

promote inclusive cities

eradicate extreme

URBAN POVERTY

November 3, 2010

MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty & Hunger

Bangladesh is on track to achieve MDG 1, with the proportion of the population below the national upper poverty line decreasing from 56.6% in 1991 to 40.0% in 2005. The average annual rate of poverty reduction till 2005 has been 1.34% against the required 1.23% to meet the 2015 target.

Indicator	Base Year 1991	2008	Target for 2015
Population below the national upper-poverty line	56.6%	38.7%	29.0%

Source: MDG: Bangladesh Progress Report 2009 Planning Commission, GoB

What is extreme poverty?

Extreme poor households exhibit a high degree of chronic and severe deprivation. Their low income is linked to a lack of employment and secured shelter, low caloric intake, low literacy-rates, inaccessibility to credit and social safety nets and low community involvement and decision-making. The elderly, the disabled and minority groups are disproportionately high among the extreme poor.

There are two official poverty measures in Bangladesh and both comprise of an upper and a lower poverty line. The Daily Caloric Intake (DCI) measure defines people consuming > 2,122 Kcal per day as absolute poor and those consuming > 1,805 Kcal per day as extreme poor. The Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) measure defines people with per capita income between BDT 33 (urban) and 27 (rural) as absolute poor and those with BDT 22 (urban) and 16 (rural) as extreme poor. Progress towards achievement of MDG 1 is measured using the DCI.

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In Dhaka, 4 million people live in slums with 100,000 people in Korail slum alone.

Urban Poor in Bangladesh

City	Number of Slums
Dhaka	4966
Chittagong	1,814
Sylhet	756
Khulna	520
Rajshahi	641

* Source : Slums of Urban Bangladesh, Mapping and Census 2005, by the Centre for Urban Studies, NIPORT and University of the North Carolina

The most disadvantaged urban poor are often the homeless who do not live in slums. Pavement dwellers, construction workers, beggars and domestic workers amongst others represent the dynamic and shifting face of the urban non-slum poor. In the city of Dhaka alone, in 2007, the number of pavement dwellers was 20,000.

* Source : Amrao Manush Project Base line study, 2007



Population in Poverty

	Daily Caloric Intake Population		Per Capita Expenditure Population	
	Absolute Poverty	Extreme Poverty	Absolute Poverty	Extreme Poverty
Urban	43.2%	24.4%	28.4%	14.6%
Rural	39.5%	17.9%	43.8%	28.6%
Total	40.4%	19.5%	40.0%	25.1%

* Source : Household Income & Expenditure Survey (HIES), 2005, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. During HIES 2005, BD population was 145 million

With Bangladesh urbanising rapidly, there is an urgent need to address urban poverty. Traditionally, poverty reduction efforts have focused on the rural poor, driven to some extent by the mistaken belief that the unprecedented levels of rural to urban migration can be reversed by developing rural areas. As a result, the focus on and understanding of urban poverty is low and policy responses are fragmented and inadequate.

The National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (NSAPR, 2004-2008) has been a fundamental step towards recognizing urban poverty and the growing disparities between rural and urban Bangladesh. Still, most safety net programmes are designed for rural areas only. The urban poor continue to be overlooked in national policies, urban planning processes, development plans and social safety nets.

The Government and development partners have started taking steps to improve the lives of the urban extreme poor. DFID funds two projects: Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction Programme (UPPR) and stimulating households improvements for economic empowerment (**shiree**) – that collectively aim to lift 4 million urban and extreme poor people out of poverty by 2015.

Other projects are slowly beginning to target the extreme poor, but more needs to be done. The existing policy and programmatic initiatives are grossly inadequate to address the core issues of the estimated **8 million urban extreme poor**. Informed debate and coordinated action by key stakeholders, including the growing private sector, is required.

PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

Constitutional rights guarantee the right to citizenship by birth. The urban extreme poor living in slums or on pavements are often denied this right in absence of documentary proof of their birth, residence and nationality. Schools ask for birth certificates, banks and employers ask for proof of residence and election officers ask for voting cards. Thus a lack of documentary proof can lead to a denial of other human and constitutional rights such as the right to education, shelter and participation in elections. The goal of an inclusive city can only be achieved if every individual in the municipal area holds evidence of citizenship.



Possibilities

The Election Commission has drafted an ordinance making national ID cards mandatory for citizens to access 22 government services. Thus they should implement their idea of including all citizens when they issue National ID cards, possibly in coordination with other organisations already working with difficult-to-reach citizens. Greater efforts are needed to link the urban poor with the City Corporation to register births. Pourshava and City Corporations can issue identity cards to homeless people in the meantime. BBS should include all extreme poor people, including the homeless, in Census, 2011, Households Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), 2010.

“Everyone born within the borders of Bangladesh has citizenship rights that make it mandatory for the state to provide them with basic services such as education, health, shelter and ensure their safety and security.”

Shaheen Anam
Executive Director, Manusher Jonno Foundation

SAFE SHELTER

Many extremely poor people are homeless street dwellers, while those who find a small sliver of space within a slum, face the constant threat of eviction as well as bullying from more powerful landlords and neighbours. Article 15 of the Constitution of Bangladesh states that the Government has a responsibility to provide access to basic necessities, including shelter, and to ensure that citizens are not forcibly evicted, without adequate rehabilitation in place, yet this is rarely the case. Lack of security makes it difficult for people to establish firm roots, build upon their assets and access income earning opportunities. Immediate evictions also pose a challenge to organisations trying to improve the livelihoods of slum dwellers. Service providers are reluctant to invest in providing services in an area likely to be removed.



Possibilities

Increased efforts are needed to ensure safe shelter for the urban poor. The National Housing Authority should implement the National Housing Policy and collaborate with donors, NGOs and the private sector to develop affordable housing options for the poor. This effort must also comprehensively address issues related to housing such as land (long-term tenure security), income (earning capacities and opportunities) and access to services. In the meantime, authorities should respect the anti-eviction law. Up-grading on-site is often a better option than eviction as it keeps people together, strengthening social groupings and dignity, so the vulnerable may collectively participate in stimulating investments to build assets.

“We are in constant fear of eviction. A few months ago, I was thrown out of my home of three years, in Shatala. I lost all my belongings. I barely had time to grab my children. I had nowhere to go. Give us an alternative before evicting us!”

Masuma
Slum dweller, beneficiary of DSK

BASIC SERVICES

Women and children in urban slums have poorer access to basic services than those in rural and non-slum urban areas (BBS/UNICEF). According to the 2005 census, only 14% of urban households have access to any type of sanitary latrine while the rest use hanging latrines. The highest primary school drop-out rate is recorded in slums where it is six times higher than the national average. Compared to the rural poor, the urban poor experience poorer health because of the hazardous environments in which they live, the costs of which compound their poverty. Unsafe drinking water and inadequate sanitation facilities are major causes of death and disability among the poor. Providing services in poor and informal settlements is challenging due to the lack of formal land tenure, lack of space and access for placing infrastructure and lack of planning. Greater collaboration and innovative models are required to meet targets.



Possibilities

Mitigating inequalities in terms of access to basic services is an effective strategy to accelerate both economic growth and poverty reduction. Addressing the issues of land tenure security and integrating the low income settlements in the city/town Master Plan is a key step towards addressing the inequitable access to basic services in slums. Public private partnerships and partnerships between the local government and community organisations may also be explored to create win-win situations where poor people gain access to high quality, affordable services, while companies gain access to new and profitable business opportunities.

“Without water nobody can live. DWASA is fully aware of the need of quality water for the slum dwellers. DWASA will extend full out cooperation in this regard in coming days.”

Dr. Engr. Md. Liakath Ali
 Deputy Managing Director, DWASA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Spatially, socially and professionally vulnerable urban populations, such as the homeless, women-headed households, the disabled, street and working children and beggars are over-represented amongst the extreme poor. They provide valuable services to cities which in turn are unable to provide them with shelter, basic services or security. Exclusion contributes to the inability of the urban extreme poor to voice their rights, claim their entitlements and negotiate their wages. This exacerbates their poverty and often results in chronic poverty, which passes from one generation to the next.



Possibilities

Increasing the voice, influence, agency and capacity of the extreme poor to act on their own behalf, is essential to ending the poverty cycle. Changing and shifting power relations and confronting the norms created by dominant members of society are incremental steps in the empowerment process for excluded groups and individuals.

“Empowering communities to control public resources and manage change is fundamental to sustainable development.”

Sir Fazle Hasan Abed
 Founder and Chairperson, BRAC

“The Community Development Committees set up in our slum have transformed my life. Now I am aware of my rights. Now I can speak in different forums. All the women here feel empowered.”

Rehana Sharmin Munni
 A Community Development Committee member in a slum in Rajshahi

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Partnerships with the private sector can contribute to poverty reduction by creating employment, suitable products and services and access to market.

Jobs : The capacity of the extreme poor to contribute to the economy needs to be developed. NGOs and training institutes should link up with private companies to assess labour needs and develop vocational capacity building initiatives to prepare and place extreme poor citizens in jobs.

Catering to the poor : The potential business opportunities of meeting the needs of poor consumers are increasingly being recognised. The private sector can find innovative and ethical ways to deliver low-cost, sophisticated goods and services to consumers across all income ranges.

Market linkage : Extremely poor people with a small amount of assets may be able to grow a few vegetables or make a few handicrafts, however, without sufficient market access, these activities will not generate income. Creating market access, through cooperatives and collaboration with larger buyers can help monetize some of their activities more meaningfully.

Corporate Social Responsibility : More companies should create funds for the poor, so we can increasingly become a self-sufficient country rather than relying on aid to solve our problems.

Social Business : Increasingly businesses driven by factors other than profit are beginning to emerge. A social business, as defined by Yunus, is a venture whose sole mission is to create a positive impact on society through its good or service, and is sustainable, or covers its costs.



“We need a new architecture of economics that will free us once and for all from the crises that surround us. Now is the time for bold and creative action - and we need to move fast, because the world is changing fast.”

Professor Muhammad Yunus
Founder of Grameen Bank and winner of the
2006 Nobel Peace Prize

November 3, 2010 Banani Chairman Bari Field

This event was organized to build awareness and create opportunities to eradicate extreme urban poor. 35 organisations fighting poverty around the country will share their experiences. 15 change makers will share their thoughts about the challenges and possible ways forward. We hope, by bringing together the government, donors, private sector players, NGOs, and extreme urban poor communities, to build partnerships that will enable us to make positive, sustainable changes. Let everyone rise as Bangladesh grows and prospers.

Please get in touch with us if you want to get involved to help achieve MDG 1.

shiree

The Economic Empowerment of the Poorest programme is a partnership between the UKaid and the Government of Bangladesh to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1 - to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger - by stimulating household improvements resulting in economic empowerment (**shiree**). **shiree** is also the Bangla word for 'steps', reflecting the approach of the programme to create economic opportunities that allow households to climb out of extreme poverty. **shiree** works through large NGOs with proven track records (scale fund partners) and innovative projects with new approaches (innovation partners) around the country. Furthermore, **shiree** creates learning and advocacy platforms to build and share knowledge about extreme poverty.

shiree is funded by UKaid and managed by Harewelle International and PMTC, with support from University of Bath, British Council, and Unnayan Shamannay.

For more information, please visit www.shiree.org

UPPR

The Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) Project aims to improve the livelihoods and living conditions of 3 million urban poor and extreme poor people in 30 towns in Bangladesh, especially women and girls, by 2015. US\$ 120 million are being provided for this purpose, on a cost sharing basis, by UKaid, UNDP and the community. The implementing partners are LGED, UNDP, UN-Habitat and respective Municipalities and City Corporations.

The project tries to meet the demands of the urban poor through community participation in identifying and prioritizing needs and taking practical steps to solve problems. Local governance representation has materialized in the process.

For more information, please visit www.upprbd.org