



EVICTION AND THE CHALLENGES OF PROTECTING THE GAINS: A CASE STUDY OF SLUM DWELLERS IN DHAKA CITY

BRIEFING PAPER

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For the detailed report: www.shiree.org,
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OVERVIEW

Eviction is a constant threat for urban slum dwellers, disrupting overall livelihoods, especially in Dhaka city. It is estimated that between 1975 and 2002, more than 131 slums were evicted, with 58 evictions occurring just between 2003 and 2004. Between 1996 and 2004, more than 290,000 slum dwellers were made homeless from 115 evictions in Dhaka, Chittagong and Dinajpur. And at least 60,000 people were displaced due to the evictions from 27 slums in Dhaka between 2006 and 2008.

Since 2009, DSK has been implementing a project entitled "**Moving from extreme poverty through economic empowerment (capacity building,**

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The paper has been peer reviewed by colleagues in either the Chars Livelihood Programme (CLP), the UNDP Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) and BRAC's Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction – Targeting the Ultra Poor (CFPR-TUP) programmes – all part of the DFID/UKAID extreme poverty portfolio in Bangladesh.

voice and rights) of extreme poor households"

with the support of the *shiree* project (Economic Empowerment Project - EEP) funded by UKaid/the Department for the International Development (DFID) and the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). The two major working areas of the project are the slums of Korail and Kamrangirchar in Dhaka city. The project is facilitating the uplift of 10,000 extreme poor slum dwellers in Dhaka city from extreme poverty by 2012 towards achieving the MDGs, particularly the targets 1 and 2 of MDG 1.



In 2010, 2,450 households were evicted from the DSK-*shiree* project areas of T&T and Sattola slums. Of these, 214 targeted households of the DSK-*shiree* project were among those evicted. Ultimately, these kinds of slum evictions have direct negative impacts on the progress made towards moving out of extreme poverty sustainably and achieving the MDGs. Critically, while the GoB is responsible to ensure the rehabilitation of households before an eviction takes place (according to a High Court ruling in 1999 and again in 2000), this was not followed by the Government in both of these cases.

This research explored the effects of the eviction which took place at Sattola slum in 2010 on a variety of respondents. It looked at the impacts on the livelihoods of those who have returned to the slum and migrated as a result of it. It found that during the eviction, the living spaces of many slum dwellers including houses, latrines, systems of water supply, gas and electricity, and drainage and sewerage facilities were all destroyed. In

addition, productive assets and household belongings were lost. Existing and future opportunities for income generation were hampered, as were many of the socio-political connections and support structures on which households relied upon as sources of daily survival and livelihoods. People were not able to go to work for a number of days, many faced salary cuts, some lost their jobs permanently, and many spent previous savings and/or increased their indebtedness by taking out more loans. Extremely poor households can be seen to have lost less, because they owned less to start with, but were left in more desperate positions following the eviction because of having fewer resources to protect and thus fall back on.

While the eviction took place last August 2010, the struggle of the evicted people still continues. Moreover, insecurity continues even with the re-building of the slum in the same place, made more complex by changes in the ownership and leadership dynamics of the area. Another uncertain situation is unfolding where a boundary wall is being established surrounding the affected slum area. In addition, a recent land survey coupled with ongoing rumours, suggest a further eviction to be likely. Extremely poor slum dwellers are thus living with the threat of eviction daily, and in coping with such confusion and psychological stress, are avoiding building back their livelihoods in a way that could help them in the long-term (e.g. using poor housing materials or not bringing businesses back to full operation). In addition, there are currently no service providers re-building the drainage and sewerage systems here, and NGOs are reluctant to work here because of the future threat of eviction.

Ultimately, the eviction served as a set-back to affected households. Gains have been lost to incomes, health, hygiene, food, accommodation, education and overall livelihoods. And in addition, the overall resettlement process has been uncertain. By mapping the potential effects of eviction on households with assets of a similar level to present DSK-shiree beneficiaries

(operating small businesses), the research shows that eviction is a continuing threat to pursuing the sustainability of the overall DSK-shiree intervention.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall question of this research was: what are the causes and consequences of evictions and their impacts on the livelihoods of slum dwellers?

The sub-questions of the study were:

- To understand the dynamics of evictions;
- To assess the immediate losses and long term consequences of evictions;
- To explore the coping strategies of the evicted households;
- To consider alternative policy and advocacy related recommendations to protect livelihood gains made by slum dwellers.

KEY ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion to this study, **any eviction should be well planned along with concrete rehabilitation or compensation options.**



Some significant differences have been observed between the T&T and Sattola evictions. If we compare these two contexts, we can see that the 'unplanned and unorganised eviction' made slum dwellers of Sattola more vulnerable and created greater uncertainty for them. Although the process of eviction at the T&T slum was totally illegal, it seemed slum dwellers suffered fewer

losses. At the T&T slum, a private company negotiated with house-owners and offered attractive compensation packages through local musclemen or community leaders. The tenants did not suffer asset losses because they were warned by the house-owners to leave their rooms. After the eviction they were assured that there was no chance of returning to the slum. So while some moved to other parts of Dhaka city, the majority rented other rooms in nearby slums. As such, most were able to continue their livelihood efforts as before. Forewarning about the eviction also meant that service providers have not withdrawn from the area.

In Sattola, uncertainty about a future eviction is strife. There are a number of indicators of this uncertainty. First, the balance of power within the slum is new and this realignment of leaders brings its own uncertainty. Secondly, the DGHS's building of a new boundary around the slum area and a recent land survey has contributed to the fragility of the situation, fuelling speculation that a future eviction will take place. This has doubly made service providers unsure of whether to start re-working here. Finally, slum dwellers are investing less in the slum, rebuilding their houses with poor materials or not bringing their businesses back to full operation.

In conclusion to this research, any eviction should be well planned along with concrete rehabilitation or compensation options. To sustain the gains, some other short and long-term recommendations for action include:

- Immediate supports need to be provided to the evictees;
- Slum dwellers can be mobilised to maintain their own unity;
- Slum-based organisations should be strengthened and links made with respective service providers;

- The Government needs to be sensitised, as do respective agencies who are the real owner of the lands;
- The High Court ruling that “rehabilitation has to be ensured before any eviction” needs to be realised and responsibilities fulfilled.
- An organised and pro-active role from donors and UN organisations is needed.

EXAMPLE COMPENSATION PACKAGE

A package of taka 2,000 (including food items, utensils and cash) per family was provided by DSK-shiree project as short-term response immediately after the eviction at Mohammadpur Beribadh areas during May 2011. A total of 51 evicted families were received the supports.

1. Rice- 20 kg
2. Pulse- 2 kg
3. Potatoes- 5 kg
4. Onion- 2 kg
5. Oil - 2 litres
6. Cooking materials
7. Cash money 500-1000 for cloth & other essential commodities

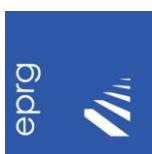
The evicted households appreciated receiving the short-term response.

Based on the immediate assessment of the losses faced during eviction, approximately 5,000- 10,000 Taka per household may be provided as an overall compensation package to re-build their income options.

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The Extreme Poverty Research Group (EPRG) develops and disseminates knowledge about the nature of extreme poverty and the effectiveness of measures to address it. It initiates and oversees research and brings together a mix of thinkers and practitioners to actively feed knowledge into practice through interventions taking place in real time. It is an evolving forum for the shiree family to both design and share research findings.

The data used in this publication comes from the Economic Empowerment of the Poorest Programme (www.shiree.org), an initiative established by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to help 1 million people lift themselves out of extreme poverty. The views expressed here are entirely those of the author(s).