M. Mozammel Hoq, Secretary, Statistics and Md. Abdul Wazed, DG, BBS. PPRC chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman provided the keynote address. The 2-day workshop had six sessions focused on new advances in quantitative and qualitative research techniques.



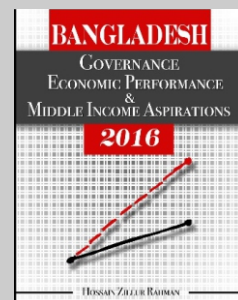
PPRC AND MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF BANGLADESH SIGN MOU ON JOINT INITIATIVE ON HEALTHY CITIES

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) for joint advocacy at municipal issues on issues of municipal strengthening, urban resilience, urban Poverty, urban health, capacity building etc. Activities under this MOU are likely to kick-off in January, 2017 under a project titled PRERONA.

Human aspects of aquaculture/fishery sector

PPRC undertook two smaller studies focused on human aspects of the growing aquaculture/fishery sector. The first was on "End Evaluation of Compliance of ILO Core Labor Standards and the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006 (the BLA) in the Bangladesh Shrimp and Fish Processing Plants (SFPPs)" for the Solidarity Center-Bangladesh/American Center for International Labor Solidarity Center. The other was a study on an In-depth Review of the Power Structure in Hilsa Value Chain Level commissioned by Worldfish for the ECOFISH-BD project. This follows an earlier PPRC study on hilsha fishermen.

PPRC EXAMINES INTERFACE OF GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN UNDP SUPPORTED STUDY



Notwithstanding the relative political calm and stable macroeconomic fundamentals that followed the heightened bouts of political violence and conflicts in 2013 and 2015, Bangladesh continues to find it challenging to overcome an entrenched sense of political uncertainty that is also impacting on the quality and pace of its economic performance. At independence, the dominant concern was about the economic future of the country. Over the course of forty-five years, this concern was significantly mitigated as a poverty-stricken, disaster-prone vulnerable economy has confounded observers at home and abroad alike in scripting a remarkable story of economic transformation and resilience. Progress in economic development, however, was not mirrored in progress in political development. At independence, politics had seemed to many as the lesser challenge. In a twist of irony, it is deficits in political development today that appear to stand in the way of an accelerated realization of its true economic potential and the foundational dream of an inclusive, humane society. Exploring these urgent themes, PPRC with support from UNDP undertook an empirical study during 2016.

Upcoming



PPRC in discussion with UNDP for a research initiative on economics of urbanization

Are the urban poor only a public policy concern related to the social protection agenda? Are they only a marginal economic sub-sector in the urban economy? Or are they an integral component of an integrated urban economy where the formal and informal interface in necessary and complex ways? Are the urban poor subsumed within a larger discourse of SME that carries the potential of being a growth driver? To explore these critical questions, PPRC is in discussion to launch a new phase of its urban work that will include among others a ground-breaking conference on the Informal Economy.

Dissemination event on newly completed research on Land Conflicts, Property Rights and Legal Empowerment

A dissemination event of the newly completed research on a rapid assessment of BRAC's Property Rights Initiative Project will be held on 17 January, 2016 at the BRAC Centre.

PPRC to facilitate launch of Healthy Bangladesh platform

Following the international conference on Realizing UHC Goals in April, 2015, PPRC and partners have been pursuing the possibility of launching of a multi-stakeholder coalition to contribute to the scaling up of the UHC agenda in Bangladesh. This platform, titled HEALTHY BANGLADESH, will be launched in early 2017 and will focus on both policy and grass-root advocacy on a holistic health agenda including UHC. PPRC is in dialogue to partner USAID-supported HFG project of Abt Associates on a district dialogue series on UHC during 2017.

At a glance



Above: PPRC Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman joins launch of BRAC's Urban Innovation Forum at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novo Theatre auditorium on 28 October 2016.



Above: Dinner meeting with Secretary, SID and DG, BBS on urban database and urban poverty statistics project, Dhamondi, 17th August, 2016.



Above: Certificate Distribution to Volunteers of International Urban poverty Conference from United International University at PPRC



Above: PPRC Chairman Launches NSU's 25 Years Souvenir Volume.



Left: Executive Chairman, Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) delivering lectures at NDC, Dhaka. Dr. Rahman is a frequent resource person at NDC



Left: Foundational training workshop for PPRC field teams on spot checks for process monitoring of 5 major safety net programs implemented by DDM



CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

Hossain Zillur Rahman

Urgency of the urban focus

Urbanization is a compelling and growing reality. Projections indicate that urban population in Bangladesh will rise to between 91 and 102 million by 2050 which will be 44% of total population.[1] The scope of the urban question, however, cannot be deduced simply from the projected size of the urban population. The erstwhile rural-urban divide is giving way to a rural-urban continuum.[2] Far from being a discrete collection of cities and towns, urbanization is a larger transformational process impacting on how natural resources such as land and water are utilized, how economic activities are shaped, and even how life-styles are imagined. Managed or ignored, urbanization thus represents a far-reaching paradigm shift that will and indeed has come to determine our economic prospects and the quality of our social lives.

While urbanization has come to be an inevitable feature of the development process, both the pattern of and consequences of

urbanization for individual countries is not a given. Urbanization in Bangladesh is marked by its own distinctive features. Four stand out.

Bangladesh is in many ways unique in that it prioritized city connecting rural roads i.e. the so-called feeder roads, well before its urban expansion.[3] Based on these rural-to-city and city-to-city linkages, an urban spectrum has emerged wherein urban characteristics stretch right from the village all the way through rural market centres, rural towns, municipalities, district towns up to the metropolitan realities of upscale Dhaka. Urban aspirations are now defining even rural life-styles.

A second distinctive feature is the context of extreme land scarcity within which urbanization is taking place. A population of over 150 million is squeezed within a landmass of only 144000 sq. km. Not only is average density for the entire country high – 1016 per sq.km in 2011 and expected to double by 2050 –

population density in the cities is considerably higher though it varies across the urban spectrum. Dhaka's density stands at an astounding 49,182 per sq.km. (2011). Corresponding figure for Chittagong City Corporation is 16,613 per sq. km. (2011). Overall, urbanization is marked by an intense competition for land that, in the absence of an effective regime of land allocation, is fueling over-crowding, urban chaos and slum growth.

The third distinctive feature is how the urbanization process interfaces with the economic growth process. Both population density and economic density maps show concentration of economically significant urban growth alongside key transport corridors most notably Dhaka-Chittagong and latterly Dhaka-northwest, Dhaka-north-east as well as Jessore-Benapole border corridor. Under-construction Padma Bridge has the potential of opening a further Dhaka-southwest growth corridor.

The fourth distinctive feature of the urbanization process in Bangladesh relates to the dynamics underlying Dhaka's growth as a primate city. Dhaka has always been the 'first' city of Bangladesh but its contemporary emergence as a primate city is unique in that this primacy has to a considerable extent been policy-induced, an outcome of extreme centralization of authority and decision-making. Such policy-induced primacy is a historic reversal of a relatively more decentralized past. The policy-induced exaggerated primacy of Dhaka not only imperils Dhaka's own sustainable urban future but also serve to ensure below-

potential growth of the mofussil. Cross-country experiences thus show that beyond being an inevitable corollary of development, urbanization can hold both promise and problems for a country. Which feature will come to dominate will very much depend on the nature and efficacy of the country's policy engagement with the urban agenda. As Bangladesh's goal shifts upward towards attaining a high middle income status, the need for bringing the urban agenda including the urban poverty agenda into the policy centre-stage thus becomes more urgent. At one level, urbanization has generally been a strong growth driver

with positive impact on poverty reduction. Despite falling poverty rates, however, urban poverty remains high at 21% (2010). More recent estimates from the PPRC-BBS city-level surveys indicate similar percentages. Of equal concern is that rapid urbanization has meant a spatial relocation of poverty from rural to urban areas: urban share of total poor in Bangladesh rose from 10% in 1991/92 to 18% in 2010.[4] Not surprisingly, the rate of growth of slum population has been consistently higher than the rate of growth of urban population as such.

Urban realities: The evidence from new data

Income realities

Urban income realities show a pronounced variation across the urban spectrum. Figure 1 summarizes data from an UNDP-supported Governance and Economy Study of 2015[5] which collected income data across the urban spectrum including rural. The findings highlight a dual reality: urban incomes in general are higher than rural incomes but within the urban spectrum, there is a strong metropolitan-mofussil divide.

Average urban incomes conceal significant disparities and such disparities are most pronounced in metropolitan Dhaka (Table 1). The lowest income class enjoys average monthly income below BDT 8,000 across the entire urban spectrum. In contrast, the top-ranked income class enjoys average monthly income of BDT 284,088 in Dhaka (2012), BDT 174,398 in Chittagong (2016) and BDT 149,810 in secondary cities

(2016). The reality of income disparities is further brought out when one looks at the respective income shares of each income class. Such disparities are most stark in Dhaka. The top income class in Dhaka (2012) was comprised of only 5.4% of households but they enjoyed 39.9% of all of Dhaka's income. In contrast, the bottom 58.4% of households enjoyed an income share of only 21%.

Figure 1
Metropolitan, Mofussil and Rural Incomes, 2015

Source: Governance and Economy Study, 2015: PPRC/UNDP

Table 1
Income levels and stratification across the urban spectrum

| Income class (Monthly income <u>BDT</u>) | Metropolis: Dhaka City, 2012 | | | Incipient Metropolis: Chittagong City, 2016 | | | Secondary Cities: 14 <u>Pourashavas</u> , 2016 | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | % of <u>hh</u> | Average income <u>BDT</u> | % of incom e share | % of <u>hh</u> | Average income <u>BDT</u> | % of incom e share | % of <u>hh</u> | Average income <u>BDT</u> | % of incom e share |
| Below 10,000 | 11.3 | 7,444 | 2.2 | 7.8 | 8,027 | 2.3 | 28.0 | 7,717 | 10.3 |
| 10,000- 25,000 | 47.1 | 15,200 | 18.8 | 56.6 | 16,029 | 33.8 | 49.3 | 16,383 | 38.7 |
| 25,000- 50,000 | 25.8 | 32,072 | 21.7 | 24.6 | 32,544 | 29.8 | 17.4 | 35,425 | 29.5 |
| 50,000- 100,000 | 10.5 | 63,197 | 17.4 | 9.1 | 63,206 | 21.6 | 4.1 | 67,441 | 13.2 |
| 100,000 & above | 5.4 | 284,088 | 39.9 | 1.9 | 174,398 | 12.5 | 1.2 | 149,810 | 8.3 |
| All | 100.0 | 38,127 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 26,817 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 20,897 | 100.0 |

Source: PPRC Dhaka Survey, 2012 & Chittagong and Pourashava Surveys, 2016

The reality of income disparities is further brought out when one looks at the respective income shares of each income class. Such disparities are most stark in Dhaka. The top income class in Dhaka (2012) was comprised of only 5.4% of households but they enjoyed 39.9% of all of Dhaka's income. In contrast, the bottom 58.4% of households enjoyed an income share of only 21%.

Quality of life

Income levels provide one glimpse into household realities in urban centres. For a fuller picture of household welfare, one needs also to look at quality of life indicators (Table 2).

Incidence of vulnerable housing which includes both the relatively insignificant incidence of jhupri and the more significant kutcha dwellings rises from 5% in Dhaka city to 26% in Chittagong city and 39.5% in the pourashavas. There is, however, a structural difference in terms of

housing tenure. It appears that as one moves from the mofussil to metropolitan centre, the dominant mode of housing shifts from owner-occupation to rental housing.

Beyond the issues of tenure and structure, quality of life is also determined by housing adequacy and rental security. Table 3 describes per capita housing space for various categories of housing across the urban spectrum. Two findings stand out. Per capita housing space increases as housing structure

improves – this is true across the urban spectrum. Secondly, per capita housing space is lower in metropolitan centre compared to the secondary cities, a feature that is true for all housing types. What this indicates is the intensity of the competition for land in metropolitan centres vis-à-vis secondary cities where both economic growth and land values remain below those in the metropolitan centre.

Table 2
Quality of life across the urban spectrum

| Indicator | Dhaka, 2012 | Chittagong, 2016 | <u>Pourashava</u> , 2016 |
|---|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| | % | | |
| Owner-occupied housing | 20.5 | 33.2 | 69.7 |
| Vulnerable housing: <u>Kutcha dwellings</u> + <u>Jhupri</u> | 5.0 | 26.0 | 39.5 |
| Non-sanitary latrine | 2.6 | 1.8 | 3.1 |
| Shared latrine-use | n/a | 38.9 | 23.8 |
| Unhygienic garbage disposal | 9.6 | 40.5 | 82.2 |
| Interrupted electricity supply | 92.2 | 96.8 | 91.3 |
| Access to piped water | 96.5 | 59.2 | 20.5 |

Source: PPRC Dhaka Survey, 2012 & Chittagong and Pourashava Surveys, 2016

Table 3
Housing adequacy

| Housing type | Per capita housing space (sq. ft.) | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| | Dhaka (2012) | Chittagong (2016) | <u>Pourashavas</u> (2016) |
| <u>Jhupri</u> | 24.21 | 40.0 | 73.86 |
| <u>Kutcha</u> | 36.18 | 59.1 | 89.69 |
| Semi- <u>pucca</u> /Tin-shed | 58.61 | 72.5 | 127.3 |
| <u>Pucca</u> /Flats | 123.72-242.8 | 162.5 | 207.1 |

Source: PPRC Dhaka Survey, 2012 & Chittagong and Pourashava Surveys, 2016

With regard to sanitation, the improvement is universal with non-sanitary latrine-use accounting for only 3% of households across the urban spectrum. The emerging concern is with shared latrine-use. This appears to rise as one moves from the mofussil to the more land-scarce realities of metropolitan centres.

On the issue of garbage disposal, indiscriminate throwing of garbage by households appears to be strongly associated with mofussil life. However, it is a moot point to what extent such behavior is reflective of

civic values and to what extent of the availability of municipal services that can facilitate more hygienic behavior.

With regard to access to utilities, while electricity connections are near universal, key concerns are with supply interruptions and the average daily duration of such interruptions. Supply interruption is near universal across the urban spectrum. The key difference emerging is with regard to the duration of interruption. Dhaka's data relates to 2012 and other evidence indicates noteworthy improvement in the capital city in this regard. However, both in Chittagong

and the pourashavas, the duration of power outages remain a pressing concern.

On the question of access to piped water supply, again it is Dhaka which appears to be in the most favourable position with 96.5% having access. Chittagong, despite being the second-most important city in the country can supply piped water to only 59.2% of households. In the pourashavas, piped water supply system remains at a nascent stage with only a fifth of households being covered.

Is urban poverty different?

A challenge of perspectives

While there have been a plethora of studies and policies on urbanization, some paradigmatic knowledge gaps remain. This is particularly true for urban poverty. Bangladeshi economists have done a commendable job of deepening understanding of rural poverty and contributing to the policy perspectives that have over the years produced well-recognized successes in mitigating such poverty. However, when it comes to urban poverty, the discourse engagement has been significantly weaker. In practice, there has been a tendency to address urban poverty through an uncritical application of the rural poverty lens.

A key strategic concern is whether the targeting paradigm that has been behind many of the successes in dealing with rural poverty has the same relevance for dealing with urban poverty. The challenge here in the first stage one of knowledge and discourse gaps. For example, in Dhaka and Chittagong, a striking new

development is the privatization of slums. The urban poor have come to constitute a lucrative housing market for unscrupulous land-grabbers and corrupt elements within the policy and administrative establishments who establish informal housing settlements often on disputed public land. The typical targeting strategies that have worked so well in dealing with rural poverty is really off the mark when it comes to dealing with these different kind of vulnerabilities.

A second critical gap is in the political economy understanding of urban dynamics in particular the interplay of interest groups and jurisdictional conflicts that often underpin poor progress on many policy initiatives such as public transportation, low-cost housing, urban health, slum improvements as well as many non-structural solutions related to behavioral norms. The knowledge gaps in these areas serve to confer a kind of discourse invisibility that stand in the way of a

more robust civic and policy engagement to redress such ground realities.

Urban poor also present several policy dilemmas whose resolution requires careful attention to a range of factors. Take the case of slum evictions and off-city resettlement plans. The real problem here is how to preserve the fragile access poor people have to the advantages offered by cities, principally jobs and services essential for survival and upward mobility like health and education. Living in cities is the best self-help strategy poor people have devised to overcome poverty and therefore government policies have to begin thinking differently about the "problem" of informal settlements. Experience has shown that not only do resettled population drift back in search of the job opportunities in cities, the initial incentive offered to move out acts as a magnet for attracting new migrants.



Statistical invisibility and 'outdated' indicators

Urban poor often suffer from a reality of being 'illegal citizens' within the urban scenario with greater burdens of insecurity and social discrimination. For these reasons, there is a derivative problem of statistical invisibility for the urban poor because public and private sector statistical systems tend to favour the 'formal' and prefer residential identity as the basis for statistical inclusion. This is precisely the reason why the informal economy, despite providing by one estimate between 30 and 70 % of employment, remains largely invisible in national statistics.

Overcoming the statistical invisibility represents both a research and a social challenge. Social and policy mind-sets often have negative views on the occupational spaces the urban poor occupy. It is thus

important not only to measure the urban poor but also to make visible and give legitimacy to the broad social faces of the urban poor. Such faces may include street vendors, rickshaw-pullers, low-wage workers in formal and informal enterprises, petty shop-keepers, artisans, home-based workers, domestic workers etc. There may be other categories of the urban poor who do not necessarily suffer from the above problem of statistical invisibility but nevertheless merit attention. These are low-salary fixed income employees and lower middle classes who often do not qualify for policy attention on current yardsticks.

A second challenge with regard to the statistical invisibility of the urban poor is the continued use of empirical indicators which may have become 'outdated' vis-à-vis rapidly transforming urban realities. Take the

case of housing structure. In metropolitan Dhaka, the poor may be living in facilities which are better in structural terms i.e. brick-and-mortar instead of thatched, but in terms of per capita space, rental insecurity and housing costs, they may be in new vulnerabilities which remain out of focus because the indicator-in-use continues to be 'housing type'. Other examples of indicators that may have become 'outdated' are access to sanitation where the emerging concern is with regard to intensity of the burden of shared-use. Similarly, with regard to access to utilities such as electricity and water, 'access to a connection' is no longer an adequate indicator. It needs to be supplemented with new indicators – incidence of supply interruptions as well as the duration of such interruptions.



Economic opportunities, social exclusion

Are the urban poor saddled with a faustian bargain of economic opportunities and social exclusion? A credible view emerging out of research is that the move from rural to urban generally provides an income boost for the poor but after this initial upward jump, income rise within the urban milieu may often be considerably muted or slower for the new immigrant.[6] Clearly, the economic opportunity map for the urban poor is considerably more dynamic as well as vulnerable compared to that of the rural poor but arguably such dynamics are yet to be adequately factored into research approaches. Measuring the urban poor is highly sensitive to the methodology used. Because the urban poor rely more heavily on cash income to secure their basic needs, income-based poverty measures tend to underestimate

urban poverty in comparison with those that look at multi-dimensional indices that include besides consumption other dimensions such as access to basic services and social vulnerabilities. Such multi-dimensional indices include i) greater reliance on the cash economy, ii) livelihoods in the informal sector, iii) overcrowded living conditions, iv) frequent shift of residence v) environmental hazards, vi) social fragmentation, vii) exposure to crime and violence, and viii) exposure to accidents etc. A key research and policy concern emanating from such multi-dimensional indices is whether the urban poor face contrasting realities whereby access to income opportunities do not easily translate into commensurate gains in social poverty. Available statistics give credence to such concerns: while

extreme poverty in urban areas was nearly halved during 2000 and 2010, literacy rates remained almost stagnant over the same period. Are such contrasting trajectories in income and social poverty a question of lagged change or are there structural barriers and policy biases that engender such differential outcomes? From an interventionist perspective, this entails a larger question, namely, whether urban poverty is mainly about the poor as a target group or is it more about a policy approach to urbanization that prioritizes narrow elite concerns – whether it is about specific growth policies or types of service and infrastructure priorities - at the expense of a sustainable urbanization process that can also transcend a conflicted reality of economic opportunities and social exclusion for the urban poor?[7]

Uncertainty, coping and agency of the poor

The nature of the risk profile facing the urban poor differs in many respects from that facing the rural poor. Better understanding of such differing risk profiles is a key challenge for urban poverty research. Risks may stem from uncertainties in the labour market, tenure and residential insecurities, disasters, institutional insecurities, uncertainties in access to basic services as well as exposure to crime

and violence. While uncertainty is a key dimension part of the urban reality for the poor, they do not accept such uncertainties passively.[8] The agency of the poor in the form of coping strategies to address uncertainties and construct strategies for upward mobility is a key story in urban poverty. It is a story that has, however, yet to be brought fully into research focus.[9]

Understanding the agency of the

urban poor is not only a research and analytical priority but such agency can be a key resource when it comes to designing solutions to specific thematic concerns pertaining to urban poverty.[10] However, when and how such coping strategies come into play and what expectations and calculations underline them is itself a critical area of research. [11]

Key learnings from the international conference on urban poverty, September, 2016

The urban spectrum

Urbanization is a distinctly differentiated reality with a metropolitan-mofussil divide evident on both income and quality of life indicators. Such a divide is equally

real in the specificities of the urban contexts and in the nature of the intervention opportunities available. While further understanding of what the urban spectrum signifies for

urban poverty is required, the need for a differentiated agenda vis-à-vis metropolitan Dhaka and secondary cities is already indicated by the analysis currently available.

Income gains versus well-being deficits

Income levels may be an incomplete indicator of the well-being status of the urban poor. Housing poverty, burden of shared latrine-use, paucity of required services such as public

transportation, rental insecurity, poor or uncertain access to utilities, health and education as well as various forms of social vulnerabilities underscore the necessity of

embracing a multi-dimensional understanding of urban poverty that is specific to urban contexts.

Bringing urban poverty research into focus

A key message from the conference was the need to avoid examining urban poverty through the lens of rural poverty. While there are similarities in the poverty experience in urban and rural contexts, the differences may often be critical. In particular, qualitative analysis of urban poverty alongside the more

familiar quantitative analysis is an under-addressed research frontier. The micro-research commissioned by PPRC for the international conference revealed a number of interesting insights which underscored the potential of this qualitative research focus. As repeatedly brought out in the conference, urban poverty often

suffers from a problem of being mis-measured i.e. conventional measures missing out on critical dimensions. Bringing urban poverty research into focus is thus not only a measurement challenge but more importantly a challenge of better understanding.

Breaking the visibility barrier

The strident visibility of the poor in the urban landscape contrasts sharply with the statistical and discourse invisibility of the urban poor. Policy reluctance stemming from a fear of incentivizing migration, elitist bias over urban policy as well as intellectual frameworks that fail to come into grips with key experiential realities of the poor such as the

informal economy often combine to push the issue urban poverty to the margins of statistical and policy focus. Breaking such visibility barriers requires not only research initiatives but also of building unorthodox networks that brings together researchers, activists, sectoral experts, urban local government leaders, pro-active policy-makers and

representatives of the urban poor themselves into compelling advocacy efforts. The importance of such policy advocacy can hardly be over-emphasized because more often than not policy reluctance to engage on urban poverty is more the norm than the exception.

Re-thinking the targeting approach

Since the 1980s, the targeting approach has been fundamental to both the understanding of poverty and how anti-poverty strategies have been fashioned. It is easy to admit that this approach has yielded rich dividends in terms of reduction of poverty particularly rural poverty. In the urban context, however, this approach premised on 'household' and 'community' as the 'targets'

present fundamental new challenges that call for strategic re-thinking of the approach. This is particularly true of metropolitan realities where the traditional concepts of household and community as social units are increasingly subject to newer realities of locational, social and labour market fluidity that necessitate fundamental re-thinking of such social concepts. The challenge here is not one of

pushing such concepts into dis-use but of discovering the newer meanings that can invest them with operational relevance. But over and above this, there is also a challenge of bringing into innovative play the extra-household contexts, the meso-economy and the city an integrated reality.

Solution priorities

Innovative housing solutions for secondary cities

Bangladesh has begun to accumulate innovative experiences in housing solutions in secondary cities that draw on community engagement, contextualized design solutions and housing finance that incorporates relevant features of the micro-finance model. Such experiences have laid the ground-work for a potential big-

push in this area. However, several issues merit further attention. Traditional MFIs may not be ideal to be the intermediary organizations driving such an initiative. The micro-finance discipline on loan disbursement has to be integrated with community mobilization approaches relevant for urban

settings. There will also be a premium in integrating design and land-pooling ideas that can elevate a financing project into a larger urban upgradation initiative. Finally, the importance of promoting a conducive policy support environment among both national and municipal leaders cannot be over-emphasized.

Urban sanitation: Faecal sludge management

Bangladesh's marked success in eliminating open defecation has brought in its wake a new challenge of faecal sludge management. Rapid expansion of low-cost sanitary latrines without adequate linkage to any functioning sewage network is creating a new problem of too-quickly filled up latrines leadings to fecal spill onto surface water and environmental pollution. Asian Water Development Outlook report, 2016 has describes

Bangladeshi rivers as most polluted. Even in Dhaka which has piped sewage network, only 2% of fecal load is treated. Health gains of sanitation are thus getting compromised by this phenomenon. A concerted drive on fecal sludge management offers a possible solution to the problem. This would require i) lesson-learning from pilot experiences in some municipalities ii) adoption of a project of scale by DPHE with

technical support of KUET, BUET etc. iii) development of a business model on fecal sludge management with particular attention to positive externalities and creation of public goods iv) an independent project focused on secondary cities v) awareness program on waste disposal and recycling at community level and vi) preparation and adoption of a regulatory framework on fecal sludge management.

Urban health

There are three outstanding solution priorities pertaining to urban health vis-à-vis the urban poor. The first has to do with inefficiencies in the distribution of public sector jurisdiction over healthcare. The second relates to the burden of healthcare expenditures on the urban poor. The third relates to better understanding of the emerging epidemiological burdens on the urban poor and the socio-economic determinants of such burdens. The institutional architecture of health-service delivery differs strikingly between rural and urban areas. While there is a commonality in the

pluralistic presence of public and private sectors in both urban and rural, distribution of public sector healthcare jurisdiction differs significantly in certain aspects. In the rural areas, healthcare infrastructure extends from tertiary facilities in district towns through secondary facilities in upazila down to Community Clinics at the grass-root level. In the urban areas, jurisdiction over health service delivery was traditionally bifurcated with municipal governments responsible for public health and health ministry responsible for secondary and tertiary services. There was an

overlap on the question of primary healthcare: health ministry had a small number of dispensaries for this purpose while municipal governments also had some jurisdiction on paper. Over time, rapid urbanization with its attendant growth of urban poor requiring primary healthcare services has posed a major challenge to this traditional distribution of healthcare jurisdiction. The institutional response to the growing challenge has been twofold both of which have contributed to inefficient resource-use and sub-optimal outcomes. The ministry of local government which

has jurisdiction over municipal governments adopted a donor-funded urban primary healthcare project implemented through NGOs that morphed into an exclusive focus on M&CH health services to the detriment of other primary healthcare needs of the urban poor. The health ministry on the other hand had allowed its dispensaries to fall into dis-use leading to the urban poor over-burdening tertiary facilities for their primary healthcare needs. The ultimate victims of such a jurisdictional landscape are the urban poor who are both deprived of their primary healthcare needs and burdened with out-of-expenses in having to access to private sector services. An urgent review aimed at overcoming the above jurisdictional inefficiencies is a priority.[12] Key steps to consider here are i) energizing the public health mandates

of municipal governments ii) budgetary boost to modernize and bring into use currently non-functional network of urban dispensaries under health ministry iii) principled dialogue between local government and health ministries to phase out project approach to urban primary healthcare (currently limited to M&CH services only) iv) strengthening the currently occasional system of GPs appointed under municipal budgets v) extend opening hours of government pharmacies to evening hours to enable urban poor to avail of these facilities after work.

The second major area for corrective action on urban health vis-à-vis the urban poor is in the reduction of out-of-pocket expenses on healthcare. Two priorities to consider here are i) strengthening the scope and scale of low cost program

on essential medicines, in particular medicines for chronic ailments and ii) awareness programs to deter delayed treatment which typically results in multiplied expenditures. Viable health insurance programs are of course a perennial priority. However, Bangladesh is yet to make the required breakthrough in this area.

Besides these reform and program priorities, there is also a need for health research that provides better understanding of the emerging epidemiological burdens on the urban poor and the socio-economic determinants driving these burdens. Cost-effective efforts from within the health system that makes innovative use administrative data[13] can be a useful supplement to more formal research approaches.[14]

Urban social protection strategy

Current evidence show that social protection programs has a proportionately greater coverage of the rural poor compared to the urban poor, a feature much more pronounced for South Asia.[15] Given that absolute number of urban poor is

set to rise despite decline in overall poverty rates, the question of social protection for urban areas is emerging as a concern. Country contexts matter here as does under-currents of policy skepticism. It may thus be premature to move directly

into specific program initiatives. However, the issue will need to be addressed sooner or later. The priority at this stage is a wide-ranging consultative process that can assess demand and identify the most promising program entry points.

Urban governance priorities: Institutional dysfunction, transport networks, land management and finance

As distinct from targeted programs for secondary cities, the priority for the metropolitan centres of Dhaka and Chittagong are integrated city development strategies that can promote a process of sustainable urbanization and liveable cities. In many ways, institutional dysfunction is the driver of the burgeoning phenomenon of urban poverty particularly in metropolitan centres. Overcoming such urban dysfunction is arguably more imperative than .targeted programs for particular

slums. There are three outstanding considerations in the preparation of such city development strategies. As distinct from the master plan tradition, city development strategies emphasize the integrated nature of the city and its multiple roles as a location of economic growth, a dynamic human settlement and a component of an agglomeration economy. A second consideration is to anchor such strategies on a wide-ranging consultative process that

includes key stakeholders including the urban poor. The third consideration is to identify a menu of interventions that together constitute a strategic package and that is commensurate with the likely availability of political capital. Based on these considerations, four thematic priorities need to be addressed: institutional dysfunction, transport networks, land management and finance.



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