The Nature and Extent of Homelessness in Developing Countries

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What is homelessness?

The number of homeless people worldwide is estimated to be between 100 million and one billion, depending on how we count them and the definition used.   However, little is known about the causes of homelessness or the characteristics of homeless people in developing countries.   A study by CARDO* in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, at the University if Newcastle upon Tyne, set out to explore the nature and extent of homelessness in nine developing countries.

Most of the countries studied did not have had little or no reliable data on the numbers of homeless people. Several did not have any official definition of homelessness with which to conduct a census. In some countries, street sleepers are actually discounted for census purposes because they have no official house or address.

The common perception of homeless people as unemployed, drunks, criminals, mentally ill or personally inadequate is inappropriate. In developing countries homelessness is largely a result of the failure of the housing supply system to address the needs of the rapidly growing urban population. The study found that homeless people:

- o Have often migrated to the city to escape rural poverty or to supplement rural livelihoods
- o Are generally employed in low paid, unskilled work
- o Often choose to sleep on the streets rather than pay for accommodation, preferring to send the money to their families
- o Are frequently harassed, evicted, abused or imprisoned
- o Suffer poor health with a range of respiratory and gastric illnesses
- o Are victims of crime, rather than perpetrators if it
- o Are predominantly lone males but increasingly couples and families with children

Homeless women and children are most often the victims of family abuse. Their poor economic standing places them at greater risk of homelessness in order to escape abusive situations.
Street children:
- o Are frequently escaping abuse, particularly from stepparents or extreme poverty
- o Are often detained or imprisoned for being on the streets.
- o Mistrust adults and authority
- o Prefer to live on the streets rather than accept over authoritarian accommodation

Homeless women:
- o Have generally been abandoned or widowed or are escaping abuse

- o Turn to inappropriate relationships to secure accommodation for themselves and their children
- o May end up begging or in prostitution to support their children

In the absence of sufficient, affordable accommodation, there are a number of approaches which could be taken to improving the lives of homeless people and helping them to find, or develop their own housing. However, current strategies are often negative or unhelpful. For example, many night shelters are unused because they are either too dirty or unsafe or because they are too far from the city centre, the workplace of many homeless people.

- o Laws which criminalise street sleeping, such as the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, should be abolished and the practice of arresting and imprisoning people found sleeping on the streets stopped
- o Good, clean, easily accessible overnight accommodation should be provided for those who need it. It should take into account their livelihood strategies.
- o Hygiene and health facilities should be available free on the streets for pavement dwellers and street sleepers
- o A range of different systems to provide security of tenure for squatters should be developed, which will allow them to feel secure in investing in and developing their own housing.
- o Where squatters must be moved, they should be facilitated to participate in relocation plans and in the development of new settlements

Homelessness in Developing Countries
Research Report

Background and Objectives

The key objective of this project was to explore the nature and extent of homelessness in developing countries, and to identify good practice and strategies for the eradication. In particular, the study aimed to identify how policy and practice can support homeless people and reduce homelessness.

Methods

The study was designed and directed by Dr A. G. Tipple and managed by Suzanne Speak from the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

The empirical research was conducted in ten countries (Peru, Bolivia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Egypt, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and China).   In each of these countries a researcher was contracted to undertake research in accordance with a terms of reference (appendix 1). At least one member of the UK team visited each of the countries to gain deeper understanding and support the researcher, with the exception of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Indonesia. Previous detailed knowledge or experience of these countries meant that it was not necessary to visit them. Draft reports were submitted and reviewed by Dr Tipple and Ms Speak and returned, with comments for amendment or completion. Final reports have been analysed for key finding, from which this initial report has been produced. Analysis will continue and further publications and conference papers are being written.

Early in the study a global discussion group was developed which received considerable interest and stimulated ongoing debate. This debate further informed

the development of the research. An on-line conference was held in the second year, with 20 papers submitted and viewed on line for several months.

Implications of the findings for policy

<u>1 Defining and counting homelessness</u>

Most developing countries have poor or non-existent data relating to homelessness. There is an urgent need for governments to undertake adequate censuses of homeless people.   Our study highlights huge differences in the percentage of the population which is recognised as homeless in different countries. However, this is likely to be influenced by the 'service statistics paradox', in that, those countries with a willingness to acknowledge homelessness, and to establish services for homeless people, are more likely to be able to locate and count them and thus, will have more accurate (and higher) figures.

In order to count homeless people, there must first be a working definition of homelessness, which there is not in most of the countries studies. Governments and NGOs may need assistance to undertake adequate censuses and to define homelessness in order to inform policies on housing, land allocation and support for homeless people. Western definitions and typologies of homelessness are inappropriate for developing countries, therefore new definitions must be developed, However, it should be noted that a single definition of homelessness is unlikely to be appropriate to all developing countries.

<u>2 Differentiating between squatting and homelessness in order to priorities policy</u>
<u>and support</u>

Squatting should not necessarily be excluded from a definition of homelessness. However, it is appropriate to try to differentiate between squatters and other forms of homelessness, especially street homelessness. If squatters are to be included in the definition of homelessness, their sheer numbers might distract attention from those in more desperate circumstances, such as the street homeless, without any form of shelter. Thus, limited resources might not be prioritised for the most needy.

This distinction is less clear in some countries. For example, in India some street homeless people may remain in the same location for many years, living in relatively

well-made shelters.   Conversely, in Peru and South Africa, squatters' shelters may be of a very poor quality for a considerable length of time, as people are unwilling to invest time or money in their housing until they know they will not be moved on.

<u>The legal position of homeless people</u>

In many countries, the legal position of squatters and other homeless people, particularly street homeless people, is poor, and both suffer raids. Street homeless people are moved generally because they are perceived as a nuisance or they disturb the attractiveness of the city. However, raids on squatter settlements are generally to clear development land for more valuable uses.

In a number of countries, homelessness and street sleeping is actually illegal and punishable by imprisonment. For example, in India, the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, is used to clear the streets of homeless people when important events are to take place. Many other countries report similar 'cosmetic' clearing of the streets. It is vital that, where they exist, these laws be challenged and overturned.

<u>3 The nature of homelessness</u>

The nature of homelessness differs in developed and developing countries

In developing countries homelessness is generally a result of the lack of housing and a failure of the formal housing supply. Policy is needed to ensure homeless people have access to secure land title and support to develop their own dwellings. In terms of international development, much could be done to assist some countries in developing a variety of approaches to secure land tenure and land allocation policy.

<u>4. Causes</u>

The two fundamental causes of homelessness in developing countries are

- Poverty, especially rural poverty.

- The failure of the housing supply system.

However, poverty and housing shortages alone do not necessarily lead to homelessness. A number of other issues make these things worse.

Rural urban migration

In many developing countries rural poverty has driven large numbers of people to seek employment in cities. Whilst rural poverty alleviation policy might address this to a degree, it is unlikely that this trend will stop.

Most often a single man will move to the city to work and send money back to the family home. In this case homelessness is often preferred to spending money on accommodation. For these people, there is a need for cheap or free temporary accommodation to support them in establishing themselves in the city.

Social causes of homelessness

Social causes of homelessness include:

- Marital breakdown or bereavement.

- Family violence.

- Deterioration of traditional extended families.

- Government 'social engineering'.

Marital breakdown or loss of a spouse is a major cause of homelessness, especially for women and children. Many developing countries have adopted legislation to protect women's rights. Nevertheless, cultural attitudes to women mean that they, and their children, may be thrown out of their homes by relatives if their husband dies or abandons them. This forces many women onto the streets, and sometimes into prostitution. Homeless women and children are also often victims of family breakdown or are escaping family violence. Work is needed urgently to ensure that women are protected and that existing women's rights legislation is enforced.

Evictions

In developing countries, it is quite common for governments to use neither their powers to evict people who have neither the money nor the power to defend themselves. Urban development policy in developing countries should take into account the needs of those displaced in order to develop land.

There are some examples of good practice in the participation of squatters in their relocation. For example the Indian NGO, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), formed an alliance with the National Slum Dwellers

Federation and Manila Milan. Together they supported 60,000 low-income people to move, voluntarily, from their settlements beside the railway tracks of Mamba to make way for improvements to the infrastructure. With the support of these organisations, the people helped to plan their new settlement and moved, without forced eviction and without the further impoverishment which usually accompanies such moves. Good practice such as this should be explored and incorporated whenever possible into development plans where people will be disrupted.

4. Interventions to address what is seen as the problems of homelessness

In many countries the interventions to support homeless people, especially street homeless people, or to limit or reduce homelessness, are negative and even damaging. For example, eviction is common in almost all of our nine countries to clear valuable land for development. One intervention in India,

At the level of mass homelessness some interventions can be equally problematic. For example, in Zimbabwe, the transit camps used for homeless people, such as Porta Farm Camp which houses over 30,000 homeless people, have become notorious. Conditions in the camps are extremely poor, and the mortality rate is higher than for other homeless people. In another camp, Hatcliffe Extension, there are 2006 people per toilet.

However, there are more positive interventions, mainly provided by NGOs. For example, Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan in Delhi is a shelter rights campaigning organisations which works with street homeless people. It provides legal advice as well as one-to-one support to access a range of services, such as doctors. Unfortunately, funding for such organisations is insecure and their work limited.

- In a number of countries, mass homelessness is addressed by allowing homeless people to settle on poor or valueless land and develop their own housing solutions. This is the situation in Peru and, to a lesser extent, in Egypt. In these countries, squatters settling on poor quality government owned land, such as deserts, may be allowed to stay for many years. In many cases their settlements will eventually be recognised and the squatters will be given legal title to the land.

Interventions for street children

As for adults, interventions for street children can be negative as well as positive. Negative interventions include:

- Arrest and imprisonment.

- Police torture and brutality.

- Forced return to their families.

- Over-authoritarian accommodation facilities.

Despite the assertion of Article 40 of the UNCRC, that imprisonment of children is to be a last resort and for the shortest possible time, street children around the world are frequently arrested for minor misdemeanours. In India, street children are regularly arrested for begging and locked in jail to be tried in the beggar's court. In Zimbabwe some 'drop-in' centres even 'gang up' with the police, using dogs, tear gas and batons on the children, usually in the dead of night. Arrested children are sent to institution to be 'screened' and 'reformed'. Development policy should work to ensure the application of children's rights legislation wherever possible.

The emotive issues of street children means that Western aid agencies are willing to fund the building of hostels to take children off the streets. However, money may be more appropriately spent on other forms of care and support for children, rather than concentrating on their housing situation. In some cases, hostels for street children are too authoritarian and alienate children further. Whilst the children need food and support, they may not be willing to compromise on their freedom. As a result they abandon the hostel totally and do not receive the valuable additional health care and education it could provide.

One street children's project in Bangalore offers a combination of accommodation, education and employment training within a fairly rigid timetable. Whilst the project is always full there is a suspicion amongst staff that parents might abandon their children in order for them to be taken in and have access to better opportunities. There is no doubt that the level of care and education is very high. However, the cost per child is also very high and the director commented:

'It's like a constant war, us against them, just trying to keep them here, they steal from us and run off to the streets. Then, when they need more money they come

back, sometimes we have to say 'you can't come back again if you continue like that''

6. What is needed

For any interventions to be successful in supporting homeless people or reducing homelessness, there needs to be a culture of care and support, rather than the indifference and victim blaming which exists in many countries. Our study found that homeless people are generally perceived, not as victims but as alcoholic and drug abusers, unemployed, criminal, personally inadequate and or mentally ill. This largely false perception is perpetuated by the popular media. More research is needed in developing countries to overturn this perception.

Involve homeless people

It is vital that we include homeless people in our planning for improvements in their lot. Through NGOs and individuals, policy makers can learn of the priorities of different groups of homeless people and respond in a targeted way to their differing needs for shelter, security and services.   There are some easily and immediately identifiable needs which should be addressed by policy makers. These are:

At the level of rough sleeping
- Legalising street sleeping and an end to abuse by the authorities.

- Easily accessible and appropriate free shelter.

- Well-maintained public water and sanitation points around cities would dramatically improve the health of street sleepers.

- Security 'lockers' for their belongings to reduce vulnerability to crime.

- Safe refuge for abused women and children to reduce rape and sexual abuse.

- Free, accessible health, medical and legal support.

The importance of shelter of some type was highlighted by the deaths of several hundred people in Delhi in January 2003, when the temperature dropped to minus 2 degrees centigrade at night. However, this need not mean building special accommodation or night shelters. It may be sufficient initially to help people move just one step up from sleeping rough, for example by providing some bedding, water

and sanitation, to make life on the streets safer, more comfortable and more dignified. Many government buildings, such as schools, are empty at night. Legitimising the use of such buildings, and providing additional support services through them, would give valuable assistance to many millions of homeless people.

Interventions to support homeless women and children must begin with work to change the culture of family abuse and violence which is so often the cause of their homelessness. In practical terms, what is needed for many homeless women in developing countries is safe refuge and support to prevent them having to turn to crime, begging or prostitution, or new violent relationships in order to feed their children.

At the level of mass homelessness

The shortage of suitable housing is often the root causes of homelessness among households in developing countries. In many countries, there are just too few dwellings for everyone and this hits poorer households hardest as they miss out in the market. There is, thus, a need for much more housing as the priority.

There is usually also a need for more housing of a type that the poorest households can afford. It should be:

- Cheap.

- Built in labour intensive technologies to provide lots of work.

- Situated close to sources of work.

- Serviced to a minimum level to keep costs down.

There is a great need for appropriately priced housing solutions for the poorest households. These may be as simple as single rooms with shared services in the yard of other people's housing.

Unfortunately, the policies adopted on housing often make it even more unlikely that the lowest income households will be able to afford appropriate housing. For example, in South Africa, the housing subsidy system, the flagship of their housing policy, almost exclusively provides single household dwellings of 20-30 square metres on freehold plots with full services, no matter what the household needs.

For those with a rudimentary structure security of tenure is important in order to allow them to develop their housing further and feel safe. However, full security or title to the land may not be necessary. The solution is more likely to be in improving on their security with some rights to occupy and access to services than in insisting on full rights in perpetuity.

Dissemination

Dissemination of the findings has been ongoing for several months. It includes:

- Production of a 20-page booklet highlighting the key findings from the study. 2,000 copies of this have already been distributed to appropriate people and institutions globally, for example, to the special rapporteur on housing rights for UNCHRH

- Two academic articles submitted to refereed journals. Referees comments are currently being addressed (appendix 2):
    o Speak, S. Degrees of Destitution: A typology of homelessness for developing countries. Submitted to Housing Studies – currently being amended for publication
    o Tipple, A. G. Definition of Homelessness in Developing Countries, Submitted to Habitat International – currently being amended for publication

- An entry in the Encyclopaedia of Homelessness, by Berkshire Publishing, will be published later this year

- As planned Dr. Tipple attended 19th Session of Governing Council of UN Habitat in Nairobi, and presented a parallel session on May 8. This was attended by over 100 delegates and was reported in Governing Council papers.

- Paper on 'Strategies to combat homelessness and support homeless people' was presented at the homelessness session of the European Network of Housing Research conference, Tirana Albania, May 2003.

- A paper on homelessness in four Asian countries is to be presented at the Association of Planning Schools in Asia conference in Vietnam in September 2003.

- 4 papers on key themes from the early stages of the research were presented on the on-line conference in year 2.

- The UK team have been invited to deliver a workshop to the Delhi Housing Authority, in Delhi in Jan 2004.

Appendix 1 – Methodology

- o **A - Terms of reference for overseas researchers**
- o **B - Example country research report (Bangladesh)**

A - Terms of Reference for in country researchers

Basic structure of the homelessness study: ESCOR Project R7905

<u>Theory section</u>

1 Current housing supply characteristics

Size of housing stock vis-à-vis the population (in terms of dwellings or rooms whichever is the most appropriate).

Current ideas about shortfalls in supply.

Policies in place; is enabling (arising from the Global Strategy for Shelter and the Habitat Agenda) embraced?

What changes have been made in the last five years.

Affordability gap - wages vis-à-vis house costs. Is it growing?

Social housing supply and who gets to occupy it (5).

Types of sharing, especially reluctant (24).

Descriptions of housing circumstances of quintiles of households.

<u>2. Current definitions or categories of homelessness</u>

Unacceptable shelter

What would the average household consider as unacceptable?

What are the current official or common definitions of homelessness?

The report on Strategies to combat homelessness (UNCHS, 2000) has outlined circumstances which have been classified as homelessness as follows:

- Rough sleepers
- Pavement dwellers
- Occupants of shelters
- Occupants of institutions
- Occupants of unserviced housing
- Occupants of poorly constructed and insecure housing (vulnerable sites, precarious tenancy)
- Sharers
- Occupants of housing of unsuitable cost
- Occupants of mobile homes
- Occupants of refugee and other emergency camps

- Itinerant groups (nomads, gypsies)

1. <u>Western typologies</u>

   How well do western typologies fit your country situation?

   Typology based on quality

   Typology based on risk

   Typology based on time

   Typology based on responsibility for alleviating action

3. <u>The difference between squatters and street homeless people</u>

   How far are homeless people counted in censuses, reports, and policy documents? Based on what typologies or definitions?

   What is the status of street dwellers in the law?

   What are the quantities shown therein?

   What are the numbers of homeless people for each definition, e.g., in housing criteria, land criteria, employment criteria, social welfare eligibility criteria?

   How do the quantities change if the definition of homelessness is changed to include or exclude others?

   These demand best guesses if there are no statistics. For the ones further down (after the note), who are unlikely to be classed as homeless, the data are required to argue the unreasonableness of including them.

   People who live on streets, under bridges, on open land, in pipes, in deserted buildings with only the shelter provided by those places.

   The above but with some sort of shelter that they provide. This would include tents, sheets, shelters made of vegetation. It implies some colonisation and personalisation of space.

   People who live in or who move between various types of shelters provided for homeless people.

   People who live in refuges, hostels, lodging houses, hot bedding, or other forms of non-personalised environments.

   > Note, None of the above include squatter settlements, single rooms where these are the norm for households (e.g., in West African compounds) or shacks in others' plots.

People sharing rooms with friends or family but who would move out given the opportunity.

People who live in squatter settlements without any recognition from local or central government.

People who live in shacks in the grounds of others' houses.

People who live in areas without full servicing

People who live in dwellings or rooms without secure tenure.

4. Numbers of people involved in types of homelessness

Numbers of homeless people based on different criteria

Numbers of homeless people based on residential situations

People who are unlikely to be classed as homeless

5. Systemic issues causing homelessness

Have there been crises in the last ten years that have generated many homeless people?

What role has career change played in causing homelessness?

Have there been major economic changes that have generated homelessness, e.g., Structural Adjustment Programmes, retrenchments or redundancies from major employers?

What are the unemployment trends? (5)

People below the poverty line (5)

Is there an official poverty line? What is it?

Social

Is there a breaking down in the social system caused by urbanisation, modernisation, globalisation, or any other cause? Has it removed the safety nets in traditional society for caring for those who cannot cope too well?

Political

Have there been any significant effects arising from the Global Strategy for Housing, the Habitat Agenda, the UN Social Summit, or from Structural Adjustment

What is government policy on homelessness? Is it part of housing or welfare policy?

Evictions

What is the incidence of renters' being evicted?

Have there been any enforced evictions? How many people were affected? What happened to the affected people (officially and unofficially)?

Disasters (natural or human-made)

6. Tendency to isolate homeless people as "others" – exclusion

Are homeless people treated as part of the general population in need of housing and services or are they treated separately?

Are they excluded from benefits, land, etc? If so, how?

Language used of homeless people

Is there a pathological approach? (52)

Are there commonly held prejudices and stereotypes? What are they?

7. Characteristics of homeless people

Insecurity of place

What issues do they face over their ability to sleep undisturbed by authorities?

Do they have to pay for protection or to keep police at bay?

Have there been street-clearing operations to move them on? What happened?

Do homeless people band together for security? How does that work?

Vulnerability to crime, taking part in crime

How prevalent are criminal harassment, violence, rape, robbery?

How far are homeless people involved in petty crime for survival?

Household size, age, gender, etc.

Create a profile of single homeless people, couples, couples with children, single parents with children.

Create an age and gender profile of homeless people. How would this differ if the definition changed?

Substance abuse

To what extent are homeless people involved in substance abuse?

Which substances are common abused by them – alcohol, glue and other inhalants, soft drugs, hard drugs?

Physical and mental illness

What proportion of homeless people are physically or mentally ill?

What are the common diseases/conditions?

What is the policy on hospitalising long-term mental patients?

Are homeless mentally ill people a result of poorly operating care in the community 1policies?

Are wounded or traumatised forces veterans over-represented?

Ethnicity

Are migrants or ethnic minorities over-represented in homeless people?

Where do they come from?

Income/poverty

What is the income profile of homeless people?

What types of employment are open to/ adopted by homeless people?

How do these compare with non-homeless people living in poverty?

How prevalent is begging?

Coping strategies

How do homeless people wash, feed and relieve themselves?

Rural – urban

Is there any information on rural homelessness?

8. Tendency to isolate homeless people as "others" – exclusion
    Persecution of homeless people
    Language used about homeless people
    Media portrayal of homelessness

9. Street children
Causes of street children phenomenon
    Family violence
    Poverty
    Loss of parents
    Eviction
    Abandonment

Characteristics of street children
    Age
    Gender
    Health
    Ethnicity
    Family size

Living conditions
    Security of place / accommodation
    Coping strategies
    Income generation
    Crime
    Begging
    Violence / prostitution / abuse
    Legal position

Responses to street children
    Education
    Accommodation
    Repatriation
    Prosecution

Family support

Street / outreach work

10. Response to homelessness

Traditional response to providing accommodation and assistance to potentially homeless people

How does traditional society respond to those who find life hard (in crises, through infirmity) or cannot afford their own accommodation?

What traditionally happens to orphans?

What about young people wanting to live away from parents?

How far are these systems still in place and how far are they changing?

Actors : Government agencies, NGOs, Religious organizations

Modes of response used

Emergency facilities

Soup kitchens and clothes stores

Traditional night shelters

Hostel for special groups (ex-offenders, single mothers, etc.)

Transitional housing

Sheltered housing

Ordinary housing

Advice/ reception

Income

Medical facilities

Social support

Supported housing

Work insertion/ training

Examples of good practice

Examples of poor practice?

11. Any other issues that are emerging as important

B – Sample country report (Bangladesh)

The Nature, Extent and Eradication of Homelessness in Developing Countries

The Case of Bangladesh

Final Report, February 2001

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Introduction

"Bangladesh was considered as a site of struggle between contending ideologies preaching do's and don'ts of development. It was considered an outpost in 'mainstream theory', a testing zone for the master discourse on development rooted originally in the historical experiences of the west.

Some time in the recent past, there was a perceptive change in the way West approached Bangladesh as a case study of development. At the turn of the new century it took a pronounced turn. It now appears that not all is lost in Bangladesh's developmental efforts and that *there is a plausible case of hope against the hopelessness*" (authors emphasis).

Fighting Human Poverty, BIDS (2000, p. 7).

The quotation cited above gives a tangible hint of ongoing efforts to fight widespread human misery and deprivation in Bangladesh. It also introduces Bangladesh as a country where no other priority could have been given more importance than a critical pursuance of 'development' to put an end to her deep rooted human misery[1]. This priority gains credence because, first, nowhere in this world so many people lived in such a small space as in Bangladesh[2]. Second, there are also few places in this world where so many people lived under abject poverty, alongside increasing opulence and inequality, as in Bangladesh. For her, people and poverty pose a dual problamatic. Since her independence in 1971, there has always been a tension between the ways in which poverty has been embraced with despair, perpetuated by the pre-existing forces, and fought against through innovative approaches. It is perhaps not paradoxical at all that some of the best-known approaches and institutions in the world to fight against poverty have also originated in Bangladesh[3]. Local-international development discourse has lately liberated poor women from their invisibility, among other achievements, to put them in the forefront of development practices, arguably nowhere more than in Bangladesh. However, a fact often lost in the jargon of development practice is that these women exist in, improve upon, and negotiate and confront male members of the household on a daily basis within a socio-spatial reality called 'home'. Besides being an 'ideological construct', home is also a concrete object with its material entities, e.g. shape and quality of its construction and economic values.

Home provides a spatial setting for women in pursuit of their key development objectives at the (micro) household level – emancipation from poverty and patriarchy while being empowered to take charge of their own lives as well as well being of their households. Shelter, the physical manifestation of home, has been widely considered a key indicator of people's well being – the object and subject of development. Judging from the seminal importance attached to home as a spatial arena for the day-to-day production and reproduction of households, we are compelled to ask 'what has been the state of shelter of the poorest section of society in a changing context of development paradigms in Bangladesh?' Whilst empirical evidences draw a national picture of poor shelter condition and identify homeless population in the streets and other public open spaces, a more specific question demands our attention. The question is: Can development in its broader sense takes place side by side increasing homelessness, in particular among women, to an extent that prevents them from participating in and benefiting from mainstream development initiatives at the grassroots? Certainly not, as protagonists of development practice would argue. If that is the case, one then wonders, how

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[1] A low Human Development Index (HDI) partly reflects the existing precarious state of human misery in Bangladesh; according to HDI, she was recently ranked 150th among a total of 170 countries. HDI is measured by UNDP based on per capital income, literacy rate and longevity of life in a given country.

[2] According to preliminary report of 'Population Census 2001', a total national population of 129,247,233 live in an area of 147,570 sq. km. The population density is 876 person/sq. km, and is considered among the highest in the world (BBS, 2001).

[3] Grameen Bank, among many national and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is a pioneer in micro finance to the rural poor women in Bangladesh, and its model has been replicated worldwide.

real would be a future where "there is a plausible case of hope against the hopelessness", especially, at a time when rising homelessness in Bangladesh has been a residue of ongoing development practices.

These broad and complex questions, in the poverty-development nexus, set the premise for this research to investigate the *nature, extent and eradication of homelessness* in cities in Bangladesh. A research focus on homeless people is further underpinned by the rapid urbanization in Bangladesh. A recent report forecasts that population increase in Dhaka City would make her the 6th largest mega-city in 2010 with 18.4 million population (UNCHS, 2001, p.11). United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) predicts that Dhaka would climb to the fourth position with a population of 21.1 million by the year 2015 (*The Daily Star*, 28.11.01). Key characteristics that highlight this rapid urbanization are: first, a rapid increase in urban population as percentage of national population; urban population is expected to cross 80 million by 2030. Second, increase in urban population has mostly been taking place among the poorer section of society. Third, an apparent high income inequality, observed especially in Dhaka, has been accompanied by a exclusionary class-biased delivery system of urban basic services, absence of good governance, and total exclusion of the poor from all modes of decision making processes that resulted in the total marginalization of the poor.

In addressing the shelter inadequacy and service deficiency of slums, low-income housing in cities in developing countries have lately gone beyond 'shelter' focus to include 'human' issues like employment generation, poverty reduction, gender needs and housing rights (Ghafur, 2001; UNCHS/ILO, 1995). In our national context, different forms of settlement specific inter-sectoral interventions, e.g. 'slum upgrading/improvement', have been engaged in improving livelihood and living environment of the urban poor (Ghafur, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1999; Siddiqui et al, 1997). However, missing in these projects and programmes are the homeless whose number has been reported increasing locally and internationally (UNCHS, 2001, 1996). We wonder why is this so? Could it be the case that homeless people are difficult to understand and quantify, or excessive bias given to user's ability to pay for services of a market driven intervention under neo-liberalism or abstract concepts like 'legal tenure' had indeed detracted potential actors from interventions? In Bangladesh, we do not know the answers yet, let alone some idea about homelessness. Some aspects of these broad questions will be addressed in this research. Taking urban problematic into consideration, discussed before albeit briefly, that attempt no doubt would be a daunting task. The analytical engagement in the following sections, therefore, is not a final word but a beginning.

Objectives

The report entitled "the nature, extent and eradication of homelessness in developing countries: the case of Bangladesh" is part of a broader research carried out simultaneously for six months in ten developing countries across Asia (Bangladesh, China, India and Indonesia), Africa (Egypt, Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe) and Latin America (Bolivia and Peru). Purpose of this research is to improve understanding of homelessness in developing countries, locally and internationally, to enable better policy making. Each of the country report has been carried out by a Terms of Reference (TOR) developed at the Centre for Architectural Research and Development Overseas (CARDO), Newcastle University upon Tyne (UK); it is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK (ESCOR Project: R7905). The stated research is a follow up exercise of an earlier research on homelessness (UNCHS, 2000) that is related to the 'Global Campaign for Secure Tenure' by the UNCHS (Habitat). The primary objectives of this research are:

- To establish a valid definition, or a series of definitions, for homelessness in developing countries;

- To estimate the scale, extent, and nature of various degrees of homelessness;

- To review good practice as carried out by groups, NGOs and agencies involved in assisting homeless people;

- To recommend strategies for eradicating homelessness in the long term and, in the medium term, reducing its occurrence and ameliorating its consequences.

A secondary but no less significant objective of this research is to provide a bibliography for others to follow in research on homelessness in developing countries.

Research Methods

This research is based mainly on secondary sources of data. However, to complement this database, 20 homeless people were interviewed and a number of resource-persons and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were consulted. Implementation of these interviews was not that easy as it seemed prior research. First of all, even if it was possible to identify a homeless people getting his response was not easy. Access to street children looked after by an organization was another problem because their 'caretaker' was also their 'gatekeeper'. To overcome the problems of identification of respondents and owning quick their trust to get correct responses in a highly risky 'street situation', it was decided to move in groups for interviews, and especially, with someone who has prior experiences in this field. An interview team consisting the researcher and Mr. Nasir Ali Mamun, a photographer-journalist with recent experiences in interviewing homeless people and street children, was formed. Mr. Mamun took photographs and conducted each interview according to a guideline prepared by the researcher, who had been present in all interviews as an observer and to ask occasional questions as they were thought necessary. The TOR were followed to the extent possible, but were tailored to what were actually existed as concrete data, cooperation extended and time available to complete the research.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into five chapters according to TOR. Followed by an Introduction, Chapter 1 examines current housing supply characteristic. Current definitions and categories of homelessness in cities in Bangladesh are outlined next in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 examines systematic causes to homelessness in cities in Bangladesh and then describes homeless people. The general profile of street children, as a specific category of homeless population, who are distinctively different than adult homeless is reviewed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 critically examines traditional as well as present responses to homelessness in cities in Bangladesh.

1.Current Housing Supply Characteristics

People can lose their place of living i.e. shelter for various natural and manmade reasons in a given space and time. But it will be unrealistic to assume that all these people will become homeless, i.e. continue to live without or within a shelter that does not conform to the notion of an 'adequate shelter'[4], as some might rebuild or buy their shelter again. It is those people who could not have access to their shelter again, most possibly for lack of incomes, will turn into or continue to remain homeless. This section first introduces the concept of shelter as a commodity to set a conceptual basis, and then gives a general review of the housing supply systems in Bangladesh. The objective is to provide a broad measure of homeless people in Bangladesh, Dhaka in particular, by investigating who have been left out of the housing market and for what reasons.

Shelter as a Commodity[5]

Generally speaking, 'commodity' is the term used to describe products (objects) when this production is organized through exchange. A commodity has two attributes: first, commodity as an external object, through its properties satisfies some human need, and is called 'use value'; and second, it has the power to command other commodities in exchange, which is called 'exchange value' (Bottomore, 1983, p.86). These two basic aspects of the notion of commodity have major implications for poor households' access and use of space for dwelling, i.e. shelter, in cities of developing countries. The broad spatial setting of shelter addressed in this paper refers to slums and squatter settlements in cities in Bangladesh, produced (mainly) by the self-initiatives of the urban poor either bypassing legal approval procedures or with traditional type of production organization. Although spatial forms and arrangements at the shelter level, in particular, are a direct result of the actions of individuals, they are nevertheless influenced by the social and economic rules and structures of society as a whole. The production of the spatial setting, i.e. land in its most

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[4] The Habitat Agenda defines adequate shelter in the following manner:

"Adequate shelter means more than a roof over one's head. It also means adequate privacy; adequate space; physical accessibility; adequate security; security of tenure; structural stability and durability; adequate lighting; heating and ventilation; adequate basic infrastructure, such as water-supply, sanitation and waste-management facilities; suitable environmental quality and health-related factors; and adequate and accessible location with regard to work and basic facilities: all of which should be available at an affordable cost. Adequacy should be determined together with the people concerned, bearing in mind the prospect for gradual development. Adequacy often varies from country to country, since it depends on specific cultural, social, environmental and economic factors. Gender-specific and age-specific factors, such as the exposure of children and women to toxic substances, should be considered in this context" (UNCHS, 1997).

[5] Discussion of this section is based on Chapter Three, Ghafur (1997).

basic sense, and shelter built on it can take place (at least) in three possible ways in slums and squatter settlements according to materialistic perspective:

- Produced only for self-consumption, characterised by its use value but remaining non-commodified by not being available to the market (owner-occupied house of many generations with its exchange value remaining latent).
- Produced, initially, only for self-consumption, appraised by its 'use value', but later acquiring 'exchange value', and so becoming a 'commodity' (e.g. sometimes squatters' dwellings in the cities of developing countries are bought and sold).
- Directly produced as a commodity for exchange in the market (local Mafia initiated rental housing).

Conventional planning practice determines land use through a process of land suitability that to a large extent is governed by the 'exchange value' of land in the market. Under this process land becomes a commodity. Due to lack of income, hence low affordability, poor households could not possibly enter into and gain from the housing market to have access to the commodity of shelter due to speculative nature of the land market. Without substantial public subsidy or significant raise in their incomes it is difficult to foresee how poor households would have access to formally developed land, e.g. site and service schemes. A realistic alternative approach to overcome this apparent impasse would be to focus on the use value of their dwelling space. Shelters may be redistributed without commodification as part of a target group specific social housing schemes; appropriation and then uses, in that case, would assign a use value to those shelters. The non-commodified housing environment, with only use value, is *qualitatively* different from other housing. This qualitative difference relates to the use value, i.e. specific character of the shelter's use to its inhabitants that can not be quantitatively compared with the use value of other shelters. Homeless people claim and appropriate urban space not through exchange value. For them, utility of a given piece of land i.e. urban space – a commodity that may or may not be open to the market for sale – lies in its use value.

The use value of a commodity is its utility in satisfying human needs and is present in the physical properties or qualities of the object. Commodity also has 'spatial properties' that contribute to determine the use value of a given commodity (Smith, 1990, p.81). The physical 'form in which a use-value occurs- its spatial extension in one, two or three dimensions, and its resulting shape' constitute the *spatial properties* of a commodity. He also pointed out that it is not just the intrinsic substances of the commodity that determine its use value. Use value is also determined by the object's usefulness in relation to other objects, events and activities. On this basis, use value is, in the first instance, a relationship, and 'as part of the set of relations that determine a particular use-value are a set of *spatial relations'.* This means that the use value of a commodity can not be understood in isolation; the use value of a house is not determined by its dimensions in feet and inches alone, but also in relation to other aspects like its internal design, its proximity to transport

routes and place of work, sewage lines and other services etc (Smith, 1990, p.83). It is this use value of shelter, therefore, that comes closer to explain what meaning or utility a given home has for its dwellers.

Housing Stock and its Supply Systems in Bangladesh

The national population has more than doubled between 1961 and 2001; it increased from 55.22 million to 129.24 million. Housing stock in Bangladesh has been increasing steadily since 1960 side-by-side increase in the national population. The point to note in this gross increase of housing stock is the gradual increase in the share of urban housing stock in a context of high urban population growth (Table1). The share of urban housing in the national housing stock has risen from 4.8 per cent in 1961 to 22.55 per cent in 2001. It is also observed from this table that annual growth rate (AGR) of urban population has always been much higher than the rate of national population. Despite decreasing AGR of urban population and Dhaka since 1981, Dhaka will eventually become one of the top megacity.

Table 1.　Population and Housing Stock in Bangladesh by Rural and Urban Areas, 1960-2001. (in million)

	Area	1960/61[*]	1974	1981	1991	2001
Population	Bangladesh	55.22	76.39	89.91	111.45	129.24
	Rural	52.11 (94.4)	69.00 (92.3)	75.82 (84.3)	89.89 (80.66)	94.34 (76.61)
	Urban	3.11 (5.6)	7.39 (9.7)	14.09 (15.7)	21.56 (19.34)	28.8 (23.39)
	Dhaka	0.55	1.61	3.44	6.11	9.91
	National AGR	2.26%	2.48%	2.32%	2.01%	1.48%
	Urban AGR	5.40%	6.70%	9.20%	4.20%	3.76%
	Dhaka AGR	5.20%	9.30%	10.0%	7.10%	--
Housing Stock	Bangladesh	9.95 (100)	13.73 (100)	14.74 (100)	18.46 (100)	24.92 (100)
	Rural	9.13 (95.2)	12.40 (90.3)	12.74 (86.2)	15.16 (82.1)	19.30 (77.45)
	Urban	0.46 (4.8)	1.33 (9.7)	2.04 (13.8)	3.30 (17.9)	5.62 (22.55)

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Three key sources of supply of housing contributed to the development of urban housing stock in Bangladesh, especially since early 1970s. They are: the public sector agencies and departments; the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and aid sector; and the (formal and informal) private sector.

Formal Public Sector

The role of formal public sector, carried out by different government departments and development authorities (DA), in the formation of existing housing stock is minimal; its contribution has been estimated to vary between 3-4 per cent of all urban housing including serviced sites (UNDP-UNCHS, 1993, p.20). Within this figure, approximately 20 per cents were for government employees in the form of rental flats and houses, 40 per cent as sites and services, and 40 per cent as housing units (including upgrading). An estimated annual housing provision by the government during the early 1990s is shown in Table 2, and it shows that the government has met only 1.07% of annual shelter needs. This figure would drop significantly if shelter need of the destitute and hardcore urban poor is added to the total need. Among three broad income group categories, percentage of public provision in relation to need is lowest in the urban poor group. Also noticeable in this table is the fact that the destitute group including the urban poor (shown in italics) within 0-15 percentiles is left out of the government programme to the mercy of their own fate. Public authorities like RAJUK – the Capital Development Authority, in particular, are explicitly pro-elite. This is evident when only 3 per cent of the proposed spending by capital programme are earmarked for housing for the poor in a recent programme (DMDP, 1995). A critical observation by Siddiqui et al (2000) on the role played by RAJUK is equally valid for other public institutions mandated to contribute to housing irrespective of income, class and race; it says –

> "So far RAJUK has not taken up any housing project for the low-income families living in the fringe areas, slum and squatter settlements. This is clear from its record of achievement during the last three decades in road construction, residential housing, footbridges, fountains, parks and playgrounds. It has not even tried to provide incentives to the private housing companies to go into such targeted housing" (Siddiqui et al, 2000, p. 15).

Table 2.   Estimated present government urban programme per annum

Income Group	Group Percentile	PWD Employees dwellings	Other Govt. dwellings	HSD dwellings	HSD plots	RAJUK plots	Other DA plots	Total	Need	% of Need
Destitute & the Hardcore poor	*0-15*	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	*99,000*	*0.0%*
Urban Poor	15-45	---	---	---	1500	---	---	1500	198,000	0.76%
Low-income, Lower-middle income	45-85	150	100	1000	2000	---	---	3250	263,000	1.24%
Middle and Upper income	85 over	150	100	---	---	500	500	1250	99,000	1.26%
Total		300	200	1000	3500	500	500	6000	560,000	1.07%

Note: The author adds the shelter need for the destitute based on existing figures of the table. Projected shelter need of the destitute is not added to the total.

Source: Based on GOB-ADB (1993), p.2-7

NGO and Aid Sector

The NGO and aid sector initiated housing supply has largely been limited within rural areas in Bangladesh. Their activities are either 'house provision' or 'house loan'. In the former case, majority of the rural-based NGOs became involved in the rural housing after the devastating flood in 1988. As an exception of this trend, Caritas, an international NGO, has been carrying out

its programme of free provision of housing to the rural poor since 1971. From early 1970s to early 1990s, Caritas had provided 360,747 low-cost houses, mainly to the disaster-affected poor households in rural areas in Bangladesh (Caritas, 2000). There are no comparable cases operating a 'house provision programme' in the scale of Caritas in urban areas in Bangladesh. An increasing number of NGOs in Dhaka, on the contrary, are involved in the poverty alleviation programmes to change lives of those who live in slums and squatter settlements. A survey carried out in 1999 among 59 NGOs found that 78.45% (Tk. 1789 million) of the total allocations was in credit schemes (Shahabuddin & Opel, 2000, p. 9). Urban poor living in illegal land or renters in private slums are usually the beneficiaries of these initiatives. Homeless destitute have not been covered in any tangible way. However, a few NGOs operating in Dhaka provide night shelters to street children and rental accommodation to poor working women.

In the latter case of house loan, large local NGOs like Grameen Bank (GB), Proshika and BRAC have been operating successfully their housing grants and schemes. Grameen Bank, for example, has been operating a housing programme to provide housing loan of different categories to its members in addition to usual loan for income generation. Landless poor are the targeted beneficiaries of GB. GB defines a 'landless' person as anyone whose family owns less than 0.5 acres of cultivable land, and the value of whose family assets altogether does not exceed the market value of one acre of medium quality land in the area. There is a growing concern that either socio-economic or housing programmes of any kind by the large national NGOs do not actually cover rural hardcore poor (Caritas, 2001; Rahman & Razzaque, 2000, Rahman, 1993). This critical observation has implications for discussing homelessness in urban areas, and will be covered later in more details.

Informal Sector

In the absence of well-established formal land and housing markets in cities in Bangladesh, informal sector has been playing the major role to cater the housing needs of a vast majority of urban (low-income) population. Small-scale builders and developers, (self-help) owner-builders, slum landlords and their intermediaries, operating in the informal private sector, are the largest suppliers of land and shelters in Bangladesh. Around 92 per cent of urban land and 96.5 per cent shelter units are provided through the informal sector (GOB-ADB, 1993). Without any incentives and recognition from the public authorities, the informal sector has been operative under heavy constraints. The major problems faced by them are: 1.limited access to land in the open market and high land costs; 2. limited options of finance; 3. limited access to technical and management resources; 4. high land transaction costs; 5. lengthy procedural formalities; 6. high standards and regulations constricting self-help housing, small-scale builders, upgrading, incremental building process; and 7. problem of *mastaans* (local mafia/muscle men) (World Bank, 1999). It is the private sector that can be regarded as the main actor active in urban housing supply.

According to different estimates, prevailing housing supply system has completely failed to reach the bottom 0-15 percentile urban households in Dhaka. It is unfortunate again that homeless people could not be covered by the informal sector housing as well, apparently for their lack of financial ability to rent a shelter. In early 1990s, a NGO named RADOL conducted a survey among the footpath dwellers in Dhaka and found that only 7.5% of the respondents pay for their sleeping accommodations while the rest do not pay (cited in ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996b, Annex J, p. 13).

An understanding of housing supply system would be incomplete if its tenure profile and structural quality are not explained. Tenurial distribution and structural quality of the urban housing stock in Bangladesh are shown in Table 3 and 4. According to 1991 estimate, 60 per cent of the housing stock in urban areas is owner-occupied and the rest 40 per cent are rental. The dominant role of the informal sector is further revealed in its 95% share of the total owned properties. In Dhaka the rental sub-market in informal settlements is the single largest supplier of housing. Rental housing in Dhaka has been estimated to vary between 65-70% of the total housing stock in Dhaka (GOB-ADB, 1993; Shafi, 1998). Though no recent data can match the data compiled almost a decade ago, the trend is shown in tenurial distribution Table 3 is believed to remain unchanged. Housing structure in Bangladesh has usually been categorized into five distinct types (Table 4); types are based on building materials used in roofs and walls of a given house. These five types are further divided into three categories based on their structural permanence; they are: *pucca* (permanent), semi-*pucca*, and *kutcha* (temporary). Level of poverty and structural quality of shelter of a given household are co-related i.e. the poor are more likely to live in shacks. This relationship is strikingly evident in Bangladesh as half of the households in slums are living in *kutcha* abodes.

Table 3.   Tenurial Characteristics of Urban Housing in Bangladesh (upto 1992)

Owned	Rental
Formal sector flat owners 5,000	Public Works Dept. rented, Govt. employees 16,000
Development authority owners 27,000	Other Govt./semi-Govt. employee housing 10,000
Housing & Settlement Directorate 67,000	Renters in development authority sites 54,000
Informal sector owners 1,881,000	Other rented properties 1,240,000
Total of owned properties	Total rented properties

1,980,000		1,320,000	
	(60% of the total stock)		(40% of the total stock)

Source: GOB-ADB (1993), p. 2-4,2-5

Table 4.   Distribution of housing stock by dwelling structures (in %)

Type	Structure	Building Life	Bangladesh	Rural	Urban	National Slums(1999)
Type 1 (*pucca*)	Brick and Concrete	50 yrs	3.8	1.0	23.3 769,000	0.91
Type 2 (semi-*pucca*)	CI Roofing, Brick or Wood Structure	19 yrs	13.3	11.9	22.6	3.09
Type 3 (*kutcha*)	CI/Tile/Wood roofing Mud Wall	15 yrs	10.3	10.8	746,000	28.33
Type 4 (*kutcha*)	All thatch/bamboo/straw	5 yrs	34.6	36.0	6.6 218,000	17.69
Type 5 (*kutcha*)	Temporary Structures	<5 yrs	38.0	40.3	24.7 815,000 22.8 752,000	49.98
Total			100%	100%	100%3,300,000	100%

Source: GOB-ADB (1993); BBS (1999).

Shelter Deficit and Need

Shelter deficit (or shortage) in Bangladesh is huge in magnitude. It was estimated in 1991 to be about 3.1 million units, of which 2.15 and 0.95 million units were in rural and urban areas respectively. A major share of this deficit had arise due to backlog of *kutcha* (non-permanent

perishable structure) unserviced units. The shelter deficit was forecasted to exceed 5 million units by 2000. The current housing stock is deteriorating (and decreasing) fast due to aging, general neglect by the dwellers, poverty and natural disasters (GOB, 1996, p. 13).

ADB-GOB-LGED (1996) had estimated annual shelter need of the national urban population and Dhaka City for 1996-2000 period (Table 5). On their estimation, significant allowance for replacement due to perishable nature of low-income housing and backlog is a key feature. Urban low-income housing in Bangladesh is characterized by its *kutcha* structures. National census on slums in 1997 census shows a heavy concentration of shelter units within three *kutcha* categories, i.e. type 3, 4 and 5, in slums (Table 4). Moreover, the shelter needs of the urban poor constitute greater share of these estimations; housing needs of the urban poor in national and Dhaka City are 67.33% and 64.22% respectively. National urban need that is calculated by the author on the basis of Table 2 is a slightly higher figure of 659,000 units. In this calculation, the combined total shelter need of the destitute and urban poor (0-45 percentile) is 45% of the total needs.

Table 5.   Estimate of Annual Urban Shelter Need, 1996 to 2000

	Source of Housing Demand Increase	Housing Requirement for Urban Population	Housing Requirement for Urban Poor
National Urban	Population Growth	220,000 units	121,000 units
	Replacement	52,000 units (non-poor) 231, 000 units (poor) 283,000 units (Total)	231,000 units
	Backlog	100,000 units	54,000 units
	Total	605,000 units	406,000 units
Dhaka City	Population Growth (1.6 million population increase over four years @ 5 persons/ household	80,000 units	40,000 units (if poor are 50% of all households)
	Replacement (equivalent to 127% of units to meet population growth as per ADB)	102,000 units	82,000 units (80% of replacement units are for urban poor as derived from

			ADB)
	Backlog (equivalent to 45% of units to meet population growth as per ADB	36,000 units	18,000 units (if poor are 50% of all households)
	Total	218,000	140,000

Source: ADB-GOB-LGED (1996).

It is now clear to us that the urban poor are not getting any access to public or NGO sector provision of shelters, unfortunately, under an unholy nexus of power-money-crime. In a situation when the informal sector is poor's last resort, the reasons why the bottom section of the urban poor can not either buy or rent an adequate shelter is explained in the following sections.

Housing Policies

The provision of basic necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care is a responsibility of the state (The Constitution of Bangladesh, Article 15). Given this importance toward shelter, different long-term National Plans since 1973 used to provide necessary policy directions to the housing sector, grouped with physical planning and water supply. The first National Housing Policy (NHP) in Bangladesh had been drafted in 1993 (revised 1999), in part, due to obligation toward the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 (UNCHS, 1988). Though belated, housing has gained a separate entity it long deserved. Bangladesh National Report to Habitat II, prepared shortly afterwards in 1996, is the second notable policy document (GOB, 1996). Before these two documents became available, a review of the 'Fourth Five Year Plan 1990-1995' to assess housing policies suggests that the government had made then a departure from housing 'provision' to an 'enabling approach' to facilitate activities of the private sector, and limit its activities within broad infrastructure development. Acute resource constraints had mainly initiated this paradigm shift. Given the adoption of enabling principles in the policy realm, two critical questions will be addressed, albeit briefly, in this section. They are:

- First, have enabling principles been embraced with consistency in shelter policies and programmes with specific references to the poorer section of society?
- Second, what positive change have enabling policies, under the auspices of Habitat Agenda of Habitat II, made in the last five years in low-income housing in Bangladesh?

Conflicts between Policies and Programme

NHP has an explicit pro-poor focus; it outlines the government approach, among others, to the housing of the urban poor amid acute resource crisis. The first objective of NHP is to "Make

housing accessible to all strata of society and to accelerate housing production in urban and rural areas with major emphasis on needs or the low-and middle-income groups, the high priority target groups will be the disadvantaged, the destitute and the shelterless poor" (Clause 3.1). To pursue this objective, NHP envisions its enabling role primarily to "Encourage in-situ upgrading, slum renovation and progressive housing development with conferment of occupancy rights, wherever feasible and to undertake relocation of squatter settlements from sites that need to be cleared in public interest" (Clause 5.10.1). In a context of high incidence of poverty, NHP intends to put greater emphasis on affordability, personal savings, self-help and cost recovery. With this intention, NHP wishes to confront housing from a holistic perspective. In terms of strategy, its "efforts would be made to enhance affffordability of the disadvantaged and low-income groups, through provision of credit for income generation and income enhancement, housing loans at specially low interest, access to space for running workshops or business and such other facilities" (Clause 4.3). Leaving aside rhetoric, unfortunately, government policies have too frequently come in conflict with its programme – words and works of enabling approach rarely match. Following examples support this observation.

- *Eviction without rehabilitation.* As against the spirit of NHP, incidences of slum/squatter eviction without proper rehabilitation have lately reached disturbing proportions. An event of eviction not only violates housing rights but also basic human rights. This issue will be discussed later for its importance as a potential cause of homelessness.

- *Withdrawal from responsibility.* The government had repeatedly stayed away from taking necessary actions that would facilitate and bolster a given programme conceived within the objectives of NHP. For example, government's unwillingness (or inability) to release lands had jeopardize a highly potential Urban Poverty Reduction Project during the late 1990s.

- *Continued shelter provision.* From megre sectoral allocation the government has continued providing subsidy in housing provision for the government officials and staffs.

- *Consistent rich bias.* The government has been consistent in favouring the rich in service provision. Different city development authorities, e.g. RAJUK, have become a tool of the ruling politicians and elite in getting preferential accesses to residential plots and flats.

Outcomes of Enabling Policies

The Habitat Agenda in 1996 has emphasized the role of enabling and participation in urban development, and thereby, sets an acceptable premise for us to gauge possible changes that emerge as outcomes of the government initiatives during the last five years. Housing has lately been seen in the context of poverty alleviation, gender and settlement types perspective (Ghafur, 2002, 2001). For the first time in Bangladesh, the annual budget for the year 1997-1998 made provisions for three programmes to make positive impact on poverty and housing of the destitute. They are: First, monthly allowance to poor elderly people. Second, formation of account in order

to provide loan for housing the homeless poor. Third, establishment of a bank which would offer loan to unemployed young people who are willing to start any income generating activity (MOF, 2000, p.112-114). Moreover, allowance for destitute women, home for the aged destitute, and *Ashrayan* (formerly known as Ideal/Cluster Village programme) are the other notable initiatives. Some of these initiatives are discussed later in details.

It is also true that a series of projects, initiated either individually or in partnership between the government and NGO sectors, have indeed emerged during this period with due focus on enablement and participation by the urban poor[6]. But what have been their impacts in upholding the Habitat Agenda has remained an open question to ponder. In a context of increasing income inequality and affluent class-biased service provision, a recent study by Asfar (2001) concludes that very little tangible advancement has been achieved in ensuring the poor's participation. The poor in housing sector activities have identified absence of a responsive institutional framework within the local government as a major bottleneck to ensure their participation. Her findings on the nature of poor's dependence on the rich and powerful politicians, for access to resources and services, reiterate pre-Habitat Agenda studies in Bangladesh (Ghafur, 2000), and confirm that genuine participation by the poor has still remained an elusive goal. An absence of genuine representation by the poor at the local government level has been affecting their participation in Bangladesh; in this respect, it is worth quoting what a major document on urban poverty states in its conclusion -

> "Municipalities should be made more transparent and accountable. Municipalities in Bangladesh are democratic as their councils have been directly elected by the citizens. However, democracy has to be made effective and meaningful by enabling the people and the communities to participate in all major development programmes both at the city level and at local level" (Islam et al, 1997, p. 291).

The most significant consequence of the poor's lack of participation in the decision making process is their lack of access to land. The urban poor's need for better access to land and for secure tenure on land they are occupying is perhaps the single most crucial issue for ensuring adequate shelter for all and for the development of sustainable human settlements. The

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[6] After Habitat II, government planned to implement its National Plan of Action (NPA) where intermediate-sized towns were given priorities. As a result, 'Support for Implementation of National Plan for Action (SINPA)', a Dutch assisted three-year project has been started in Tangail in September 1, 1998. SINPA aims to achieve the goals set by the NPA by facilitating local capacity building of the stake holders for effective planning and management of urban development. Other notable projects include:

  a. Asian Development Bank funded initiative called "Promoting Good Urban Governance in Dhaka City"
  b. UNCHS supported and LGED implemented "local Partnership for Urban Partnership for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project".
  c. CARE-Bangladesh has initiated "Supporting Household Activities for Hygiene, Assets and Revenue" (SHAHAR). Urban local government agencies with NGO support are involved in its implementation.

government of Bangladesh, through NHP, could neither improve upon the existing exclusionary land-laws nor willingly seriously to do so in the near future to move progressively toward implementing the goals of the Habitat Agenda. McAuslan (2000) make not of this impasse -

> "The NHP and the BNR both recognize the need for new laws on urban land matters. However, these laws are to focus more on urban planning and improving the operation of the land market and do not touch on the development of any specific legal framework for urban land management or for upradation or regularisation of slums and squatter settlements, as some commentators have called for. There is a case for the development of such laws to enable the policies of the NHP to be implemented and the Government to meet its commitments under the Habitat Agenda" (McAuslan, 2000, p. 48).

Changes during the last five years

Despite persistent conflicts and contradictions in the implementation of policies, discussed briefly in the above section, a few tangible changes have been observed in Bangladesh during the last five years (1997-2001) in her shelter sector. The are listed below:

- An increasing involvement of NGOs in partnership with the government activities in the urban and rural shelter sector.

- An attitudinal change at the policy level that it is worth studying and investing in housing. As a result, housing finance has received an increased policy focus, and the private urban shelter sector witnessed the advent of corporate housing finance (see Hoek-Smit, 2000 for details).

- A gradual shift from the earlier housing sector specific projects to city-wide inter-sectoral intervention (see GOB, 1996 for a list of priority projects to be implemented in this period).

- Small and inter-mediate sized cities have come under more focus than before (see GOB, 1996).

Specific Dimensions of Urban Housing

This section discusses specific dimensions of urban housing with specific reference to Dhaka.

Affordability Gap

Existing housing supply has been characterized by 'a critical imbalance' between housing price to household income ratio that has been known to affect homeownership and rental housing. Table 6 shows those urban poor who generally have difficulty in affording a minimum acceptable standard shelter typically lie in the 0-50 percentile range and include the following groups: destitute, hardcore poor, and moderately poor. Table 7 shows that median household income has increased as high as 85% between 1993 and 1998. On the other hand, three types of land i.e. highly developed land, developed land and raw land have increased 7%, 53% and 13%

respectively during the same period. Due to higher increase in income, land price-to-house ratio decreased. But in reality, this decrease in ratio means little if not anything for most of the households in Dhaka. Price of land has continued to remain beyond their affordable reach. This situation is explained next.

Table 6.   Household population by income groups in Dhaka City, 1996

Income Group	% of Households	Percentile Group	No. of Households	No. of Population	Average Household Size	Income Range (Tk)	Total Income (Tk Million)
Destitute	2	0-2	36,500	88,000	2.4	0-750	13.7
Hard Core	18	2-20	328,100	1,280,000	3.9	750-2100	167.5
Moderately	30	20-50	546,900	2.910,000	5.4	2100-4000	1668.0
Poor	25	50-75	455,800	2,552,000	5.6	4000-8000	2734.8
Lower Middle	20	75-95	364,600	1,969,000	5.4	8000-28,000	6562.8
Income	5	95-100	91,100	501,000	5.5	28,000 and over	6832.5
Middle Income							
High Income							
Total	100	--	1,823,000	9,300,000	5.1	--	18279.3

Source: ADB-GOB-LGED (1996), p.27

Table 7.   Comparative Land Price-to-Income Ratio between 1993 and 1998 (in US Doller)

Year	Type of Land	Minimum price of 1 m^2	Maximum price of 1m^2	Median price of I m^2	Median household income per month	Land price to income ratio
1993	Highly Developed Land	750	1120	934	90	10.38
	Land	187	374	262		2.91
	Developed Land	11	56	22		0.24
	Raw land					
199	Highly Developed	934	1245	1000		6.00

17

8	Land Developed Land	250	623	400	167	2.40
		16	62	25		0.15
	Raw land					

Bangladesh country paper prepared for Habitat II estimates in 1996 that if land is available at a rate of Tk. 150,000 per *katha* (68.7 sq.m) and Tk. 200,000 is spent to construct a small house of two rooms then the capital cost would be Tk. 350,000. A low-income household would own this house in the periphery of Dhaka if it invests Tk. 4000 per month over a period of seven years. This figure excludes earth filling. This repayment figure becomes absurd as the median household income per month in greater Dhaka is Tk. 4000: repayment figure equals or greater than household income. In other words, if we assume that investments by a given household in a well functioning housing market would not taken an undue proportion of household income then this house would be unaffordable for 75 per cent of all households (GOB, 1996).

Similar low level of affordability has been observed by an earlier study (UNDP-UNCHS, 1993, P.23). The 1993 study estimated that 70 per cent of the shelter demand is for plots and core-houses costing their buyers less than Tk. 500 per month. Payment schedule was calculated under the assumption that on average a household with income averaging Tk. 5000 per month allocates 10 per cent of this income to housing rent or payment costs. With this level of affordability, low-income households will have to settle for plots under 40 sq.m or take in renters and possibly both. For the hardcore poor households, however, there is no alternative than to rent in slums or squat. The 1993 study can now be considered a very optimistic estimation due to deterioration of the general socio-economic situation. According to 'Household Expenditure Survey 1995-96', only decile–9 households spend 9.23 % of their monthly income on housing and house rent. In the lower eight decelies, this figure varies between 6–8 % of their monthly expenditure, and thus leaves little rooms for housing repayments (BBS, 1998, p. 289). Whereas households upto decile-7 can not afford spending Tk. 400 each month i.e. 10% of total household income on rent or repayment

Table 8. Floor Areas in sq.m by Income Groups and Time

Income Group	Approximate Percentile	1974	1981	1990	Plot size sq.m (1990)
High Income Group (HIG)	2	460	280	185	
Middle Income Group (MIG)	28	280	185	140	150-360
	20	93	74	46	75

Low Income Group (LIG) <LIG (poor)	50	19	9.5	6	54 (multi family on plot)

Source: UNDP-UNCHS, 1993, p. 24

Rents and House Price

Rental housing is one of the largest segments of the housing supply system in cities in Bangladesh. According to a 1993 estimate, around 40 per cent urban housing stock are rental (see Table 3); this figure in Dhaka is around 65-70 per cent. Islam et al (1997, p. 199) report that nearly 55 per cent of the urban poor households live in either private or public rental housing. Their study has also revealed that 93 per cent hardcore poor in Dhaka live in single room and 92.5 per cent of them occupy a space less than 150 sq.ft. (p. 204-5). Higher land price and construction costs have also pushed housing beyond the affordable range of low and middle-income people. Their access to owned or rented house is still limited despite the fact that the ratio of the median free-market price of dwelling unit and the median annual household income decreased significantly between 1993 and 1998 (Table 9). This ratio was 18.5 in 1993 and 12.5 in 1996. This ratio has decreased as house price increased one fourth and the median annual household income has almost doubled. Increase in median household income takes place in a context when (Dhaka) city product per person has more than doubled during the 1993-1998 period – US$ 219 in 1993 to US$ 500 in 1998. It would be misleading, however, to judge the implication of this increase as homogenous across all income groups in Dhaka (UDD, 2000, p. 16). The issue of income inequality is discussed later in Table 19.

Table 9.   House Price and Rent-to-income Ratios in Dhaka   (in US Doller)

	Dhaka	
	1993	1998
A. Median House Price	20,000	25,000
B. Median Rent	90	95
C. Median Annual Household Income	1080	2000
D. Median Household Income of Renters	150	155
House Price/Household Income (A/C)	18.52	12.50
House Rent/Household Income (B/D)	0.60	0.61

Source: UDD, 2000, p. 3.

Note: The average annual exchange rate of US $ in 1992-93 and 1997-98 period are 1 US$ = Tk. 39.14 and Tk. 45.46 respectively.

19

According to Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) conducted survey in late 1999, house rent in Dhaka rose by about 177 per cent in the last ten years despite presence of rent control laws and courts (*The Daily Star*, 10.1.00). The survey by CAB was conducted on rents of four types of houses – *pucca*, semi-*pucca*, shanties in slums, and thatched houses. Although rents of these types of houses increased by an average of 18.24 per cent in 1999 the highest increase of 26.01 per cent was in slums. The average rent of a room in slums in Dhaka rose to Tk. 907 from Tk. 715 in 1998. The average rent of one *pucca* room rose to Tk. 2088 in 1999 from Tk. 1785 in 1998, showing 16.97 per cent increase. The rent of one semi-*pucca* room rose to Tk. 1502 from Tk. 1290; the rate of increase was 16.43 per cent. In the same period, the rent of thatched house increased by about 17.94 per cent; the average rent was Tk. 1015 in 1998 which rose to Tk. 1197 (*The Daily Star*, 10.1.00).

Social Housing Supply

According to the Bangladesh national report to the Habitat II (GOB, 1996), social housing is a specific category of public housing that involves social costs i.e. some form of subsidy either in its land development, construction or rent[7][8]. Social housing, thus defined, provided housing for 1.16 per cent of all households in Dhaka (GOB, 1996, p. 68); later UDD (2000) reports that social housing in Dhaka had increased from 1.12 per cent in 1993 to 12 per cent in 1998. Neither this broad definition of social housing nor any of its subsequent estimation of constructed housing units gives reference to low-income households. Low-income household's limited access to government housing is reported by another study; the study found that 5.4% and 5.9% of all urban poor in Dhaka and in all urban areas are tenant in government houses (Islam et al, 1997, p. 200). In a context of very limited public sector involvement in housing (Table 2.), a review of existing literature suggests that social housing supply in Bangladesh take the following forms:

- **Government staff housing:** Different government and semi-government organizations provide housing at a highly subsidized rent for their employees. They provided around 35,000 housing units by 1996 and almost half of them were constructed by the Public Works Department (PWD) in the Ministry of Housing and Public Works (ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996,

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[7]   The main report (GOB, 1996) does not define the concept of social housing anywhere in it. The definition stated above is based on personal conversation with Md. Salim Ullah, Deputy Director, Urban Development Directorate.

[8]   Besides unfruitful public initiatives, more than a dozen NGOs are catering for the housing need of special groups like (single-female) garment workers, destitute and delinquent women and youth, street children and orphans, mentally and physically retarded children, working mother etc. These are mostly dorm type accommodation in rental houses, which are part of empowerment/rehabilitation programs comprising of literacy and skill training, legal, social and entrepreneur support, health, mother and childcare facilities, etc.

Annex K, p.7). Provision of housing at subsidized rent has always been in practice for the government employees in Bangladesh. The rent is payable at a rate of 7.5 per cent of the basic salary of an employee; those who not provided with a house would receive 45 per cent of their basic salary for renting in the private sector. The government is giving double-subsidy in rent and construction of this housing: First, the rent fixed at the rate of 7.5 per cent of the salary is considered well below the market price. Second, an analysis in 1993 showed that the housing construction costs in the public sector is between one and a half to three times the cost of a comparable private sector development GOB-ADB, 1993, p. 2.9). Government staff housing meets around one per cent of its needs.

- **Squatter resettlement housing:** Before 1997, Housing and Settlement Directorate (HSD) had constructed 7888 semi-permanent dwelling units to rehabilitate squatters in and around Dhaka city (HSD, 2000); a detail account is given in Table 35.

- **Low-income housing:** Housing built by the government or municipality and let at a subsidized rent to low-income people unable to afford housing in the private market. Social housing for the poor and low-income people was constructed indeed with this objective. However, their post-implementation experiences show some unforeseen consequences. This point is discussed below.

In 29th May 1984, decisions to construct a housing project to stop development of public health threatening environment was taken in a meeting held at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works. Low-income people with a monthly income below Tk. 1000 would be the beneficiaries of this project by paying a rent of Tk. 250 per month. Initial project target was to construct 32 apartments, each with 24 dwelling units and 405 sq.ft (with half stair) per unit, in a 10 acres of land. Housing and Settlement Directorate (HSD) was given the task of implementing this project with two specific objectives: First, to apply cost-saving structure. Second, to provide housing at a subsidized rent for the welfare of low-income people, and transfer the ownership to its occupants after 60 years (cited in HEC, 2000, p.2).

In its first and last phase, only 2 apartments with a total of 48 dwelling units were constructed in 1984 in Budda near Gulshan, Dhaka. The only other known example of social housing was constructed at the personal directives of the then President H. M. Ershad to rehabilitate squatters. 192 dwelling units in 4 six-storied apartments were built in Islambagh, an old Dhaka locality, by the initiative of Dhaka City Corporation in late 1980s, now known as 'Ershad Colony'. The squatters were indeed given possession to live in two-room dwelling units with kitchen and toilet before they were evicted in 1993/94. Despite stated objectives, none of the mentioned social housing projects are now inhabited by the targeted beneficiaries. Class III and IV government employees and class IV employees of the Dhaka City Corporation are now the respective occupants of the former and latter case.

Table 10. Profiles of two cases of identified social housing in Dhaka.

Location of Project	Period	Number of Buildings	Number of Dwelling Units	Target Population	Present Status
Budda	1984-85	2 six storied walkup apartments	48 (each unit with an area of 405 sft with half stair)	Low-income people	Mostly class III and IV employees of different government offices and ministries
Islambagh (Ershad colony)	Late 1980s	4 six storied walkup apartments	192	Squatters in Dhaka	Mostly class III and IV employees of Dhaka City Corporation

Source: Ghafur (2000a) and HEC (2000)

Social costs are involved in constructing dwelling units not meant for deserving people. Subsidy targeting and its mobilization by the government are the two major constraints facing social housing supply (Hoet-smit, 2000).

Types of sharing

A 1993 study reported that sharing, through free lodging, rental 'mess' accommodation for single males and females and commuter housing comprised close to 2.5 per cent of all population in Dhaka (GOB-ADB, 1993, p. 2-22). Sharing of a dwelling unit by more than one household or individual in Dhaka, in particular, has recently increased in scale. Sharing today can take place in following forms:

- **Sharing rooms or dwelling by a group of individual males or females:** A large number of low-paid employees and daily labourers in Dhaka are either unmarried single or left their families back in villages. Slum and squats in Dhaka offer accommodation to these people. The dwelling type is commonly known as 'mess'. There are approximately one million female workers in the garment industries in Dhaka; most of them are young migrants and unmarried. Their employers do not take any responsibility for their housing. These large numbers of working women live either in mess, i.e. a non-family situation of shared accommodation, or in a slum/squat dwelling as sublets. Besides accommodation, Bangladesh Habitat II reports that "they share rent and food expanses with other three or five workers and 65% of them hold less than two square metres per person" (GOB, 1996, p.34). Problems of sharing become acute in using toilets, washing and cooking due to over-crowding. In some cases, sharing take place as paying guests with poor families living in the slum areas; they slept in (beaten-earth) floor side-by-side their hosts. Working women's preference for en-group sharing arises from their need of a cheaper accommodation as well as from the personal safety that is

possible in group-movement to and from their place of work to home. In recent years, different NGO initiatives are trying to address the housing problem of working women (Dunham, 1994).

- **Sharing by subletting:** A small low-income family living in government or office provided housing may sublets a room of their dwelling unit to another small household or a bachelor. This process of sharing is underpinned by a given host family's need to generate extra income for its subsistence; this type of sharing has often been manifested in the physical extension of a given house, and the process is called 'transformation' (Tipple & Ameen, 1999). According to a 1995 study, 5.4% and 3.2% of all urban poor live as sub-tenant in public/private houses in Dhaka and in all urban centres in Bangladesh (Islam et al, 1997, p. 200). The relatively higher rate in Dhaka is partly reflective of her acute housing shortage than other cities.

- **Free lodging:** A young-male, possibly a relative and college/university student, lives and eats with a host family. In exchange of free lodging, the individual may teach or supervise the homework of host's school-going children; or he may occasionally carry out selected household works, e.g. paying bills and shopping, as a voluntary gesture of his gratitude. This sharing is least observed among all.

- **Sharing parental residence:** It is quite common in Dhaka, as in most parts of Bangladesh, to find adult unmarried/married son, often with his small family, sharing a parental residence with retired and aged parents. From a cultural practice, aged parents usually encourage this form of sharing. Unfortunately, this form of sharing has been found only among solvent owner-occupiers. However, shared living of this sort in today's congested multi-story apartments is not as comfortable as it had been in the earlier detached residences with generous open spaces.

Housing circumstances of quintiles of urban households

Specific data on quintiles of urban households to describe their housing circumstance are not available in Bangladesh. 'Household Expenditure Survey 1995-96' generated data on household deciles are used to calculate figures of quintiles of average monthly household income and expenditures (Table 11). The amount spent by quintiles household on housing/house rent is then estimated. These figures are then used as indicators to explain housing circumstance of the respective quintiles. One has to be careful in dealing with these housing descriptions as mere approximation of the available circumstances because quintile-based housing information does not exist. It is evident in the table below that the amount of expenditure exceeds the amount of income for the first two quintiles, and therefore, directly implying their status of poverty. The income gap starts reversing progressively toward the upper quintiles.

Table 11. Housing circumstances of quintiles of urban households in Bangladesh

Urban Household Quintiles	Monthly HH Income and Expenditure (in Tk) [*]	Monthly Housing/rent Expenditure (in %)[**]	Shelter, Structure and Settlement Situations	Access to Services
1 (0-20)	2038 *2269* Destitute and hardcore urban poor	10.95 (223)	Extreme and Passive homeless either living in the street or under makeshift shed built illegally in footpaths or public lands.	Without any access to services like water, sanitation and electricity.
2 (21-40)	3605 *3668* Urban poor and hardcore urban poor	11.79 (425)	The urban poor, especially the hardcore ones, live in *kutcha* huts as renters in slums and squats; they live under constant threat of eviction.	Only few have access to safe drinking water, electricity, hygienic sanitation. Services are absent due to the illegal tenure of their settlements.
3 (41-60)	5254 *5051* Urban poor and low-income HH.	13.57 (713)	All but few households are renters in private slums; some are owner-occupiers. Most of the houses are semi-permanent structures.	Most have access to (illegal) electricity, sanitary latrine. Drinking water is either from tube wells or nearby piped- water points.

4 (61-80)	8122 *7763* Low- and lower-middle income HH.	14.93 (1213)	Most of the households are owner-occupiers of semi-permanent and permanent residences.	All but few have legal connec-tion of electricity, piped water, proper sanitation and gas. However, the settlements they live in are not planned.
5 (81-100)	20,826 *16,654* Middle and upper income HH.	17.12 (3564)	Mostly owner-occupiers of at least one high standard permanent residence, built in either public or private sector initiated planned settlements.	Enjoy access to all available urban utility services in good quality and quantity, e.g. gas, phone, piped water, sewerage, and electricity.

Note [*] : Figures in italics are amount of monthly household expenditure.

[**]: Figures as percentage of household income; figures within parentheses indicate expenditure in TK.

Source: Income data are calculated from the 1995-96 'Household Expenditure Survey' (BBS, 1998).

2.Current definitions or categories of homelessness

The concepts of 'home', 'house', and 'dwelling' at first glance, may seem to denote the same phenomenon, i.e. a place of living for human beings. However, apparently inter-changeable and overlapping as they may appear, the meaning and attributes of these terms need clarification[9]. The definition and use of the concept 'home' in the literature draws attention to its *subjective* nature. It is argued, by and large, that the subjective dimension makes a house (or a shelter) *a* home. It is not uncommon, in the subjective interpretation of home, to find social, psychological, cognitive, affective, behavioural issues emphasised, and spatial and physical issues de-emphasised. Home is a concept that varies with culture, social groups, and individuals (and time). One of the earliest influential explanation of home was given by Hayward (1976)[10], and was used as a basis for further modification (Lawrence, 1987; Despres, 1991). What becomes clear from these studies is the fact that the meaning of home can not be confined only within a physical-spatial realm. Rapoport (1995) strongly argued (against common usage) that the meaning of the concept 'home' is synonymous with that of 'house' (and dwelling). He also suggested that no essence of the social and psychological needs filled by 'home' is lost by substituting (for home) house or dwelling (Rapoport, 1995).

This section contends that the concept of home would include both its material and normative entities. It would be a mistake, therefore, to focus only on the physical dimension of homelessness. Although approach to homelessness was argued to take a stance of either rooflessness or rootlessness (Somerville, 1992), this report, however, does not negate any one at the expanse of the other. We ought to take a holistic view in a given discussion of the nature and extent of homelessness in cities in Bangladesh. The objective would be to complement our understanding of the commodity nature of home, gained in part by a 'housing supply system' approach, with a normative profile, in particular, the wider implications of social identity.

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[9]   These issues were discussed earlier by the author in Chapter Three, Ghafur (1997). For details, see Rapoport (1995), Lawrance (1995) and Tipple et al (1994) for a comprehensive review of these terms.

[10]   Hayward (1976) identified nine dimensions of home, and places them in the following order of importance (cited in Rapoport, 1995, p. 34):

(1) as a set of relationships with others.
(2) as a relationship with the wider social group and community
(3) as a statement about one's self-image and self-identity
(4) as a place of privacy and refuge
(5) as a continuous and stable relationship with other sources of meaning about the home
(6) as a personalized place
(7) as a base of activity
(8) as a relationship with one's parents and place of upbringing
(9) as a relationship with a physical structure, setting, or shelter.

Home and Homelessness in Bangladesh: A Normative Approach

The contemporary connotation of the term 'home' includes objective as well as subjective dimensions in Bangladesh just like most other countries. The 'meaning' of home goes beyond its immediately apparent physical connotation of shelter/dwelling/house – *bari*, *basha*, *ghar, griho* in Bengali – to include a given individual's or group's spiritual, social, and psychological attachment to a specific place in time. It was contended that "the rural environment and the ideal geography of the bari (homestead) is highly upheld in the Bangla poetry and song imbibed all through childhood" (Maloney, 1991, p. 6). Home is the centre of holistic existence of an individual or a social group (i.e. household) in Bengali culture and tradition. In short, home shapes people's 'self' as well as 'social' identity. In addition to a place for living, home is where they are grounded socially to an extent that it gives them social identity. For example, a child is a son or a woman is a wife of a certain home. Home is where one has his/her roots; it is, therefore, not surprising that in spite of living in cities for prolong period, one's self-perceived home is still in an ancestral village of a specific district. In this way, home acts as a conduit for attaining social identity by a given group in a social setting i.e. *samaj*[11] in Bengali. To belong to a home essentially implies to be in *samaj* i.e. society in its broader sense.

The nearest opposite terms of home, as a locus of protection, affection and identity, are *rasta* and *bazaar* (street and market in English respectively). As opposed to the positive senses of home, *rasta*, in particular, is imbued with negative connotations that shape general public perception of any individual or group living in street. Phrases like '*rastai darano*' (stand in the street) '*pothe bosa*' (sit in the street) are in fact de facto statements of one's utter destitution and/or loosing all assets one has at a given time. These phrases are also used in everyday dialogue in a relative sense to convey one's precarious economic situation in a moment of time. For example, 'if I fail in my business than I have no option except *rastai darano*' (stand in the street). In other words, *rasta* is the bottom of a ladder of social status and upward economic mobility. In social terms, to be from *rasta* means one's moral degradation, in particular, for girls and women. For example, *rastar maye* (girls of street) or *bazaarer maye* (girls of market) identifies a girl or woman as prostitute. In these cases, whatever social-identity one has is either

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[11]   Meaning of *samaj* differs contextually and historically in Bangladesh. "For most Bangladeshies", Blenchet (1996, p. 27) minutely observes, "far more important that being citizens of a nation-state, is to be a member of a *samaj*. The *samaj* upholds a moral order which is far more compelling on its members and, in recent history at any rate, membership into a samaj has been seen to be more enduring than that in a state. The *samaj* is associated with proper living as Bengali, as Muslims, as Hindus, as a civilized people. Of course, these views on proper living vary considerably depending on social location, rural/urban dwelling, wealth and education".

erased or badly tarnished to the extent of becoming a pariah in the eyes of society[12]. They are called *potita* in local Bengali dialect, literally meaning a fallen one.

In a highly socially and economically stratified society like Bangladesh, beneath an apparent homogeneity, one's existence without a home has serious social repercussions. In addition to natural causes, e.g. river erosion, cyclones and floods, people also become homeless due to human interventions. To make someone homeless (*ghar chara kora*) implies making him/them social outcastes. To put this reference of 'enforced' homelessness in the correct perspective, one has to remember its historical precedence – the precursor of present homelessness in many ways. In the colonial period of Bengal, making someone homeless by an act of eviction had been a long lasting oppressive tool employed frequently by the z*aminders,* in particular, in the event of their tenant's failure to pay land revenues. In the undivided Bengal, *zaminders* were native fiscal agents created for collecting land revenues by the 'Permanent Settlement Act, 1793'[13]. Memories and ramifications of this oppressive Act, despite its final abolition by the 'East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950', had left deep-rooted marks in the Bengali psyche and social structure. Phrases like 'to evict from forefather's homestead land' (*bap-dadar vitemati theke utched kora*), or 'to let dove run in one's evicted home plinth' (*vitematite ghughu charano*) are some of the worst possible curses, threats and situations still in practice in the day-to-day life

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[12]   Process of ostracizing of these fallen girls/women by *samaj* is captured by Blanchet (1996, p. 27-28). She reports "The Daulotdia [brothel-based] prostitutes are called by the villagers nearby 'women of the government' (*shorkari meye*) in contrast to the 'women of the *samaj*". A few 'women of the government' are local girls born and bred in the surrounding villages. They may have been as young as 11 or 12 years old when they crossed over the line. Thereafter these girls are categorically rejected by the *samaj*. Parents cannot keep in touch with their daughters for fear that they themselves would be excommunicated. The state is seen to regulate these young girls' lives. After death, prostitutes' wealth is said go to the government. Their dead bodies are not cared for by members of the *samaj*. Only prostitutes will touch the dead body of prostitutes and their burial (for Muslims) never takes place in a cemetery used by the *samaj*".

[13]   During pre-British period of Bengal, rights of ownership in land had been vested in neither the state nor *Zamindars*, but in the cultivating masses (Siddiqui, 1992, p.668). But the 1793 Act had changed the scene completely. Siddiqui observes "Permanent settlement proved to be a disaster for the Bengal's economy in general, and for the Bengali peasantry in particular. It led to an agrarian structure characterized by (p. 669):

 a) rack renting (kind rent, '*abwab*', illegal exactions, frequent enhancement of legal rent, etc.) and inflexible demand of rent, irrespective of crop condition;
 b) highly skewed land ownership pattern;
 c) absentee landlordism, divorced from the risk and responsibility of production and investment;
 d) a long chain of *modhyasvatva* or between the zamindar and actual tillers;
 e) insecure tenancy ('non-occupancy *raiyats*', 'under-*raiyats*' and '*bargadars*');
 f)   vulnerability of the peasantry to exploitation by usurious money lenders and traders".

of Bangladesh[14]. State of homelessness inflicts in an individual or groups a loss of identity, privacy, comfort, and protection – enjoyed otherwise at home by default. To become homeless, therefore, is one's ultimate traumatic destiny. Ahmed Sofa, a Bengali writer and poet, gives glimpses into the state of homelessness in the contemporary context –

> …. Under the thick quilt in deep blissful sleep
> Shivering starlight throws its spell.
> Bamboo made tiny huts are like honey-combs
> Filled with children's laughter and women's giggles.
> Amid pain and pleasure life rotates
> Suffering and worry are there
> Still life continues in smooth rhythm.
> Famine casts its horrible shadow
> And in the whole land crisis crops up acute
> Very often confusion makes inroad into their minds.
> They compare, which is better: life or death … …
>
> In the heart of these homeless people pangs for home
> burns like fire
> They hear in dreams, the voice of forefathers
> and the roar of thunder
> Flow of river dazzles their gaze…..

The Eviction of the Shanty Town Dwellers, Ahmed Sofa, in *The Daily Star*, 20.12.97.

State of living without a home – homelessness – has multi-dimensional consequences. It is difficult to set single criteria to identify, categorize and quantify homelessness. In the specific context of Bangladesh, any attempt to define homelessness has to be inclusive to consider different categories. It follows, people living without a roof over their head that they own – the physical perspective – should not be the only type of homelessness in its broader sense of the term. From a social perspective, on the other hand, a person (or a group) can be a homeless even when living in a legitimate shelter for reasons beyond his/her/their control. These opposing situations are not in contradictions but depict two facets of a common reality. In that case, loss of

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[14]   In the recent post national election political scenario, a leading opposition party sponsored daily newspaper supplement claims that the minority Hindus and Christians came under indiscriminate attacks from the supporters of the ruling party for their alleged political supports. It was claimed, among other violence and tortures, that 38,500 Hindus were evicted from home and made homeless (*The Daily Star*, 10.12.2001).

(social) identity instead of or in addition to loss of shelter contributes to a given individual's or group's perception of homelessness, e.g. abandoned children and orphan, brothel-based sex workers, trafficked women and children. This research will discuss homelessness from the physical perspective for lack of time and resource.

Current Definitions or Categories of Homelessness

Although homelessness in cities in Bangladesh is seldom addressed explicitly different studies and censuses have tacitly covered issues central to homeless population. Existing literature has not dealt with the concept of homelessness analytically except its occasional citation. Different discrete studies related to homelessness either follow a 'census', 'survey-research' or 'journalistic' approach to define homelessness in Bangladesh. In all these efforts, rooflessness i.e. living in public outdoor/indoor spaces, especially streets, without a shelter of his/her/their own has been taken as the basis for understanding and enumerating homelessness. In all these efforts, social perspective has remained almost unexplored if not neglected. Scopes and coverage of these three approaches are discussed next

Census Approach

The government of Bangladesh has frequently used the term homeless in different policies and documents; but surprisingly, it did not attempt to define and count people within an explicit category of 'homeless'. In a national culture of foreign aid dependency[15], and its undesired consumption, estimation of poverty has always received priority but not homelessness. Higher figures of poverty have been beneficial to pursue aid, and success of any given regime is measured, in part, by the amount of more aid it manages (from the Paris based donor club) than the previous regime. Current figures of homelessness, on the other hand, have been perceived politically dangerous indicator by a given regime for fear of public decent. Interestingly, a given regime has never been seen shy away from undertaking projects for the homeless. These projects and programmes includes those terms that reflect mass-communicable political rhetoric but names, true to the people affected and their situation, referred below are never considered. Terms like *bastuhara* (homeless: *bastu* = home and *hara* = state of not having) and especially, *sharbohara* (utter destitute: *sharbo*= all and *hara*= state of not having) had often been made synonymous with communist insurgents.

The term homeless has been left open to define and debate. In rural areas, for example, homelessness is either conflated with landlessness, in particular, people without homestead land or rootlessness i.e. people without a shelter with fixed address. The categories that represent many of the notions of homelessness, and are defined by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) are 'floating population' and 'rootless people'. According to the Population Census 1991

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[15]   See Sobhan (1990) for a discussion of this topic.

(BBS, 1999, p. 3), "the homeless and transient population found on the census night 00:00-5:00 am of 12th March 1991 at the bus stands, railway stations, launch *ghats* (terminals), boats, *majars* (shrines), staircases, verandas, parks, road sides, hotels, transport etc. were defined as the floating population. This general definition poses a problem for the census of slums and enumeration of floating population in 1997 as transient population may not be homeless at all[16]. Consequently, the changed definition used by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) for identifying the floating population was:

> "Floating population are the mobile and vagrant category of rootless people who have no permanent dwelling units whatever worse these are and they are found on the census night … in the rail station, launch *ghat* (terminal*)*, bus station, hat-bazaar, *mazar* (shrine), stair case of public/government buildings, open space etc" (BBS, 1999, p. 3).

Central to the census definition of floating population is their state of 'rootlessness'. Vagrant, displaced, landless or people exposed to the risk of total economic deprivation are considered rootless people. Rootless people are defined as satisfying any of the following scenarios (BBS, 1999, p. 4):

1. Landless population who have lost even the homestead areas of their parents and/or of themselves;

2. Landless population who have lost their land and homestead areas because of political, economic or social reasons; and

3. Abandoned women, population affected by river and the population driven out of their own homestead areas.

An aggregate estimation of homeless households, in urban and rural areas, is obtained by deducting the number of housing stock from the total number of households. According to 1991 census, total number of households and housing stock in urban areas were 4.09 millions and 3.3 millions respectively. The urban housing deficit that appears from these two figures is 800,000, and is equated with the homeless households (Islam et al, 1997, p. 121). These households are either squatting or sharing shelter units with other households or were living in non-residential circumstances. From this estimation, 20 per cent urban households are homeless or 4.4 million people with average household size as 5.5 person in 1991.

Survey-Research Approach

The studies under survey-research approach are either academic or commissioned research works executed within a limited coverage. General consensus on the definition of homelessness rarely exists in this approach. In investigating the informal sector poor of Dhaka City, Siddequi and others (1990) identify homeless people as the residual segment of the urban poor who have

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[16] For further critique of this limitation see Begam (1997).

been living in temporary residences in different parts of the Dhaka City, and called 'floating population'. In their opinion, floating people can be broadly divided into two categories: first, people living in shacks built illegally (squatters); second, people living in veranda or open spaces of different private or public buildings (pavement dwellers). Although similar twin-categories have been observed in rural (Rahman, 1993)[17] and urban areas (READ, 2001) some argue to oppose their inclusion.

Begam (1997), for example, has indeed addressed the issue of homeless in Dhaka City in her study of 'pavement dwellers' but her coverage has limitations on two accounts. They are: first, her coverage becomes limited due to the exclusion of the squatters from pavement dwellers due to pursuance of a rigid physical criteria; second, pavement dwellers in tern are not absolute homeless in the true sense of the term as some of them are known to own house in their villages. "Pavement dwellers", she defines, "are those shelterless people who do not own even the *kutcha* (semi-permanent) roofs and walls, whether it be mud, bamboo, tin, cardboard, or tin-cans of the squatter and slum people" (ibid, p. 37). It appears that the possible sleeping locations of her pavement dwellers recall those of floating population. The comprehensive survey for 'Urban Poverty Reduction Project' has also been tacit in defining homelessness although it studied under the rubric of 'street dwellers'. In similar vain, street dwellers are defined as people who sleep on the streets, railway terminals and platforms, bus stations, parks and open spaces, religious centres, construction sites and around graveyards, and other public places without having any roof on top of them (ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996a).

It is evident from these studies that enumeration of neither pavement dwellers nor street dweller nor floating population has taken into account of different homeless people living outside indoor-outdoor public spaces. These studies hardly step beyond the physical criteria. It is interesting to note that slum dwellers are never referred to as homeless. The apparent definitional disagreement seems to lie in why, where and how to draw a line between these terms and squatters. The observed definitional ambiguity in fact points to the public failure to recognize the homeless issue as a potential problem.

Journalistic Approach

Journalistic approach delineates selective but emotive profiles of homeless people in its attempt to report a specific dysfunctional state of our (Bengali) society. Outputs of this approach are mostly in transcribed interviews and cartoons (Mamun, 2001; innumerous cartoons of R.Nabi,

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[17] Rahman (1993) highlights the 'landless' issue in depicting 'rural homeless' in Bangladesh. Anyone who owns less than 0.5 acre of land is considered functionally landless in Bangladesh. She observes that rural homelessness arises from poor people's lack of access to homestead land. She describes rural homeless as two key types: 'Squatter homeless' and 'Dependent homeless'. Squatter homeless people occupy public land for their flimsy homestead in rural areas for which they have no right of occupancy. Dependent homeless people, on the other hand, construct their homestead or live in a corner of a given house of a landlord; they are dependent as their staying in someone's property has been subjected to the charity and goodwill of solvent landlords who in return usually demanded hard labour in his domestic or agricultural works.

Star Weekend Magazine, 1999). Its language is rich for keeping intact homeless people's account, views and wits, expressed in their own words, whose original flair has not been lost in the subsequent transcription. As a matter of fact Mamun had admitted to this author that his prospective buyers of his book - *Ghar Nai* - are mostly young who are more interested in the sharp street vocabularies then the misery of their life histories. Printed media coverage on homeless people has been surprisingly low compared to the noticeable coverage given to poverty issues. The given coverage of homeless issue in different forms is not meant to be rich in analytical contents but its true worth certainly lies in its representation of a section of society subsisting in utter destitution.

It is evident now that the floating population and pavement dwellers are the two categories of homelessness that emerged from a narrow physical perspective of rooflessness. In excluding squatters as a category of homelessness by the Census approach we should keep in mind that it may have a covert intention to keep the homelessness definition as narrow as possible for obvious political reason to show a minimum figure of homelessness in any given time. Each approach has its specific foci, and is important for our comprehensive understanding of homelessness. However, the following two points should be noted for analytical clarity. They are:

- First, floating population is not the only category of homeless;

- Second, not all pavement dwellers are homeless. Pavement dwellers could have a home in their ancestral village that they usually visit periodically.

Having said that we should also note that all these studies have constructed a rather undifferentiated 'life-style' profile of homelessness. They do not tell us in detail how experiences of homelessness might vary in terms of age and sex. This limitation is addressed to some extent by a report prepared for the CONCERN-Bangladesh - a leading international NGO in Bangladesh. CONCERN has recently conducted a 'needs assessment survey' in eight different sizes of cities and towns including Dhaka targeting a specific segment of homeless people – socially and economically disadvantaged women and children (READ, 2000). This study for Concern-Bangladesh understands homelessness as arising from the state of illegal dwelling or lack of shelter. Homeless people are merged with squatters but separated from slum dwellers (residing in legal land) in estimating the total homeless population in all cities in Bangladesh. Concern approach to homelessness is holistic as it went beyond the narrow physical perspective to take a social point of view in including, e.g. brothel-based sex workers.

Types and Extent of Homelessness

Homeless population is not homogenous. They are differentiated mainly by the nature of their residential circumstances. Sleeping situations at night (and livelihoods) of homeless people will differ further in terms of age (i.e. adults and children) and sex (men-women and boys-girls). Table 12 shows different forms of homelessness as seen among the urban poor in Dhaka. This

paper proposes three types of homelessness for analytical purpose, based on our discussion in the previous sections and observation from Table12 They are: extreme homelessness, passive homelessness, and potential homelessness. The proposed typology, developed from a holistic understanding of the notion of homelessness, establishes a basis, first, to differentiated street dwellers from squatters; second, to estimate numbers of people involved in different types of homelessness. Each type is explained below although it is very difficult to provide their up-to-date accounts for absence of available data.

Table12. Residential Pattern of the Poor in Dhaka City

Nature of Residential Place	Estimated Number of Persons	Percent of total Poor Population
1. Slums and Squatter Settlements of 10 households or more	1,317,000	47.5
2. House aids/servants living in high/middle class residences	300,000	10.8
	50,000	1.8
3. Floating population	200,000	7.2
4. Garment workers living outside the slums and squatters	75,000	2.7
5. People living in institutional buildings	80,000	2.9
6. People living in shopping areas, construction sites, *katcha* bazaars and on trucks/pushcarts/rickshaw vans and other vehicles	750,000	27.1
7. Poor families living outside the slum settlements under various arrangements		
Total	2,772,000	100.0

Source: ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996, p. 20

Extreme Homelessness

Extreme homelessness is the most visible type, and is based on a narrow physical criteria of roofless situation. This type of homelessness refers to the situations where people live in streets or other public spaces without a permanent residence or shelter of their own. Extreme homeless people are called 'pavement dwellers' or 'street dwellers' or 'destitute' in different studies and reports, while common in all these terms is their floating status for day-to-day survival. There is no accurate and up-to-date data for this type of homelessness; as a result, estimation of extreme homelessness varies widely. The extent of extreme homelessness in Dhaka City was conservatively estimated as 12,600 by an urban poverty survey in 1995 (Islam et al, 1997), and 14,999 in a 1997 census (BBS, 1999). Other headcount estimates show a much higher figure. For example, Table12 puts it as 50,000. The bottom 2 percentile households (i.e. 88,000 person) with less than Tk. 750 per month income have been identified, from household-expenditure data, as destitute who would possibly have no shelter of their own or enough money to rent (see Table 6). Urban poverty monitoring survey, 1995 reports the number of urban floating population as 235,000 in 1991 (BBS, 1997, p. 1)

Rural landless households - estimated as 5.48% of all households – are extreme homeless, as they do not have any homestead or cultivable land. Poverty among the rural landless is pervasive; an estimated 66 per cent of 1,013,037 landless households are absolute poor in rural areas. Inclusion of rural landless households is important for discussing homelessness in urban areas; a large number of this category will eventually migrate to major cities, especially Dhaka, in search of income, and will add to the existing extreme or passive homelessness.

Passive homelessness

A holistic view of the loss of identity, privacy, comfort and shelter provides the basis for considering passive homelessness. Squatters living illegally in public or private land have been the major contributors to this type of homelessness. Squatters are passive homeless because the shelter they live in does not conform to the notion of an 'adequate shelter' despite being owned or rented (UNCHS, 1996). The number of squatters has risen from 3 per cent in the late 1980s to a significant 6 per cent of the total urban population in Dhaka in the mid 1990s (Islam et al, 1997, p. 125). In different studies in later years, however, the squatter population in Dhaka has been found to vary between 10% to 24% of the total city population[18]. From holistic

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[18]   According to a recent study by Habitat Council Bangladesh, the squatter population in Dhaka in 1998 was 900,000 which is 10% of the total city population of 9 million (*The Daily Star*, 3.6.98). The study also reported that at least 2 million people of the total population live in slums and squatters in the capital city with 55% of those staying in slums and 45% in squatters in government land.

perspective, passive homelessness is not a fixed state; an act of eviction by the state or vested interest group, for example, can easily demote people from passive to absolute homeless. The issue of eviction will be discussed later in this report. Under favourable conditions, created mainly by supports from NGOs, people can also expected to come out of their homelessness. Other notable groups of passive homelessness are abandoned children and orphan, brothel-based sex workers, housemaids and domestic (child) servants, and trafficked women and children (Shamim, 2001; Concern, 2000; Chowdhury & Shamim, 1994; Shamim & Chowdhury, 1993). Trafficking has recently become an issue of serious national concern[19]. An independent study by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) reported that over 300,000 Bangladeshi girls are in different brothels in India and 200,000 in Pakistan; over 300 minor girls being trafficked out of Bangladesh every month (*The Daily Star*, 2.10.2001).

Potential homelessness

Potential homelessness is underpinned by greater possibility of becoming extreme as well as passive homeless among a given group due to social, economic, natural and political factors. Individuals or households at risk of becoming homeless include: people living in slums, in particular, those who are in shared accommodation (i.e. sub-tenant), stranded refugees living camps, nearly one million (single) female garment workers, poor rural widow, and marginal rural farmers who are functionally landless. People who are below or just above the poverty line are potential homeless due to their vulnerability to eviction, loss job without notice, conspiracy by people from within and outside family, and a range of natural causes (discussed later in details). Moreover, women's vulnerability arises mainly from the prevailing gender inequality.

A 1996 survey conducted for the 'Urban Poverty Reduction Project' (UPRP) estimated that a total of 1.3 million people live in all types of slums and squatters in Dhaka Metropolitan Area (DMA). This figure constitutes about 24% of the total population of an estimated 5.58 million in DMA, and 43% of the total poor population of 3 million (ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996, p.19).

With reference to the 'Study of Urban Poverty in Bangladesh' (GOB-ADB, 1996), a recent report by the World Bank (1998) suggests that approximately 24% of total urban population (1.2 million households) are living in slums and 12% (0.6 million households) are either homeless or squatting in public lands (World Bank, 1998, p. 47).

[19] A joint study report prepared in 1996 by the Ministries of Home, Social Welfare and Women and Children Affairs states that over the last five years, at least 13,220 children have been smuggled out of the country (The Independent, 25.10.1996).

3.Median household's perception of unacceptable shelter

The lower income groups, including the urban poor and destitute, constitute 75 per cent of the population in Dhaka; a given household within this group is more likely to be a renter in a burgeoning informal housing market than an owner-occupier. Shelter, a commodity, has its structural quality and associated services determined at a given time and space by the amount of rent to be paid by its prospective occupants. In other words, one gets what he/she pays. According to 1996 UPRP survey, monthly average income of median household in Dhaka is Tk. 4000. In absence of other subsidiary data, we have to take an alternative approach to approximate median household's perception of unacceptable shelter. For this approximation, the following two income and expenditure profiles should be taken into account: First, average monthly household income of 4th decile (within urban poor group) is Tk. 3971, and it spends 11.8% of this income or Tk. 468 per month as housing or house rent (BBS, 1998). Second, average monthly income of a slum dwelling household is Tk. 3771 and it spends 9.18% of this income or Tk. 346 per month as housing or house rent (ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996b, Annex D, p. 14).

From these figures, we can conclude with a certain degree of confidence that median household would possibly be a renter in a private slum paying close to Tk. 450 per month as rent. Shelter which he would choose, and that he/she can afford would be a temporary structure (Type 3 in Table 4) in a private slum with access to (illegal) electricity, a tube well within dwelling premises or piped-water point in close proximity and sanitary latrine. (Low-income) Bengali households are extremely resilient people when it comes to hardship at the prospect of saving a small amount of money, even if it means giving away a bit of his/her social status or class-consciousness. Despite this resilience, an absence of the above described shelter situation, a few important shelter and non-shelter issues would influence a given median household's selection and rejection of a shelter. A median household would consider a shelter unacceptable if it is located far away from his place of work, small in space, situated in a congested setting, lacks basic services, owned by a troublesome landlord, and fails to offer an environment of personal safety. These issues are discussed next.

- **Location:** Household head of a given median household has to live close to his/her place of work. A shelter located far away from place(s) of work would be considered unacceptable for costing more in travel expenses and time.

- **Dwelling Space:** A median household require a set of furniture like a double bed, a clothing hanger, a table with at least a couple of chairs considered essential in its day-to-day living. Available spaces inside a given shelter that does not accommodate this set of furniture would be considered unacceptable.

- **Outdoor environment:** A shelter without any open spaces in front of it suggests an outdoor environment of high density and congestion.

- **Services:** Median household would like to ensure before renting a shelter that it has all the necessary services like electricity, gas, water and sanitary latrine. Availability of electricity, for example, has an entertainment aspect in television in addition to its utilitarian side to get comfort by fans during summer.

- **Landlord:** A shelter considered acceptable on account of the above four points can become unacceptable if its landlords is found exploitative in terms of rent and abusive in terms of person to person communication.

- **Safety and security:** Safety and security of the members of the median household and its assets from violence, threat of eviction, and fire hazard would definitely play important role in deciding whether a given shelter is acceptable to live or not.

4.Western typologies (of homelessness) in the local context

An outcome of the significant research and policy focus that homelessness has been given in the Western world, especially in the last few decades, is the emerged many different typologies of homelessness (UNCHS, 2001, pp. 26-31). This section comments how these unique typologies, originating in contrasting situations of the West, fit in the urban context of Bangladesh. Our understanding that has emerged from the types (of extreme, passive and potential homelessness) already posited in a previous section and that will be gained later during examining systemic causes of and responses to homelessness would be the basis of our comments. A few salient features of homelessness in Bangladesh need to put forward before we start any further. They are:

- Origins of most cases of homelessness in cities in Bangladesh are located predominantly in rural areas, with their unique set of systemic causes (Section 3 discusses these causes in detail).

- Homelessness in cities in Bangladesh can not always be equated with a narrow perspective of 'houselessness'. Homelessness in Bangladesh is holistic, and is known to have a social point of view.

- Only a tiny (fortunate) fraction of the urban households are provided houses by their respective employers. For the majority unfortunate (low-high) households, limited if not non-existent housing mortgage system would preclude any possible threat of their becoming homeless overnight due to unforeseen job loss or crisis.

Typology based on quality

Typology posited by FEANTSA (1999), in its study of homelessness in Europe, is based on high and low levels of two variables - quality and security of a given house (Table13). Homelessness,

in this typology, is taken to be house-based in some form or the other. In other words, presence or absence of homelessness is dependent on the relative interplay of quality and security of a given house. In terms of these two variables, square 1 and 4 represent contrasting situations of 'adequate shelter' and homelessness respectively. The offered four squares can be related to the local (housing) circumstances, with some changes in the hierarchy, in cities in Bangladesh. However, living situations of extreme homeless people can not be captured in this typology based on housing adequacy. FEANTSA's limitation in accommodating extreme homeless within this typology becomes exposed when it acknowledges that "the unique distress and urgent needs of those people who are identified by a narrow definition (square 4) are lost and neglected" (FEANTSA, 1999, p. 10).

Table 13. Housing adequacy and homelessness in cities in Bangladesh[*]

	High quality	Low quality
High security	**1** Affluent and solvent household living in detached residences or multi-story flats, built in public or private sector initiated site and service schemes. Satisfaction of adequate housing is sustained through the provision of available best services, open spaces and community facilities.	**3** (2) Potential homeless people living in the service deficient and highly congested private slums, refugee colony and Old Dhaka tenement houses. Environmental qualities like air, light and noise are often exacerbated due to presence of small industries.
Low security	**2** (3) Owner-occupied high quality residences, i.e. permanent structures and service availability, face low security more from floods than any other aspects.	**4** Passive homeless people living in the service non-existent squatter settlements under constant threat of eviction, violence and extortion.

Note[*]: Figures within parentheses indicate original hierarchy.

Cooper (1995) offers four categories based on relative degree of homelessness. 'Absolute homelessness', the first category in his typology, succinctly captures the reality of extreme homelessness in cities in Bangladesh. 'First degree relative homelessness', the second one, is only partially representative of the local circumstances as only a minority evicted squatters may take refuge in their relative's shelter for a short time. Most of them start living in the street or sheltered public space like railway station, bus terminal and shopping arcade; extreme homeless people have little if no options available to take refuge under institutional or social care during

crisis. Subsequently, contexts for second and third degree relative homelessness become non-existent.

Typology based on risk

Homeless people in Austria are defined and differentiated based on their risk toward homelessness (BAWO, 1999). Suggested three categories of homelessness and their manifestations in cities in Bangladesh is summarized in below in Table 14.

Table 14.   Homelessness typology based on risk and its manifestation in Bangladesh

Categories[*]	Peoples affected in Bangladesh
Potential homelessness: People in those situations where the housing loss is not imminent but may be approaching because of inadequate housing or income.	In a context of poverty, potential homelessness arises more on social grounds than due to inadequate housing or sudden loss of income in Bangladesh. Potential homelessness in rural areas has implications on urban homelessness, through migration. People affected are: • poor widows and people approaching old-age • functionally landless marginal farmers • families vulnerable to approaching river-erosion
Imminent homelessness: Those who are threatened with the loss of their current abode, who are incapable of keeping it, or who cannot provide a replacement for themselves.	Homelessness can be imminent to the following: • low-paid government/non-government employees if without pensions after retirement and without supports from their earning children • households living in squatters and brothel-based prostitutes are vulnerable to evictions • abused/tortured children living with (step)parents
Acute homelessness: Includes those who are living in the streets.	Includes single poor migrant workers who sleep in pavements for not affording a shelter of a lowest kind and extreme homeless people like: • children of the street • floating disadvantaged women including single mother, disabled beggars, prostitutes

In the context of USA, UK and Canada, Daly (1996) proposed a typology based on the potential of the people who are, or are potentially, homeless.

Table 15. Homelessness typology based on potential and its manifestation in Bangladesh

Categories[*]	Peoples affected in Bangladesh
People who are at risk or vulnerable to homelessness soon, perhaps within the next month, who need short term assistance to keep them off the streets.	
(Working) people whose primary or sole need is housing. ... (they) may be temporarily or episodically without homes and really need some financial or other assistance but do not have serious problems otherwise.	• male daily-labourers and female garments workers living in 'mess' in slums and squats in Dhaka • individual male hawkers and transport workers and their dependents living in the streets or squats
People who can become quasi-independent but need help with life skills so that they can manage on their own.	• floating disadvantaged women, e.g. single mother, disabled beggar and prostitute • extreme homeless children of the street and passive homeless children on the street
People with substantial and/or multiple difficulties but who, with help, could live in group- or sheltered-housing.	• street girl children traumatized by sexual abuse • floating prostitutes • single mother with many minor children
People who need permanent institutional care or who may graduate on to some supportive or sheltered housing.	• disabled persons • mentally ill persons

Note [*]: Texts in this column are taken from UNCSH (2001, p. 29).

Typology based on time

Hertzberg (1992) deals with people in the United States who are already homeless and categorize them in her typology based on the length of their homeless episode and their reaction to their state. The identified three types of homelessness are: 'resisters', 'teeterers' and 'accommodators'. Features common to these types are observed in cities in Bangladesh in varying degrees but lack of empirical study restricts specific comments other then general descriptions.

Table 16. Typology based on time and its manifestation in Bangladesh

Categories[*]	Manifestation in Bangladesh

Resistors: These people had steady job/income before becoming homeless recently. They view their homeless status as temporary and try hard to get out of it. But if failed, they lose their self-esteem and faith in society.	Resistors are new extreme homeless from villages or passive homeless demoted due to eviction who - • hope to graduate to passive homeless state again • try desperately to maintain a source of income • very conscious to preserve his self-esteem • are supportive in maintaining a family life and involved in a social network
Teeterers: Teeterers are homeless for a longer period and tend to have significant personal barriers to stability, mental illness, alcoholism and severe family dysfunction. They view their status less negatively than resistors.	Most of the resistors, under stress and strain, become teeterers in a period to time. In their present status, they are – • uncertain about their chance to live in a slum/squat • their earnings become lower and uncertain • family break-up starts and social support weakens
Accommodators: Most visible and commonly perceived type of homeless people. None have realistic hopes for the future. Their homeless status has been accepted without any resistance.	Teeterer adults and children growing up for a long time in the street are the eventual accommodators. They have – • accepted their fate for living in the street • passed days often without incomes and food • no family relationship or social support network

Note [*]**:** Texts in this column are adapted from UNCSH (2001, pp. 30-31).

Typology based on responsibility for alleviating action

Unlike the United Kingdom, there is no definition of homelessness in Bangladesh that legally obligates a local authority to help or provide accommodation to a homeless individual or households living in the street, squatter settlements or slums. However, monthly old age allowance to destitute at union level and provision of shelter/land to homeless/rootless/landless in rural areas are subjected to centrally controlled and funded programmes; local level authorities play their role only in the identification of their beneficiaries and implementation, under central supervision.

<u>5.Differentiation between squatters and street homeless people</u>

From physical criteria, an owner-occupied shelter however poor in structure and limited in its access to services has never been considered a case of homelessness in cities in Bangladesh. Virtual absence (e.g. street sleepers) and relative absence (e.g. squatters who own the roof over their head) of shelter are the possible cases of homelessness. From social perspective, absence of an identity as a well participating member in all spheres of society constitute the basis of homelessness for groups like domestic servants, brothel-based sex workers and trafficked children. Household income as presented in the Household Expenditure Survey, for example, as a threshold issue would not be a successful way to differentiate homeless people from squatters. Homelessness is, therefore, a 'content issue' for a given attempt to differentiate between squatters and street homeless people in cities in Bangladesh. Following aspects provide a tangible basis:

- **Overhead roof:** However rudimentary, squatters have a roof over their head despite being built on an illegal land; street homeless are floating people and not rooted in given space in this sense.

- **De facto address:** An overhead roof gives them a de facto address that helps them developing a social network with people living in similar situation. A de facto address and traceable social network gives them their social collateral that enables them receiving different NGO assistance e.g. credit, education, water and sanitation, and social belonging to a group. Street homeless individuals or families in comparison are absolutely insecure in streets than squatters living en-group in a piece of land. Insecurity and uncertainty of street homeless people limit their access to NGO assistance.

- **Employment:** Although both are working predominantly in the informal sector, the opportunities of work and extent of income are more limited to homeless people than the squatters. Begging as a means of livelihood, for example, is more prevalent among homeless people than squatters.

- **Demographic:** Homeless population is predominantly male. As a result, average household size is smaller and sex ratio is higher among homeless people that squatters.

<u>6.Numbers of people involved in types of homelessness</u>

It was discussed earlier in Section 2 that homelessness in Bangladesh has never been considered analytically and enumerated systematically in censuses, reports and policy documents. Homeless people as well as their critical issues, nevertheless, have been covered in terms like 'floating people', 'street dwellers', and 'pavement dwellers'. This section pulls findings from Section 2, and presents below as per ToR.

- Homeless people are considered in censuses on the basis of their floating nature of their living and livelihood, and are counted from their presence in different public spaces. General conditions of floating people are then conflated with rootlessness - a state of their exposure to the risk of total economic deprivation manifested, in part, in their loss of homestead land and destitute women. According to the 'Census of slum areas and floating population, 1997', there are 32,078 floating people in 118 cities and towns in Bangladesh and 14,999 people in Dhaka (BBS, 1999).

- Major reports and policy documents have also adopted definitions formulated by census approach. The survey for 'Urban Poverty Reduction Project' merges homeless people with 'street dwellers', and is defined as people who sleep on the streets, railway terminals and platforms, bus stations, parks and open spaces, religious centres, construction sites and around graveyards, and other public places without having any roof on top of them (ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996a). The number of street dwellers in Dhaka was estimated as 12,600.

There is another approach in which reports and policy documents have counted homeless people along with squatters. Reports by World Bank-Bangladesh and Concern-Bangladesh understand homelessness as arising from the state of illegal dwelling or lack of shelter. Homeless people are merged with squatters but separated from slum dwellers (residing in legal land) in estimating the total homeless population in all cities in Bangladesh (World Bank, 1998; READ, 2000). The policy document by World Bank reports that 0.6 million households or 2.62 million people were homeless and squatters.

Status of street dwellers in the law

The legal status of street dwellers is quite explicit under existing laws, namely *The Bengal Vagrancy Act, 1943* and *Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898*. Both these acts were enacted during the British period when maintaining law and order among the natives had been given utmost priority. A vagrant means a person not being of European extraction found asking for alms in any public place or wandering about or remaining in any public place if such person exists by asking for alms but does not include a person collecting money or asking for food or gifts for a present purpose (Siddiqui et al, 1993, p. 278). "Enacted in British India in 1943", Rohfrilsch (1995) writes, "largely to safeguard the city dwellers of Calcutta from floating population following great Bengal famine; the Vagrancy Act has become an instrument in the hands of police to keep the urban areas free from undesirable elements and provide extra financial resources to policemen". If the Vagrancy Act identifies street dwellers as unwanted nuisance in public spaces then *the Code of Criminal Procedure* provides necessary legal tools to deal with them[20].

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[20] Chapter V Of Arrest, Escape and Retaking: *The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898*

B – Arrest without warrant

Numbers of homeless people based on different criteria

Housing Criteria

Roof over head: People who are floating in public spaces without a roof over their head are 32,078 in 118 cities and towns in Bangladesh (BBS, 1999).

Land ownership: People who are squatting in public lands with a roof over their head that they might or might not own are 2.62 millions in all cities in Bangladesh (World Bank, 1998).

Adequate shelter: People who are living in slums and squatter settlements without access to 'adequate shelter'[21] are 7.85 millions (World Bank, 1998). Another estimate made by a recent census is 1.39 millions (BBS, 1999).

Shelter deficit: The extent of homelessness as a manifestation of shelter deficit, i.e. difference between the total number of urban households and dwelling stock, is 800,000 households or 4.4 million people.

Land Criteria

Recent comprehensive data on landlessness in urban areas do not exist. However, a Ministry of Land initiated study in the early 1980s found that 56.63% household in Dhaka

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Section 55 (1)

Any officer in charge of a police3-station may, in like manner, arrest or cause to be arrested –
(a) any person found taking precautions to conceal his presence within the limits of such station, under circumstances which afford reason to believe that he is taking such precautions with a view to committing a cognizable offence; or
(b) any person within the limits of such station who has no ostensible means of subsistence, or who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself

Section 57

(1) When any person who in the presence of a police-officer has committed or has been accused of committing a non-cognizable offence refuses, on demand of such an officer, to give his name and residence or refuses or gives a name or residence which such officer has reason to believe to be false, he may be arrested by such officer in order that his name or residence may be ascertained.
(2) When the name and residence of such person have been ascertained, he shall be released on his executing a bond. With or without sureties, to appear before a Magistrate if so required: …
(3) Should the name and residence of such person not be ascertained within twenty-four hours from the time of arrest or should he fail to execute the bond, or if so required, to furnish sufficient sureties, he shall forthwith be forwarded to the nearest Magistrate having jurisdiction.

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[21] See footnote 4.

did not own any land (MOL, 1983 cited in Islam, 1992, p. 156). While in rural areas, 5.48% household (1.02 million) or 5.36 million people have no access to homestead land in Bangladesh, and thereby, can be called homeless (BBS, 1998).

Employment Criteria

Homelessness in cities in Bangladesh has never been defined in terms of employment criteria.

Social Welfare Eligibility Criteria

Since 1997, Bangladesh government has started a programme to give allowance to homeless old people and distressed women. Although 413,190 homeless old people and 236,595 distressed women have been given allowance under this programme, their actual numbers are much higher.

Numbers of homeless people based on residential situations

Table 17. Numbers of people involved in types of homelessness

Types of Homelessness	Number of Homeless People
People who live on streets, on open land, in parks, in building staircases with only the shelter provided by those places.	55,000
The above but with some sort of shelter that they provide. This would include tents, sheets, shelters made of vegetation. It implies some colonisation and personalisation of space in areas like shopping areas, construction sites and different transport stations.	75,000
People who live in or who move between various types of shelters provided for homeless people.	Shelter provision for the homeless people does not exist
People who live in refuges, hostels, lodging houses, hot bedding, or other forms of non-personalised environments.	Similar facilities do not exist

Note: Figures are based on Table 12.

People who are unlikely to be classed as homeless

Observations are given on the following five categories of peoples' status of homelessness -

- People sharing rooms with friends or family but who would move out given the opportunity would not be classed either as a case of extreme or passive homelessness. This possible situation has little contextual relevance in cities in Bangladesh, as public authorities do not provide housing to any deserving household or individual. Each household or person has to manage access to housing by their/his/her own initiative, mainly, in the private sector. In this context, whoever is sharing rooms is either a paying guest or staying for a brief period as visitor. Sharing rooms either as paying guest or visitor with an urban poor household appears a distant possibility because of space constraints and privacy. 80.6% urban poor households in Bangladesh, with an average household size of 4.36, live in a single room of 125 sq.ft in average size (Islam et al, 1997).

- People living in squatter settlements without any recognition from local or central government would be classed as passive homeless for reasons explained in Section 2.

- Cases in which people who live in shakes in the ground of other's house are rare in cities in Bangladesh in a context of decreasing floor area (and therefore, plot area) by income groups (Table 8). Only in rare occasions, a possible case of homelessness arises when poor individual or households are allowed to live as caretaker in lands of an absentee landlord.

- Based on our normative understanding of homelessness, service deficiency per se is not a deciding criterion of neither extreme nor passive homelessness. In other words, a given household can be an owner-occupier despite living in a service deficient neighbourhood. There are numerous service deficient neighbourhoods outside slum and squatter settlements in cities in Bangladesh[22]. This is evident if we look at the following rate of service provision:

  Water: 65% of the Dhaka City Corporation is connected with piped water supply (UDD, 2000); this figure is 44%in Chittagong, 29% in Sylhet, 12% in Tangail. According to another source, approximately 45% of the urban population have access to safe drinking water, and the water coverage in Dhaka with her 9 million population is 75% (Sheesh, 2000, p. 395).

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[22] *Bangladesh Urban and Shelter Sector Review* suggested that settlement upgrading would depend on the service deficient community under consideration and its contextual situations (UNDP-GOB, 1993, Appendix 1, Dealing with Deficiencies, pp. 110-113). Later it identified and described eight types of communities, including slums and squatter settlements, where upgrading could take place; although their numbers and the areas covered by them were not given. They communities are:

1. Communities legally on public land, mainly owner occupiers;
2. Communities legally on public land, mainly tenants;
3. Communities illegally on public land, mainly owner occupiers;
4. communities illegally on public land, mainly tenants;
5. Communities legally on private land, mainly owner occupiers;
6. Communities legally on private land, mainly tenants;
7. Communities illegally on private land, mainly owner occupiers;
8. Communities illegally on private land, mainly tenants.

Sanitation: Around 45% of the urban areas in Bangladesh have access to sanitary waste disposal services.

Sewerage: The sewerage coverage of Dhaka city is about 20% in terms of population and 30% in terms of area (Sheesh, 2000, p. 395).

Electricity: In Dhaka 74% households have access to electricity (UDD, 2000).

- People who live in dwellings or rooms without secure tenure are potential cases of passive homelessness.

7.   Systemic Issues Causing Homelessness

In investigating systemic issues that contribute to homelessness existing literature refer to factors embedded in either 'structural' or 'agency' realms (Neale, 1997). According to structural explanation, the causes of homelessness originate in the wider social, economic and political spheres in a given context, and without inputs from an individual homeless person. On the other hand, (human) agency approach explains homelessness as a fault, inadequacy or incapacitation of a homeless person. From an agency approach, homeless person can either be a passive victim (e.g. psychiatric patients) or guilty individuals (e.g. with frequent drinking problems or drug abuse). Neither structure nor agency approach has been argued to construct a true picture of an issue as complex as homelessness. Instead of their dichotomy, a two-pronged approach, well known in social science as 'structuration' (Giddens, 1984), is required to investigate the causes of homelessness. One is thought not to compete but complement the other in understanding homelessness; utility also lie in the way insights missed in any one will be compensated by the other. An understanding of homelessness from both these perspectives is essential to link findings of a given investigation with the following actions for it's eradication.

Therefore, the roles of 'marco-causation' at a structural level and 'micro-constraints' (or stimuli) in an individual level are both significant to investigate the issues causing persistent homelessness in Bangladesh. In any given case, homelessness is a result of a collection of disparate and inter-linked problems. Following TOR, this section investigates causes of homelessness in relation to five areas. They are: poverty, social, political, evictions, and disasters. Before discussing each of these issues, it should be noted that structural aspects of these issues might be emphasized as this research is based on secondary sources, and does not carry out an extensive empirical work on homeless people.

Poverty: The Root Cause of Homelessness

Poverty is a major cause contributing directly or indirectly to homelessness in Bangladesh. The state of poverty is a manifestation of human deprivation featured by non-fulfillment of minimum required basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, fuel etc., and is compounded by a situation of

vulnerability, helplessness and powerlessness. Dimensions of this deprivation are known to vary in space and time. Poor people's lack of access to adequate shelter – homelessness – is one of the manifestations of this deprivation. What is the extent of poverty, and how has poverty contributed to homelessness in Bangladesh are the two issues addressed in this section.

Lack of access to food to sustain productive live, captured in part by daily minimum per capita calorie intake, indicates one major aspect of human deprivation. In Bangladesh, measurement of poverty in rural and urban areas is dominated by this per capita calorie intake method although its limitations are well known. Incidences of poverty based on a minimum intake of 2122 calories and 1805 calories per person per day[23], defined as 'absolute poverty' and 'hardcore poverty' respectively, are shown in Table 18[24]. It shows the staggering proportion and number of population that has been living below poverty in rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. Despite a significant reduction of the rate of poverty that took place in urban and rural areas during 1981/82 to 1995/96 period, the numbers of absolute and hardcore poverty in urban areas for the same period have increased. However, these findings by Household Expenditure Survey do not match other estimates based on per capita income needed to buy a normative bundle of 2112 calories/person/day. The proportion of rural population living below poverty line, based on the 'head-count index', has declined to 51 per cent in 1995/95; the urban poverty has declined to a level of 26 per cent in the same period (BIDS, 2001, p.20). Despite discrepancies in figure that may arise due to methods in measuring poverty, the most disturbing is the common observation that income inequality is increasing between the rich and poor.

Table18.   Number and Proportion of Poverty in Bangladesh, 1981-82 to 1995-96

Year	Poverty Line 1: Absolute Poverty 2122 calorie/person/day				Poverty Line II : Hardcore Poverty 1805 calorie/person/day			
	Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural	
	Million	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million	%
1981-82	6.4	66.0	60.9	73.8	3.0	30.7	43.1	52.2
1983-84	7.1	66.0	47.0	57.0	3.8	35.0	31.3	38.0

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[23]   Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and many other studies, however, use 2112 cal./person/day and 1950 cal./person/day to define absolute and extreme poverty line (BIDS, 2001, pp. 19-32).

[24]   Household Expenditure Surveys (HES) in 1991-92 and 1995-96 have also defined 'ultra poverty' as another extreme level of poverty that is based on 1600 k.cal/person/day (BBS, 1998, p. 57).

1985-86	7.0	56.0	44.2	51.0	2.4	19.0	19.1	22.0
1988-89	6.3	47.6	43.4	48.0	3.5	26.4	26.0	28.6
1991-92	6.8	46.7	44.8	47.8	3.8	26.2	26.5	28.3
1995-96	9.6	49.7	45.7	47.1	5.2	27.3	23.9	24.6

Source: BBS, 2000, p. 389.

Poverty acts in causing homelessness in two possible ways: first, in moment of crisis, people are forced to sell their homestead land (and shelter) to survive; second, persistent inadequate income perpetuates already existing homelessness. These two causal scenarios are discussed next.

Poverty causing homelessness

Poor rural households are vulnerable to different crisis situations in addition to their lack of adequate income required for daily survival. The key crises they have to encounter on a recurrent basis include natural disasters, ill-health, and insecurity. The extent of these crises among the extreme poor, moderate poor and non-poor is shown in Table 19. The observation that extreme poor are less affected by the natural disasters than others actually demonstrates that they have little or no assets that they might have to lose in a given disaster. On the contrary, moderate poor and non-poor are more vulnerable to become homeless in events of natural disasters. Rahman (1993, p.75) reports from her study on rural homelessness that while 30% of the sample households were landless before becoming homeless the next 54% homeless households had previously owned landed properties within a range of 0-1.65 acre.

Table 19. Different Crisis faced by Rural Households

	Percentage of Households Affected by Crisis in 1994		
Types of Crisis	Extreme Poor	Moderate Poor	Non-poor
Natural disasters	24	28	45
Ill-health	40	37	19
Insecurity	14	12	6
Marriage and dowry	4	4	2
Death	2	1	--
Never faced any crisis	40	41	31

'Poverty Monitoring Survey' of 1995 reports that 12.3% and 15.8% of the sample households in urban and rural areas respectively had to encounter at least one crisis (BBS, 1997, 1997a). The rate of encountering crisis is likely to vary, in part, due to the occurrence of disasters in a given time. It is, however, the micro-studies from which we could well understand the dynamics of crisis and its coping mechanisms. In a 1989-90 survey, 30 percent of all rural households had to face crisis arising from disasters and nearly half of all rural households had to address one or two health related crises; many households used to face different forms of insecurity (Rahman, 1997, pp.116-118). Rahman (1997) further adds that above 76 percent rural households had to face at least one crisis in a 'normal year' without any major disaster. Poor household's vulnerability to crisis subsequently creates pressure on their meagre income and/or saving, and pushed down their overall poverty level. Erosion of savings to mitigate crisis for extreme poor, moderate poor and non-poor households have been reported as 27%, 22% and 13% of their total income. Erosion of greater proportion of savings among the extreme poor households' compounded by the possibility of getting least amount of loan than others make them more vulnerable to sell or mortgage their assets, for example, homestead and cultivating land. The Table also shows that the situation for women is even worse.

Perpetuation of homelessness by poverty

Rural livelihoods in Bangladesh are predominantly agricultural in nature where land remains as the main productive asset for generation of household income. According to 1995/96 Household Expenditure Survey (HES), 5.5 per cent of the total rural households are landless; the figure for 'functionally landless' households (i.e. 0-0.5 acre) is 49.5 per cent. The total number of these two categories is a staggering 10,181,015 (55.0 per cent). Landlessness has been co-related with poverty, which in turn contributes to homelessness. High incidence of poverty in rural areas has normally been associated with high proportion of landless households. Despite paucity of studies on landlessness,

observation on 1960-82 period by Hossain (1986) more than a decade ago is still valid today –

> "The landless households have grown at a much faster rate (3.1 per cent annum) than the population in the country (2.5 per cent per annum). The functionally landless has grown at a rate of 3.1 per cent per annum for the country as a whole, and 2.2 per cent for rural areas during the 1960-82 period. The lower rate of growth for the rural areas is due to rapid rate of increase in migration of this class to metropolitan cities and the growth of rural towns. Still the growth of rural landless is much higher than that of all rural households (1.6 per cent per annum)" (Hossain, 1986, p. 98).

HES 1995/96 reports that the proportions of absolute and hardcore poverty among the rural landless households are 66 per cent and 44.3 percent. The same figures for functionally landless are 58.6 per cent and 32.2 per cent (BBS, 1998, p.58). For a landless labourer, average monthly household expenditure on food and clothing usually take more than 70 per cent, leaving little more than 7 per cent to be spent on housing and house rent. The situation is also very similar for the functionally landless households. This very low allocation of monthly expenditure for housing hardly allows poor households' coming out of their homelessness, not to mention their living in an adequate shelter and leading a decent life. As a result, homelessness persists.

Table 20. Percentage of Income Accruing to Households in Each Decile, 1985/86 to 1995/96.

Decile of Households	Urban 1985/86 1988/89 1991/92 1995/96				Rural 1985/86 1988/89 1991/92 1995/96			
Lowest 5%	1.20	1.12	1.09	0.74	1.23	1.10	1.07	1.00
Decile-1	2.84	2.76	2.64	1.92	2.92	2.74	2.67	2.56
Decile-2	4.08	4.05	4.06	3.20	4.30	4.13	4.07	3.93
Decile-3	5.09	4.91	5.01	4.06	5.30	5.10	5.10	4.97
Decile-4	5.99	5.80	5088	4.98	6.70	6.05	6.05	5.97
Decile-5	7.04	6.84	6.80	6.97	7.10	7.12	7.21	6.98
Decile-6	8.29	7.91	8.11	7.20	8.20	8.25	8.57	8.16
Decile-7	10.30	9.42	9.66	8.98	9.55	9.69	10.28	9.75
Decile-8	12.24	11.57	11.77	11.35	11.30	11.74	12.30	11.87
Decile-9	15.73	15.56	15.64	16.29	14.07	15.10	15.71	15.50
Decile-10	28.41	31.19	30.43	36.05	31.00	30.08	28.04	30.23
Top 5%	18.04	20.02	19.42	24.30	21.36	19.81	17.80	19.73
Gini ratio	0.37	0.38	0.40	0.44	0.36	0.37	0.36	0.38

Source: BBS, 2000, p. 390

Despite noticeable improvement in the general poverty, income situation of the extreme poor in recent years has not been seen improving in their favour. As a matter of fact household incomes

in the lower deciles have witnessed a steady decrease as against an increase amongst the top decile households (Table 20). In particular, lowest 5% households in urban and rural areas, during 1985/86 to 1995/96 period, have gone down in their share of total income at a time when the top 5% have gained, especially in the urban areas. In 1995/96 period, top two deciles (52.32%) had earned more than ten times than what bottom two deciles earned (5.12%) during the same period. Similar observation of increasing inequality in Dhaka has also been reported by Hossain et al (1999) in their longitudinal study between 1991 and 1998.

Social: Erosion of Traditional Safety Nets under Poverty and Patriarchy

Homelessness is a distinct form of (individual and familial) destitution that is known to take place in a concrete society. Rural villages are the spatial context of origin of urban homelessness in most interviewed cases of primary and secondary sources. A few pertinent questions in discussing causes of homelessness thus arise in a broader societal context: first, how has rural society – manifested in the kinship relations – responded to this form of destitution? Second, have there been any well-operating safety nets in traditional rural society for caring those who can not cope too well? Thirdly, if not, under what circumstances pre-existing safety nets have been eroded or become inoperative to benefit the homeless in any given way? These are complex questions seldom addressed, let alone in housing discourse in Bangladesh. Insights from anthropological studies, in particular, provide some useful leads to these questions in understanding the nature and extent of homelessness in Bangladesh (Maloney, 1991; Arens & Burden, 1977).

Bangsa (i.e. the genetic lineage segment) and *gusthi* (i.e. basic kin segment) are the two key concepts that guide day-to-day inter-personal interactions and collective social existence in traditional rural society in Bangladesh. In the former case, two or more families related by blood connection form *bangsa*. *Bangsa* is inherited by males and females from father and is fixed for life; the term does not imply any social group with corporate functions. *Gusthi*, on the other hand, differs from *bangsa* in the sense that it does not require blood connection. *Gusthi* usually consists of a few closely related and neighbouring households, and is defined as such only as long as the families in it consider themselves as comprising a *gusthi*. Being guided by moral economy in traditional society, Bengalis felt entitled to received help in distress by someone in relative affluence. For the solvent persons, duties and responsibilities toward destitute were seen as their *dharma*, meaning whatever is right and righteous for the individual in his time and place. Duties were performed, reciprocated and perpetuated in a context of abundance and indulgence (Maloney, 1991).

Traditional roles and obligations recognized and performed by *bangsa* and *gushti* toward their vulnerable members have gradually become extinct in the recent past. Arens & Burden (1980) gives an idea about how this change has taken place. In their classic micro-study of a village in

Bangladesh, each *bangsa* in its past, i.e. a few generations ago, had usually been an independent socio-economic unit. Member households used to live in a group in close proximity. Mutual obligations and cooperation had been more among the members of a given *bangsa* than with others, in particular, to ensure poor's livelihood as well as protecting solvent person's land. Poor households went to the solvent members of their own *bangsa* for help or credit when required; poor daily labourers had never worked in land outside their own *bangsa* for a living. The significance of *bangsa* in offering safety nets toward its vulnerable members, albeit observed in an exaggerated form in the past, has been eroded in the present days. Evolution in the agricultural production system, decreasing per capita land due to population increase, and increasing poverty leading to pauperization of the rural peasantry have been suggested as the main contributing factors for the demise of *bangsa*. Now-a-days, rich land owners are more inclined to hire daily labourers in a context of declining daily minimum wages than asking poor landless relatives, within their own *bangsa*, to cultivate land as share cropper. In engaging daily labourers, moreover, there is also no apparent threats of losing land through prolong share cropping. In worst situations, a poor household put into deep crisis due to sudden death of its only earner is at a risk of its landed assets being grabbed by immediate powerful relatives within *bangsa*.

Vulnerability of the potential homeless people has not only been exacerbated by the rapidly eroding inter-household relationships but also by an unequal intra-household relationship among its members due to persistent gender inequality (Kabir, 1998). Within an apparent homogenous group of poor, women are more likely to become vulnerable to homelessness than men under the influence of 'patriarchy', i.e. male subordination of women. A study carried out in 8 cities and towns in Bangladesh has found that a majority of floating women came from households and land (READ, 2000, p.41). The underlying causes behind homelessness among women and children may include: torture by husband/father, involuntary separation to arrange husband's remarriage, husband's desertion, torture and abuses by stepparents. As a consequence of this male sub-ordination, changes are taking place not only in the family structure but also in kinship relations that put the parents and the child in the different worlds, and also in different classes. Moreover, when immovable assets and lands are decreasing within households, break-up between child and parents increases due to dwindling prospects of inheritance. As a result, homeless people especially women and children have become detached from their immediate kin. Subsequently, the social networks that have been known operating among the poor to benefit them are not present among homeless people anymore.

Political: Pro-elite Setup in Control of the Urban Environment

Cities have attained an added significance in an age of globalization. Cities attract mobile international capital for investments in the formal sector; this then creates a context for the rich to accumulate wealth. Greater linkages between the formal and informal sector, to benefit the poor,

remain a dream. Seen from a different perspective, cities also provide settings for a centralized administration, in particular, in developing countries: a spatial setting from which to perpetuate political hegemony (of ruling party) and distribute patronage. Recognizing the significance of city as a source of power and wealth, inter and intra class alliances/conflicts most often take place to control and have access to its limited resources. Various urban administrations serve the cause of the elite and powerful sections of society; an unholy alliance exists between the authorities and vested interest groups. Use and abuse of policies, rules and regulations in practice, among others, are the tools for favour. The urban poor, without exceptions, have always been the deprived majority.

The above description is not of a fictitious city but correspondences to reality. Just consider the case of Dhaka – a beloved and despised 'premature' metropolis. Dhaka has now been witnessing a new arrangement and negotiation in the production and consumption of urban space. Rapid densification of the existing urban fabric, erosion of open spaces either by arrogance or ignorance, choking traffic congestion and pollution, and proliferation of slums could not deter the advent of emerging buildings, for example, in urban housing, educational facilities, heath care facilities, commercial buildings and information technology (IT) facilities. Any proposition that this new trend is partly brought by, and contributes to 'globalization' and its attended local manifestations is difficult to set aside. The discrete but inter related benefits emanating from this new spatial arrangement favour mostly those who are either directly or indirectly integrated into the globalization process or have access to power and wealth. This new arrangement of urban space has been an 'uneven development' due to virtual absence of corresponding developments to cater for the needs of the urban poor. The striking co-existence of opulence and poverty subsequently raises the issue of 'social justice' in benefiting all urban citizens equally and equitably (Sobhan, 1998).

Pro-elite set up in the broader urban shelter sector, with virtual absence of poor's representation, causes and perpetuates homelessness in its broader sense. Implications of a pro-elite setup in the context of Bangladesh, especially Dhaka, are double-edged. On the one hand, it exhausts limited national resources for their own consumption through development of subsidized sites and service schemes, construction and allotment of multi-story apartments in prime lands and unhindered access to urban basic services. On the other hand, genuine (poor) beneficiaries find it difficult to have access to projects as powerful section of society manipulates and abuses the implementation process for patronage distribution.

Dhaka is a socially unjust city. Provision of basic urban services is explicitly class-biased. Elitist attitudes toward rapidly spreading slums and squats (Firozuddin, 1999; Shakur & Khan, 1986; Ghafur, 1999), and increases in income disparity between the rich and poor, among others, are two of the major outcomes of this socially unjust premise.

In the former case, existing studies have consistently argued with evidence that the poor actually benefit from their migration to the Dhaka City (Afsar, 2000, 1999; Begum, 1999), and that this process of distress migration does not transfer rural poverty to urban areas. Even where donor assisted project is specifically designed to facilitate poor migrant's living and livelihood, pro-elite mindset at the highest decision making level object to their implementation. The refusal by the government to release necessary lands had effectively jeopardized the implementation of an ADB assisted in situ upgrading of slums (with education and health components) in Dhaka. Unresponsive attitude toward this project is evident in the following words of a top-level policymaker of the Planning Commission - "any attempt to improve the condition of the urban poor would accelerate migration" (Afsar, 2001, p. 12). In such an exclusionary policy realm, seeds of future slum and squat formation, and subsequent drives for their eviction allowed to germinate. This is explained next.

Instead of user's pay approach to service delivery, authorities have been keen to pursue service delivery based on legal holding, especially, in an unfairly structured city like Dhaka. In Dhaka, it was estimated that 54 per cent of city's population do not own any land, and 70 per cent of the city's population – the urban poor – live in its 20 per cent space mostly via a tenancy or as illegal occupiers (Islam, 1992). It is, therefore, no surprise to us that three-fifths of households in Dhaka are covered by piped water supplied by concerned authorities. Only one-tenths of households in slums and squatter settlements have direct access to water inside their houses. Only 28 per cent households living mostly in high-income areas have sewerage connections. Anti-poor approach not only excludes the urban poor but also encourages corruption through illegal connections, and the consequent loss of government revenues. The poor living without legal tenure, however, have been paying for the services anyway, if not in a disproportionately higher rates.

A longitudinal study was recently conducted, among 800 households in Dhaka, to investigate growth and distribution of income in Dhaka (Hossain et al, 1999). According to this study, per capita income of Dhaka dwellers has doubled in the last seven years (1991-1998); it raised from US$ 415 to US$ 843. A very good news indeed! But a closer scrutiny unfolds a different picture – an increasing gap between the rich and poor. To describe how this increase in per capita income is not homogenous among all Dhaka dwellers, a few selected findings are summarized below.

- **Income Figure:** The average per capita income for all slum dwellers (with legal and illegal tenure) is a meagre US$ 253 while US$ 1110 is for the non-slum dwellers. In this period, the rates of increase among slum and non-slum dwellers are 6 and 11 per cent respectively.

- **Income Share:** In 1998, the lower 40 per cent households (determined on the basis of income) hold only 11 per cent of the total income generated in Dhaka. Whereas upper 10 per cent high-income households share 42 per cent of the generated income.

- **Increasing Disparity:** Despite increase in per capita income, gap between rich and poor is widening in Dhaka. The share of total income generated by the lower 40 per cent households

came down to 11 per cent in 1998 from 17 per cent in 1991. Whereas, this figure for the upper 5 per cent households has almost doubled from 17 per cent to 31 per cent during this period.

- **Reasons for Disparity:** Less income from businesses and commerce and fixed assets contributed to half and one-fourth of all disparity respectively. Seeds of (urban) income disparity are embedded in the poor people's initial fixed asset disparity. In Dhaka, the lower 50 per cent households control only 7 per cent of all fixed assets in Dhaka. Whereas, the upper 5 per cent households control 40 per cent fixed assets.

To create earnings from business, commerce and assets, especially in the formal sector, one needs considerable capital and good education. In this case, formal financial and educational institutions do not favour the poor. The reality of poor's subsistence on a daily basis, on the other hand, does not allow them to accumulate capital or pursue education beyond the primary level. Moreover, urban poor are also deprived of the incentives provided to the rural poor through different free education programmes like 'food for education', 'free education up to the 10th grade of girls, and 'free distribution of books' (BIDS, 2001). Besides education, dimension of income disparity also depends on housing and health. While a close relationship between housing and health is well established in terms of their impact on a given household's level of income and productivity, the urban poor are far behind from their due access to both of them. Their lack of access to housing is already discussed in an earlier section; in their access to health services, there is no referral system for the urban poor as they exist for the rural poor. Among a total of 75 wards in Dhaka metropolitan area, BIDS (2001, p. 121) reports, there are only 5 ward-level dispensaries.

Gap between the rich and poor is likely to increase as poor household's spending on these fields are very low. Giving poor access to various resources is ultimately a political issue. Beyond rhetoric, there is a lack of genuine political commitment in addressing the sufferings of the poorer section of society, least but not the last of them are homeless people in the broader sense of the term. Homelessness would continue to thrive in a city like Dhaka if pro-elite urban governance clouts rational and equitable distribution of resources in favour of the urban poor.

Evictions of Slums and Squatter Settlements

Eviction as a cause of homelessness has a long history in Bangladesh. However, the extent of homelessness due to evictions in the past had been nowhere near to what Dhaka has been witnessing periodically since the early 1970s. In 25th March 1971, in the beginning of Bangladesh liberation war, unspecified thousands of innocent people in Dhaka, especially poor squatters and non-Muslims, were killed indiscriminately by the West Pakistan Army; innumerable houses were either burned or demolished on that fateful night. Due to rampant atrocities committed by the army and their local collaborators, ten million people became homeless during the nine-month

liberation war and fled to neighbouring India as refugees. Just after the war, one would have thought that Bangladesh had her fair share of sufferings and lessons. But, sadly, history repeated itself at regular intervals. Slum and squatter evictions, often accompanied by their burning, have now become the major cause of homelessness of an urban origin. Although slum and squatter settlement evictions without rehabilitation and compensation have been unabated since 1971, a significant change in the type of actors and the reasons behind their evictions has taken place in the recent past.

In the post-war reconstruction period, the floating and squatter population in Dhaka had suddenly increased in 1974 due to steady arrival of destitute rural migrants, forced to leave their habitat because of famine and flood. Despite this influx of hungry, homeless and jobless poor to Dhaka City, her squatter population was reported as 14 per cent of the urban population; in that time, this figure was very low compared to other cities in developing countries (Choguill, 1993, p. 329). The then one-party socialist government (BAKSHAL) took a very uncharacteristic move in the first week of January 1975 to evict 173,000 squatters from different parts of Dhaka, and dumped them in resettlement camps in three different locations about 5, 10 and 15 miles away from the city. This action came as a surprise to many as the same government had requested earlier the United Nations in 1973 for financial and technical assistance for an alternative solution to the squatter problem (Shakur & Khan, 1986, p. 37)[25]. It is now an open question to debate whether a given oppressive regime's desire to rule by a reign of terror, and its paranoia against a possible threat of insurgency that prompted its action in 1971 had reappeared again in 1975, in lesser scale and different socio-political context. A housing expert lamented with reference to the tragic incidence of 1975 –

> "By this time, other countries with similar and more serious squatter problems, were taking a more benevolent view. Bangladesh, however, enthusiastically pursued a series of misguided policies which were not only ineffective, but also alienated a large proportion of the low-income community. What became known as the Squatter Rehabilitation Programme, based on a number of resettlement camps located far to the periphery of economic opportunities within the informal sector, was at odds with earlier ideals and policies. Furthermore, they were totally in conflict with the lessons which were being learned internationally" (Choguill, 1993, p.330).

A draft National Housing Policy (NHP) had been formulated at a time when Choguill had his quoted text published in 1993. As already mentioned in a previous section that NHP has included all issues and agenda that were thought beneficial to the less fortunate section of society –

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[25] Later a team from UN visited Bangladesh to suggest possible ways to address the problem. Their concluding remarks were "before any action is taken to resettle or remove squatters ... steps be taken with a view to developing a short-term strategy for dealing with the squatter problem" (cited in Ullah, 1994, p. 6).

homeless, destitute, slum/squat dwellers and landless. Prior to the publication of the draft NHP, an estimated 200,000 people had been affected and US$ 2.5 million worth of property were destroyed in 30 cases of major forced evictions in Dhaka from 1990 to 1992 (Sinha, 1994 as cited in Rahman, 2001). According to the Coalition of Urban Poor, a local pressure group, 42 slums/squatters were evicted between May and August, 1999. A total of 21,933 families living in 34 of these were affected (CUP, 1999).

Box 1.

Eviction of Slum Dwellers in Bangladesh: Whither Adequate Rehabilitation?

Newspaper reported an eviction of *basti* dwellers by the government from behind the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel and areas surrounding the Panthpath Road, Dhaka (*The Daily Star*, 28.6.98). These *basti* dwellers had been residents of that *basti* for several years. Their existence had inevitably linked to the existence of that *basti* which, due to its central location, had been a source of livelihood and shelter. The process of eviction began early in the morning and continued late into the night, and over seven hundred families were evicted. These families were first sent to a place near the *Buddhijibe mazar* (graveyard of intellectuals) in the Mirpur area; the *basti* people were forced out the area when the local residents bitterly protested the move. They then went to their place of eviction and raised a barricade along the Sonargaon Road for about two hours. They were later taken to a place at Mirpur Section 12, near a ceramic factory…..

Soon after reading these reports, *Ain O Salish Kendra* (ASK), a legal aid and human rights organization, sent an unit to monitor and investigate the process of eviction and observe the rehabilitation of the evicted people. The team made on-site investigations and monitored the evictions and interviewed the evicted *basti* dwellers. The team reported that despite public assurances by *RAJUK* (city development authority) that measures had been taken to rehabilitate the *basti* dwellers in Mirpur, including building of houses and provision of water, sanitary and electric facilities, the basti dwellers on arriving at Mirpur Section 12 found a virtually vacant land. The land had upon it about 20 completed bamboo structures, while the rest (about 650 houses) were not complete, having only standing bamboo, without any roof or covering. Moreover, each family in this open land had been allocated merely 3 feet by 5 feet space, whereas each family had an average of 7 members. Again, for over 700 families, there are only 8 latrines constructed at the lower/sloping end of the area, making it very difficult for old and sick people and children to use them. Three tubewells had been provided, of which two are still in the process of being installed. The *basti* dwellers are also without electricity and do not have access to the market or work places. More alarming still is the reported fact that of the money provided (TK. 1000 per family) to the *basti* dwellers as compensation, they could retain only a fraction, as they were bullied by local *mastaans* (local thugs or musclemen) into paying

up large sums of their compensation.

Source: Dr. Faustina Pereira, *The Daily Star*, 17.10.98.

Another way by which the poor are rendered homeless is 'slum burning'. Slum burning can take place either intentionally by hired miscreants to evict the poor from a given slum to grab its valuable land for vested interests or purely accidentally by electrical short-circuits or unattended earthen ovens. Whatever the case, the outcome has been equally devastating. In separate six incidents alone, reported in the media between March'98 to March'00, around 10,300 shanties were gutted and approximately 50,000 people were made homeless by the fire[26]. The actual number of incidents and people affected are believed to be much higher than this. High shelter density, highly flammable construction materials, and delayed and non-effective fire fighting are the factors that contribute to enhance the destruction. An editorial of a local daily gives a picture perfect portrayal –

> "There is a familiar tinge about Sunday's fire at a slum in Keraniganj that left the shanties in ashes, six people snuffed out and scores of shops in the blaze – it all started from an earthen oven at one of the shanties – to the havoc it eventually wrought, it was an action replay of many such incidents that we have seen and read and heard about beforehand. Early this year, several hundred shanties were obliterated in an inferno at Islambagh in the old part of the capital, there appears to be a pattern here in terms of place, nature and victims of such incidents. It's inevitably the slums and the dwellers who get caught in the middle of such an all-devouring blaze" (Keraniganj Fire, Editorial, *The Daily Star*, 28.12.99).

Given all post-1993 cases of evictions one wonders why has there been a gross contradiction between government policies and action? As a matter of fact, contradiction starts from the government's coming in conflict with the existing law. To legally evict illegal occupants, the Government and Local Authority Land and Building (Recovery or Possession) Ordinance, 1970 requires a 30 days notice to be given by the District Commissioners. The court of law can also

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[26]   Figures and date of incidents: 1. 1000 houses in Taltala *bastee* (20.3.98) 2. 6000 houses in Agargaon *bastee* (28.2.99) 3. 500 and 400 houses at Keranigang & Hazaribagh (27.12.99) 4. 400 houses at Mirpur (25.3.00) 5. 1000 houses in five different slums (26.3.00) 6. 1000 shanties in Begunbari slum at Tejgaon (6.4.00).

grant an order of eviction but usually grant a longer time. But in reality, government and other authorities in most cases usually give less than 48 hours notice to the people to evacuate their illegally occupied premises (Rahman, 2001). To make matter worse, evictee slum dwellers are often fall prey to looters during eviction who would snatch away their few remaining valuables; one would consider lucky if he/she could escape the beatings by the police. This is not an end to the sufferings arising during eviction; there is another part of it. Squatters are also subjected to extortion by the local *mastaans* to resist and manage an event of possible eviction. The ordeal that put human sufferings at its extreme, however, has not been allowed to go without any humane reactions from the highest quarters of the state. A press report reveals their true nature – "The Prime Minister has made some soothing noises, to the effect that her government will not let anybody go without food and shelter. But in the absence of a specific well-planned programme to rehabilitate them, even her own party-men know that the words are hollow, uttered just for the record" (*The Weekly Holiday*, 20.8.99).

An intention of doing good to someone somewhere by the state lies behind and gives justification to its act of eviction. In the event of state's repeated slum evictions, and its intention for rehabilitation through 'housing provision', will the poorer sections of the city be given a fair deal? Before assessing critically how good the eviction and rehabilitation will be for the effected groups, let us first understand what benefits these actions will bring to others. The following key issues, although not exhaustive, have been perceived by the state to give justification to their acts. In bringing positive implications through evictions, these well-harboured assumptions were refuted by this author elsewhere (Ghafur, 1999). They are elaborated next.

- General public will be benefited with an improvement in the overall crime situation. This is a highly disputed proposition as slums and only slums are not the only dens of crime in the city. As a matter of fact, a small minority of the known crime syndicate takes refuge in and operates from different slums and squatter settlements for benefit of invisibility. Poor slum dwellers and squatters are not their accomplices but helpless victims of various extortion, tortures and sexual abuses. These criminals terrorize the whole neighbourhood without impunity, and are known to have political patronization. It has been alleged repeatedly that they operate by keeping illicit connections with the law enforcing agencies.

- Eviction will put an end in the illegal consumption of public utilities and in turn, will benefit the taxpayers. True indeed if we establish that slum dwellers are the key culprits causing mammoth 'system loss' to various public utilities. Take power supply for example. It was reported in the media that slums/squatters in Dhaka consume 70 megawatt illegally each day (*The Daily Star*, 26.6.98). In reality, the poor are actually paying for their illegal consumption, at a rate of Tk. 50

per connection. But the money generated is lost in a circle of crime-corruption[27].

- Eviction will result in the recovery of prime *khas* urban land, resulting in public appropriation. We agree and hope that the eviction also takes place in areas controlled by the elements within the ruling party. We also hope that this act of recovery sets a precedence for the repossession of recently reported 364 acres of 'de-possessed' land in Dhaka (*Vorer Kagoj*, 20.11.98). De-possessed land refers to land grabbed by the politically influential vested interested groups. By repossession we do not mean selling those lands afterwards for shopping centres and apartments.

- There will be an improvement in the face of the city, to the hygienic and aesthetic taste of the non-slum dwellers. But the question remains whether only the *bastees* and *jhupries* are restricting Dhaka towards becoming *tilottoma* (the ultimate beautiful women).

- Relocation project arising from eviction will boost already booming (housing) construction sector. A good number of the urban poor will find their employment during construction of these flats. But can someone guarantee their allotment to, and continued living by the urban poor – the alleged beneficiaries – defying the forces of gentrification?[28]

Therefore, mere eviction of slums would not solve the Dhaka City's problems as argued by the state. Based on previous resettlement experiences, there is also a case to argue that eviction and its subsequent rehabilitation outside their places of work would not bring any positive change to the slum dwellers except misery; they will eventually comeback to their earlier places of living. Hardly any case studies, inside and outside Bangladesh, exist that comply with these actions. Moreover these projects do not intend to provide a living and working environment suitable to the poor's way of life (Ghafur, 1998). In all periodic incidences of eviction and slum burning, we are witnessing a misjudged exercise that will consequently result in alienating a large number of the urban poor for the benefit of others. We are pursuing an urbanization of injustice. One can rightly

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[27] Allegations of illegal consumption by the poor becomes ludicrous when it was revealed that 108 honourable MPs of the 7th National Assembly left their telephone bills of Tk. 41.1 million unpaid till June, 2000 (*Prothom Alo*, 19.12.00). It was also reported a few days ago that 181 MPs or 60 per cent of all do not pay income taxes. A good majority of those who pay actually were forced to complete necessary formalities to obtain their TIN (Tax Identification Number) in 1998 to apply for a housing plot offered by RAJUK (*Prothom Alo*, 2.11.00).

[28] In a culture of patronage and corruption in Bangladesh, it is indeed difficult to ensure genuine beneficiary's access to low-income housing. Giving reference to a project in Mirpur, Dhaka, Tipple & Ameen (1999, p. 168) notes "The allocation procedure for the 3,180 single-roomed units was handled badly and the people for whom they were intended failed to be allocated them. Instead, middlemen (known as *mastans*) stepped in to take over unoccupied units". See also the fate of two projects in Social Housing Supply section.

speculate that the eviction/rehabilitation will not benefit the urban poor beneficiaries due to following observations:

First, certain elements in the state perceive the urban poor way of living as 'social pathology'; they opined openly to act for its 'social control', thus explicitly ignoring the issues of 'social justice'. For example: (a) Home Minister wished "Strict measures would be taken for removing the slums which have become criminals' dens"; and also "We can no longer think about them from humanitarian point of view only. They themselves have to solve their (accommodation) problems" (*The Daily Star*, 8.5.99). (b) A proposed macro-level stabilization policy aims at 'discouraging the people to come to Dhaka without a place to stay' (*The Daily Star*, 17.9.99).

Second, eviction threatens as well as presents an opportune premise for different special interest groups. For example: (a) In reaction against 'state-violence', NGOs seek legal justice to prevent eviction as they were about to lose their stake; it was reported that Tk. 200 million investments by various NGOs are in jeopardy due to slum evictions (*The Daily Star*, 27.8.99). Although different NGOs have reasons to safeguard their interest in the event of evictions, this paper, however, duly acknowledges the good work done by various NGOs to bring positive change in the lives of the urban poor. (b) Specialist professionals suddenly were found in a rush to start proposing technical solutions requiring huge capital investments.

Natural Disasters

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. A number of factors, in particular, geographic location at the downstream of some of the largest rivers in the South Asia and beside Bay of Bengal have made her vulnerable to natural disasters. Disasters like flood, cyclone, drought, tidal-bore, and river erosion occur almost regularly, causing immense loss of lives, crops and property. Bangladesh had been struck by at least 63 different natural disasters (e.g cyclones, floods) of various intensities during the period of 1960-81 (BIDS, 2001, p. 109). Among all types of disasters, flood is perhaps the most recurrent and damaging one. The annual flood affected areas usually varies between 25,000 sq. km to 40,000 sq. km. Experts estimate that out of the total of 1,42,777 sq. km, 82,088 sq. km (i.e. 58 %) areas are flood vulnerable in Bangladesh. In the last 35 years since 1954, there were 28 occurrences of flood, out of which 11 were devastating and 5 most devastating (BIDS, 2001, p. 109). The floods in 1988 and 1998 were two of the most devastating in living memory. Flood is known to cause temporary and permanent homelessness, especially, among the poor.

Box. 2

Vulnerable Ecology and Chronic Poverty

Chronic poverty in South Asia is to a large extent the result of adverse ecological processes. Bangladesh give a striking illustration. Here the most persistent poverty has historically been found in the river-erosion areas which in years of severe flooding have been susceptible to widespread starvation and even famine (Sen, 1981).

The 1974 famine, for example, was particularly severe in the river erosion belts along both sides of the Bhahmaputra. These form the most economically depressed thanas and unions of what are now Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Jamalpur districts. These were also the areas hardest hit during the massive floods of 1988 and 1998. In the later years, however the damage was not so great. In 1998 both the Government and NGOs were very active with a large-scale distribution of foodgrains via the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme, the Cash-for-Work programme, and a variety of lean-season food-assisted programmes essentially aimed at preventing the potential entitlement failure that can lead to famine. …

Apart from the impact of an immediate crisis those living in ecologically vulnerable areas also find it more difficult to recover. This is because apart from having few savings or other assets they tend to have less access than richer areas to non-farm employment and to microcredit. They also find it difficult to borrow the money to migrate. And since everyone is affected simultaneously the markets for both assets and credit also collapse – a consequences of 'covariate risk'. While all householders in these areas are exposed to ecological risk, those most vulnerable are small landowners and agricultural labourers. …..

Note: To avert near famine situation in 1998 flood, government had to take an extensive programme of distributing 4 million flood-affected families with VGF cards with the support of the NGO community. VGF card would ensure supply of 16 kg of foodgrains per month to each family in October and November. VGF cards were sent to all 4479 unions in the country under four categories ranging from 300 to 1,000 cards per union considering the number of vulnerable families.

Source: 'Vulnerable Ecology and Chronic Poverty' in BIDS, 2001, p. 113

The disaster that is related with flood is river erosion. Floods are known to cause major changes in river course that contribute to the erosion of riverbanks. Annual riverbank erosion in Bangladesh causes dislocation to an estimated one million population, many of whom are permanently displaced (BIDS, 2001, p. 107). The demographic and socio-economic consequences of river erosion are far reaching. Consequences of river erosion are two folds: a direct loss of arable and homestead land and sudden onset of poverty. The end result of these

losses in most cases is migration out of that area of their ancestral village. Loss of land and shelter due to river erosion hardly went unnoticed in the printed media. The Bangladesh Observer (30 September, 1999) states that the Jamuna river devoured 2000 houses rendering 15,000 people in about 75 villages of Tangail District homeless from June, 1999. At least 15,000 families of 10 villages including one Cluster Village (i.e. *Ashrayan* project) under two *Thanas* (administrative unit based on Police Station) of Manikganj District were rendered homeless due to the erosion of the river Padma and Jamuna in ten days ending on September 28. Table 21 presents some information on the incidence of landlessness due to the riverbank erosion during 1992-95 as reported in three daily newspapers.

Table 21.   River Erosion and Landlessness

Affected items reported in the newspaper	Meghna and its branch	Padma and its branch rivers	Tista, Jamuna and Brahmaputra	Other rivers	Total
Number of incidence	8	18	31	21	76
Number of villages	110 (12.7)	152 (17.6)	568 (65.7)	35 (4.0)	865 (100)
Number of families	3000 (3.6)	21,590 (26.1)	48,210 (58.4)	9,785 ((11.8)	82,585 (100)
Number of houses	900 (4.4)	11,044 (54.0)	7,650 (37.4)	850 ((4.2)	20,444 (100)
Number of people	195,000 (38.6)	235,000 (46.5)	70,000 (13.8)	5,650 (1.1)	505,650 (100)
Cultivable land (acre)	--	72,420 (45.8)	69,150 (43.8)	16,400 (10.4)	187,970 (100)

Note: Data are compiled from the following national dailies *The Sangbad* : 05.06.92 – 09.04.95, *The Ittefaq* : 25.01.95 – 06.06.95, and *The Janakantha* : 04.01.95 – 06.06.95. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Source: BIDS, 2001, p. 114

Tropical cyclone originating in Bay of Bengal is another disaster that causes instant havoc, especially, in the coastal areas in Bangladesh. Cyclone usually occurs during April-May and October-November periods. Between 1960 and 1986, Bangladesh had been struck by 33 cyclones of which seven were most severe in damaging lives, livestock, crops and shelters. Propensity to damage in coastal areas is more as cyclone is accompanied with 10-15 feet high tidal-bore. A lunar landscape devoid of any shelter, trees, lives and infrastructure is usually left

after a cyclone struck coastal areas. A cyclone in 1970 killed an estimated 300,000 people and another cyclone in 1985 killed 19,000 in Bangladesh. Revolutionary advancement in the early warning system, construction of a series of cyclone shelters, and evolvement of a well-coordinated disaster mitigation system have succeeded in reducing the loss of lives significantly over the years. However, inexpensive land and chances of eking out a living could not deter the poor from settling again in these dangerous coastal areas. As a result, loss of lives and property continues. So does homelessness.

8.   Tendency to isolate homeless people as "others" – exclusion

Homeless people in Bangladesh are generally perceived as "others", i.e. a specific group experiencing different forms of exclusions in its access to legal rights and means of daily subsistence. The present tendency to isolate homeless people from the mainstream society is socially constructed. This section discusses the nature and causes of exclusion of homeless people.

Depiction of homeless people in the printed media and general public perception has contrasting profiles. The former portrays an exploited, helpless but struggling picture for wider public consumption by highlighting uniqueness in their past-profile, personality and problems (Mamun, 2001; Sofa, 1997; and the innumerous cartoons of *Tokai* by R. Nabi in the last few decades). On the other hand, the latter views homelessness with apathy, and maintains a negative homogenous portrayal of the homeless in the day-to-day affairs of the common people. For example, a typical middle- and upper-class response to a request for help by a homeless, irrespective of age and sex, is "Why do you beg? Can't you earn for a livelihood?" Looking at these opposing views i.e. 'heroic' versus 'pathological'[29], one wonders why is this paradox in representation of homeless people in a given society? This situation is rarely addressed in the existing literature. This is indeed a difficult task in how do we attempt to explain this paradox that is how have people with unique identities become faceless lesser mortals. With a risk of over-simplification this report would argue that formation of an exclusionary class-conscious attitude toward the least fortunate members of society at the macro level has its trickle down implications to guide individual behaviour at the micro level.

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[29]   According to Cooper (1995), a pathological view of homelessness disempowers homeless people and limits the parameters of the debate by stripping people of their unique identity and replacing it with a negative stigma. This view blames the homeless for their situation (cited in UNCHS, 2000, p. 52-53).

Formation of 'class' in the agrarian society of Bangladesh has traditionally been based on ownership of land[30]. Large land owning rural elite had been representing the ruling class in various national and local governments for a few decades during the post-colonial regimes. Subsequently, traditional leaders and landlords gave place to a new type of leader – politicians – since the early 1980s. Politicians now represent a new class with its own interests and relationships with the state and (poor) people. Land is no more the sole basis of power and authority, and is replaced (or added to) by access to administration, political influence, and the exercise of violence (Ahmed, 1991). This situation has become more complicated with the advent of the so-called 'industrialists' in the national political scenario that, in part, has lead to the 'commercialization of politics'. The press reported that 30 prominent businessmen won in the 2001 national parliamentary election (for a total of 300 seats) while 20 lose (*The Daily Star*, 7.10.01). In an environment of rampant corruption, affiliation with and investments in politics are viewed as the shortest way to become rich in Bangladesh. An unholy trinity of 'power-project-profit' has been observed motivating most of the aspirant (businessmen) as well as practicing politicians. It is hardly surprising that the poor have become politically disenfranchised, and emerged as the main victim of this exclusionary process of the 'depoliticization of politics'.

Nevertheless, what is interesting to observe is that class-consciousness in daily relations is limited, as people tend to identify with their kin instead. Poor do not oppose to any rich individual (who in addition may or may not have access to power) and the class he/she may represent, and unite under an ideological doctrine to carryout 'class-struggle' for emancipation of their poverty[31]. Instead, the poor might be proud of this fact and consider the rich person as a potential source of patronage. It is in this background, a culture of patronage has been developed and perpetuated between the poor and (rich and powerful) politician. A hierarchy-patronage relationship has been aided further as "neither constitutionally nor through any legislation nor other special act, any provision was made to ensure representation of the poor in the lower [local government] bodies" (Afsar, 2001, p. 11). Consequently, homeless people – the poorest of the poor – in Bangladesh are generally excluded from all forms of social and political participation, and benefiting from basic civic amenities. A recent report by CARE-Bangladesh observes that the poor feel disenfranchised, and withdrew themselves from participating in any initiatives to solve their problems (CARE-IFPRI, 2001, p. 2). This report gives critical insights into the state of poor's spatial, social, and political exclusions, and their implications on their lives –

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[30] Hereditary classes are not polarized in Bangladesh, partly, due to the exodus of most of the three high Hindu caste groups in recent history and an absence of a Muslim high class in rural areas (Meloney, 1991, p.54).

[31] In the recently concluded national election, held in 1st October, 2001, the combined nine left-wing and three liberal democratic parties got 0.43% votes (Daily *Prothom Alo*, 7.10.01).

"[Urban poor] households are pushed into the city, with a very weak sense of identity and belonging. Rates of participation in community activities are very low, with 94% of households not associated with any society or organization. Urban slums are often outside the main stream of governance and long-term strategic development planning. This creates the operational space of exploitation. At best households can expect an ad hoc response to their development needs, but most commonly they can expect violent eviction due to insecure land tenure. Influential people often force these households to pay rent in cash or kind for access to tube wells and latrines. This occurs on both private and government land. If they are unable to pay cash, they are often caught in a criminal net involving the sex and drug trade" (CARE-IFPRI, 2001, p. 2).

Language used of homeless people

Whether casual inter-personal interaction or formal job interview, one's identity comes first in most cases. Homeless people who are in search of a job, women in particular, have been frequently denied a job for living in the street. On the other hand, homeless people, male and female alike, are socially stigmatized in the meanest possible way. Society at large imposed an alleged identity on them that is based on prejudices and class-consciousness. For example, a young divorcee or widowed mother is publicly called a whore, and street children as thief or illegitimate child or son of a beggar. Use of and reference to individual as well as group identities hold a prominent place in the day-to-day affairs of Bengali life. As an opposite case of reference, George Simmel's aspired anonymity preferred and pursued in urban life in Western metropolises at the beginning of the 20th Century is the least desirable situation for homeless people in Bangladesh. Lack of tangible social identity precludes the homeless people more than any other low-income groups. The nature and extent of these social, spatial and political dimensions of exclusions would vary among the absolute and passive homeless people.

9.   Characteristics of homeless people

It is beyond the scope of this research to report and understand the unique characteristics of homeless people within all three suggested types of homelessness i.e. extreme, passive, and potential homelessness. Within this limitation, this report, therefore, will only describe the characteristics of the extreme homeless people – people who virtually live in the street. In this section, henceforth, 'homeless people' will refer only those who are covered by extreme homelessness.

Insecurity of place

While studies on homeless people are rare, 1996 street dweller survey (ADB-LGED-GOB, 1996) enumerated 11,500 (later adjusted as 12,600) homeless people residing or sleeping at night in 105 locations in the Dhaka city. Table 22 summarizes their location of sleeping. It is evident from this Table that the possible locations of sleeping for the extreme homeless people in Dhaka are heavily concentrated in a few types of public outdoor and indoor spaces of a few specific building types. A little less than half (47.5%) of the surveyed homeless people were found living in ninety open footpaths. Nearly one-fifth (21.15) of them were seen in seven public transport stations. The next notable location is the market centres (12.66). The study on disadvantaged women in eight cities and town has found 79% of the respondents residing in open spaces and the rest in thatched shanties in slums. Open space includes railway station (19%), road side pavements (15%), verandah/behind house (14%), park (8%), River side/Ferry point (8%), godown (2%), and different places at different times (13%) (READ, 2000, p.23).

Table 22.   Major Locations of Street Dwellers in Dhaka

Types of locations	Number of homeless	Percentage of homeless
Open footpaths	5,441	47.52
Transport stations	2,422	21.15
Market centres	1450	12.66
Graveyard/shrines	1108	9.68
Open spaces (i.e. parks)	616	5.38
Religious centres	66	0.59
Parking place/garages	36	0.31
Play ground	36	0.31
Constructions sites	14	0.12
Others	60	2.27
	Total	100.00

 Source: ADB-LGED-GOB, 1996, p. 180.

Based on above observation, homeless people would possibly encounter authorities in three types of situations to sleep undisturbed at night. They are:

- A strict objection over their sleeping in public spaces under organized security like New Market in Dhaka – a government market for higher income groups. Whereas sleeping opportunities in public spaces within railway stations are subjected to the presence of occasional law and order maintaining drive.

- No strict resistance from night guards in cases of smaller private and public commercial/office spaces as homeless can either be a source of income (for them) or additional protection at night. Night guards often sexually abuse the girls and women.

- Almost invariably no objection from non-existent night guards in all public open spaces (including parks and street pavements) in Dhaka.

There were many sporadic attempts in different locations of Dhaka City to drive homeless people out of the street for development works or (re)claiming illegally occupied urban space. Most of these attempts at best transferred the problem elsewhere. Living under constant threat of eviction hardly contributes to community development among homeless people on a longer basis. However, homeless people tend to band together for personal security and against theft and mugging in a given moment of time in their living in the street.

Vulnerability to crime, taking part in crime

Overall law and order situation in Bangladesh has deteriorated alarmingly in the recent past[32]. Dhaka, her capital, is increasingly becoming a crime prone place to live in[33]. Homeless people and those living in slum and squatter settlements are known to be vulnerable to crime, violence and torture. However, how much of them, especially the homeless, have actually been involved directly in crime of serious nature is an open question to debate. Concerned quarters within the government views *bastees* – slum and squatters – as dens of crime to justify their eviction drive. But common sense suggests that just because crimes are committed *in bastees* do not automatically justify the labeling of *bastee*-dwellers as criminals. Reality on the ground suggests, on the other hand, that professional and organized crime syndicate operate from *bastees* for

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[32]   The Home minister informed the parliament, in a recent question-answer session, that a total of 18,563 murders and 12,925 rape cases have been registered in the last five years in Bangladesh (Daily *Prothom Alo*, 19.11.2001). However, the actual number of committed crimes, rapes for example, could be much higher as the victims are reluctant first to acknowledge it and then report to the police for justice for fear of reprisals from the perpetrators and loss of face in society.

[33]   Siddiqui et al (1990, p. 308) estimates in late 1990s that there is, on the average, one criminal for every 300 residents of Dhaka City with a total population of six million.

possible cover of invisibility that is available only there. Siddiquie et al (1990) compiled responses on crimes and criminals in Dhaka City according to the views of magistrates, crime reporters, criminal lawyers, polices, jailers, and selected households. The types of crime concerned are hijacking, *mastani*, drug addiction and trafficking, theft, smuggling, kidnapping rioting, robbery, and cheating, fraud and defalcation. It is not surprising that homeless people, called vagabonds or floating people, have rarely been identified as involved in serious crimes. Whenever referred, they were reported to take part only in petty crimes and prostitution.

Table 23.   Types of tortures experienced currently: Qualitative response

Type of tortures Experienced	No of Responses*		
	FWSW: n=26	FDW: n=51	FWO: n=82
Torture by Husband: Beaten by hand/leg/stick; not providing support and neglecting; beating for non payment of dowry; took away child and deserted me; severing tendons of hand and leg because of opposition to his second marriage	10	12	25
Torture by other family members: Second wife of husband torturing; mother in law rebuking and not providing food; engaging me as intensive laborer in the household; husband's sister beating	-	10	16
Torture by Police: Disturbance by police during sleep; beaten by police; police demolished house; police driven away from shrine	8	20	18
Torture by Others Verbal abuse by employer; mastans/miscreants snatching away money/ food; rape by youth; local influential beating	8	7	15
Victims of theft: All belongings stolen; money stolen	-	2	8

Note *: FWSW = floating women sex workers, FDW = female disabled women, FWO = floating women other.

Source: READ, 2000.

Social landscape of Bangladesh is characterized by a male dominated society where oppression of women starts from home. In this general context, READ (2000, p. 29) reports that 41.7% floating women have told that they came under some form of oppression lately. In more details, the corresponding figures for floating sex workers, floating disabled women and floating other women are 66.9%, 39.5% and 22.4% respectively. Table 23 gives a list of types of tortures

experienced by (disadvantaged) floating women, a specific section of homeless population, in eight cities in Bangladesh. It becomes clear from this table that floating women are prone to violence, torture and crime from not only for living in street but also for being helpless and powerless.

Age, gender and household size

Existing studies have shown similar patterns in key demographic features like age[34] and sex of homeless people (BBS, 1999; Begum, 1997; ADB-LGED-GOB, 1996). Table 24 presents the distribution of homeless people by age and sex in Dhaka Megacity and 118 cities and towns (including Dhaka). Males represent more than three-fourths of homeless population in both contexts. A closer scrutiny of Table 24 suggests that extreme homeless people are predominantly male; the male population in Dhaka Megacity and 118 cities and towns are 78.12% and 76.19%. These figures are very close to 81.7% (male) and 18.3% (female) that Begum (1997, p. 49) had found earlier among pavement dwellers in Dhaka.

Table 24. Distribution of Homeless Population by Age and Sex

Age in Years	Dhaka Megacity Total 14,999		Total Urban (118 cities & towns) Total 32,078	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Below 5	411	345	680	513
05-09	(3.51)	(10.51)	(2.78)	(6.72)
10-14	428	172	828	371
15-19	(3.65)	(5.24)	(3.39)	(4.86)
20-34	907	207	2094	721
35-44	(7.74)	(6.31)	(8.57)	(9.44)
45-59	685	67	1772	410
Over 60	(5.85)	(2.04)	(7.25)	(5.37)
	3411	748	8358	1859
	(29.11)	(22.79)	(34.20)	(24.34)

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[34]   The practice of birth registration is almost absent among poor people in Bangladesh. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) cautions its readers - "Age reported is a weak variable and very often does not reflect the reality. Miss reporting of age is a dominant characteristic of the data in developing countries. The prime reason is the low literacy rate, which leads people not to properly record their date of birth. As a result most of the people do not know exact age. Moreover, most people, specially young woman have a tendency to lower their age particularly if they are unmarried and this miss-reporting is socially condoned and widely accepted" (BBS, 1999, p. 20).

	2624	464	4139	1327
	(22.39)	(14.14)	(16.94)	(17.37)
	2538	932	4593	1747
	(21.66)	(28.40)	(18.79)	(22.87)
	713	345	1975	691
	(6.09)	(10.51)	(8.08)	(9.05)
Total	11,717	3,282	24,439	7,639
	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)	(100.00)
Percentage of total	78.12%	21.88%	76.19%	23.81%
Sex ratio	357		320	

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentage.

Source: Calculated from BBS, 1999, p. 192.

Lesser proportions of females observed in homeless population demand an explanation. Females are underrepresented mainly because married male household heads usually prefer staying alone in the street, and keep their wives and daughters in other safer accommodation other than streets to avoid potential threat of physical and sexual abuse. This is evident when 70% of all interviewed pavement dwellers in Dhaka were living alone in the pavements while 54.9% of all were married (Begum, 1997, p.51). In addition, a sudden drop in the proportion of girls between 10 to 19 years, especially in Dhaka Megacity, is noticed in the Table. This is a unique coping strategy adopted by the homeless people, and will be discussed later in a separate section. Another possible reason could be due to their invisibility in the census data and studies. Recent studies on migration reveals an increasing share of women – 'feminization of urban poverty'. A recent survey by READ (2000) on 'disadvantaged women' in eight cities and towns is a significant attempt to address the plight of women. Within disadvantaged women, the mean age of floating sex workers, disabled floating women and other floating women are 28, 30 and 34 years respectively. Homeless (young and single) women distressed migrants, without any peer supports, prior information about the area of destination, education and skills, are most likely to survive through prostitution, and subsequently not counted by a given census. Given the greater extent of floating prostitutes in major cities in Bangladesh[35], it is surprising that prostitution (or sex-work) as a means of earning among the floating (extreme homeless) population is absent in the 1997 census (see Table 26 in a later section). Given its greater

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[35] A recent report has identified 33% of an estimated floating women primarily engaged in sex work as a means of livelihood. The estimated number floating sex workers would range from a conservative 83,000 (16%) to 171,000 (30%) (READ, 2000, p. ii). Taking these projected figures into account, the number of floating sex workers in Dhaka invalidates total floating population of 12,600 and 14,999.

magnitude, it is also unlikely that prostitution is included in the meagre 'others' category in Table 26 shown later in this section. Their invisibility may also emerge due to prevailing tacit uneasiness with this profession that then resulted in their exclusion (or limit them to a token few) in most academic or journalistic study/report. For example, Begum (1997) has found only 4 cases of prostitution within a sample of 505 females; while Mamun (2001) has deliberately avoided interviewing prostitutes and beggars. Notable exceptions in this regard are recent studies prepared for Concern-Bangladesh (READ, 2000; 2000a).

Homeless people differ from other poor groups in terms of age distribution. The age groups below 60, in the Table 24, are further categorized into three groups for analysis. They are: 'economically dependent' (below 10 years), 'youth' (10-19 years), and 'adults' (20-59 years). Homeless people are unique among the urban poor in terms of age and sex at least in two aspects. They are explained next.

- A high proportion of homeless adults (20-59 years) is seen in both male and female categories; adults represent 73.16% and 65.33% of all enumerated male and female homeless in Dhaka Megacity. Percentages of dependants, youths and adults of homeless people in Dhaka Megacity (14,999 total population) have been calculated as 9.0%, 12.4% and 71.5% respectively. The point to note is that proportional distributions of these categories are quite different from other poor groups. The corresponding figures of these categories for all poor (i.e. combined total of hardcore poor and moderately poor) living in Dhaka city are 30.3%, 19.5% and 47.4% (calculated from Islam et al, 1997, p. 169-70). Separate figures for hardcore poor and moderately poor show marginal variations. From this comparison between homeless people and other poor, two tentative conclusions can be drawn: First, poor people usually become homeless at their adult age due to reasons stated earlier. Second, it is difficult to maintain a family being homeless in the street.

- The trend in sex ratio (i.e. number of males per 100 females) among homeless people in Dhaka (357) and 118 cities and towns (320) are strikingly different than those observed in other poor groups. Sex ratios of hardcore poor, moderately poor and all poor in Dhaka are 96.46, 106.18 and 100.08 (Islam et al, 1997, p.169). Sex ratio of all slums in 118 cities and towns in Bangladesh is 104 (BBS, 1999)

In terms of social unit homeless people are not homogenous. Interview with homeless people and reviews of existing literature have led to the identification of three types of social units. They are: single person unit; couples with children; and single parent with children. Most of the extreme homeless people living in the street are single, although a substantial proportion of them could be living with members of their family. Findings of a 1996 survey reported that the average size of households living in the street was 3.6 (ADB-LGED-GOB, 1996). Homeless people differ from other poor and non-poor groups in household size also. Average household size in slums of Dhaka Megacity and entire city are 4.06 and 5.64 respectively. From her study on 'pavement

dwellers', Begum (1997) has found single person as the main social unit that comprises 70% of 2761 respondents. She further notes that 28% cases were living with families of a nuclear type, and only 1% was living with members other than their immediate family. READ (2000) found the following results among 453 floating women: 28% living alone; 21.7% with a male/female guardian; 20.8 with husband; 20.9% with children or other family members; and 8.6% with peers.

Substance abuse

Incidence of substance use, especially hard and soft drugs, among extreme homeless appears rare as existing studies did not mention it as a problem. Spending any given amount of disposable amount on buying drugs seems unlikely, especially, when homeless people live in hand to mount if not in constant hunger. However, a very small number of homeless *sufi*, mystic or *fakir* has been observed using hashish or other soft drugs for spiritual upliftment. Another small group might be involved in some kind of petty crime to fund their drug use. In both these cases, no accurate figure can be suggested due to absence of empirical investigation.

Physical and mental illness

A study on pavement dwellers reports that nearly 15% of its sample population are physically and/or mentally handicapped; 2.4% were found mad (Begum, 1997, p. 66).

Despite absence of any study of the mental state of the poorest section of society, i.e. homeless people, some preliminary observations emerge from interviews conducted for this research and other secondary sources that demand future investigations. It is generally observed that the implications of surviving in the street and eking out a living, day after day, put homeless people under heavy mental stress. Constant mental preoccupation with food, security and shelter drives these people on the verge of madness. Loneliness and frustration over life, recurrent thoughts on committing suicide, unarticulated and unrelated response to a specific question, repressed anger against a misconceived ruling class, lack of belief in keeping relationships and friendships are some of the disturbing expressions of homeless people whose mind is not in peace. The apparent poor mental state has been compounded by their poor physical health, greatly incurred due to lack of regular nutritious food intake.

Table 25.   Diseases suffered by floating homeless women*

(in %)

Diseases	FWSW (116 cases)	FDW (68 cases)	FWO (116 cases)	All Categories (300 cases)
Symptoms/diseases related to STD/RTI	32.8	2.9	12.9	18.3 12.7
Leukorrhea	16.4	7.4	12.1	10.7

Itching	6.9	10.3	14.7	22.0
Fever	37.9	7.4	14.7	8.0
Lower abdominal pain	10.3	11.8	3.4	26.7
Pain during urinating	17.2	44.1	26.7	
Physical weakness				
Other				
Leprosy	3.4	0	0	1.3
Breathing problem	3.4	4.4	2.6	3.3
High blood pressure	1.7	1.5	1.7	1.7
Others	15.5	29.4	27.6	23.3
Don't know	9.5	7.4	12.1	10.0

Note *:   1.
Multiple response, total percent exceeds 100.

> 2. FWSW = floating women sex workers, FDW = female disabled women, and FWO =
> floating women other.

READ (2000) reports that that three fourth of the FWSWs (77%), slightly over half of the FDWs (57%) and about two third of the FWOs (63%) have been suffering from diseases. The distribution of diseases related to STD/RTI among different respondents is shown in Table 25. The rate of syphilis among floating sex workers is quite high (42.7%). The findings among these respondents that 58% went to modern care facilities and 52% opted for indigenous health care suggest their multiple choice. According to a very recent press report, the rate of HIV infection among floating sex workers is 0.5 per cent (*The Daily Star*, 1.12.01). The overall rate of HIV infection is very small compared to other South Asian countries. A Health Ministry source said that there are 182 'full blown' AIDS patients in Bangladesh and 21,000 people are living with HIV/AIDS; this figure in the previous year was 157 (*The Daily Star*, 1.12.01).

Ethnicity

Bangladesh is a homogenous society in terms of culture and language. Most of the population is Muslim by religion. However, there are small ethnic minority groups whose language and worldviews are significantly different than the Bengali language and culture. Homelessness in cities does not have any ethnic dimensions. However, some ethnic minorities, especially Hindus, Christians and some indigenous tribes, came under attacks from vested interested groups in rural areas and become homeless.

Income/poverty

Most homeless people earn an income however inadequate and irregular that may be to ensure his/her/their day-to-day survival. It appears difficult for a homeless person to give an account of monthly income as they earn and spent on a daily basis with little if nothing left for saving.

Amount of income and opportunities available for its generation varies among single homeless, homeless couples with children and single parent homeless. Moreover, not only the income profile varies among basic social units it also varies between male and female; income can even vary within women. For example, the average daily incomes of floating sex worker, floating disabled women, and floating other women are Tk. 121, Tk. 40 and Tk. 40 respectively (READ, 2000, p. 26). This gender difference in income, as in national level, takes place in a context when homeless people are predominantly single and male. According to study by Begum (1997), average income per day of pavement dwellers was Tk. 42.61; the figures for male and female were Tk. 46.80 and Tk. 17.63. An aggregate estimate, by ADB-LGED-GOB (1996), suggests that average monthly household (of 3.6 person) income in Dhaka was Tk. 1200. Variations in income among different social units leave us with the following observations:

- In spite of low income a single male's limited daily expenditure on subsistence in occasion can allow meagre saving for him or close relatives.

  Case example: Manik Miah, aged approximately 24, originally hails from Kishorganj. He lives in Dhaka alone and works as a porter in Karwanbazzar – a large wholesale market at the centre of Dhaka – for nearly 10 years. During this period, he has been sleeping in pavement that is within his place of work. After a days work, he could save Tk.60 after paying for foods. The extra money is saved and kept by a trusted shop-owner. Besides being an extreme homeless he is also a seasonal migrant as he works six months in Dhaka and goes back to his village to work as agricultural labour for the remaining six months. His parents and a brother live in village; they are 'dependant homeless' as the house they live belongs to a distant relative (see footnote 7 for clarification). They had 5 acres of agricultural land and 10 decimal homestead land before being lost due to river erosion.

- A given household of homeless couple with children would most often have its male household head as main earner. The concerned household has to ensure flow of earnings either by engaging other household member(s) or pool income from multiple sources to avoid its premature disintegration.

  Case example: Shahjahan Miah, aged 45, came from a medium land holding family in Ostogram. His farmer father married twice; Shahjahan has three more brothers and 4 sisters, in addition to many more from his stepmother's family. Young brothers of Shahjaran were neither educated nor skilled in any occupation at the time of his father's death in 1971. At their father's demise, they started selling lands for subsistence and wasted the money unproductively. Some lands were also lost due to their inability to recover from sharecropper's grab. Subsequently, there were not any more land left for sale, and they became landless. He recalls that they are homeless for the last 25 years.

  Being homeless and without any source of income in their village, his family migrated to Dhaka in mid 1980s, and have been living there since then. After arrival in Dhaka, he moved

in to a squatter with 3 children with the help of a fellow villager. With no money and skills, he soon started breaking bricks for a livelihood. In those early days, he could not save any money after all expanses on food and clothing were met. Later they were evicted from the squatter without notice and rehabilitation or compensation. Since then his family has been living in the street as he could not afford spending Tk. 1200-1500 for renting a room a slum or squatter. Considering all sorts of uncertainty and insecurity, he sent his 2 sons and one daughter under the care of their maternal grand parent. Life in the street was thought not safe for his young daughter. At that time his wife had been suffering from tuberculosis. He spent a fortune for treatment of his wife without any positive results. Ultimately he sent back his wife back to village. He maintains periodic contacts with his wife and contributes a small amount for her welfare. Shahjahan then remarried, with his first wife's consent. His second wife lamented that no one is willing to employ her as she is from the street; daily domestic works also preclude her from working outside. He now earns by pulling rickshaw for half a day. He opined that his earnings have dropped significantly since living in the street.

- The situation for single parents is possibly the worst for income generation. Taking care of children takes a lot of parent's time that puts constraints in their ability to spent long hours away from their children for work.

Case example: Rita (30) – a single parent of two minor children of six and one and half years – became orphan when she was only 12 years old. She was then taken to a relative's house that too was lost later due to river erosion. She has been living in Dhaka since then with her relatives for about 20 years. She had a steady job at a garment factory with a salary of Tk. 700. At one stage, her relatives became keen to arrange her marriage with an implicit intention to use her marriage as an excuse to oust her from their home. She was not willing to get married but later had to give her consent. Her husband was a rickshaw puller. Shortly before their first child was born she quitted her job partly due to more time needed for household work and child caring, partly due to the long journey to the work. Soon afterwards her husband developed an extra-marital affairs with one of her co-workers. While she was pregnant second time, her husband deserted her and had taken with him many valuables that were not bought by his income. At his desertion without a divorce, she fell into a deep crisis. Few weeks later she homeless for her failure to pay rent.

Her present adobe is a cover of polyethylene over a small chunk of footpath alongside many other street dwellers in Katobon area. She now begs as well as collects waste papers from which her daily income is Tk. 15. Even this income is irregular. This amount is insufficient to feed her two children and herself. At least Tk. 100 are required daily for bare subsistence. Her problem is that she could not take again a steady job at garment factory for there is no one to take care of her children while she is away from home.

To get an idea about what types of employment are available to or adopted by homeless people we need to look at the broader economic context in Bangladesh. Homeless people eke out a livelihood in an urban economy that is constituted by a large informal sector, providing 84.5 per cent of all employment; the share of the formal sector is only of 15.5 per cent that rarely creates employment opportunities for the poor (Quasem et al, 1998, p.11). As a result, different types of low-productive informal sector activities have remained the main source of employment for the poor. An often-ignored fact is the one that the poor are stratified within themselves, and this is manifested in the types of work they engaged in for a living.

Giving alms to the beggars is a religious duty and that encourages people rightly or wrongly to beg. One who is unable or unwilling to give alms to a beggar usually gives de facto acknowledgements to his duty by saying *maf koro* (forgive me) to the beggar. Table 26 vividly shows the extent to which very few types of work are available to homeless people where begging (33.73%) accounts for the highest proportion of all types. Begum (1997) reports 22.2% pavement dwellers involved in begging in Dhaka; she observed that begging has provided an alternative to those who were previously engaged in business and secure job before falling into a crisis. City specific studies carried out in the last few decades suggest that begging has never been the last resort for only the disabled and diseased; Siddiqui et al (1990, p. 280) opined that over time, increasingly able bodied persons have entered into the trade[36]. In addition, homeless people are presented in greater proportions in those types (e.g. construction labour and porter) that demand manual labour. On the other hand, the types that require technical skills and resources (e.g. industrial labour, business and service) are less in proportions among homeless people.

Table 26.   Comparative Profiles of Main Economic Activities of 10 years old and over in Floating Population and Slums.

Main Activities	Dhaka Megacity (in %)		Total Urban (in %)	
	Floating pop. (14,999)	Slums (533,788)	Floating pop. (32,078)	Slums (971,719)

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[36]   Two key observations become evident from studies carried out by the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (1963) and Farooq (1976). They are: the majority of the beggars of Dhaka city were able bodied, and the percentage of able bodied beggars had increased from 51% in 1963 to 81% in 1976 (with 72% being employable (cited in Siddiqui et al, 1990, p. 280).

Occupation				
1. Begging	33.73	0.60	26.94	0.71
2. Daily Labour:	0.68	0.78	2.80	1.23
agriculture	0.68	10.46	3.96	8.31
3. Daily Labour: industry	27.34	6.12	17.40	4.98
4. Daily Labour:	12.03	1.62	16.02	2.05
construction	1.60	5.13	5.50	4.88
5. Porter	6.70	9.18	4.91	9.26
6. Maid servant	4.07	1.94	4.13	1.74
7. Business	1.59	10.27	4.08	9.03
8. Hawker	0.68	--	1.41	--
9. Rickshaw puller	--	7.37	--	8.60
10. Van puller	0.23	6.54	0.20	6.41
11. Student	1.03	--	1.62	--
12. Service	5.61	4.86	7.10	4.70
13. *Tokai* (child waste picker)	4.03	35.13	3.93	38.10
14. Not working				
15. others				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from BBS, 1999.

From a comparative perspective, Table 26 further reveals that incidences of income generations among homeless people in areas requiring skills and resources, e.g. employment in industry, services and rickshaw, are fewer than other poor groups like slums.

Coping strategies

Life in the street is not easy, and homeless people living in the street have to cope with different adverse situations. Homeless people living with family know well from their experience that footpath/street is not a safe place, in particular, for their grown-up daughters and young wife. Their exists a great danger of their being kidnapped, raped or other forms of abuses by the local *mastans*, unscrupulous people or even from the members of the law enforcing agencies, especially police. As they do not want to lose whatever dignity has been left, they sent their grown up daughters and young wife to some safer places as a measure of precaution. Daughters and wife could be staying either as a guest or paid guest in a (distant) relative's house

in a nearby slum/squatter from which they can visit their parents' daily or even take a meal with them.

Washing and bathing, cooking, collection of fuel, and defecation are major problems which homeless people have to cope in a day-to-day basis. The situation is more acute for the women. However, those few fortunate women who work as maid in residence use the bathing and toilet facilities available at the place of their work. Homeless people also take advantage of the facilities if available in a nearby market or a mosque. But access to these facilities is not taken for granted even if they have to give a small toll to the gatekeeper as they ultimately have to depend on the mercy of the concerned authorities. Those adults who live without these options use newspaper or polyethylene bags to defecate at night and throw away the waste in a dustbin or open sewer.

Rural - urban

A monograph by Rahman (1993) is probably the only available work on rural homelessness in Bangladesh. A short resume' on rural homeless would include the following points -

- Rural housing supply characteristics

- Type and extent of rural homelessness

- General characteristics of rural homeless people and their regional variations

- Structural causes of rural homelessness

- Government and NGO responses to rural homelessness

10.   Street Children

Discourse, discussions, and descriptions in the preceding chapters were about homeless population in general, in particular, in Dhaka in Bangladesh. But homeless population in Bangladesh, like most other countries, is not homogenous. Previous chapters did not cover specific strata of homeless population – street children – whose extent and nature of the problems and needs have been found all over the world as different than adult homeless population. This chapter deals with the unique profiles of street children, especially, in Dhaka. The broader national housing context, and different macro-causation and micro-stimulus that lead to the pauperization of the rural peasantry, already mentioned before, have also ramifications for discussing the plight of street children. Therefore, contents of this chapter do not aim to be discrete but related to and develop on our previous findings. We begin first by defining what 'children' in Bangladesh mean. This is then followed by an aggregate estimation of different types of children broadly related to the object of this study - homelessness. This estimation sets a premise to focus further our examination of the specific types – children of the street and children of street dwellers. Then conditions of their living are explored in details.

Definition of Children in Bangladesh

The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by Bangladesh in 1990 reset the legal and moral ground to ensure the rights of a 'child'. It does not mean, however, that general well being and rights of children in Bangladesh were non-existent before. On the contrary, different statutes and laws have specified different age limits for children to look after their well being[37]. Unfortunately, they create more contradictions than consensus in definition[38].

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[37] The legal and statutory definitions of children in Bangladesh differ widely. Following list is not exhaustive.

(1) Child means a person who has not completed 15 years – *The Mines Act, 1923,* Section 2.
(2) Child means a person who has not completed twelve years of age – *The shops and Establishments Act, 1965,* No. VII, Section 2.
(3) Child means a person who has not completed sixteen years of age – *The Factories Act, 1965, No. IV, Section 2* and *Children's Act, 1974,* No. XXXIX, Section 2.
(4) It is punishable for a male adult marrying a girl below 16 years of age – *The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929* (1984 amendment).
(5) All boys and girls under the 14 years of age are children – *National Children Policy, 1994.*

[38] Siddiqui (2001, p.10-11) gives a number of reasons for different definition of a child in Bangladesh. They are: "First, the tendency not to deviate too much from the ground realities (dictated by the prevailing norms) played its part. Second, specific requirements of the concerned legislation rather than a holistic view guided the definition of the child. Third, an 'opportunistic balance' was usually sought between pressures and counter pressures exerted consciously during the legislation process. In other words, these definitions of the

The adoption of the CRC in the national policy realm raises the critical issue of what would we mean by the concept child, as the CRC document defines child as a person below the age of 18. The translation of an apparently culture-neutral concept like child is not easy as it may appear in the specific context of Bangladesh. Blanchet (1996) argued that the conceptualization of child in a given space and time is a cultural construct. Moreover, she contends that there is no matching Bengali word that captures a 0-18 years of ones life span as depicted in the CRC. Instead she gives especial attention to children aged between 8 and 16 years. This is a life stage, she explains, "when the recognition of agentive capacity and autonomy increasingly matters as children are capable of forming ideas and opinions of their own and can engage in independent activities" (Bhanchet, 1996, p. 3).

The closest Bengali word for Child is *'shishu'*. Aziz and Meloney (1985) defined *shishukal*, i.e. period of childhood, as a stage of non-reason corresponding to infancy and pre-school childhood, covering an age span up to 5 years. But this age limit has been taken further to include children of much higher age. Moreover, the word *shishu* does not refer only to the age or physical development of a child. It also refers to a child's life circumstances. For example, a child growing up under economic hardship is expected to take responsibilities early either to earn or look after the younger siblings, much earlier than a child growing up under economic solvency. Blanchet captures both these situations in one place – a middle class school going child and the servant child living in a given house. She notes, "These two types of childhood which unfold underneath the same roof provide a powerful and revealing contrast of the ways in which different childhood and class identities are constructed in the daily intimacy of a home" (Blanchet, 1996, p.10).

It should be obvious by now that the children without a protective cushion and holistic support from family are the object and subject of this research. These vulnerable children have been studied from at least three ways. They are: *working* children, *disadvantaged* children and *street* children. Although they are separated by definition, the underlying nature, extent and causes evident in these approaches may well be overlapping. An unsettled anthropological debate over what is meant by the notion child, especially, what is its age limit has subsequently been reflected on research and practice. Different government and non-government organizations have been seen following different age limits to suit their specific objectives. This ambiguity does not of course contribute to define 'street children' – the specific object of this present study. Amid differences, adoption of an operational definition of street children has lately become a norm to settle the situation[39].

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child were more the outcome of bureaucratic pragmatism rather any principled commitment to improve the lot of children."

[39] 'Appropriate Resource for Improving Street Children's Environment' (ARISE), is an UNDP funded and government and NGO partnership programme

Table 27.   Children Population in Bangladesh, 1961-1996.

 (in million)

	1961	**1974**	**1981**	**1991**	**1996**
Total Population	50.84	71.48	87.12	111.45	121.13
0-14 years of children	26.46 (46.1)	34.37 (48.0)	40.60 (46.7)	50.53 (45.3)	49.63 (40.7)
5-14 years of children	14.20 (27.9)	22.30 (31.1)	25.80 (29.7)	31.83 (28.5)	34.13 (28.0)

Note: Figures

within parentheses indicate percentage of total population.

Source: BBS

(2001), p.24-25.

The National Children Policy, 1994, defines all boys and girls under the age of 14 as children. Table 27 gives an account of children population in different periods in Bangladesh. Although percentage of children population has been decreasing its absolute numbers has almost doubled between 1961-1996. In 1996, children below the age of 14 constitute 40.7 per cent (49.63 million) of total population. If we accept below 18 years as the cut off point in defining children, then 49.76 per cent, 61.75 million, of the 124.3 million population in 1997 would come under this category (MWCA, 1999, p. 16).

Typology - High risk, IN, OF, and children of Street dwellers

Street children are differentiated among themselves just as homeless people are. Experiences of living in streets and the subsequent implications in the life of street children would differ. UNICEF (cited in UNCHS, 2000, pp.77-81) first developed an influential typology of street children; later it was added by another type, i.e. children of street dwellers, by Lusk (1992). Each type is explained below -

- *Children at high risk*: boys and girls who live in absolute poverty in households that do not satisfy their basic human needs.

- *Children in (or on) the streets*: youngsters who spend a substantial portion of their time in the streets, usually as child workers, often with parental encouragement.

(BGD/97/028). The operational definition for an ARISE study in Dhaka states – "Children below the age of 18 years living, working, playing and sleeping on the street who are deprived of basic rights are the street children" (DSS, 1999a, p. viii).

- *Children of the streets*: those children for whom the street has become a home, their primary environment for daily life.

- *Children of street dwellers*:

Existing estimations of street children in Bangladesh have never been carried out according to this typology. The category of street children has been treated more homogeneously than typologically. To add more to the confusion, a recent ARISE study (DSS, 2001) carried out in six divisional cities in Bangladesh has identified four categories of street children but does not present numbers in each category[40]. A total of 445,226 street children, between 3 and 18 years, were counted from selected streets, pavements, parks, different transport stations, slums, and squatters in six divisional cities. Among these cities - Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet - Dhaka has the largest share, i.e. 334,807 or 75.2 per cent of the estimated street children. Actual numbers would be much more than this figure as the report states - 'if other areas including the slum centres and the children who used to stay with their parents at home are taken together for consideration'.

Table 28. Distribution of children according to types

Studies, Samples and Cities	Age in years	High Risk Children	In/On the Street Children	Of the Street Children	Children of Street Dwellers
Rahman (1992) 882 slum children in Dhaka	Below 14	53.3% of a total 1655	497 (56.3%)	385 (43.7%)	--
WVB (1993) 160 girls in Dhaka	7-18	--	118 (73.8%)	37 (23.1%)	5 (3.1%)
DSS (1999c), 206 children in Khulna,	8-18	--	106 (51.0%)	100 (49.0)	--

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[40] Although ARISE has set its own definition of street children (see footnote 34) it had to adopt the following four categories of working definition of street children (DSS, 2001, p. 2):

    i) children upto 18 years of age who work/live on the street day and night without their family;
    ii) children upto 18 years of age who work/live on the street with their family;
    iii) children upto 18 years of age who work/live on the street and return to other family; and
    iv) children upto 18 years of age who work/live on the street and return to their family.

Barisal and Jessor					
Gupta (2000) 247 children in Dhaka	6-18	--	175 (71.0%)	72 (29.0%)	--
AB (2000) 288 children in Dhaka	Below 15	--	172 (60.0%)	107 (37.0%)	9 (3.0%)
AB & Tdh (2000) 246 children in Chittagong	6-16	--	--	155 (63.0%)	91 (37.0%)
READ (2000) 626 children in 8 cities	18 years	--	378 (60%)	248 (40%)	--

Despite this limitation, however, it is possible to get a tentative idea of the relative proportion of each type that is present implicitly in different studies. Table 28 summarizes findings on different types of children by different city/locality specific studies. It should be noted that these studies differ in their definition of children. The distribution of types of children evident in Table 28 gives only an idea. It is indeed a difficult task to draw any conclusion on the relative number of different types of children. To capture an overall scenario of street children in the specific context of Bangladesh, each of the above four types is briefly explained next.

Children at High Risk

Children at high risk are termed as 'distressed children' by the 'National Plan of Action for Children 1997-2002'. This document defines urban distressed children from the point of homelessness – "those (children) living in extreme stress, having no, or only partial, shelter" (MWCA, 1999, p. 112). Children arriving and living in cities due to urban migration to escape rural poverty, children affected by natural disasters, children from broken families and children living without adequate shelter in service deficient urban low-income settlements constitute this group. MWCA (1999) estimates the number of these children living in slums in all over urban areas in Bangladesh as close to 2.5 million, with limited access to education or other urban basic services (ibid, p. 16). To arrive at a more concrete estimation, let us first count the total number of people living in slum and squatter settlements as 7.85 million, i.e. total households living in slums and squatters (1.8 million) times the average household members (4.36), according to

1998 World Bank figures. If we assume from different studies[41] that the percentage of children within 0-14 years of age as 42% of the total population then the total number of children at high risk in all urban areas is 3.3 million. For 2 million people living in slums and squatters in Dhaka in 1998, the number of children at high risk would be 0.85 million.

Children in (or on) the street

According to the 'Report on National Sample Survey on Child Labour in Bangladesh, 1995-96', the number of child labour (aged between 5 and 14 years) in urban areas is 1,136,000, that is 17.25% of the total child labour force (BBS, 2000, p. 150). These children – working children – have to work to earn an income to contribute to their households. In absence of any elder siblings or working parents, working children could well be the only earners in a given poor household. Although a comprehensive study on child labour by Rahman (1997) provides critical insights into the lives and livelihood of children in (or on) the street we should note with caution that not all 'working children' belong to the type of children in (or on) the street. Moreover, there could be a segment of children population that lives in the street but does not work. The ARISE study carried out in six divisional cities found that 69% of its 3974 surveyed street children earn (DSS, 2001, p. 34).

Rahman (1997) reports that the average daily wage and monthly income of this child labour force is Tk. 16 and Tk. 478 respectively; these figures vary among boys and girls, and in favour of boys. According to this study working children were involved in about 300 types of work in urban areas. Most of these working children were living in slums and in most acute service deficient areas where 12 to 47 per cent have been living without access to drinking, cooking and bathing water; about 47 per cent of them have no access to proper sanitation. At night about 70% of the working children sleep with their parents and 10% were found sleeping in their employer's residence; around 7% sleep in open public spaces and 9% in their working places. Around 48% of them never attended school (Rahman, 1997, p. ix-x).

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[41] Rahman (1992) conducted a survey among 302 slum households in Dhaka with an average household size is 5.5. She found 882 children below the age of 14 that is 53.3% of a total population of 1655. The children population below the age of 14 is 46.6% in Agargaon squatter in Dhaka (Paul-Majumder, et al, 1996, p.82). While Islam et al (1997, p. 169) reports from their 1995 urban poverty study that the children population below 14 years is 41.9% among all poor in Dhaka city and 42.5% in all urban centres. According to BBS (1999, p. 21), children below the age of 15 in all slums in Bangladesh is 42.7%; this figure for Dhaka Megacity is 41.8%.

Children of the street

At present there is no national estimate of children of the street in Bangladesh. According to the ARISE study in six cities (DSS, 2001), 62.86% of 3974 surveyed street children sleep or rest in street and different public spaces, and they can be called children of the street. Only 12.08% sleep in slums, presumably with their parents or close kin; a high 25% did not respond. A detailed description of this type will be given later in this report.

Children of street dwellers

Despite street dwellers being a highly visible sub-group of homeless population, there is a striking absence of figures on the scale of their children.

<u>11.</u>   <u>Causes</u>

A triad of poverty, patriarchy and physical forces of nature has been causing immense misery and sufferings to people living, in particular, in rural areas of Bangladesh. The sheer magnitude of the affected people in rural areas is overwhelming compared to those affected in urban areas. The former acts as places of origin for 'distress migration' to the later. Therefore, a discussion on a given urban phenomenon like urban homelessness invariably leads us to examine its causal origins in the rural area. The broad economic, social and physical factors observed active within the triad, put under the rubric of 'push factors', have already been discussed in the context of homelessness in this report. Earlier discussions set a background for this section to focus on the specific implications that these factors have on the disintegration of traditional familial structure: involuntary separation of a child from his/her family. In this discussion, however, there is no denial of the role of 'pull factors' that may have emerged from an apparent rural-urban disparity seen in wage differentials, income opportunities and available basic services. Push and pull factors do not act in opposition or isolation but quite often in their interaction. For example, a divorcee mother has been compelled to remarry, and thereby forced to abandon her child(ern) to overcome her economic insolvency and social insecurity. Under the morbid spell of these factors, changes are taking place not only in the family structure but also in kinship relations that put the parents and their children in different life circumstances. In other words, dramatic changes in the parental relationship in a given point in time would brought insecurity among the children, and this would subsequently give rise to a new vulnerable group in cities called 'street children'.

Table 29.   Causes for becoming street children

(in %)

READ, 2000*	AB, 2000	AB, 2000a	DSS, 1999c
626 children in 8 cities	288 children in Dhaka	246 children in Chittagong	206 children in Khulna, Barisal & Jessor

Economic	Extreme poverty**	Poverty	Poverty and
91.8	90.0	58.5	43.0
Social	Parental divorce/	Torture by stepparents	job opportunities
55.7	3.0	28.5	Lost family contact
Disabled	separation	Seeking job	37.0
4.7	Torture by parents	7.3	Family conflict
Others	5.0	Lost	11.0
1.7	Runaway from home	2.4	River erosion
	2.0	Others	9.0
		3.3	

Note *: Percent exceeds 100 due to multiple responses. **Economic reason:** poverty (35.6%), to earn money (22.7%), landless (19.3%), migration (12.8%), parents could not support (1.45). **Social reason:** death of parents (20.3%), beaten by family/mother/stepmother (15.0%), father divorced mother (6.9%), mother remarried (3.7%), left home (3.7%), abandoned by mother/brother (3.1%), came to town with a relative (1.3%), born on the street (0.6%), homestead land occupied (0.6%), divorced by husband (0.5%). **Disability:** lame (2.6%), blind (0.8%), other forms of disability (1.3%) (READ, 2000,   ).

** 'Extreme poverty' includes no food at home resulting hunger and starvation; loss of parent's income leading to no access to necessary food and clothing; and loss of income due to continued physical sickness of the family members (AB, 2000, p. 7).

Table 29 presents empirical findings on the causes for becoming street children. To put these causes, especially the economic and social ones, in the correct perspective we should keep in mind that people in Bangladesh are first stratified by economic classes. The poor people, in particular women, are further affected by patriarchy, i.e. their subordination by the male members within their household.   It becomes obvious from the evidences presented in Table that poverty is the root cause, acting directly or indirectly, in the making of street children. The social reasons are significant too. Among presented four studies, READ (2000) gives a more in-depth account of the economic and social reasons behind becoming street children. Most often, social reasons act with economic reasons in an interactive way. This is, however, difficult to explain by some abstract numbers. Beyond quantitative profile, the empirical reality will be better understood from the following case examples.

- **Case example:** Farid is a 13 years old kid from Tangail. His father was a carpenter and had been working in a furniture shop in Chittagong before he died three years ago. His father got married four times altogether. Mother of Farid was his second wife. Farid saw his mother

being left by his father without a divorce before marrying for the third time. His younger brother was then brought by and looked after by his (maternal) grand mother, a petty businesswomen, who refused to take Farid. With no option left before him, Farid continued to live with his father as he could not also live with his mother, who as well got married later in Tangail; she has a child from her new marriage. One day he was taken to visit his aunt for a few days. Two days later, he was told that his father had married again. Farid remembers that his father had some landed properties and two bamboo huts. After his father's death, Farid was not given any rightful share of his paternal assets. Instead, he was regularly beaten up and verbally abused by his stepmothers. Unfortunately, neither his father nor his mother wants to keep Farid with them. Nobody wants him. Deeply hurt, he left home and came to Dhaka three years ago. Initially, poor loveless child attempted to visit his home; but his stepmothers behaved badly with him at each of his return. Now he never thinks of visiting there.

- **Case example:** Muhammad Abdul Karim is approximately 12 years old boy. He is from Noakhali. He was born in a very poor family. Being seduced by another women, his father left his mother to marry that woman, and left them in deep crisis. Initially his mother had to work very hard as maidservant to feed them. But later, all her efforts went in vain. Karim is now the only surviving child. His other two brothers and one sister died from hunger and lack of treatment. Two of these three deaths had indeed taken place before him. He is still traumatized by those events. Later his mother remarried and now works in a garment's factory in Chittagong. He had been living with his aunt since his mother left him at his infancy. The last time Karim met his mother was four years ago. At that time he was her only surviving child. She received him well but refused to allow him staying with her. There is a little irony attached to his fate. His mother wanted to take him with her when his father had left her; but his father did not allow that, probably thinking of him as his only chance of leaving lineage. Later he married but Karim did not want to live in poverty in slum. Because, his stepmother used to beat him up and scorn at him without any reason each day while his father was out at work. One day, he left his father for good.

- **Case example:** Sumon is an 8 years old boy. He recalls that his mother died allegedly due to evil spell on her (*ban mara*). He can also remember that his mother had a serious altercation with his father over his intention to marry. His mother was vehemently opposed to such an idea. Soon after his stepmother moved in, happy days of Sumon came to an end. He had to face physical assault and verbal abuse almost everyday. He was forced to leave his home when tortures by stepmother became intolerable. He first went to his cousin who sells apple at Sadarghat (launch terminal). From there he went to Khulna to spent one and half month; from Khulna, he then went to Chittagong to live there for six months. After these months of wondering, he returned to Dhaka from Chittagong by train. He now works as a porter at Kamalapur rail station at Dhaka.

These three brief case examples succinctly delineate oppressive aspects of our society specific to the poor people in Bangladesh. They show how familial relationship can break up under economic hardship as poor husbands can easily be lured at the prospects of receiving dowry and other gifts at their new marriages. Under practice of patriarchy, wives can easily be overruled, pushed aside or assaulted to implement any whim of their husbands. Women have little if no voices at their home. Poverty, lack of education, lack of access to (economic and social) resources, and malpractice of traditional values accelerate creation of a space for male subordination of poor women among the assetless rural people. In a context where mothers are not given due respect they deserve, children is never considered seriously by their parents as an individual who may have their own views, needs and demands (Blanchet, 1996).

The degree in which familial relationship comes under threat due to poverty and patriarchy is unlikely to be found among solvent rural peasantry and urbanites.

Ameliorative strategies/programme

Different organizations, in particular NGOs, have been involved in addressing the plight of the street children in Dhaka and other cities in Bangladesh. Considering the burgeoning nature of the problem, a joint collaboration, named ARISE, between Department of Social Services (DSS), Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was initiated in the recent past. ARISE stands for 'Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children's Environment'. The main objective of the project intervention is to support the development of the most vulnerable children, i.e. street children, by strengthening their survival skills and improving opportunities for a productive future. In accordance with the principles of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the project strategy aims to develop a comprehensive system of support and development for street children by –

- Improving and strengthening existing services/facilities, with focus on shelters/halfway homes for the provision of basic needs of nutrition, medical care and psychological counseling, education and relevant vocational training.
- Providing technical assistance for agencies to develop new services/facilities according to the needs of children identified through exploratory research.
- Establishing the strengthening channels of information sharing, communication and referrals between governmental and non-governmental agencies, formal and non-formal sector of service delivery.
- Developing policy recommendations and promoting advocacy for the implementation of the partner agencies.
- Ensuring dissemination of information and best practices in all relevant DSS projects and programmes through workshops, training, local study, etc.

- Developing a national rescue mobilization strategy for street children and their support agencies.

- Strengthening resource mobilization capacity of existing service providers focusing on cost recovery and local/community resource mobilization to ensure sustainability of services provided

ARISE is a three year project. It started operation from October 1, 1998 in six divisional cities of Bangladesh – Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, and Sylhet. In the implementation of ARISE, local government and communities would be mobilized to help continue the programme through mobilization of local resources. The project envisages linkages for effective coordination and cooperation with different GOs and NGOs dealing with the issues and problems relating to the street children. With that end in view, all the DSS programmes (such as Urban Community Development Programme, Rural Social Services Programme and Institutional Programme) and different local NGOs and UNICEF. Key outputs of ARISE include:

- Street children in six divisional cities will have accesses to sustainable services for the capacity building, including counseling as services and safe shelters

- Services for street children by the government and non-government agencies will be upgraded through information sharing and rapport building.

- A base for professional training or counseling of children will be established.

- Exploratory and participatory research will be conducted and successful innovative approaches to alleviate problems of street children will be disseminated and replicated.

- A systematic approach to protect, support and care for street children will be identified and recognized by agencies involved.

- Appropriate policy recommendation will be formulated

- Resources will be mobilized for the continuous support of street children.

12.   Conditions of Living

"…. street children who have broken off from their families and fend for themselves have the greatest space to construct a world of their own. Many of them describe the freedom of the street as an intoxicating experience, and once a child has known it, he or she cannot go back to the constraints of family live. These children live in a heroic world where the ability to survive is attributed to their own wits and nobody else's. They care little as to whether they are considered children or adults …" (Blanchet, 1996, p. 17).

Street children struggle and survive within conditions of living that have not been created by their own choice. They stay alive in an inhospitable urban environment, against all possible odds. This section reviews the conditions of their living.

Violence

Living without a home and protection, in other words devoid of an identity and guardians, make street children vulnerable to violence. Street children face violence in both street and home. The three main perpetrators who have been reported in various studies committing violence against them in street are broadly related to the law-enforcing agencies, especially, police, *mastans* and adults. Street children are also assaulted and abused by their stepparents and brothers at home. Members of the police force view street children, from a legal point of law, as potential accomplice of criminal gang, drug ring, and civic nuisance as floating vagrants. On the other hand, street children are also objects of extortion and exploitation. *Mastans* often harass street children physically in collecting tolls for sleeping in a given place or for funding their drug addiction or just for sheer amusement. Male adults are known to beat up young boys if they are perceived as potential competitors in places of work. All these three perpetrators are known to show their predatory instincts in sexual abuse of girls.

Police tortures street children with impunity. Violence against street children by police have been known taking place in three different settings: in street, in a police station under 'safe custody, and in 'state custody' in juvenile correctional facilities and vagrant homes (Khair and Khan, 2000; Khan, 2000). In Chittagong, 162 children (66%) out of 246 children mentioned that they are mentally and physically tortured by the police, railway police and general people (AB, 2000, p. 5). Within this numbers, the police tortured 79 children (68 boys and 11 girls). A participatory research conducted on the street children, by the street children, had identified and prioritized 11 problems faced by them[42]. Except one all the mentioned problems are social in nature. The brutal treatment by the law-enforcing agencies as the main problem for living in the street (Khair and Khan, 2000). Street children reports –

> "There are other problems in the street, but abuse from police is a major problem. As we don't have any relatives in Dhaka City, we have to live under the open sky at night, after working hard for the whole day. We never get involved in any 'bad' activities. Actually, we do not have enough time to do anything else, but work. The police pick us up every now and then without any specific reason. According to our research, police caught 20 children out of 30 without having any specific case against them. These children were accused of 'sleeping on the street'. If children have no other option but to sleep on the street, is it their fault?" (Khair and Khan, 2000, p. 27).

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[42]   The problems faced by street children are in the following order of importance: 1. Torturing by the policemen. 2. Torturing by the musclemen. 3. Misbehaving by the adults. 4. Street children do not like their present work. 5. No access to better job without having guardian. 6. Problem of marriage for street girls. 7. Street children's future is uncertain. 8. Poor income. 9. Street children can not protest due to absence of their relatives. 11. Street children do not have access to education (Khan, 1997).

Age plays an important role in exposing girls to sexual violence. A report on girl street children observes that girls aged 12-18 is more vulnerable to sexual abuse than those of aged 7-11 (WVB, 2000). In Chittagong, 17 children (7%) were reported sexually abused by Railway policy, Railway staffs and adult vendors (AB, 2000); another study conducted in Khulna, Barisal and Jessor reported that 18 girls, or 9% of 206 children, were sexually abused (DSS, 1999c). Girls are physically weakened, and importantly, tormented mentally by this act of insanity. Trauma and fear of threat for not speaking out the name of their abusers have shattered the psychological state of these girls.

Crime

National Children Policy, 1994 in accordance with CRC attempts to ensure the rights and well being of street children. Unfortunately, the just objectives delineated in this Act too often came in conflict with the presence and implementation of other Acts. The most notable Acts by which street children as well as homeless people in general are affected most are *The Bengal Vagrancy Act, 1943* and *Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898*. Both these acts were enacted during the British period when maintaining law and order among the natives had been given utmost priority. Although the limitations of these two Acts, in particular, were well known no subsequent governments since the end of British rule in 1947 had took initiatives for necessary corrections or amendments for their apparent utility as a tool in suppressing possible public control. Tragically, street children fell victim of these laws. Street children's right to the city has been denied to a great extent with the implementation of these laws[43]. In other words, it is a crime to be a child living and working in the street. Street children are vulnerable due to the floating nature and lack of permanent address. The ways in which the law is enforced can be quite creative in nature as described by the street children –

> "The most common way is that before a *hartal* (strike) day police go the different places of the city in civil dress, where street children usually sleep at night. They ask the children whether they would like to have some '*khichuri*' (a special Bengali rice-lintel preparation). Unfortunately, being hungry street children, those of us who are 'new comers' to the city easily accept this offer without knowing the consequences. The police usually ask children to follow them to a certain place where *khichuri* is supposed to be distributed. When the unsuspecting street children go over to the designated place, they find other policemen waiting there to forcibly pick them up in a vehicle and send them to the local police station" (Khair and Khan, 2000, p. 29).

Despite sanitize profiles of street children depicted in many reports and studies there are evidences to suggest that a section of street children are involved in petty as well as organized crime although it would be difficult to give an up-to-date estimation. It is inevitable that not all-

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[43]   See footnote 20.

street children can live and work outside criminal activities. Children rarely admit their involvement in crime as the adult members of the gang – who would usually restrict them from speaking with outsiders freely and openly, cautioned them. A recent study carried out in Chittagong reports that a small number of children (27 out of 246) admitted that they are involved in criminal gang activities such as drug dealing, smuggling, political violence and illegal sex trade (AB, 2000a, p. 4). Mamun states in a personal communication with this author that his experience of interviewing street children suggests that stealing food for self consumption is not considered a crime by them. Some of the street children are habituated to crime and reluctant to come out of it, while some also suggested that they would leave petty crime completely if honest gainful livelihoods are available.

An extensive study in 8 cities in Bangladesh found that only 28 children (4.5%) are involved in prostitution; of them 21 were girls and 7 were boys (READ, 2000, p. 32). According to an estimate by this report if the assumed number of street children lies in between .2 to .3 million than a 5% of this figure i.e. 12 to 15 thousand children would be involved in prostitution. Another countrywide survey on street children by Rahman (1997) found that girls between the age of 12-17 years usually come in this profession. This report suggested that about 50 per cent of these floating child prostitute were between 12 to 17 years.

Box. 3   Conversations with street children in conflict with the law

Case 1.   Abdul Kader Khokon: A fifteen years old hardcore pick-pocketer

You look suspicious. How many times did the police catch you? Never, as my protectors (big brothers) give police money regularly. How will they subsist if they catch us? … *Who do you fear most?* Public. *Who is this public?* Those people who walk along the roads. They beat us mercilessly if they can catch us. *Do beatings by public strong?* It's quite dangerous. That's why we move in-group. If one of us gets caught we protect him by beating him first in front of the public to deceive them and then let him escape. *As a bright young man why did you choose this profession of pick pocketing when so many opportunities are available?* Consider it as a business without capital. *You call this a business?* Of course, there are risks involved in this business. …..

How much do you have to pay to your protectors? All have to be given each day. After counting money, they give us something for eating and clothing. *How do they know what had been your catch?* They stay with us, even now while I am talking to you. *What's the meaning of pick pocketing?* It means stealing one's money. *Don't they pick anything else?* I steal whatever I can but never hijack[*]. *What's the difference between pick pocketing and hijacking?* Hijackers use knives and revolvers. They take money by showing arms but we use our brains. *Who is good among these two?* We. *Why?* We do not beat or shoot anyone. On the contrary we got

beaten quite often. Hijackers harm people irrespective of their successful catch or not. Public fear them a lot. *Do you want to become a hijacker?* No, my present business is better. *How have you become a thief?* I am not a thief. *Then what are you?* A pick pocketer. *Tell me how have you become one?* No body wants to remain good while being hungry. I learned my trade from my seniors. They trained me. Now I can eat everyday. *If someone can manage your food will you still do it?* I shall always pick pocket; it is now my obsession. *Don't you feel guilty?* No, I don't kill anyone. There are people who even hijack me.

<u>Case 2.   Ayub Ali: A fourteen years old born-again thief</u>

What do you do? I collect waste papers. *What did you do before?* I used to steal. I had a pixy group. I stopped stealing and doing other bad things after my parents were separated. However, I will punish my father one-day. *Why would you punish him?* He didn't feed me. He got married again after leaving my mother. *Have you seen your face in the mirror lately?* My face is not that good now. I have injury in my head. I have just arrived from Sylhet shrine. *Why did you go to that shrine?* I went to the shrine to make a promise that I would never steal again. Given good opportunity, I shall do good jobs. I had been obsessed in stealing in the past. I went there to ask His forgiveness. *Did God forgive you?* Yes, He did. Shahjajal's shrine is quite hot. *How did you ask forgiveness in the shrine?* After my arrival, caretakers of the shrine would not let me in as I am without decent clothing. What I will do then? I ask His forgiveness by mere touching large cooking pans with my hands, and requested Him to give me proper jobs so that I never ever have to steal again. I didn't steal even when I was very hungry during returning from Sylhet by train. …..

How did you learn to steal? When I first arrived at Dhaka I knew nothing. I used to get afraid at the sight of a car. Later I started participating in a gang, first by doing the watching role. Subsequently, I learned and did the stealing part**.** *Will you steal again?* No, never again. I shall be saved if I can do a job. But people will give alms but not a job.

Source: *Ghar Nai*: Street children interviews by Nasir Ali Mamun, and serialized in the
        (Bengali daily) *Prothom Alo*. Translation is by this author.

* Note: 'Hijacker' in its local use denotes armed mugging.

Health

The percentage of street children taking nutritionally balanced diet with meat, fish, egg, milk and fruits is usually very small[44]. Lack of access to balanced diet causes malnutrition that in turn have negative impacts on their normal physical growth and mental development. Informal conversation

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[44]   Those who can not afford taking a balanced diet two or three times a day is found to be 71% in a study conducted in Khulna, Barisal and Jessor (DSS, 1999c, 20).

96

with street children in Dhaka reveals that constant mental preoccupation with food affects a given street child's mental state. Therefore, malnutrition and living rough compounded by trauma and stress make street children vulnerable to poor mental and physical health. Available case studies on individual street child show traces of mental fatigue and stress, manifested often in abnormal and self-inflicted violence (Box. 4). But unfortunately, there is hardly any data to report let alone study the mental health of street children. Therefore, an important question of how have street children living rough been affected mentally can not be addressed in this report.

Box. 4 Self-inflicted injury as manifestation of a disturbed mind
Muhammad Abdul is an orphan and can not say how old is he. From picture he appears a regular 9-10 year kid. His father married again after his mother died few years back. His father died later. He has 1 brother and 2 sisters living with his stepmother. He does not live with her as she demands Tk. 20 per day from him. He can't pay the money demanded by her though his siblings do. Following conservation reveals what is hidden behind an apparent regular face of a kid –
Can't you provide Tk. 20 by doing some works? Scrap paper sells Tk. 1 per kg here. I earn Tk. 3 or 4 each day. I don't like slow works. I prefer rock and role (meaning possibly speedy and exciting works). *Why have you so much scratches in your body?* These! They are scratched with a razor blade when I was hungry. *Why did you do it?* I begged for food in this place but no one feed me. People kicked me instead. I was left alone hungry for three/four days in the (train) station. After that I scratched my body. *Didn't you feel pain as you scratch yourself?* I did that when I feel sad, then I take drug as well. *Is it good?* Of course, very good. First I take sedative tablets worth Tk. 1 and then scratch myself with a blade. *What is this tablet for?* For sleeping, for addiction. *Do you scratch yourself after you take a tablet?* Yes. *Don't you feel pain?* My body gets settled after a brief period of shivering. Then I don't feel anything. *Do you feel pain later?* Much later. *Doesn't anyone watches you during hurting yourself?* I give a damm! They don't give work, and food. Even my own brother and sisters don't help me. They kick me all in the name of loved one. *Now tell me honestly, why do you take drugs?* I can't tolerate hunger. I can't remain stable if lived without food for three/four days. *Why are you without clothes in this winter?* Don't have any. Kabil has stolen them. *Who is he?* He is my friend. *Does he hurt himself as well?* No he doesn't. He is out of this. He steals now.
Source: *Ghar Nai*: Street children interviews by Nasir Ali Mamun, and serialized in the (Bengali daily) *Prothom Alo*. Translation is by this author.

Table 30.   Common diseases among street children

	READ, 2000 (626 children in 8 cities)	Gupta, 2000 (247 children in Dhaka)	AB, 2000a (246 children in Chittagong)
Sick population	200 children (32%) were suffering during the survey	215 children (87%) were suffering during the survey and in the recent past*	56 children (22.8%) were suffering from diseases during survey
Types of diseases (in %)	Fever 24 Abdominal pain 22 Chicken pox 21 Cough and cold 15 Gastric/Acidities 8 Ear infections 6 Jaundice 2	Fever 51.6 Diarrhoea 8.8 Chicken pox 7.9 Scabies 7.0 Pain 6.5 Jaundice 5.6 Gastric 4.7 Asthma 3.7 Others 4.2	Skin diseases 41.1 Worms 21.4 ARI** 17.8 Eye infections 8.9 Hepatitis 5.4 Diarrhoea 5.4
Treatment sought (in %)	32	92.5	Data not available for 56 children
Types of treatments sought (in %)	Health clinic/centre 38 Pharmacies 35 Indigenous methods 27	Consulted doctors 54.3 Pharmacies 29.1 Indigenous methods 16.6	Pharmacy 71.1 GO/NGO clinic 6.9 No treatments 22.0 (among all 246 children)

Note *: Although no data indicates how many children were actually sick during survey, it was reported that 77 children (31%) were found suffering during 0-6 months (Gupta, 2000, p. 32).

**: ARI = Acute Respiratory Illness

Existing trends in sick population, patterns of common diseases, and percentages and types of treatment sought by street children are shown in Table 31. It is evident from these very recent studies that 22 to 32 per cents of street children have been suffering from a diseases during survey. READ (2000) reports from its wide spread samples that incidence of sickness hardly differs by gender as the sick population among girls and boys are 33% and 31% respectively. However, the types of sickness are bound to vary owing to the unique physiological differences, in particular, specific to adolescent girls and boys. Nevertheless, most of the observed common diseases, e.g. fever, cough and cold, worms, diarrhoea and skin diseases, may have originated from malnutrition, rough sleeping conditions and poor personal hygiene. DSS (1999c, p. 22) reports that most of the street children (58%) had suffered various illness upto 5-10 days while only 12% suffered more than 20 days. In times of sickness, street children do not usually have access to proper medical care available at the government hospitals, health clinics/centres; Medicare provided by various NGOs is subjected to their availability in a given city or locality. A large number of them depend on local pharmacies for medical advice and supply of medicine. In case even these services are not available or affordable, some of them had to resort at last to the risky indigenous methods.

READ (2000, p. 35) has found that more than on third of the children (39%) heard about HIV-AIDS. There is slight difference on awareness about AIDS by gender: Girl child 40% and boy child 39%. Sources from which knowledge on AIDS acquired include TV (76%), friends (19%), poster/banner (75%), and radio (5%).

Substance abuse

No street child, boy or girl, would admit at first of taking any drugs for fear of guilt or perceived criminal offence. Confession of taking drugs would come only after a close intimacy has been developed between the child and the interviewer. In spite of this note of caution, existing studies observe that substance abuse by street children has not reached any alarming proportion. The high price of hard drugs like heroine and cocaine has probably acted as a deterrent for not their rampant use among the street children. However, use of soft drugs like hashish, sedatives and phensydile (a cough syrup) has been observed. Despite its importance, only one study by AB (2000) in Chittagong gives any near detail account of substance abuse among street children. The study reports that 82 children (33.3%) were addicted to some form of drugs (Table 30). Table 30 shows the use of different drugs in terms of age and sex. Street children take drugs to forget their sorrows and sufferings (AB, 2000).

Most of the children take one drug. The study by AB & Tdh (2000) went further to investigate the reasons behind substance abuse. The main reasons for taking drugs are: followed to adults (20 cases); influences of peer (53 cases); and to reduce frustration (8 cases). AB (2000a, p.23) observes "children know that it is a bad habit to indulge in drugs but they are not aware of exactly what effects that drugs have on the body. Furthermore, there is no body to explain the bad effects of drugs to these children.

Table 31.   Substance use by street children in Chittagong

Age Gruop	Sex	Use of Substance		Types of Substances*					
		Yes	No	Hashish	Tobacco	Phensydile	Sedative	Cigarette	Alcohol
A 6-9 yrs.	Boys	7	4	--	1	--	1	6	--
	Girls	--	23	--	--	--	--	--	--
B 9$^+$-12 yrs.	Boys	36	52	1	1	--	3	34	--
	Girls	--	16	--	--	--	--	--	--
C 12$^+$-16 yrs.	Boys	37	25	--	5	1	1	38	1
	Girls	2	6	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total		82	164						

Note *: One child may take more than one form of drugs.
Source: AB (2000, p. 24)

Self esteem

Street children have low self-esteem first due to derogatory images that they are attached to at a societal level for being homeless and rootless; and second, verbal, physical and sexual abuses to a specific street child also directly contribute to the development of low self-esteem. In the former case, terms like *tokai, kangali, fakirnir poot* (son of a beggar) to mean street children and

nosto meye, *potita* to call prostitute including child essentially contain a negative evaluation by society[45].

What was once a popular cartoon character, i.e. *tokai* (meaning child who picks waste that can be resold or recycled), has now been used by society at large to label a specific section of the urban poor – street children who may or may not pick waste for a livelihood. Although society has stereotyped these street children under this label, they feel demeaned by it. Why do they complain? They object to the use of this label as it possibly robs them of their unique identity and typecast as a faceless homogenous group. A recent feature in the Bengali daily presents Ratan and three more children near his age as sleeping near a dustbin beside Gopibagh Bazaar in Dhaka[46]. The common sentiment prevailing among the street children against typecast-image is reflected in Ratan's own words -

> "you can not tell us *tokai* just because being homeless we collect waste from other rubbish and sell. We do a business here. You can call us small businessmen or *vanguri* (scrap) merchant. Given a chance I could have also attended school daily, carrying books on my backs and study. What would you call us then?"

Age and Gender

Key findings of different studies are presented in Table 32 and Table 33 to get a general idea about age and gender profiles of street children. A few major observations can be drawn from them. In terms of age, lesser percentage of children below 9/10 years is likely to be in the street. Street children are likely to be concentrated between 10 and 14 years of age. From a gender perspective, there are more boys in the street than girls; according to studies presented in Table 33, boys constitute 60 to 80 per cent of the surveyed street children.

Table 32.   Age profile of street children

(age in years)

Rahman, 1997 *(working children in urban areas*)*	Gupta, 2000 (street children in Dhaka)	AB, 2000 (street children in Chittagong)	DSS, 1999c (street children in Khulna, Barisal, Jessor)

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[45] Blanchet (1996) provides an eloquent description and explains how *kangali* and *nosto meye* develop a counter culture amidst these imposed derogatory identities by *samaj* in Bangladesh.

[46] *Manusher Mukh* (faces of men): a recent feature in the Bengali daily *Prothom Alo* by Anu Das Gupta. Translation is by the present author.

3-6	*304*	7-9	34			8-10	64
(1.0%)			(14%)	6-9	72	(31.0%)	
7	*395*	10-12	125	(29.3%)		11-13	69
	(1.3%)	(51%)		9^+-12	104	(33.5%)	
8	*997*	13-15	60	(42.3%)		14-18	73
	(3.2%)	(24%)		12^+-16	70	(35.5%)	
9	*1361*	16-18	28	(28.4%)			
	(4.4%)	(11%)					
10	*3911*						
	(12.7%)						
11	*1968*						
	(6.4%)						
12	*5564*						
	(18.1%)						
13	*4005*						
	(13.0%)						
14	*4533*						
	(14.7%)						
15	*3021*						
	(9.8%)						
16	*2975*						
	(9.7%)						
17	*1753*						
(5.7%)							

Note *:   Urban areas include 4 metropolitan cities including Dhaka, 5 old district towns, 4 new district towns, and 4 Thana headquarters in Bangladesh.

Age profiles of street children presented in Table 32 do not give a detailed account as given by Rahman (1997) for working children. However, review of literature on street children, and personal conversation and observation suggest that pattern that is evident in age distribution among working children is also seen among street children. The two most important patterns are: first, as boys grow older toward 18 years they tend to have their own business establishments and possibly graduate from street children status. Second, girls tend to get married at their early teens or withdrawn from street by their parents. These patterns suggest that many street children possibly rejoin the mainstream (poor) population; however, there is an acute absence of exploration of this important issue for guiding future intervention. A study on girl street children reports in support that the number of girls in the 7-11 year and 12-18 year

groups constitute 68.75% and 31.25% respectively (WVB, 1993, p. 11). Study by READ (2000) reports that the mean age of floating disabled children and other floating children as 13 to 14 years.

Table 33. Gender split among the street children

Studies	Age limit	Sample	Male (in %)	Female (in %)
Gupta (2000) in Dhaka*	7-18 yrs.	247	28	72
AB (2000) in Dhaka	Below 15yrs.	288	83	17
AB & Tdh (2000) in Chittagong		246	81	19
READ (2000) in 8 cities & towns	Below 15 yrs.	626	70	30
DSS (1999c) in Khulna, Barisal, Jessor	18 yrs.	206	63	37
DSS (1999e) in Rajshahi, Bogra, Rangpur	8-18 yrs. 7-16 yrs.	60	58	42

Note *:   World Vision Bangladesh (WVB) who has an explicit bias toward street girl children sponsored this study. See WVB (1993) for more details.

To discuss how do boys and girls differ in their experiences, causes of homelessness, and life chances, it is first important to bear in mind that there is no co-relation between age and length of living in the street. For example, a 12 years old child might have spent longer time in the street than an elder 14 years of age. Amidst all studies, only AB (2000) seems to report a gender specific profile of street children in Chittagong. Life experiences of street boys and girls, as manifested partly by sleeping situations at night, persons they are sleeping with, tortures they encounter, duration at street, meals per day, places of eating, daily incomes etc., differ significantly at an empirical level. Although AB (2000) has its limitation as a city specific study, however, its finding could well be useful in understanding the situation in other cities in Bangladesh. Highlights include the following:

- *Sleeping situations*: While a majority of 137 (68.8%) boys sleep in the railway station, 31 (65.9%) girls sleep in the street with their families. 104 (52.2%) boys sleep with peers and 36 (76.6%) girls sleep with their parents.

- *Torture*: 144 (72.4%) boys have been reported tortured by police and others while the figure for girls is 18 (38.3%).

- *Duration in the street*: Staying in street in the duration categories of 1-3 years, 3-6 years and 6$^+$ years among boys and girls show a decreasing and increasing trend respectively. This means that girls stay longer in street as they have fewer opportunities to graduate from street children.

- *Daily meals*: 129 (64.8%) boys and 26 (55.3%) girls can manage two meals per day. 140 (70.3%) boys eat their meals in pavement restaurants while 37 (78.7%) girls eat their meals in open air that are most probably home-cooked.

- *Daily incomes*: Fewer boys (10.5%) are without incomes than girls (46.8%), and boys tend to have a greater daily income than girls.

Beyond descriptive profiles of street children, however, systematic attempts to gain insights into their life experiences in relationship with street environment are almost rare. Typecasting of street children

as *tokai* or *kangali* helps little to reveal their unique life experiences beyond homogenous profiles they meant to capture (Siddiqui et al, 1990; Blanchet, 1996). Only exception is probably the 'Child-Street System' (CSS)[47] – a systemic tool – employed by Stoecklin (2000) in his qualitative study of street children in Chittagong (AB, 2000). He argues, "it is a question of casting light not merely on the child but rather on the overall interactions which children in the street have with other social actors" (ibid, 39). In using CSS, an individual case is successively reduced to a few key 'words' characterizing the street experience of a specific street child; these words are then explored further to identify possible 'links' that exist between them. The objective of this exercise is to develop a basis for construction of typology, comprising six main profiles. Each profile is to be understood as a general 'ideal-type', meaning that a profile is composed of outstanding features that are found in several cases. The profiles emerged in the context of Chittagong are (Stoecklin, 2000, cited in AB, 2000, p. 43-49):

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[47]   'Street-Child System' (CSS) is an innovative systemic tool employed to understand the different ways of experiencing street life. This systemic model is an effort to see children in the overall context of their social and symbolic relations in order to understand their behaviour. CSS has eight dimensions that are interrelated; so change in one will affect the others (Stoecklin, 2000, cited in AB, 2000, p. 38). They are:

(1) *Physical/spatial area*: setting, territory
(2) *Time*: duration, age, rupture/progression
(3) *Socialization*: street/family
(4) *Sociability*: organization of the peer-group, hierarchy in the street, relation with adults
(5) *Dynamic*: types of street activities, drugs, games
(6) *Identity*: self-image, group identity, identification
(7) *Motivation*: family-street balance, perception of street, street career
(8) *Gender*: boy/girl

- *The Hero*: This child is characterized by a strong sense of being virtuous against all odds. He/she does not stand injustice, fights to defend others, feels responsible for family members, has generally a good self-image and wants to be recognized as a honest street worker.

- *The Hardworker*: The hardworker has a strong willpower, sees him/herself as a honest and loyal contributor to family income and would just like to live a normal life as a street worker. Like the 'heroes' these children find their insertion in a peer-group positive, because it gives them opportunity to work in an organized way. They have a mixed image of themselves: as good and honest boys, but helpless, deprived and stigmatized as 'street children'.

- *The Ambivalent*: Any child in a street situation is somewhat ambivalent. However, the children put under this profile are those who have quite contrasted motivation, the heroes and the hardworkers on the one hand are somewhat positive and show self-confidence. The survivors, the isolated and the dependent abused on the other hand are rather negative and desperate. The ambivalent stands somewhere in between these two.

- *The Survivor*: these children do not have both parents anymore. They are either orphan and engaged in solo working activities for their own and siblings survival, or are used for begging to the benefit of abusive step-parents. Street life is really not a choice of their own, they left in one-go and are permanently on the street. Facing violence on a daily basis (from adults and elder boys) their image of self is contrasted: negative image of self linked to their social position, while remembering love and affection of family which helps them maintain some kind of positive personal identity.

- *The Isolated*: Isolated children in the street have absolutely no group insertion. Some even refuse the group's lifestyle. They are usually newcomers and have no or quite weak work skills. Abandoned by parents or tortured and exploited by in –laws or elder siblings, these isolated children are highly abused and assaulted by the Mafia, the police and the general public. They feel apart from society; socially excluded, rejected, neglected, 'a nobody'. Nevertheless, they tend to have a mixed image of self, mainly because they are not engaged in bad activities.

- *The Dependent Abused*: These children are in the street under close and abusive family supervision (mother, stepmother, stepfather). They have no independence, and all they can do alone is just roaming around and play for few moments when they are not compelled to beg and sometimes have quite simple working activities. Cautiousness and fear, and absence of group insertion and protection prevent these children from acquiring work skills and the capacity for negotiation.

Income and Employment

Derogative typecasting of street children by society at large not only reduces their self-esteem but also affects negatively their job prospects. Being already constrained by their lack of

education and reference guardians, street children are further constrained in finding a gainful job due to the negative image attached to them. Street children are basically forced to fend for themselves by engaging in those marginal works that would not normally be done by others; only occasionally, they live with their families in the street and share their income with them. Soon after their arrival in Dhaka, they have to start searching for a means to eke out a living. Most often, street children, especially girls, fell prey to deceivers. As their street life began, boys and girls are exposed to cheating, exploitations, and physical, sexual and verbal abuses, especially, by male adults. Just as homeless people lag behind in employment opportunities in comparison to other non-poor groups, options for earning among the street children are limited if not worse than those performed by 'working children'. Rahman (1997) reports that 16,373 working children in four metropolitan cities (including Dhaka) are engaged in 300 types of activities. Some of these activities require technical skills which street children have been seen lacking invariably. Table 34 presents some recent finding on the types of work performed usually by the street children in different cities in Bangladesh, and the average daily income, working hours and savings that arise from those activities.

Table 34. Income and Employment Characteristics of Street Children

	Gupta, 2000 (Dhaka)	AB, 2000a (Chittagong)	DSS, 1999c (Khulna, Barisal, Jessor)
No. of children surveyed	247	246	206
Key types of activities (in %)	Hawking 38.0 Private service 13.0 Rickshaw/van 1.0 Carpentry 1.0 Students 4.0 Do not work 43.0	Porter 40.0 Rag picker 28.5 Shop assistant 4.5 Rickshaw/van 5.5 Prostitution 0.5 Vendors 2.0 Begging 3.5 Do not work 11.5	Waste picker 23.8 Vendor 13.1 Rickshaw/van 7.3 Begging 9.7 Others 18.9 (maids, labour) Do not work 27.2

		Others 4.0	
Average daily income (in %)	<Tk. 10 2.0 Tk. 11-25 21.0 Tk. 26-50 21.0 Tk. 51-100 14.0 >Tk. 100 2.0	<Tk. 10 6.0 Tk. 10-20 38.0 Tk. 21-50 34.0 >Tk. 50 4.5	Food for work 8.0 Tk. 10-20 53.0 Tk. 21-50 32.0 Tk. 51-100 7.0
Average daily working hour (in %)	Data not available	<3 hrs/day 6.5 3-6 hrs/day 32.0 6-12 hrs/day 48.0 >12 hrs/day 1.0	Data not available
Savings	Data not available	36.6% can save	77.2% can save

Evidences shown by Table 34 suggest that types of employment open to street children are invariably non-technical in nature. A noticeable percentage of them have also been observed being not engaged in regular works; for example, percentage of street children not working in Dhaka is 43% (Gupta, 2000), and in 8 cities is 34% (READ, 2000). Presumably these street children are either dependent on others or are involved in petty thefts or other criminal activities to maintain their day-to-day subsistence. Most of the types of work listed in Table 34 are labour intensive. Hawking, porter, and waste picking are some of the most frequently observed works; the opportunities for and extent of these types have been known to vary according to the specific circumstances of a given city. Begging as a last resort is also prevalent among them. The types of work and amount of money earned usually vary according to age and sex of street children; elder children and boys (than girls) earn more. Most of their daily income is very small and fixed within Tk. 10-20 per day. Although there are cases where daily income exceeds Tk. 100 per day, they are very few in number. The mean daily income found among 626 children in 8 cities is Tk.

35 per day; mean savings per day is Tk.10 (READ, 2000). It is interesting to note that street children do not help their parents as they themselves are living hand to mouth; in Chittagong, 150 have been reported not helping their parents but those who do usually help their mothers and none of the girls help their fathers (AB & Tdh, 2000).

In comparison, street children are in worse situation than (non-homeless) working children in at least the money they earn. A key difference between these two is the latter's access to capital, however small. This factor has arguably resulted in their self-employment that makes a big difference in their income. Rahman (1997) reports from his study on working children that the average monthly income of the self-employed children was Tk. 797 (US$ 19.93) and the average monthly income of the child worker employed by others was Tk. 369 (US$ 9.05).

Coping Strategies

Circumstances specific to the living condition in relation to a given city or locality decide how well a street child feed him/herself. Level of earning has certainly related to whether he/she will buy food once, twice or thrice a day. Available studies suggest that most of the street children are able to eat at least twice a day: 64.8% twice a day (AB & Tdh, 2000); 63.1% street girl children at least twice a day (WVB, 1993). Street children usually buy their food from cheap pavement restaurant – *eetalian* hotel in popular vocabulary. *Eet* is a Bengali term for brick; *eetalian* hotel is a situation where one takes his/her meal by seating over an *eet,* probably even without a roof overhead. For those who eat prepared meals, street side pavements, i.e. footpaths, have also been the place of eating. If incomes are absent or not adequate, street children are known to beg for food or survive by scavenging on rotten food in the dustbins and thrown away waste by restaurants. DSS (1999c) reports from its findings that 23% of the respondents used to meet their food requirements through door to door begging; in another study, 32% survive on residue or waste food (DSS, 1999b).

Perception of personal cleanliness among most of the street children inside and outside is poorly understood. For example, Gupta (2000) reports that 144 out of 247 street children in Dhaka did not demonstrate any clear idea about the importance of cleanliness; the rest of them showed a clear conception of what cleanliness means and why do they need it. A study carried out in Khulna, Basrisal and Jessor found that 82% respondents have the habit of cleaning their hands and face and used toothbrush regularly while 79% use charcoal for brushing and cleaning their teeth; children who have reported having bath on a daily basis is 86% (DSS, 1999c). Another study carried out in Narayangonj, Tongi, and Mymensingh observes that 42% take regular baths (DSS, 1999b).

Street children in different cities in Bangladesh usually have access to drinking water due to availability of tap and tube well water but lack access to sanitation. Extent of lack of access to proper sanitation has been seen better in Dhaka than other cities. For example, DSS (1999c)

found that 78% respondents do not follow sanitary practice probably due to non-availability of such facilities near their places of living and working. The figure reported by DSS (1999b) is These children either defecate/urinate in roadsides or other open spaces (DSS, 1999c). In Dhaka, on the contrary, the percentage of interviewed street children using slab latrine (15%) and sanitary latrine (46%) are noticeably higher than those three cities. Compared to the findings of DSS (1999c), very few (4%) relieve themselves under open sky in Dhaka (Gupta, 2000). One probable reason could be the presence of many public buildings (e.g. transport stations, vegetable markets), public toilets, and facilities specifically made available by different NGOs for the street children on payment.

<u>13.   Response to Homelessness</u>

This section first describes different traditional responses to homeless people as a background to find and describe recent practices aimed at eradicating homelessness in cities in Bangladesh.

Traditional responses to providing accommodation and assistance to potentially homeless people

The burgeoning scale and evolving complexities of urban life as witnessed today do not have a long history in Bangladesh as opposed to the overwhelming peasant life. The present 23.3 per cent urban population was as little as 5.6 per cent of the total population just forty years ago (Table 1). Despite rapid increase in urban population in the recent past, the notion of 'traditional society' should refer primarily to a situation that is observed and practiced in the rural areas. Tradition based on social customs and religion that guides daily affairs of the peasantry, at household and societal levels, has had provisions to look after those who find life hard to live due to sudden crisis or infirmity. Traditional society outlines a number of roles and responsibilities for benefit of its vulnerable members; but tangible responses to eradicate extreme homelessness in the longer term are rare, if not almost absent. Nevertheless, there are responsibilities bestowed onto a given household to offer protection for its vulnerable members, and thereby avert potential homelessness in two possible cases. The well-off section of society are also made obligated to contribute to homeless people in the form of onetime handouts or donations that may or may not have implications to eradicate extreme homelessness. All these responsibilities have approval of, and are carried out under the observance of *samaj* in a context of traditional rural society. The nature and context of these responsibilities are discussed next in the stated order.

- Pre-existing patrilocal-patrilineal context highlights the traditional society in Bangladesh. Parents, in particular, widowed or divorced mother expect to be supported by a (elder) son in their old age. In traditional society, daughters are usually given in marriage in their early teen ages to males much older than them. Traditional society is characterized by a large number of widowed mothers as a result of this age difference. Mothers prefer to have as many boys as possible as an insurance for support in their old age. Children in return expect to get

blessings of their parents, especially father, which is thought essential to become a part of the *samaj*.

- Brothers have a responsibility to look after their sisters in unforeseen crises, for example, in the events of divorce or premature death of their husband. After death of a father, sons are entitled to receive larger share of inheritance under Muslim laws than their mother and sisters. In reality, sisters in an average poor household in traditional rural society usually waive rights over their meagre share in favour of their brothers. Sisters expect that in return their brothers would look after them in moment of their unforeseen crisis.

- At a larger societal level, society and religion support a system of redistribution of resources in favour of the destitute. The utter destitute, e.g. beggars, disabled persons and orphans, can expect alms and assistance from the financially solvent section of society. Poor's expectation to receive assistance is socially constructed (Maloney, 1991). All major practicing religions in Bangladesh preach among their respective followers to give assistance to the destitute, poor and orphan as their moral duty. Islam, however, gives this duty an institutional shape. Islam instructs its followers to give annual *fetra* and *zakat* to destitute and poor distant relatives as forms of *de facto* taxation. A small amount of money has to be given as *fetra* for each member of a given solvent household twice a year before the holy *Eid* festivals; the money can only be received by a deserving individual. On the other hand, money to be given annually as *zakat* depends on one's movable assets, mainly gold/silver and money in excess of a fixed limit. Besides deserving individuals, an organization can receive people's *zakat* to run philanthropic purpose like orphanage. One can also contribute to these organizations or others if he/she wishes outside religious instructions.

Orphans[48] (and abandoned children) can take either form of the extreme or passive homelessness, depending on its specific circumstances. For example, orphans are extreme homeless if they are children of the street; they are passive homeless if sheltered in an orphanage or live as servant or worker who sleeps in an employer-given accommodation. In Bangladesh traditional responses to orphans and abandoned children vary under instructions of different religions. The position of Islam, the religion of most of the population in Bangladesh, is different than Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Islam being a religion of tolerance offers compassionate views toward this vulnerable group. Although Islam allows its subjects to take guardianship of an orphan till his/her puberty it forbids him/her from any inheritance after the

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[48] Children without both parent or without father are treated as orphans according to Department of Social Welfare. Orphan population in Bangladesh is quite significant as 70-78 state run orphanages operate for the care, protection and education of approximately 9,000 to 10,000 orphans (Chowdhury & Shamim, 1994). Besides, government also provides monetary grant to each of the 1300 orphanages which it recognizes officially; each orphanage gets an allocation of Tk. 400 per orphan per month (DSS, 1999d, p.9).

death of his/her foster parents. The prevailing system of guardianship plays a positive role by providing the orphan or abandoned children with a social identity (Chowdhury & Shamim, 1994).

The reality in practice, however, is far from traditional society ascribed roles and responsibilities to look after the wellbeing of homeless people. Under the influence of poverty, compounded by patriarchy, the rural peasantry has long been undergoing a process of breaking up the traditional familial structure and kinship. Forces responsible for these changes have already been explained earlier in this report. As outcomes of this process, first, husbands divorce, desert or torture their wives. Second, on the one hand, (step) parents are abusing physically and refusing shelter to their children not only as a means of reducing dependants but also depriving them of their due share of inheritance. On the other hand, young children are leaving their parents, rural homestead and social support structure in search of incomes when chances of inheriting immovable assets and land have been obliterating rapidly. However, all that were good are not lost. In moments of national and local crisis, society/community comes forward collectively even today in response to their humanity. During the great flood in 1998, for example, affluent rice-selling community in old Dhaka had fed thousands of (temporary) homeless people and destitute each day for more than a month in a well-coordinated way. The community in question did not wait for government supports, recognition or press coverage. During the whole month of *Ramadan*, countless *Masjids* (i.e. place of worship) across Bangladesh make arrangements for *iftar* (i.e. the event of breaking fasting) for the destitute.

De facto moral and religious obligation still compels people at large to give alms and assistance to the poor and destitute. All that is needed is to motivate solvent people more to make the best of the untapped positive synergies in our society.

Actors: Government agencies, NGO, Religious organization

There are tangible responses, however small in relation to the overall need, by government agencies, NGOs and religious organizations that address the plight of the different categories of homelessness in cities and villages in Bangladesh. A review of their activities during this research suggests that these responses on occasions go beyond shelter issues to include financial, food and social assistance. Government agencies are by far the largest actors in providing shelter and other support services to homeless people in the short- and long-term basis. The role of NGOs and others are limited in this regard mainly due to lack of access to land although they provide (night) shelter and services side-by-side state run initiatives for children of the street. It was mentioned earlier in this report that the NGOs, especially the large ones operating in the rural shelter sector, have a tendency to leave aside the poorest of the poor.

A framework for responses to homelessness, suggested by Edgar et al (1999, p. 56), is used to give next a critical appraisal of different actor's responses to homelessness in Bangladesh (Table 35).

Table 35.   State responses to homelessness in Bangladesh

Approach	Accommodation	Financial services/support
Emergency/crisis	State sponsored night shelters (with income and social support) for extreme homelessness • Proposed HSD, DMDP and UPRP models	State allowance/services for extreme and potential homelessness - • poor aged-people, • distressed women • disabled persons
Transitional/support	Supported housing (with social and medical support) for extreme homelessness • *Hetoishi* - Homes for Aged People	Credit programme for passive homelessness • *Ghare Phera* (Return Home) Programme
Permanent/integration	Basic housing for passive homelessness • *Asrayan* (Shelter) Programme • *Adarsa Gram* (Ideal Village) Project • Public housing for *Bastuhara* and squatter Resettlement	Housing loans for the disaster-affected homeless poor • Housing Fund

Emergency or crisis approach

Except makeshift accommodations provided for the flood affected homeless people, in schools and other multistory educational facilities, there are currently no sustained efforts aimed at providing night shelters to the extreme homeless people in cities in Bangladesh. Although a few drop-in centres run by the state and NGOs have been in operation to cater only for the children of the street. 'Night shelter' as a concept is not unknown in Bangladesh. Different important policy documents have already suggested its introduction in major cities in Bangladesh.

HSD Proposal:

A proposal for a phased-construction of 11 night shelters, in nine different locations in Dhaka, to provide refuge to 4950 members of the lowest income group, i.e. homeless people, was submitted to the Housing and Settlement Directorate (HSD) as early as in 1993. The proposal has since then waiting for its necessary approval. Its total cost was estimated as Tk. 39.97 million; under further scrutiny this was suggested to be much higher than initial estimation. Possibility of the cost recovery of its capital investment was ruled out as a nightly rent of an amount between Tk. 7.92- Tk. 12.12 per person was found not affordable by the target group. However, an operational cost at the rate of Tk. 2.92 per night per person, equivalent of 5.84% of the daily income of the target group was considered possible as night rent (cited in ADB-GOB-LGED, 1996b, Annex J, p. 11-13).

DMDP Proposal

Later in 1995, another proposal for night shelters came from Ahmed (1995) in support of the specific recommendations of an ongoing Dhaka Metropolitan Development Planning (DMDP) Project. As part of an overall review of the housing market, her proposal targeted the lowest 0-10 percentile population in Dhaka as potential users of night shelters with sanitary facilities. The overall cost of a single story night shelter for 50 person was estimated as Tk. 2.56 million or Tk. 51,240 per person. Cost-recovery of the capital investment was again thought not possible due to user's low and uncertain income. However, the proposal suggested engaging the user's labour in maintenance.

UPRP Proposal

A comprehensive Urban Poverty Reduction Project (UPRP) in 1996 had also included the provision of night shelters and sanitary facilities for the urban destitute; however, it suggested separate provisions for children, adult men and women and families. This proposal considered both temporary sheds and permanent 5-story walk-up structures. The former type would be located either at the pockets of busy (government owned) urban lands or on the roof of municipal markets; shelters and services were intended to provide for the transient adult groups. The later type would be constructed in regular plots accommodating either 384 or 512 children and destitute women. The ground floor of these building would be used for social and community functions. The estimated cost of night shelters was US$ 1.258 million (UPRP, 1996). Recovery of capital costs were seen not possible. User-pay system for the offered attached public toilet services was suggested to generate income for necessary operation and maintenance.

While implementation of night shelters has remained stranded, the last government, however, has taken initiative to give monthly allowances to the vulnerable groups like homeless old people and distressed women. The following information was taken from a special supplement

published as part of election campaign by the ruling Awami League as its tenure ended (Ratan, 2001). It claimed the following:

Allowance for Aged-people

An amount of Tk. 500 million was spent each year to give 413,190 homeless old people nation-wide monthly allowance at the rate of Tk. 100 person since 1996-97 financial year.

Allowance for Distressed Women

Poor women are potential homeless people when they become widows or deserted by their husbands. Tk. 250 million has also been spent each year since September 1999 to give monthly alliance poor widows and women deserted by their husbands. Distressed women numbering 236,595 within 460 upazilas (sub-districts), 12 C-graded municipalities and Tajgaon circle of the capital were initially brought under this project.

Fund for the Disabled

A Foundation for the Disabled has been established at a cost of Tk. 100 million.

Transitional or support approach

***Ghare Phera* (Return Home) Programme**

The urban poor living in slums and squats are the distress migrants who have been pushed to the city due to poverty, natural disasters and river-erosion. *Ghare Phera* is a credit programme conceived in this context for these ill-fated urban poor; it was launched by the Bangladesh *Krishi* (Agricultural) Bank in May 20, 1999 - a period also marked by the state initiated slum and squats eviction drive. The conception of this programme was underpinned (rightly or wrongly) by two assumptions: First, most of the slum and squat dwelling urban poor despite owning homestead land and other assets, however small, have chosen to live a misearable life in the major cities in Bangladesh. Second, many different problems of the Dhaka City, in particular, could be resolved if these people are helped to go back to their owned home in respective villages.

Name: Rootless People's Rehabilitation to their Own-home[49].

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[49] The name of the programme is in Bengali. It is translated into English by the author from "*Chinnomul Manusher Sho-griha Protyabasan*". In the inauguration ceremony of this programme, the then honourable Prime Minister called it as *Ghare Phera* (Return Home).

Objective: To give loans to rootless people, living in inhuman conditions in slums in Dhaka, for income generation to facilitate return to their own homes for living in decent environment.

Implementation of this objective will result in the following outcomes -

- It gives chances for children and future generations of the ill-fated slum dwellers to grow up in proper natural environment

- Improvement in the existing unhealthy urban environment through the return of rootless poor from slums to their own-homes in ancestral villages.

- Return of city's rickshaw, pushcart and van pullers to village will improve urban life by reducing existing traffic congestion

- Return of rootless people to villages will contribute to increase farm and off-farm production by reducing the existing scarcity of daily labourers;

- Abolishment of slums due to return of their rootless dwellers to village will reduce levels of crimes in society by putting an end to criminals' chances of taking shelter in slums

- Rural economy will be boosted through an integration of ill-fated slum dwellers into different productive activities in their respective villages.

Coverage: The poor living in slums and squatter settlements in Dhaka who are willing to go back to their owned home in villages are initially covered by this programme. Subsequently, the poor living in similar situations in Chittagong, Khulna, and other major cities of Bangladesh will be brought under this programme.

Programme Implementation Process: Field workers of the Bangladesh *Krishi* Bank (BKB) conduct socio-economic survey in slums and squatter settlements under the direct supervision of its Managing Directors. The objective of the survey is to get an idea of the respondent's immovable assets and their willingness to return back to village. Respondents are classified into the following four categories:

1. One who has a house on a homestead land and small agricultural lands;
2. One who has a house on a homestead land but no agricultural lands;
3. One who has only a homestead land but no house on it and no other lands;
4. One who has neither house, homestead land or other land; the respondents in this category had been living either as dependent homeless or squatter homeless (Rahman, 1993).

Information given during the survey was later verified jointly by the Head Office and local branch of the BKB in the respective Union/Thana of the respondent. Upon satisfactory verification, respondents are interviewed again in the Head office to decide the amount of credit to be given to them. The BKB has adopted a policy to sanction loans only to the first three categories of the urban poor. The remaining fourth category will be sheltered and financed by the *Asrayan* Project of the state, and will be discussed later in this section.

115

Credit Mechanism: The Head office sanctions the credit, and is disbursed in village from the closest branch of the BKB. The amount of loan one can get ranges between Tk. 5,000 and Tk. 300,000. One does not require deposit any collateral for a loan up to Tk. 50,000; but for loans beyond this amount, one has to deposit his/her movable/immovable assets and business as collateral. There is a grace period from one to six months depending on the area and amount of loan sanctioned; although exempt from repayment during this grace period, one has to pay a token amount of Tk.30 per month. After this grace period, the loan has to be repaid with its interests in a maximum of 36 installments. For all disbursed loans an interest has to be paid at a flat rate of 10%. In ten phases of *Ghare Phera* Programme so far, from 20.05.99 to 15.03.01, a total of 2,372 slum dwellers and squatter families (or 14,220 people) were sanctioned Tk. 42.227 million as loans by the BKB. The beneficiaries allegedly went back to 145 *Upazilas* (sub-districts) in 31 districts in Bangladesh.

Permanent or integration approach

Since independence different projects have been undertaken independently as well as in collaboration by the government of Bangladesh and NGOs to provide shelters and land to the poor homeless people in rural and urban areas. These initiatives implemented either through shelter provision and loans for its construction or micro-finance as an incentive to return to village aimed at the reintegration of homeless people on a permanent basis. As a result, some of these shelter provisions had been tied with social and economic components to contribute to the alleviation of poverty among their targeted beneficiaries. This section now describes some of the recent and old projects.

Adarsha Gram (Ideal Village) Project

The present *Adarsha Gram* Project was formerly known as "Cluster Villages for Rehabilitation of Rootless and Landless Families". Shortly after the national independence in 1972, the Land Administration and Land Reforms Divisions took initiative to maximize the utilization of the state owned *khas* land under the newly introduced land reforms[50]. One of the outcome was the establishment of seven cluster villages in four *char* (i.e. land that resurfaced from the riverbeds) areas to rehabilitate river-erosion affected 1470 landless and rootless families. *Adarsha Gram*, therefore, is the oldest rural housing initiative to provide home for the homeless in rural areas. Since its initiation in the early 1970s, *Adarsha Gram* approach to land reform and poverty

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[50] Some important land reform measures were undertaken in 1972 in Bangladesh. President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation, issued Presidential Order No. 96, 98 and 135 for the exemption of Land Development Tax (*Khajna* in Bengali) up to 25 *Bhigas*, to set maximum ceiling of land from 375 *Bhigas* to 100 *Bhigas*, and to ensure that all diluviated land after aluviation will be government *khas* land respectively (MOL, 1996, p. 3).

alleviation has been a national priority issue and subsequently, was included in all the relevant national planning documents.

Name: Establishment of Self-reliant *Adarsha Gram* for Rehabilitation of Rootless and Landless Families (ALA 88/15   May 1991 – June 1993).

Objective: To facilitate and support the human development of landless families through helping them settle as small rural communities in *Adarsha Gram* established on the government *khas* land that is effectively redistributed to such families under the project. The objective is implemented through the following activities –

- Identifying and/or reconfirming *khas* land locations which are conducive to *Adarsha Gram* settlements from physical as well as soico-economic perspective; to earmark and process the land of such locations for effective redistribution to and settlement of beneficiaries;

- Identifying, matching and mobilizing landless and destitute families to settle in *Adarsha Grams* in a democratic and decentralized manner with the assistance of a committee at Thana level;

- Making all such families owner of a piece homestead land of at least 0.08 acres and at least half of the families owner of some agricultural land and/or a pond;

- Providing long-term user rights for ponds and community facilities to all *Adarsha Gram* communities; such facilities will typically include community centre, grazing land, graveyards, prayer grounds, etc.;

- Assisting and involving *Adarsha Gram* communities and families in the establishment of homesteads and community facilities including latrines, kitchens, tubewells and community centers, following quality cost standards agreed upon beforehand;

- Assisting *Adrasha Gram* families and communities to initiate and engage in human and community resources development activities (e.g. education, health and family welfare, income generation, production, community development, etc.); this will be achieved through support and facilitation from government agencies as well as from NGOs.

Coverage and costs: *Adarsha Gram* projects have been implemented allover Bangladesh, except Rangamati, Khagrachari and Banderban districts, with resources of her own and the European Commission (EC). The target of this project is the establishment of 1,104 *Adarsha Grams* for homeless 45,647 families; an Adarsha Gram can accommodate 15-500 households. Total investment cost of the project at the end of 1997 was estimated as Tk. 970.66 million with the EC providing 53.4 per cent of the total cost; EC contribution as per revised 1996 financing memorandum was ECU 11,000,000 (ECU 1.00 = Tk. 47.1166).

Asrayan **(Shelter) Programme**

The relatively recent *Asrayan* programme bears similarities with *Adarsha Gram* Project in many respects. However, it is claimed that the concept of this programme came from the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her visit to a cyclone-affected area in May 1997. *Asrayan* is an integrated effort for the homeless poor to provide shelter and promote self-income generation. An overall socio-economic development among this target group is the main aim of this programme. For its proper implementation, active cooperation and coordination between different actors were sought under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office. Defense forces have been given the task of constructing this programme; different NGOs were given the responsibility for carrying out the motivation and training works.

Name: *Asrayan* – Shelter and Income Generation Programme for Landless in Bangladesh.

Objectives: Provision of homestead for homeless and landless, development of skills for self-income generation activities through training, and alleviation of poverty through provision of credit for small enterprise development. The objective is implemented through the following activities –

- Identification of *khas* land
- Selection of beneficiary families
- Development of settlement area
- Construction housing barracks, disaster shelter and community center
- Transfer of title deeds of shelter and land
- Establishment of cooperatives
- Taking programmes for tree planting and conservation of environment
- Development of farm and off-farm activities
- Development of use of bio-gas plants
- Providing training and formation of groups among its beneficiaries to tackle disasters, empowerment of women, primary health care, making arrangements for skills and small enterprise development.

Coverage and Implementation period: All over Bangladesh during five years (1997-98 to 2001-2002)

Estimated Costs: Fully financed by national resource of Tk. 1640 million. Approximately Tk. 50,000 (US$ 1150) will be spent for the construction of shelter and implementation of socio-economic development for each family (Rahman, 1999).

Physical components: Under the nationwide coverage of this programme, 50,000 homeless families will be rehabilitated in 5,000 barrack houses. Each barrack house will accommodate ten dwelling units for ten families; each dwelling unit has an area of 225 sq.ft. Rehabilitated each

family will be handed over the title deeds of the dwelling unit and 0.8 acre *khas* homestead land in the joint ownership of wife and husband. Under this programme, all 50,000 families will be given training for increasing their awareness and enterprise skills and human resource development. Besides, 50,000 person will be given on average Tk. 10,000 as credit for income generation activities.

Each barrack house will be provided with one tubewell and two separate unit of bathroom/ latrine for males and females. Each barrack house will be constructed with C.I. sheet, wood and R.C.C pillar at a cost of Tk. 3,66,800 per unit. In a programme site with four or more barrack houses, a community center will be constructed at a cost of Tk. 2,50,000. More than half of the project target has already been achieved as it was reported in June 2001 that 29,000 families were given houses (Ratan, 2001).

Public Housing for *Bastuhara* (homeless) and Squatter Resettlement

Since independence in 1971, the government had implemented a number of squatter resettlement projects located at the outskirts of Dhaka. These projects were heavily subsidized and often distributed to class three and four government employees along with their intended homeless (*bastuhara*) beneficiaries. Moreover, the possessions of these shelters have been known to change hands from their original squatter allottees to non-target group (Tipple & Ameen, 1999). Table 36 lists all the major projects either already implemented or waiting for their implementation by the Housing and Settlement Directorate (HSD).

Table 36.   Completed and on-going public housing for homeless and squatter population[*]

Name of project	Project area in acres	Project cost in Million Tk.	Total dwelling units constructed
1. Semi-pucca houses for the *Bastuhara* (Mirpur, Dhaka)	---	43.04	4304
2. Squatter resettlement project (Section 11, Mirpur, Dhaka)	92.5	193.34	2568
3. Squatter resettlement project, Phase - 1 (Duttapara, Tongi, Dhaka)	101.0	119.79	1016
4. Semi-pucca row houses for *Bastuhara* (Keraniganj, Dhaka)	64.13	231.40	3200

5. Core houses for *Bastuhara* and destitute families, Phase- 2 (Duttapara, Tongi, Dhaka)	35.0	219.0	2424
6. Core houses for *Bastuhara* (Mirpur, Dhaka)	50.0	305.0	3500
7. Flats for *Bastuhara* and low-income government employees (Mirpur, Dhaka)[**]	40.0	3326.9	16,000
Total	**382.63**	**4438.47**	**33,012**

Note [*]**:** The first three listed projects are completed while the remaining projects are proposed under the 5th Five Year Plan period (1997-2002).

[**]: 9,600 i.e. 60 per cent of the 16,000 flats will be for *Bastuhara***.**

Under heavy national resource constraints and dwindling aid flow, various projects described in this section give evidence to a positive role played by the government, in particular, to address the homeless people in rural and urban areas. They have shown that interventions have indeed diversified enormously in their scale, content and coverage over the years to impact positively, especially, people within passive and potential homelessness. They have also shown areas where the government has yet to turn policies into tangible actions to address the plight of the extreme homelessness. An increasing involvement of the NGO sector in the urban and rural shelter scenarios, and their even greater enthusiasm to work in partnership with the government have been an encouraging sign in the right direction. These are the projects designed (at the top) with responsive goals and objectives, and have the potentials to eradicate homelessness significantly in cities and villages in Bangladesh. But a disturbing absence of critical appraisal of these projects restrict us from giving any evaluative comments on whether the set objectives have been implemented without any financial aberration, and importantly, above narrow political patronage distribution. What implication does this limitation has on our eventual identification of the best and worst practice becomes simple: Each of these projects has the potential to be considered as the best practice only and only if it is implemented 'properly'.

Other emerging issues

Possible all issues, within and beyond TOR, are covered in this research.

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Appendix 2

- o **Current and forthcoming publications and publications under review**

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Introduction

The number of homeless people worldwide is estimated to be between 100 million and one billion (UNCHS, 1996). The gap between the low and high estimate is very large, however, because the true number depends on the definition used. This paper explores the diverse definitions of homelessness in 10 developing countries and how those definitions have developed. Definition is important because "... most researchers agree on one fact: who we define as homeless determines how we count them". (Peressini, McDonald and Hulchanski, 1995).

Theoretical concepts of home and homelessness

Home is a very rich concept. It embodies many ideas such as comfort, belonging, identity and security. Somerville (1992: 532-4) attempts to tease out the multi-dimensional nature of the meaning of home and its converse, homelessness. He presents seven key signifiers of home – "shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode and paradise". To these, are added the connotations they have for dwellers (warmth, love, etc.), the nature of the security they give (physiological, emotional, etc.), and how these affect them in relation to themselves (relaxation, happiness, etc.) and others (homeliness, stability, etc.). Homelessness is the condition that represents the corollary of these, expressed in connotations of coldness, indifference, etc., presenting stress, misery, alienation, instability, etc.

Thus "home" is a place where a person is able to establish meaningful social relations with others through entertaining them in his/her own space, or where the person is able to withdraw from such relationships. "Home" should be a place where a person is able to define the space as their own, where they are able to control its form and shape. This may be through control of activities and of defining their privacy in terms of access to their space. When this is done, they have made a home with a sense of their identity (Cooper, 1995).

Recently, UNCHS (Habitat) - now UN-Habitat – has been revising its definitions of homelessness in the light of existing documentation worldwide rather than just in Europe, North America and Oceania. An early, discussion document, published as Springer (2000), and the compilation that resulted from a review project (UNCHS, 2000)[51], both explored the nature and usefulness of definitions of homelessness.

The terms homeless, houseless, roofless, shelterless people, and pavement dwellers do not always cover the same people. Indeed, Dupont (1998) deliberately avoids the use of the term `homeless' because it adds the loss of familial roots to a lack of shelter but also he argues that many people living on Indian streets have a house and/or a home somewhere else, most likely in a rural area. Just because the family is spatially scattered, it does not preclude it from providing support and emotional ties or, indeed, imposing duties and obligations.

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[51] Based on a report by Graham Tipple. The following paragraphs are based on the discussion therein.

Other commentators have defined homelessness as featuring a lack of a right of access to secure and minimally adequate housing, variously described as, "rooflessness (living rough), houselessness (relying on emergency accommodation or long-term institutions), or inadequate housing (including insecure accommodation, intolerable housing conditions or involuntary sharing)" (Edgar, Doherty and Mina-Coull, 1999: 2).

This is very close to the four-fold quality-oriented definition developed by FEANTSA[52] to both define the condition of homelessness and evaluate its extent:

- rooflessness (i.e. sleeping rough);
- houselessness (i.e. living in institutions or short-term `guest' accommodation);
- insecure accommodation; and
- inferior or substandard housing (Daly, 1994).

Springer (2000) points out that the two last classes are overlapping as an accommodation might be both insecure and substandard. She also refers to the Austrian[53] quality oriented criteria for assessing homelessness. These are the minimum standard of the housing unit, the infrastructure, including schools, shopping opportunities and transport, psychological and health criteria and the juridical security of the housing situation.

Beavis et al (1997) describe the use of the time component in their study of homelessness among Australian aborigines. They distinguish among situational or temporary, episodic and chronic forms of homelessness.

Cooper (1995) discusses the ideas of relative and absolute homelessness. Absolute homelessness occurs when there is neither access to shelter nor the elements of home. A person may be in relative homelessness; that is, they may have a shelter but not have a home.

In western writing, social exclusion is a major component of the concept of homelessness. It implies a lack of social ties and relations revealing social exclusion or marginalisation (Edgar, Doherty and Mina-Coull, 1999). Somerville (1992) posits that homelessness is likely to have rather different meanings for women and men. Men would be expected to feel deprived of property rights, whereas women would miss exclusive possession, users' rights and the implications that has for the day-to-day discharge of domestic responsibilities.

> "Thus, although homelessness means lack of privacy and dispossession for both men and women, for men it seems more likely to take the form of propertylessness, whereas for women it is more likely to mean the disruption of everyday routines. Again, this could mean that homelessness is more serious for women than for men" (Somerville, 1992: 535).

Glasser (1994: 3) quotes a definition of homelessness as suggested by (Caplow, Bahr and Sternberg, 1968: 494):

> "Homelessness is a condition of detachment from society characterised by the absence or attenuation of the affiliative bonds that link settled persons to a network of interconnected social structures".

However, it is intuitively evident that, while this social exclusion and detachment may apply to men sleeping rough in the United States and Europe, it may not apply to

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[52] Fédération Européenne D'Associations Nationales Travaillant avec les Sans-Abri (Federation of European National Associations working with the Homeless).

[53] BAWO Projekt Büro, Östereich, Grundsatzprogramm, retrieved January 1999 from the World Wide Web http://www.bawo.at.

pavement-dwelling families and is unlikely to apply to the many millions of people living in squatter settlements throughout the world (Glasser, 1994).

Springer (2000: 479) concludes that

> "there are as many classifications and definitions of homelessness as there are different point of views. A definition of homelessness might refer to a special housing situation, to a special minimum standard, to the duration and the frequency of a stay without shelter, to lifestyle questions, to the use of the welfare system and to the being part of a certain group of the population, to the risk of becoming houseless and to the possibility to move or not if desired."

There is a body of literature that argues for a continuum approach; either a homelessness continuum or a home-to-homelessness continuum (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). At one end of the latter, more all encompassing, continuum lie satisfactory and secure forms of housing and at the other lies sleeping rough. Neale (1997) sees homelessness as a highly ambiguous and intangible phenomenon which lies at one end of housing need/experience. She argues that, as it is integral to the housing system and inseparable from other aspects of housing need, theories of homelessness and policies to tackle it cannot be separated from other aspects of 'housing'.

We have recently conducted a review of homelessness in ten countries; PR China, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh in Asia, Egypt, Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe in Africa, and Bolivia and Peru in Latin America; sponsored by DFID.[54] In each, we asked for local definitions of homelessness. The following is a discussion of what these and other definitions tell us about attitudes to homelessness and policies that may be adopted to combat it.

Official definitions of homelessness

In the UN System, used for example in the "Compendium of Human Settlement Statistics¨ , the expression "Homeless household" refers to

> "… households without a shelter that would fall within the scope of living quarters. They carry their few possessions with them sleeping in the streets, in door ways or on piers, or in any other space, on a more or less random basis." (UN, 1998: 50)."

This definition, suggesting visibly dishevelled figures tramping city streets and carrying their possessions to random sleeping places, is universally recognised and simple. However, such "accommodation oriented" definitions have been criticised because they have restrict the issue of homelessness to not having a house - "houselessness". They do not do justice to the complexity of homelessness nor are they sufficient to describe the different realities of homelessness in every country, Cooper (1995).

Other countries have widened the definition to include people sleeping in institutions meant for those without any form of shelter. This is the case for definitions used in the USA, India and France. For example, in the USA, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, defined "homeless" to mean:

> "(1) An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence; and
>
> (2) An individual who has a primary night-time residence that is:

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[54] Homelessness in developing countries, DFID Research Project No. ESA343, 2001-2003.

A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelter, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);

An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.

(3) This term does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained under an Act of Congress or state law." (USA, 1994: 22).

This rather narrow definition of homelessness equates to the two groups in Europe who would be sleeping rough or in a public shelter. The use of the term 'adequate' does, however, leave room to extend the focus to those whose housing can be deemed to be inadequate. Their situation, which for the most part corresponds to a narrow or literal definition of homelessness, also implies the absence of community and family ties, privacy, security, and the lack of shelter against the elements (FEANTSA, 1999). However, writing on behalf of FEANTSA, (Avramov, 1996) prefers a wider definition which also includes the value-laden term "adequate":

"Homelessness is the absence of a personal, permanent, adequate dwelling.

Homeless people are those who are unable to access a personal, permanent,

adequate dwelling or to maintain such a dwelling due to financial constraints and

other social barriers…" (Avramov, 1996:71), in (FEANTSA, 1999: 10).

Adequate housing is now defined by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the following terms:

"As both the Commission on Human Settlements and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 have stated: 'Adequate shelter means… adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities – all at reasonable cost.'" Article 11 (1) (UNCESCR, 1991).

We have difficulty, however, in accepting that all who are not "adequately housed" in accordance with the above in developing country contexts could be regarded as homeless. Because of this, we asked the question of all our collaborators, "What is homelessness in your country context?" In the remainder of this paper, we discuss the answers.

Official or government definitions vary widely among the countries in our study. They range from nonexistent to virtually all-encompassing. Despite using the term 'homeless' widely in policy, a number of countries, including Peru, Ghana and China, have no single 'official' governmental definition of homelessness.

The way in which the term is used in housing development policy and in censuses gives an indication of some governments' informal definitions. However, the increase in the number of people living on the streets is forcing many countries into defining home, if not homelessness. For example, China has, for decades, prided itself on its strong socialist welfare system; no unemployment and no homelessness. A strong national housing registration system, tight links between employment and housing, and rigid constraints over movement of people, meant that few households would ever be without a dwelling of their own or, at least, one shared with family members,[55] unless they moved illegally away from their place of registration.

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[55] The three generation household is traditional and still very common in China.

The development of a market economy in China and the relaxation of some controls, including control over movement, has meant that China is experiencing a growth in the number of people moving away from their place of registration or *Hukou*, where housing is assured. These people, known as *Mangliu* (blindly floating people) or *Sanwurenyuan* (without registration card) are the closest to being officially defined as homeless people that can be found in China. They are not entitled to (subsidised) housing through the normal channels and, like most households, find themselves unable to afford housing on the open market. They collect in 'aggregated villages' of poor quality overcrowded housing; they are disjointed from mainstream society in that they are not locally entitled to school places, welfare payments, etc. However, China still has no official definition homelessness and regards those without housing, especially squatters, as illegal, rather than as a category of people to be supported by policy.

This illegal status of squatters in China contrasts with the situation in Peru and Bolivia where, although there is no official definition, there are two very different semi-official categories of people regarded as homeless for policy purposes. Both countries adopt similar approaches to addressing these two categories. The first category to be regarded as homeless are those without legal title to land. In Peru they are addressed by the land property formalisation programme which focuses on formalising land title for squatters without a registered plot or property, being below the poverty level, and claiming a plot from the government. A similar system operates in Bolivia also.

The second group consist of those living on the streets of Peruvian cities. This group is branded variously as alcoholics, addicts, vagrants, criminals and mentally ill. Even the street children are called 'piranitas' after the piranha fish. Being so far outside any formalised community, this group will not be granted land title. In Bolivia, there is a second category of street dwellers who are not regarded as homeless. They are the migrant traders from the Alto Plano region, mainly from the Potosi region, who come into the cities to trade during the summer months and live outside, on pavements or under trees in open space, generally with no form of shelter. Later, they will return to their homes in the rural areas.

Another group who might be thought of as homeless but are outside the Peruvian official definition are those living in dilapidated *tugurios* (old city-centre housing) which is, in many cases, in such poor condition as to be dangerous and hazardous to health. They fall outside the land registration policy aimed at addressing homelessness. Here we can see an interesting similarity between China and Peru in that the people most clearly identified as homeless, those living quite literally on the streets, are the very ones least likely to have their housing needs addressed and the most likely to be considered illegal. This demonstrates that, in defining homelessness, a government does not necessarily indicate its intent to address it.

In Ghana the very concept of homelessness is new and it sits uneasily within a context of traditional extended family responsibility. There is, in fact, no word for homelessness in the main Ghanaian languages, reflecting the fact that the phenomenon is relatively recent. Nevertheless, for the 2000 population and housing census, in order to differentiate between those people with homes and those without, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) defined homelessness not in shelter terms but as 'people not belonging to a household'.

However, the GSS accepted a very broad definition of home, based on basic shelter. By this definition, a home in Ghana includes sales kiosks, abandoned warehouses, offices or shops. The key element of this definition is that the structure should have a roof. No other issues of quality or suitability were considered. Therefore, in Ghana,

only the most destitute, without any form of shelter or roof, and without family anywhere nearby to take responsibility for them, would be considered as officially homeless.

The government of Bangladesh has frequently used the term homeless in different policies and documents; but surprisingly, it did not attempt to define and count people within an explicit category of 'homeless'. Terms like *bastuhara* (homeless: *bastu* = home and *hara* = state of not having) do not clarify the definition as there is no definition of home in the first place.

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) suggests an official definition of homelessness, which it uses for census purposes, as:

> "Floating population are the mobile and vagrant category of rootless people who have no permanent dwelling units whatever …and they are found on the census night … in the rail station, launch *ghat* (terminal*)*, bus station, *hat-bazaar* (market), *mazar* (shrine), staircase of public/government buildings, open space, etc." (BBS, 1999: p. 3).

This definition was refined from an earlier one which included the term 'transient population', when it was agreed that much of the transient population may have homes elsewhere, which they had temporarily abandoned. Central to the change in BBS's definition is a notion of 'rootlessness' (implying separation from family and familiar places) and of homeless people being landless, or of having lost their original homestead.

The Census of India defines homeless people as those not living in "census houses", i.e. a structure with a roof. Planners charged with providing housing land to deserving cases classify a person as eligible for their housing land allocation programmes if they do not have a roof or land. Thus, residents of 'Juggi and Jompri' clusters (squatter areas) are entitled to a plot in a regularised area only if their housing is cleared. However, if a household has a plot in a regularised area but only a poor and insubstantial shack on it, it is not regarded as homeless because of the land holding. By a quirk of policy, pavement dwellers are usually not entitled to any plot because they are rarely on the voters' list and do not possess ration cards (UNCHS, 2000). Hindu *sadhus*, (wandering ascetics) who travel around India carrying minimum possessions dressed only in loincloths and having given up all worldly attachments in order to obtain enlightenment, are not included in the category of homeless. *Banjaras* (Gypsies) and Loharas (Nomadic tribe) have also been excluded.

In Indonesia, the closest translation of homelessness in the national language is *tunawisma* (from Old Javanese meaning no house). The Indonesian language does not distinguish between house and home, (both words translating into *rumah)*. This might suggest that Indonesians would have difficulty differentiating between houselessness and homelessness. However, the official definition, as used in the national census of 2000, is based not on houselessness, rooflessness, rootlessness or landlessness, but on permanence.

The Indonesia census of 2000 divides the population into two main categories, those having a permanent place to stay (*mempunyai tempat tinggal tetap*) and those not having a permanent place to stay (*tidak mempunyai tempat tinggal tetap*). Those not having a permanent place to stay included ship's crewmen, nomadic people and

people living in houseboats or floating houses,[56] as well as the more obvious *tunawisma* – houseless.

People without a 'permanent place to stay' are also, generally, without a *kartu tanda penduduk* (KTP – identity card), issued by the local authority. They are not organised into community and neighbourhood units (*rukun warga* and *rukun tetangga*)[57] in which every household (at least theoretically) should be a member. As a consequence, they do not benefit from development projects and their dwellings, regardless of standard or quality, cannot be fitted with any electricity or piped water connections. The situation for Indonesians without KTPs is similar to that of the '*Sanwurenyuan*' or blindly floating people in China, who, without their official *Hukou*, or registration, cannot access housing.

Some countries take a more qualitative approach to defining homelessness. For example, the official definition of homelessness in Egypt states that people who are living in marginal housing ("*Iskan gawazi*") are considered homeless. Marginal and unsuitable housing includes shacks, kiosks, staircases, rooftops, public institutions and cemeteries and people living in them are eligible for government-provided housing. In line with Bangladesh, people living in uncovered boats are regarded as homeless. Indeed, those who try to sleep in boats report harassment by the police. The statistics agency (CAPMAS) uses the definition based on quality of shelter in order to plan for its low income housing and government subsidy.

In India the National Campaign for Housing Rights uses a broad definition of home, in order to direct its work on homelessness. It defines home as a place where one is "able to live with dignity in social, legal and environmental security and with adequate access to essential housing resources like land, building materials, water, fuel, fodder as well as civic services and finance".

In South Africa, officials of the Provincial Housing Department and the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, also base their definition on quality, as they consider homeless people to be:

> "…People without (i) adequate shelter, (ii) secure tenure, (iii) living in squatter settlements, (iv) living in backrooms in townships and elsewhere,[58] (v) living in slum conditions. It is evident in the inner city, since it consists of both third and first world elements, a cardboard house under the bridge, occupation of metropolitan open spaces, parks, vacant land, a couple of dirt-stained blankets on the corners of high rise building, occupation of unused buildings".
>
> "…The definition of homelessness includes the unavailability of adequate shelter, land and security of tenure. It is a result of unfavourable financial conditions and other conditions beyond the control of the homeless people…".

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[56] Though living on houseboats may be quite a highly regarded strategy in some countries, both Indonesia and Egypt regard those who dwell on boats to be homeless.

[57] These organisations are a legacy of the Japanese occupation period (1942-1945) when they were used to organise the people in war efforts Jellinek, L (1991). In 1969 Ali Sadikin, the governor of Jakarta at that time, revived them to promote community participation in the city's development. A *rukun tetangga* (RT) consist of around 30 households, while a *rukun warga* (RW) consist of around 10 RTs.

[58] These include the backyard shacks that are almost ubiquitous in the former 'Black Townships'.

(Interviews at the Provincial housing department and the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council by Dr O. Olufemi)

Three distinct groups of homeless street people were identified in the Johannesburg inner city (Olufemi, 1997); (Olufemi, 1998: 229).

- Pavement or street dwellers. For example, those who live on bare floors, pavements street kerbs, cardboard boxes etc.
- Those who live in temporary shelters such as bus, railway station, open halls, taxi rank etc.
- Those who live in city shelters (shelters provided by NGOs or Faith-based Organisations).

Similarly an ex-homeless person interviewed in Johannesburg in 2001 indicated that homeless people are found:

> "…On pavements, In the parks, Abandoned buildings, and in their own shacks…". (interview by O.Olufemi)

No distinction is made between shack dwellers, squatters, and homeless pavement dwellers. The result is that shack dwellers and squatters, arguably somewhat better off than pavement dwellers, benefit most from the various housing delivery policies and programmes such as subsidies and informal settlement upgrading programmes. Indeed, squatter settlements are often used purposely as a stepping-stone into a formally serviced area where residents are eligible to receive the government grant with which to buy or build a minimum dwelling.

The issues of tenure, introduced into the definition in South Africa, is seen again, in a somewhat extreme form in Zimbabwe. The definition used by the National Housing Taskforce of Zimbabwe is based on the assumption that anyone who does not own their own home in an officially approved residential area is homeless. Everyone who does not own a publicly provided dwelling is entitled to register for on the Official Housing Waiting List (OHWL). Government housing is available to all those on the official waiting lists under this definition, on a first come, first served basis. No priority is given on the basis of need.

So embedded is this concept of homelessness being related to ownership, that government housing policy prescribes that 90% of all new housing should be for home ownership and only 10% for rent. Furthermore, all urban local authorities are required to sell their government housing to tenants.

Working definitions

The official definitions discussed thus far are those used by governments, predominantly in their land and housing policies and censuses. However, arguably more appropriate, working definitions are adopted by NGOs to prioritise their work. In some cases working definitions are tighter than official ones, in order to focus the NGOs work on those most in need. In other cases, an NGO's definition can be much more all-encompassing, in order to provide for those who would not be considered homeless officially, and for whom government support is not available.

As we have seen, in Zimbabwe, the government's definition of homelessness is very broadly based and includes everyone *without a house to his name* . Even some NGO, such as Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless in Zimbabwe (DSHZ) and the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation (ZIHOPFE) subscribe to this definition. However, among many relief NGOs, this definition is narrowed to focus on those in greatest need, such as people on the streets, displaced people and farm workers recently evicted by the government in the land reallocations. Some NGOs such as Bulawayo Shelter, the Scripture Union, and Zimbabwe Red Cross Society include

displaced persons in their client group. Even these groups will not, however, support anyone with family willing to take them in.

In some countries NGOs operate on a wider definition of homelessness than the government. This is either to draw attention to the poor and unsafe housing conditions in which many people live, or to actively support those people who would not be eligible to receive government help.

In Bangladesh, where the official definition of homeless equates to rooflessness the international NGO CONCERN takes a more holistic approach to defining homelessness. For example it considers social issues and causes of homelessness and includes brothel workers as homeless.

In some countries it is left to NGOs to take account of issues of quality and condition of shelter. In Ghana, for Example, the Westphalia Children's Village at Oyoko in the Ashanti region, considers children in 'poor living environments' such as a dilapidated dwelling, as homeless, whilst they are not considered so by the government unless they live on the streets and seek shelter at night in abandoned buildings or bus shelters or if they cannot trace their families.

In both Bolivia and Peru, where there is no official definition but where the policy emphasis is on land registration, many thousands of people live in dreadful conditions. They live either in inadequate shelter on registered or unregistered land plots in squatter settlements or, in the case of Peru, in dilapidated and hugely overcrowded Tugurios, old inner city tenement type properties. Their plight is taken up by NGOs who need to widen their definition of homelessness to include poor quality and dangerous condition, lack of facilities and infestation. For example, CEPROMU, an NGO in Lima, works exclusively with households living in the run down city centre tugurios, who it considers homeless due the extremely poor and dangerous conditiond in which they live.

In South Africa also, NGOs such as the South African Homeless People's Federation regard shack-dwellers and squatters as homeless people. The shacks in question here are structures of timber or masonry built to the rear of formal (former 'Black') township housing plots. The tenants share the services of the plot with the other occupants. The Federation states that it is a network of organisations that are "rooted in shack settlements, backyard shacks or hostels[59]" (Bolnick, 1996) also operates on a wider definition to support those living in conditions which would not otherwise be considered as homelessness in many countries. Furthermore, by including these, the Federation opens its remit to about one-fifth of all residential units in African areas (Crankshaw, Gilbert and Morris, 2000).

Conclusions

The concept of homelessness is one that varies greatly among nations and often reflects the political climate rather than the reality of deprivation. There is little doubt that people living on the streets, under bridges, and in structures not designed for residence are homeless. However, the margin between homeless and inadequately housed is much more vague and can be set very low, excluding squatters, or very high, including all who are not owners or renters of formally approved dwellings. The continuum approach allows some flexibility to blur the threshold of homelessness but, without a threshold, estimating the scale of policy interventions needed is difficult.

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[59] Such hostels are not homeless people's hostels but the works dormitories built for single male workers by the apartheid regime and now occupied by households.

There seems to be a need for more agreement than already exists especially if policy is to be appropriate and if lessons are to be learned between country experiences. We are not ready to propose a single definition to suit all cases and we suspect that it will not be appropriate to do so. Neither will we be quick to abandon the term homeless in favour for such terms as houseless, shelterless, etc. (as suggested by (Springer, 2000) and others) as homeless has a resonance for lay people. However, the lead given by Springer (2000) in separating homeless and inadequately housed people may be useful if we can work out where the threshold may be. Which is where we came in…….

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Housing and homelessness in developing countries

Suzanne Speak and Dr. Graham Tipple

<u>Background</u>

The number of homeless people worldwide is estimated to be between 100 million and one billion. However, the number depends on how we define them. Current definitions and typologies of homelessness, developed for industrialised countries, are generally inappropriate to understand the situation of either extreme homeless people or squatters in developing countries. Moreover, the causes of homelessness differ between developed and developing countries. Thus, interventions must also differ accordingly.

This entry draws upon a study of the nature and extent of homelessness in nine developing countries – Peru, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Egypt, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and China. The study was carried out by CARDO within the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England. The aim of the study was to explore the different definitions and causes of homelessness in developing countries and to highlight innovative practice in eradicating homelessness and supporting homeless people. The original research did include a specific element on street children. However, as there is a growing literature on street children, in this entry we will focus on homeless adults and households.

In order to set the context for the entry, we begin by very briefly discussing what homelessness means in most developed countries of the West, and how it relates to the housing supply system.

<u>Differences between homelessness in developed and developing countries</u>

One of the major differences between homelessness in developed and developing countries is that, in developed countries, homelessness is less a result of a failure of the housing supply system and more the result of personal or household circumstances. Thus, the provision of housing itself is often not the solution to homelessness in the West, and homeless people frequently need a range of social support and welfare systems to help them access and retain the available housing and lift them out of homelessness. However, in developing countries, formal housing supply systems simply fail to provide enough housing to cater for demand, particularly amongst low-income groups. This leads to massive informal development and squatting which, in turn, mean hundreds of millions of people living in conditions that would be considered as homelessness in developed countries.

Indeed, if we base our definition of homelessness on typologies devised in developed countries, most of the world's population would be homeless.   For example, in its study of homelessness in Europe, the European Federation of National Organizations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) posits a quality-oriented definition of homelessness beginning with a four-fold sub-division of housing adequacy. In it, an adequate home is one that is secure and where available space and amenities (quality) provide a good environment for the satisfaction of physical, social, psychological and cultural needs. Low quality in Europe would be manifest by overcrowding, high levels of noise, and pollution or infestation, conditions that many, if not most, people in developing countries endure.

Cooper (1995) offers four categories, or degrees, of homelessness, ranging from housed but without security, safety and adequate standards, to without a roof and living on the streets. Within this typology, the category of "people without an acceptable roof over their heads" could describe the countless millions of people in poor quality squatter settlements around the world, as well as those living on the streets.

Definitions of homelessness in developing countries

Official definitions of homelessness range from non-existent, in Peru, China and Ghana, to virtually all-encompassing in Zimbabwe. However, most countries develop working definitions for census purposes that fall very broadly into four categories.

Tenure based definitions
Two examples show the extremes of definitions based on security of tenure. The National Housing Taskforce of Zimbabwe assumes that anyone who does not own their own home in an officially approved residential area is homeless. Everyone who does not own a publicly provided dwelling is entitled to register for one on the Official Housing Waiting List (OHWL). So embedded is this concept of homelessness being related to ownership, that government housing policy prescribes that 90% of all new housing should be for home ownership and only 10% for rent. Furthermore, all urban local authorities are required to sell their housing stock to tenants.

Peru is at the opposite end of the tenure scale. There are two very different semi-official categories of people regarded as homeless for policy purposes. The first group consists of those without legal title to land. They are addressed by the land property formalisation programme that focuses on

formalising land title for squatters below the poverty level, without a registered plot or property. Through this programme, land plots are allocated and existing squatter settlements are divided up and formalised. This leads to many thousands of people squatting, in makeshift dwellings of straw or plastic sheeting, on poor quality desert land, and applying for legal tenure before they invest in building more substantial homes. In many cases the process takes years.

The second group consist of those living on the street. This group is branded variously as alcoholics, addicts, vagrants, criminals and mentally ill. Being so far outside any formalised community, people in this group will not be granted land title.

Shelter based definitions

For the purposes of allocating land plots, the Census of India defines homeless people as those not living in "census houses", i.e. a structure with a roof. Planners, charged with providing housing land to deserving cases, classify a person as eligible for their housing land allocation programmes if they do not have a roof or land. Thus, residents of 'Juggi and Jompri' clusters (squatter areas) are entitled to a plot in a regularised area if their housing is cleared. However, if a household has a plot in a regularised area but only a shack on it, it is not regarded as homeless because of the land holding. By a quirk of policy, pavement dwellers are usually not included because they are rarely on the voters' list and do not possess ration cards.

In shelter based definitions, what constitutes an adequate roof is open to question. The Ghanaian Statistical Service includes sales kiosks, abandoned

warehouses, offices or shops in its definition of 'house', no other issues of quality or suitability are considered. Therefore, in Ghana, only the most destitute, without any form of roof, and without family anywhere nearby to take responsibility for them, would be defined as officially homeless.

Definitions based on suitability and quality

Other countries, for example Egypt and Bangladesh, would class such shelter as inadequate. In Egypt people who are living in *marginal* housing ("*Iskan gawazi*") including shacks, kiosks, staircases, rooftops, public institutions and cemeteries are considered homeless. Similarly the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) suggests an official definition of homelessness, which it uses for census purposes, as:

> *"Floating population are the mobile and vagrant category of rootless people who have no permanent dwelling units whatever …and they are found on the census night … in the rail station, launch ghat (terminal), bus station, hat-bazaar (market), mazar (shrine), staircase of public/government buildings, open space, etc.".*

In South Africa, officials of the Provincial Housing Department and the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council base their definition on quality, and they accept as homeless those people without adequate shelter, secure tenure or living in squatter settlements, backrooms in townships or living in slum conditions.

Definitions based on permanence and stability

The Indonesia census of 2000 divides the population into two main categories, those having a permanent place to stay (*mempunyai tempat tinggal tetap*) and those not having a permanent place to stay (*tidak mempunyai tempat tinggal tetap*). Those not having a permanent place to stay included ship's crewmen,

nomadic people and people living in houseboats or floating houses, as well as the more obvious *tunawisma* – houseless.

Differentiating between homelessness and squatting

Squatting should not necessarily be excluded from a definition of homelessness. However, it is appropriate to try to differentiate between squatters and other forms of homelessness, especially street homelessness, for a number of reasons. If squatters are to be included in the definition of homelessness, their sheer numbers might distract attention from those in more desperate circumstances without any form of shelter, such as the street homeless people.

Squatters have roofed structures which, in general, are somewhat more permanent than those of street homeless people. This not only gives squatters more physical security but also a *de facto* address that helps them to develop a social network with people living in similar circumstances. Both of these are important with respect to government or NGO assistance, e.g., for credit, education, water and sanitation, especially where these rely on traceable networks to provide social collateral in the absence of monetary assets.

Generally, but not always, the quality of squatters' shelters tend to improve over time and also tend to be of higher quality than those of street homeless people's shelters, which are often built of plastic sheeting or cardboard. Squatters tend to settle in peripheral sites but homeless people gravitate to the centre of the cities where their opportunistic lifestyle is possible.

In many countries, including India, China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the legal position of squatters is no better than that of other homeless people. Both squatters and other homeless people, particularly street homeless people, suffer raids. However, when this happens, squatters can be the more insecure as they have more to lose. When street homeless people are moved it is generally because they are perceived as a nuisance or because they disturb the attractiveness of the city. However, raids on squatter settlements are usually done to clear development land for more valuable uses, often favouring the upper income groups.

In Peru, however, squatters are in a much better position than other homeless people. Whilst squatters settling on state owned land do not have title, a peculiarity in Peruvian law states that people invading state owned land, and remaining there for 24 hours without any formal complaint being lodged, cannot be evicted immediately. Rather, they can apply to have legal title to the land and the case will be decided in court. Invasions on private land which last more than 24 hours without complaint must also go to court. If the private land has been undeveloped for 10 years or more, the court is likely to give title to the invaders. Unlike street homeless people, squatters in Peru may regard themselves on an upward trajectory of housing.

In many countries, the street homeless population has higher occupational mobility, less secure jobs and larger income range than residents of squatter settlements. Street homeless populations tend to be predominantly single and male, whereas squatter settlements have more mixed populations.

Interestingly, there are virtually no squatters in Ghana as local chiefs control most land. Even the lowest quality housing in the cities tends to be on land held legally under customary tenure acquired through the chiefs.

<u>Causes</u>

The two fundamental causes of homelessness in developing countries are poverty, especially rural poverty, and the failure of the housing supply system to provide at even a most basic level. However, poverty alone does not necessarily lead to homelessness. These two issues are exacerbated, in some cases, by social and political changes and the breakdown of traditional family support systems, which push some people into homelessness.

From rural home to urban homelessness
In many developing countries, particularly Peru, India, Bangladesh and Egypt, rural poverty has driven many to seek employment in cities. Most often a single man will move to the city to work and send money back to the family home. Homelessness is often preferred to spending money on accommodation. Sometimes, for example if the weather is bad, the homeless person will pay to stay in a hostel, if hostel places are available, but the rest of the time he or she will save money by sleeping rough. In some cases other family members will follow them to the city. In India, for example, entire families move to the city to work on construction sites and live on or near the site in rudimentary shelters.

Seasonal economic migration in Peru sees many indigenous people from the Alto Plano sleeping on the street and in parks at particular times of the year. These people have adequate homes back in their villages but are without any

shelter for the time they spend trading in the cities.   This also occurs in Bolivia.

Social causes

Many people endure poverty without being tipped into homelessness until it is coupled with a breakdown in traditional family support or separation from, or loss of, a spouse.   This highlights the fact that rapid changes and disruptions in social relations can contribute to the stress of housing insecurity. It emphasises the importance of supportive family life and the impact of ineffective parenting. It also suggests that effective intervention such as family support, child protection, family mediation, and the prevention of domestic violence can be important in addressing homelessness.

Homeless women and children are frequently victims of family breakdown or are escaping family violence. This is especially true in a number of South American countries, such as Peru and Bolivia. Street children often also tell of fleeing an abusive step parent.

Many developing countries have adopted legislation to protect women's rights. Nevertheless, cultural attitudes to women mean that they, and their children, may be thrown out of their homes by relatives if their husband dies or abandons them. This forces many women onto the streets, as the box below highlights, and sometimes into prostitution to provide for their children.

Rita (30) is a lone parent of two children aged six and one and half years she was orphaned when she was only 12 years old. She was taken to a relative's house which was later lost due to river erosion. Rita has been living in Dhaka with her relatives for about 20 years. She had a steady job at a garment factory with a salary of Tk. 700. At one stage, her relatives became keen to arrange her marriage with the intention of using her marriage as an excuse to oust her from their home. She married, against her will, to a rickshaw puller. Shortly before their first child was born Rita left her job, needing more time for household work and child caring. Soon afterwards her husband developed an extra-marital affair with one of her co-workers. While she was pregnant the second time, her husband deserted her and took with him many valuables not bought with his income. Following his desertion without a divorce, she fell into a deep crisis. A few weeks later she became homeless due to failure to pay the rent.

Her present home is a cover of polyethylene over a small chunk of footpath alongside many other street dwellers in the Katobon area. She now begs as well as collects waste papers from which her daily income is Tk. 15. Even this income is irregular. This amount is insufficient to feed her two children and herself. At least Tk. 100 are required daily for bare subsistence. One problem is that she could not take a steady job at garment factory again as there is no one to take care of her children while she is away from home.

In China, what might be considered as homeless people are included within the 'floating population'. In this there are some who are trying to escape from the Family Planning control by the local government. To control the population growth, the Chinese government formulated the 'one family one child' policy. Some families who want more children choose to leave their household registration place. The women in these "over-procreated" families cannot obtained the official Temporary Living Permit without the Family Planning Certificate granted by their native neighbourhood. Without official identification, children born to these families will have difficulty obtaining education and employment.

Evictions

In developing countries it is quite common for governments to use their powers to evict people, who have neither the money nor the power to defend themselves, to allow commercial development of the spaces they illegally occupied. For example, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has a land protection Branch to detect all squatter settlements and remove them. The inhabitants are first rendered homeless and moved on to the pavement then are chased off the pavements. In one such eviction, the slum settlement of Old F-Block, Raghubir Nagar, in New Delhi, containing nearly 4000 units and supporting about 25,000 people, was demolished in late November, at the onset of winter.

Such evictions generally involve the transfer of ownership from the poor and vulnerable to middle- or upper-income people and the development of functions that particularly benefit wealthier groups. Such cases can be found in the North as well as in the South; in Calcutta, Mexico, Nairobi, Dakar, Paris, and in Malaysia. In the Malaysian case, the evictions were to make room for a golf course especially for international tourism. Forced evictions are a particularly disturbing phenomenon for those in precarious housing. They are officially sanctioned acts with many harmful consequences for the affected people. They are usually violent and discriminatory in nature.

Characteristics of homeless people

The characteristics of homeless people in developing countries are quite different from those in the developed countries and from common Western perception of homeless people as lone, unemployed vagrants and drunks.

Whilst the majority of homeless people in developing countries are single and male there is also a very high percentage of homeless families with children. This is especially true, in countries such as Peru, if we include squatters in the definition. In India and Bangladesh, households with children also feature highly amongst those who live on the streets.

Homeless people in developing countries fall predominantly into the 20-59 age range. However, there are certain anomalies. For example, in Kumasi, Ghana, 70% of homeless people are under 20 years of age. The figure also varies amongst some Indian cities. For example, in Delhi only 14% of homeless people living on the streets are aged under 20 but in Calcutta the figure is 31% and in Mumbai it is even higher, with 43% of homeless people being under 15 years of age in 1985.

Homeless people in developing countries live and sleep in a broad range of locations including on the street, in abandoned buildings, in stairwells, in and around stations, and in rudimentary shelters in squatter settlements. In India and Bangladesh many hundreds of thousands of people live on the streets. In some cases they live without shelter of any kind, carrying their belongings and simply sleeping where they can. However, often they construct dwellings of plastic sheeting, cloth and cardboard, which have no security or services, but which may survive for years.

In Mumbai, for example, households live in makeshift shelters which extend across the pavements up to the slow lane of the highway which becomes the front porch for domestic activities. The danger from passing traffic and pollution is extreme. In other countries, for example, China, it is rare to find

homeless people living on the street, as they would very quickly be removed by the authorities.

In Egypt and Peru many, if not most, homeless people live in poor, temporary dwellings in squatter settlements around the periphery of cities. Some of these settlements, particularly those on poor quality, state owned land, of no commercial value, survive for many years and may eventually be formalised.

Whilst begging is common amongst homeless people in developing countries the assumption that homeless people are reduced only to begging, or that all beggars are homeless, is clearly incorrect. Most homeless people in developing countries do work. This is particularly true if we include squatters in the definition. For example, the Villa el Salvador squatter settlement in Lima, Peru, is home to 370,000 people, most of them are employed in the informal sector, working as traders, taxi drivers or labourers but some of them are professionals such as teachers or nurses. However, in general, homeless people tend to have lower-paid and more insecure employment than adequately housed people.

Homeless people in developing countries are frequently victims of crime, abuse and harassment, but there is little evidence to suggest they are any more likely to be criminals than housed people. It has been noted, particularly in South Africa and Bangladesh, that members of criminal gangs, whilst not homeless themselves, sometimes use the cover and anonymity of squatter settlements to hide their stolen goods.

<u>Interventions</u>

Interventions to address homelessness are limited and often negative or unhelpful. For example, in many countries intervention takes the form of harassment, eviction or moving on, violence or imprisonment. One intervention in India, the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, is used to clear the streets of homeless people when important events are to take place. Many other countries report similar 'cosmetic' clearing of the streets.

In Zimbabwe, the use of transit camps, such as the notorious Porta Farm Camp which houses over 30,000 homeless people, is questionable. Conditions in the camps are extremely poor, and the mortality rate is higher than for other homeless people. For example, in another camp, Hatcliffe Extension, there are 2006 people per toilet.

At the level of street homelessness, appropriate interventions may be similar to those needed by street homeless people in developed countries. That is to say that such people often need a range of advocacy and one to one support to access services, coupled with immediate shelter and protection from the elements. The importance of easily accessible, preferably free, shelter was highlighted by the deaths of several hundred people in Delhi in January 2003, when the temperature dropped to minus 2 degrees centigrade at night.

Very few countries provide night shelters, although they can be found in India and in South Africa. They are often poor quality, dirty, unsafe and may not be appropriate for some people. For example, in Delhi, cycle rickshaw drivers cannot use the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) night shelters, as they have no safe parking for rickshaws.

The provision of shelter need not entail building specific night shelters. Many municipal buildings are empty at night and could be used by homeless people as safe places to sleep. A simple measure of legitimising this use of some public buildings, and providing additional services and support through them, might provide vital help to many thousands of street homeless people.

Nevertheless, there are some organisations providing valuable interventions. For example, Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan in Delhi is a shelter rights campaigning organisations which works with street homeless people. It provides legal advice as well as one to one support to access a range of services, such as doctors. Another Indian NGO, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), formed an alliance with the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan. Together they supported 60,000 low-income people to move, voluntarily, from their settlements beside the railway tracks of Mumbai to make way for improvements to the infrastructure. With the support of these organisations, the people helped to plan their new settlement and moved, without forced eviction and without the further impoverishment which usually accompanies such moves.

At the level of mass homelessness and low-income squatter settlements, the interventions needed are quite different from what is needed to tackle homelessness in developed countries. At this scale people need security of tenure and more, basic housing, which can be occupied at virtually no cost, and which the household can improve and extend over time.

Land allocation policies, which aim to provide homeless people with legal tenure to land on which they can build their own homes, generally only allocate very poor quality land, of low or no value. This land is also generally

some distance from the city and thus from employment opportunities. The

allocating of land without any form of support to assist people to build

adequate shelter has led to many thousands of people living for many years in

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Interventions to Combat and Support Homelessness in Developing and Transitional Countries

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Abstract

> Interventions to support homeless people or reduce homelessness in developing countries are limited and are often negative or unhelpful. They are frequently developed without a full understanding of the needs of homeless people or the personal, social or cultural context within which homelessness is experienced. This paper highlights current interventions in homelessness in developing countries and raises questions about the way in which governments and NGOs support homeless people or deal with what is perceived to be the problem of homelessness. It draws on a study of homelessness in nine developing countries[60]. The paper sets a context by discussing the differences between homelessness in developed and developing countries. It continues by highlighting the nature of some government and NGO interventions. Finally it makes some broad and general suggestions to underpin the development of interventions to support homeless people or reduce homelessness.

Introduction

The causes of homelessness in developing countries differ from those in more developed countries. Thus, interventions, either to reduce homelessness or to support homeless people, must also be different. However, interventions are often conceived with little or no understanding of the needs and desires of homeless people, or the relationship between their homelessness and other aspects of their lives. Thus, many interventions are negative and unhelpful.

To Western eyes, homelessness, particularly in the form of street children and rough sleeping, are emotive issues. A natural first response is to seek to

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[60] Peru, Ghana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt, India, Bangladesh Indonesia and China.

accommodate people, and to get them off the streets and into shelter. However, as this paper will show, this is not always the most appropriate solution to homelessness.

The paper begins by briefly discussing the differences between homelessness in developed and developing countries. It continues by highlighting both positive and negative interventions currently being used. Finally, it raises broad issues which should underpin interventions to support homeless people or reduce homelessness.

<u>Differences between homelessness in developed and developing countries</u>

One of the major differences between homelessness in developed and developing countries is that, in developed countries, homelessness is less the result of a failure of the housing supply system and more the result of personal or household circumstances. Thus, the provision of housing itself is often not the solution to homelessness in the West, and homeless people frequently need a range of social support and welfare systems to help them access, and retain, the available housing, and lift them out of homelessness. However, in developing countries, formal housing supply systems simply fail to provide enough housing to cater for demand, particularly amongst low-income groups. This leads to huge numbers of people sleeping rough on the streets, and to massive informal development and squatting which, in turn, mean hundreds of millions of people living in conditions that would be considered as homelessness in developed countries.

Indeed, if we base our definition of homelessness on typologies devised in developed countries, most of the world's population would be homeless. For example, in its study of homelessness in Europe, the European Federation of National Organizations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) posits a quality-oriented definition of homelessness beginning with a four-fold sub-division of housing adequacy. In it, an adequate home is one that is secure and where available space and amenities (quality) provide a good environment for the satisfaction of physical, social, psychological and cultural needs. Low quality, in Europe, would be manifest by overcrowding, high

levels of noise, and pollution or infestation, conditions that many, if not most, people in developing countries endure.

Cooper (1995) offers four categories, or degrees, of homelessness, ranging from housed but without security, safety and adequate standards, to without a roof and living on the streets. Within this typology, the category of "people without an acceptable roof over their heads" could describe the countless millions of people in poor quality squatter settlements around the world, as well as those living on the streets.

<u>Levels of homelessness</u>

Homelessness in developing countries can be viewed at two levels. First, there is the immediate level of street homelessness, which, in many countries, exists on a large scale. For example, in India in 2000, the organisation Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA) counted 52,765 homeless people, using a similar definition to the Indian census. This compares to 19,366 counted in the 1991 Census, a difference of over 33,000. This figure is believed to be the *minimum* number of homeless people. Survey limitations mean that not everyone will have been included. For example, many migrants will have returned to their villages temporarily for the harvest season and many other people, sleeping in places that are not visible, will have been missed. It is thought that the actual figure is likely to be double this, about 100,000. This is in accordance with the estimate provided by the Slum and Juggi-Jompri Department of Delhi Development Authority, who believe approximately one percent of the total population of Delhi are homeless (Dupont, 1998). Similarly, in Dhaka, Bangladesh one enumeration of street homeless people found 5,441 people, 47% of the total homeless population of the city, sleeping on the pavements.

The second level of homelessness, mass homelessness, is represented by the millions of people living in squatter settlements in developing countries. For example, the squatter settlement of Villa El Salvador in Lima, Peru, is home to 370,000 people. As most of them do not have legal title to the land on which they construct rudimentary dwellings, they are officially classed as homeless. Similar settlements exist throughout the developing world. Whilst

the residents of such settlements generally construct somewhat more permanent and better quality dwellings than street homeless people, they still lack security, basic services and infrastructure in most cases.

Clearly, the interventions needed to support these two groups of homeless people are very different, as are the interventions required to prevent or reduce each type of homelessness. However, interventions to address homelessness at both levels are limited and often negative or unhelpful.

<u>Current interventions to address street homelessness</u>

In many countries, interventions to address street homelessness take the form of harassment, eviction or moving on, violence or imprisonment. People are removed from the streets for 'cosmetic' purposes, particularly when civic events occur. One intervention in India, the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, is used to clear the streets of homeless people when important events are to take place. The Society for the Provision of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) is currently trying to have this law overturned. Many other countries report similar 'cosmetic' clearing of the streets.

The use of security guards to keep homeless people out of 'public' spaces at night is common in a number of countries. For example, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, security guards are employed by shopping centres and office complexes to remove people who try to sleep there. Homeless people themselves, especially women and girls, report being abused and even raped by guards.

Even if homeless people are not physically removed from the streets, strategies are employed to deter them from using public places. For example, in Joubert Park in Johannesburg, South Africa, the tops of taps were removed so as to deny homeless people access to water.

However, more positive interventions to support street homeless people do exist. A few countries provide night shelters, in particular India and South Africa. Unfortunately, in the Indian case at least, they are not well used. Homeless people reported that the shelters were often poor quality, dirty, unsafe and are inappropriate for some people. For example, in Delhi, cycle rickshaw drivers cannot use the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) night

shelters, as they have no safe parking for rickshaws. Recently many of the Delhi shelters have closed down because of under occupation, whilst, at the same time, thousands of people sleep on the streets at night.

Some organisations provide valuable interventions in the form of advocacy and support. One such organisation, Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan in Delhi is a shelter rights campaigning group that works with street homeless people. It provides legal advice and one to one support to access a range of services, such as doctors.

<u>Interventions for street children</u>

Many interventions to support street children are as likely to alienate them as to help them, and street children frequently end up in inappropriate institutions (Bibars 1998). Despite the assertion of Article 40 of the UNCRC, that imprisonment of children is to be a last resort and for the shortest possible time, street children around the world are frequently arrested for minor misdemeanours. In India, street children are regularly arrested for begging and placed in jail, to be tried later in the beggar's court. In Zimbabwe some street children's centres even collaborate with the police, who use dogs, teargas and baton sticks on the children, usually in the dead of night. Arrested children are sent to institution to be 'screened' and 'reformed' (MPSLSW, 1999)

Street children themselves can see even less extreme interventions as undesirable. Much of the literature on street children highlights that many have fled oppressive or abusive families (. They fear adults and resent authority and control. As Karabanow and Rains (1997) shelter is frequently used as a means of control. However, as those working with street children note, they often do not want shelter, or care, if it comes with structure and regulation.

One street children's project in Bangalore offers a combination of accommodation, education and employment training within a fairly rigid timetable. The project is always full and there is a suspicion amongst staff that parents might send their children there, telling them to pretend that they are homeless, in order to get better opportunities. There is no doubt that the

161

level of care and education is very high. However, the cost per child is also very high, as is the turnover of children. The director commented:

> *'It's like a constant war, us against them, just trying to keep them here, they steal from us and run off to the streets, then, when they need more money they come back, sometimes we have to say 'you can't come back again if you continue like that''*

Conversely, the YMCA street children's centre, also in Bangalore, does not try to house children but allows them to be out on the streets at night if they prefer, as most do. Instead, it focuses its attention and efforts on providing education, food and medical assistance, and winning the confidence of boys, many of who remain connected to the project for many years. As they grow up they engage with training and employment schemes and slowly feel able to find appropriate accommodation. These two examples of intervention are both valid and it may be that both approaches are required to cater for the range of difficulties, fears and hostilities street children have.

Whilst many countries seem to pay little attention to street children, others have begun to take a more strategic approach to the phenomenon. For example, China has established specific Street Urchin Offices in many repatriation stations, to help reunite those children who do have a family or guardian somewhere. For those without any family, there are 34 public welfare institutions which currently house 34,000 orphans. However, many street children have run away from abusive parents or stepparents. Therefore, reuniting children with their families, without first addressing the underlying reason for the child leaving home, is not only unlikely to succeed, it may be distressing or dangerous for the child.

Current interventions to address mass homelessness

Interventions to address mass homelessness can also be positive or negative. In Zimbabwe, the use of transit camps, such as the notorious Porta Farm Camp that houses over 30,000 homeless people, is questionable. Conditions in the camps are extremely poor, and the mortality rate is higher than for other homeless people. In another camp, Hatcliffe Extension, there are 2006 people per toilet.

162

In a number of countries, including Peru and, to an extent Egypt, one approach is to tolerate squatter settlements that form on land of no commercial value, such as desert land. Whilst still technically illegal, municipalities often allow squatters to remain for many years. During that time their settlements might become accepted and eventually legalised through a process of land tenure regularisation.

This is the situation for many squatters in Peru. Whilst they do not have title to the land, their situation is not technically illegal, owing to a peculiarity in Peruvian law. The law states that people invading state owned land, and remaining there for 24 hours without any formal complaint being lodged, cannot be evicted immediately.

During the years that follow invasions, settlers begin to approach the government for legal title to the land. The longer they remain, and the larger the settlement grows, the more likely they are to be granted legal title and, thus, the more likely they are to feel able to invest in improving the quality of their shelter. Although improvements may remain very basic until formalisation is well under way, once formalised, these settlements can begin to access basic services such as water and sanitation.

The land registration process can take many years but equally, when political climate requires, it can be swift. During the Fujimori era, the government of Peru established a very quick and large-scale land registration programme, in order to influence political opinion. Likewise, in India, at local election time, groups of squatters may have their settlements designated as official slums. This means that they may be placed on upgrading programmes and the residents given ration cards and the right to vote.   For this reason, unlike street homeless people, squatters may regard themselves as being on an upwards housing trajectory.

However, land allocation policies, which aim to provide homeless people with legal tenure to land on which they can build their own homes, generally only allocate very poor quality land, of low or no value. This land is also generally some distance from the city and thus from employment opportunities. The allocating of land without any form of support to assist people to build

adequate shelter has led to many thousands of people living for many years in inadequate shelters without services.

In China, housing reforms introduced in 1988 to change housing form a form of welfare to a commodity, coupled with relaxation of the control over movement between cities, has led to greater choice for Chinese people but also to a growing 'floating population' (Chang, 1996; Huang and Clark, 2002). Two interventions are being used to address this. First, migrant housing complexes, managed by public agencies or real estate developers, are becoming available in a few cities. Some involve the reuse of old, temporary housing, while others are new residential compounds built by private enterprises. These complexes accept single working migrants, as well as families, and are equipped with basic facilities and let at very low rents in a few cities.

A more strategic approach by the Chinese government is that of the reform of the strict household registration system. The change allows some rural workers to transfer their household status from 'agricultural' to 'non-agricultural' in selected cities at very low cost, if they have employment and a living place there. The reform, operating in the selected cities, is a signal from the central government that it is willing to loosen its control of rural migration and give the "floating population" a chance to settle down in the city permanently Whilst this does not actually provide housing for the floating population, it does remove the problem of illegality, which meant that many households could not access the available housing. However, there is a paradox, in that the household must first have a place to live.

<u>Developing supportive interventions</u>

Two issues currently hamper the success of interventions to support homeless people and reduce homelessness. The first is the lack of accurate information on numbers of people experiencing different types of homelessness. This can only be addressed by national governments having the political will to undertake, or support, appropriate censuses. However, whilst governments are keen to highlight levels of poverty, as a means of securing international aid, they are reluctant to acknowledge homelessness.

To do so might indicate an intention to address a measurable situation, against which their performance could be assessed later.

The second difficulty is an apparent apathy to the plight of homeless people in developing countries. Our research confirms the common perception of homeless people as 'others'. The cause of their homelessness is perceived to lie in their personality and behavioural problems (Mamun, 2001; Neale 1997). This view is perpetuated in the popular media, in articles and cartoons such as the following from South Africa.

Add cartoon SA1

Changing attitudes to homeless people might begin at institutional level, with work to end arrests, imprisonment and abuse of street sleepers by the police. To improve the situation for street sleepers, Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan, has called for legislation to make sleeping on the streets legal. Another NGO, SPARC, is working to have the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act (1959) abolished.

Street sleepers

At the level of street homelessness, appropriate interventions in some cases may be similar to those needed by street homeless people in developed countries. That is to say that some street homeless people in developing countries do need a range of advocacy and one to one support to access services, coupled with immediate shelter and protection from the elements. The importance of easily accessible, preferably free, shelter was highlighted by the deaths of several hundred people in Delhi in January 2003, when the temperature dropped to minus 2 degrees centigrade at night. However, we caution against making the assumption that all street homeless people are homeless because of personal or household crisis and therefore need such support. In many cases, especially in better weather, people prefer to stay on the streets rather than spend money on accommodation. Thus, if accommodation is provided, to be of use to the largest number of people it should be accessible, well located in relation to employment and income opportunities and virtually cost free.

However, the provision of shelter need not entail building specific night shelters. Many municipal buildings are empty at night and could be used by homeless people as safe places to sleep. A simple measure of legitimising this use of some public buildings, and providing additional services and support through them, might provide vital help to many thousands of street homeless people.

Street sleepers themselves often do not prioritise shelter highly, except in poor weather. However, they do express a need to be able to access water and sanitation facilities. The provision of well maintained facilities around cities for the use of street homeless people would vastly improve their health.

Many street homeless people have very few belongings. Those they do have are precious to them, and may represent all the efforts of their labour and their plans for the future. Some find supportive and trustworthy people, such as local shopkeepers, with whom to leave things. Many others would benefit from some form of secure location, such as lockers, for money and belongings.

Street children

For many people, a first reaction is to remove street children from the dangers of the streets and house and educate them, or, if possible, resettle them with their families. However, when asked, street children frequently prioritise their own needs differently to the priorities adults would set for them. That is to say that, for children themselves, accommodation is often a low priority whilst, employment, training and business credit are high priorities (Korboe 1996). Thus, interventions for street children must recognise these different priorities and not focus just on housing them.

Drop in centres, whilst not dealing with the emotive issue of children sleeping rough at night, on the streets of cities or in railway stations, are frequently more effective at retaining children's involvement and interest. However, the location of such centres is critical. Street children need to work, thus such centres should be close to the city centre, where children can earn their living. However, municipalities frequently prefer such centres to locate out of sight rather than in the heart of the city (Vanderschueren 1998). The training and

development of street based outreach workers, who work 'with' rather than 'for' street children may be more effective than housing-focused projects. Indeed, some of the best out-reach workers have been street children themselves (Ennew, 1994; Copping,1998).

The cultural context surrounding the street child must be understood. Lack of understanding can lead to wasted resources. In Bolivia, for example, many of the indigenous Andean population migrate annually from the Alto Plano to trade in the major cities. Entire families make the journey including the children and they are technically homeless for their time in the city, living out on the public parks and grass verges. As mothers and fathers sell their goods around the streets the children are left to care for themselves and to earn what money they can. In the early1990s a project was established to provide education and care for the children of these migrant families, whilst their parents were working. However, very few families ever took up the support, as they placed little importance on formal education, and preferred their children to learn how to make a living on the streets.

Add photo of banjo boy

The sympathy evoked by smaller, younger street children can turn to fear and antagonism when the child grows older. However, it is often when street children become older that they begin to acknowledge the difficulty and sadness of their situation. Schemes that provide street youths with employment not only provide a living but also acknowledge their dignity. One innovative approach to adolescents on the streets can be seen in Mumbai, India, where the police trained older street children in traffic control over a period of 6 months. When trained they were given uniforms and put to work for the city. The scheme was so successful that it was extended after the first year.

Whilst poverty is still the key factor, the links between family breakdown, remarriage, step-parenting and children running away are too strong to be overlooked (Korboe 1996; Lusk 1992; Bibars 1998). Reunion with a family, as

discussed earlier, is frequently not a suitable solution without considerable family counselling and support. Ultimately, many children would be prevented from fleeing to the streets if their mothers were better supported on being abandoned or widowed and, thus, did not need to take unsuitable second partners.

Mass homelessness

At the level of mass homelessness and low-income squatter settlements, the interventions needed are quite different from what is needed to tackle homelessness in developed countries. We acknowledge that mass homelessness cannot be reduced, or prevented, without addressing failures in the housing supply system. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the complexities of housing finance, building material supply chains or building regulations. For that reason, the paper does not attempt to discuss prevention of mass homelessness.

However, there are ways of making current squatters somewhat more secure, or including them in decisions about their settlements which will not increase their, already great, difficulties. Security of tenure need not necessarily mean full, legal ownership.   Durand-Lasserve and Royston (2002) discuss recent shifts in responses to tenure regularisation in informal settlements, some of which might be adapted for squatter situations. These include incremental upgrading to full legal rights of ownership, collective ownership and the development of protection from eviction through long term lease.

Whilst security may be a starting point, which gives a household a sense of optimism to invest and develop their housing, this may need to be supported by credit to enable sustainable building to take place.   For want of a small amount of money, many people are forced into making false 'savings' by repeatedly renewing their board or straw walls, every year.   Over a few years the cost outweighs the savings.

Dwellings of straw walls in Villa El Salvador, Lima, Peru

Settlements that have formed cohesive communities should be protected. However, if they must be moved this should not involve the mass evictions which have been seen in so many countries, but should be done in collaboration with the residents. SPARC formed an alliance with the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan to support 60,000 low-income people in a voluntary move from their settlements beside the railway tracks of Mumbai to make way for improvements to the infrastructure. With the support of these organisations, the people helped to plan their new settlement and moved, without forced eviction and without the further impoverishment, which usually accompanies such moves.

Other squatter communities are not so fortunate and have been forcibly evicted. One such case that of 390 adults and 510 children living in appalling circumstances in an informal settlement in the Cape Metropolitan area, the evicted squatters resorted to constitutional law to resolve their situation. Their shacks were bulldozed and burnt and their possessions destroyed. However, the group asked the Court to order the state to provide them with shelter. Their argument was based on their constitutional right of access to housing and their children's right to shelter. The State argued that they had satisfied their responsibility through their housing programme, which would, in due course, provide adequate housing for all.

In what has become known as the Grootboom Judgement, after Mrs Grootboom, one of the evicted squatters, the Court declared that the housing programme, called for by section 26(2) of the Constitution, must include measures 'to provide relief for people who have no access to land, no roof over their heads, and who are living in intolerable conditions or crisis situations'. The state housing programme that applied in the area of the Cape Metropolitan Council at the time of the launch of the application fell short of this obligation.

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Degrees of destitution: A typology of homelessness in developing countries

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[61] The Global Urban Research Unit is a new research centre incorporating CARDO

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Abstract

There is an ongoing attempt to develop a globally acceptable definition of homelessness. Whether such a definition is broad and inclusive of squatters and those in particularly poor quality housing, or narrowly focused on street homelessness, it is likely to include a large population. Therefore, we are left with a need to develop criteria for identifying, allocating and prioritising appropriate support.

Drawing on a study of homelessness in nine developing countries, this paper presents a new categorisation or typology of homelessness, based on choice and opportunity. It highlights the way in which homeless people, living in identical shelter situation for identical reasons, might require different responses to support them out of homelessness. This paper does not seek to debate the definition of homelessness but to stimulate discussion on finding a way to identify and prioritise the needs of those included within any given definition.

Key words: Homelessness, Developing countries, Choice, Opportunity

Introduction

Homelessness is seen as the most extreme manifestation of destitution, especially in the West. In countries such as the UK, where the vast majority of people are not only housed, but housed adequately, to be without even a roof or place to sleep is a clear indication of crisis. Street homelessness also signifies unemployment, which in turn, perpetuates the homeless state. However, even in the West, this most visible form of homelessness is

complex and sometimes misjudged. In developing countries, the situation

and circumstances of the roofless are even more complex. It has become

evident that, in developing countries and to a lesser degree in the UK,

different forms of homelessness, including absolute rooflessness or street

homelessness, can involve a degree of choice. It can even represent an

element of personal control over one's situation. Certainly, even amongst

street homeless people, we can observe differing degrees of destitution.

During a study of homelessness in nine developing countries[62], carried out by

CARDO at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, this complexity of street

homelessness began to emerge. It also became apparent that there are no

typologies of homelessness developed specifically for developing countries.

Moreover, those developed for the West, for example by FEANTSA (1999),

Copper (1995) or Daly (1994) are inappropriate to describe homelessness in

many developing countries.

This paper attempts to describe some of the complexity of homelessness in

developing countries and develop a categorisation or typology of

homelessness based on the degree of choice the homeless person or

household can exercise over their situation, and the level of opportunity the

homelessness affords them to improve their longer term situation. That is to

say that, why someone is homeless, and how they perceive their

homelessness, is as important as a basis for policy and intervention as how

that homelessness manifests itself. Understanding reasons why people

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[1] Bangladesh, China, Egypt, Ghana, Peru, India, Indonesia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

become homeless and the degree of choice they may have exercised over their situation, enables decisions to be made about the degree and type of support they needs. As Neale (1997) suggests it is not necessary to begin by eradicating all homelessness in order to bring about improvements to homeless people's lives.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of how homelessness is perceived in the UK and some of the current typologies, developed predominantly for the west.   It continues by discussing findings relating to the authors work in developing countries, which indicate three categories of homelessness based on the degree of choice involved and level of opportunity both to escape homelessness or to improve ones living situation through homelessness. Finally some suggestions are made for the type of interventions needed for the different groups.

About the empirical study

The research, which was funded by DFID, was carried out between ? and May 2003, by the Centre for Architectural Research and Development Overseas (CARDO).   The nine countries were selected for a number of reasons. They presented a range of housing and homelessness situation and degrees of poverty. For example, form the original list of potential countries, Venezuela was rejected as being too affluent. They gave a range of different cultural experiences and understanding of housing and homelessness. For example, cultures around property ownership differ greatly between Ghana and China. China also offered the opportunity to explore the effects of new

population mobility and an emerging market economy on housing and homelessness. They were all countries in which CARDO had good connections and could employ country based researchers whose work they were familiar with. Finally, they were all countries in which DFID had research interests.

The work was managed by a team of experienced researchers in the field form Newcastle. A researcher was commissioned in each of the nine countries to undertake research according to a detailed specification. The specification detailed seven main areas of investigation[63]. The work included conducting a local literature review, trawling secondary sources for statistical data and undertaking interviews with homeless people and representatives of government and non government organisations. Specific case studies of 'typical' homeless households were sought through interview and oral testimony.

Because of the cultural and practical differences between the nine countries, it was not possible to be over prescriptive about how many interviews should be conducted or precisely how empirical data should be collected. Each researcher submitted a draft which was reviewed and returned for verification

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[63] The seven main areas of investigationwere: housing theory; current housing supply characteristics; current definitions of homelessness; what the median household would regard as unacceptable shelter; appropriateness of western typologies; numbers of people involved in types of homelessness; systemic causes of homelessness, isolation or exclusion of homeless people; characteristics of homeless people; street children, typologies of street children; causes of street child phenomena; conditions of living; responses to homelessness; actors and agents. Within each of these sub sections were explored in detail.

or further explanation and completion. Members of the Newcastle team

visited the researchers in six of the countries to gain additional understanding

and assure the quality of the research. It was not deemed necessary to visit

the remaining 4 countries as one team member had existing experience of

them and the initial reports were satisfactory. This paper draws particularly on

some of those case studies to develop the suggested typology of

homelessness in developing countries.

Current perceptions and typologies of homelessness

Despite the growing understanding of the diversity of backgrounds, support

needs and housing histories of homeless people in the UK, provided by the

likes of Watson and Cooper (1992) and Evans (1991), homelessness in the

UK is still given two main explanations. Neale (1997) refers to these as

'structural' and 'agency' explanations.

The structural explanation places the cause of homelessness in broad social

and economic factors, such as lack of affordable housing or poverty. This

explanation begs response at a societal level, in terms of a subsidised

housing market and provision of an adequate supply of appropriate

accommodation.

Whilst poverty and a failure of the housing supply system may indeed be the

fundamental cause of homelessness in many developing countries, the

structuralist approach does not explain homelessness in most developed

countries, where poverty is lower, where welfare systems, although

diminishing, do still exist and where the housing supply system is more efficient.

As a demonstration of the inadequacy of this explanation for homelessness in the UK it is interesting to consider the case of Newcastle upon Tyne. As in some other larger cities in the UK, there is actually a surplus of local authority housing, as well as an oversupply of emergency accommodation in Newcastle. Indeed, at one time, during the late 1990s, Newcastle City Council actually advertised its vacant property on the local underground. At the same time some Big Issue[64] sellers were living out on the streets and a number of homeless people could be found sleeping rough in city centre doorways.

In the UK, the popular understanding of homelessness is that of visible street homelessness which is viewed as deviance. Homeless people are seen as failures, who sleep in doorways and on benches, as tramps, drunks or vagrants.   This perception of street homelessness is underpinned by what Neale terms the 'agency' explanation which places the responsibility for homelessness on the individual in one of two ways.

The first route for this victim-blaming 'agency' approach is to focus on the anti-social actions of the homeless, such as drinking or drug abuse. The second is to acknowledge the victim's personal inadequacy, such as learning difficulties or mental health problems. The 'agency' explanation seems to be

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[64] The Big Issue is a weekly magazine reporting on homelessness and other social issues, sold by homeless people to raise money.

something of a preoccupation amongst academics, with 10 times the number of reports on homelessness with a focus on mental illness than with a focus on poverty or housing (Julia and Hartnett 1999). The truth is that the causes of homelessness in developed countries vary greatly but are often underpinned by some form of personal or household crisis, such as unemployment or repossession of a home. For women the cause is frequently domestic violence (Charles 1994; Hague, Malos and Dear 1995).

Whatever the cause, homelessness in the UK seldom leads to sleeping rough, especially if children are involved. It is, perhaps, this relatively low level of rough sleeping which leads people to believe that it must be a last resort, indicating absolute lack of choice or concern. This is not necessarily true. Interviews with rough sleepers indicate there are many reasons why people choose not to make use of the available temporary or permanent accommodation. Some feel intimidated by other homeless people in shelters, or fear becoming institutionalised (Department of Environment 1990).

Exisiting typologies of homelessness

There are a number of typologies of homelessness developed for the West which are inappropriate for use in developing countries. For example, FEANTSA (1999) suggests a typology based on a combination of high or low quality and security. However, any categorisation using the concept of low quality or security would include the vast majority of the developing world's population and would offer little differentiation between their individual circumstances and stress.

Cooper (1995) offers us degrees of homelessness based again on accommodation or shelter. The worst degree, 'absolute homelessness' includes those living on the streets, under bridges and in deserted buildings. Again, this would include many hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people in developing countries. Moreover, Coopers third degree – inadequate housing, would certainly include millions of squatters and be of little use in developing interventions of apportioning resources.

Only Hertzberg (1992), discussing homelessness in the United States, begins to categorise homeless people by how they perceive their homelessness and what they want for the future. This typology offers three groups of people and suggests that 'resistors' are fighting against homelessness, 'teeterers' are ambivalent to it and 'accommodators' have accepted it. However, Hertzberg's typology fails in a developing countries context in that it does not acknowledge any degree of choice or control. Moreover, the length of time each group is homeless, and the places they are most likely to stay are inappropriate for developing countries.

Developing a new typology for developing countries
We turn now to consider three categories of homelessness based on the degree of choice the homeless person might exercise and their potential for improving the situation. These categories have developed out of the element of the original study which looked at the characteristics of homeless people. This was compiled from both primary and secondary data, where it existed.

The primary data included detailed interviews and testimonies of homeless people themselves, collected both by the author and by the other researchers working on the study.

These interviews and testimonies particularly gave an insight into why people were homeless and how they perceived their homelessness, in the context of their broader life.

Homelessness as a supplementation strategy

We have called the first category of homelessness we encountered 'supplementation homelessness'. Supplementation homelessness develops when people, often lone men, leave their village homes in search of employment in the city.   In this respect, the origins of homelessness, economic migration, is similar to that of many homeless people. However, for a number of reasons, it is possible for the supplementation homeless person, by sleeping rough and not spending on housing, to send money home to supplement his rural livelihood. In a number of cases, the people interviewed made a conscious choice to remain on the streets, even though they could return home, or house themselves better in the city, if they chose to.

On the streets of major cities, such as Delhi, Dhaka or Cairo live thousands of people, sometimes alone but increasingly in family units. They live without any shelter from the elements or under makeshift shelter of cardboard or plastic sheeting, or in doorways and stairwells. Many have deliberately abandoned or left their homes, either temporarily or permanently, in search of work (Dupont 1998). This phenomenon is common in all our nine countries.

It is even increasing in China, where recent relaxation of the control of population movement has led to the formation of a 'floating' population, with many hundreds of thousands of people leaving their towns and villages and seeking employment in the cities.

Photograph 1 shows a roadside camp in Banglaore, which houses construction workers. The elevated road they are working on can be seen in the background. We would class many of the workers here as 'supplementation homeless', in that their work on the site is a way of them supplementing their rural livelihoods. Several were working to earn money for a specific event, such as a sister's wedding, or to buy extra land or cattle. They maintained a strong connection to their villages and viewed their homeless period as temporary, even though they had lived in the camp, following the work, for several years. They did not regard themselves as being disconnected from their homes or their social networks.

How often do you go home to the village?

When I want to, for festivals and harvest about 2 months between

Do you still have a home there, and family?

Certainly

Photograph 1: construction workers housing, Bangalore, India

In some cases, the homeless period becomes set in the culture of a group. For example, in Bolivia and Peru every year entire families migrate from the rural parts of the Alto Plano to cities and large towns to trade and hawk goods on the streets. During the time they are there, they are quite literally shelterless and live out on the streets, generally with no protection at all from the elements. They are target migrants who choose or tolerate homelessness during their sojourns in the city. Whilst most of these people might be considered 'supplementation homeless', others, those whose rural livelihoods were marginal to begin with, do not return to their homes and become part of our second category - survival homeless.

Homelessness as a survival strategy

We have called our second category of homelessness 'survival homelessness'. Its origins are often the same as our first category, supplementation, in that many survival homeless people have migrated in search of employment. The roadside camp shown in photograph 1 housed both supplementary homeless and survival homeless people in identical conditions.

Many of the homeless people in the camp had, initially, come to supplement their rural livelihood or improve their land and housing in the rural villages. Like their supplementary homeless neighbours, they generally came alone at first, intending to work and send money home to the village. However, unlike the supplementary homeless people in the same camp, the survival homeless are often unable to send enough money home to improve their village

situation. This may be because their land is too poor to support them, even with the added earned income from the city, or because they have no land, or perhaps because the structure of the family is such that the land cannot be managed without them.

Eventually those who were initially 'supplementary homeless' bring their wives, children and parents to live with them, abandoning their village and becoming survival homeless. The children in the camp in photograph 1 cared for themselves and each other, whilst mothers, fathers and grandparents worked. There was no school available and no water or sanitation provided, even though the Indian government has guidelines for construction companies regarding provision of basic services for their workers.

Any money the labouring families may be able to save, by living in such poor conditions rather than paying rent, is soon eaten up with medical costs and other essential expenses. Although initially they only expected to work on the site for a few months, many families had been there for 3 years or more, moving with the site as the work progressed. During that time, their ability to return to the village diminishes, as any land or housing they have falls into even poorer condition. They also begin to feel inadequate as their idea of supplementing their rural homes dies away. Slowly they become less and less connected to their village and may return home only once a year for the village festival. Their short term response to economic crisis becomes long term, even permanent.

How often do you go back home?

Only for my (village) festival now. There is nothing left, the house is broken down and there is nothing for me there now

<div align="right">

Male construction worker Bangalore.

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In India, as in other developing countries, the construction industry actively recruits from the rural villages around cities. However, not all migrants move to a specific job. Some people arrive in the cities with no specific employment in mind and settle where they can at the side of the road, doing any work they can find, with the intention of returning to their homes once things improve. For example, on the streets of most Indian cities live groups of people who make their living collecting and recycling rags. Photograph 2 shows one such group in Bangalore, which has developed over the last 12 years. Many people here are losing regular contact with their village homes and return only for the festival, if that. This entrapment repeats itself in other developing countries. As indicated earlier, some of the target migrants of the Andes find it easier, or at least more viable financially, to remain homeless in the Peruvian city than to return to their villages.

Photograph 2: Rag pickers housing in Banglalore, India

Although some of the people in this group remain isolated, alone and in a state of utter destitution, in many cases this acceptance of homelessness in the city places the survival homeless person on a new, upwards, housing trajectory. Living under makeshift shelter for many years, and having relinquished hope of returning to their villages, the group in photograph 2, have formed a small community. Interesting new alliances and relationships appear to be building between groups of survival homeless people. For example, in India, those with daughters, who would normally arrange marriages with families in neighbouring rural villages at home, have to begin to think of making matches through other groups of settlers, as their standing in their village diminishes. Over time what begins as supplementation homelessness but turns into a survival homelessness eventually becomes a new 'home' situation.

Their grouping together also gives homeless people a de facto address, which in turn gives access to NGO and government assistance. Indeed, the group pictured had recently celebrated being designated as an official 'slum'. This means that they may be allowed to vote, may eventually be provided with services, such as water and sanitation, and their small settlement may be upgraded or they may be moved to better housing.

At first glance the two groups of supplementary and survival homeless seem little different. Their locations and the conditions of their shelter are virtually the same, they do the same work for the same money. Where they differ, however, is in their connectedness to their previous lives and places of origin

and their ability to leave their homeless situation. Whilst 'supplementary' homeless people regularly send money home, 'survival' homeless people seldom do. 'Supplementary' homeless people may return to their villages and their families quite regularly, every few months, and plan to return permanently once the money they have sent has bought more land or helped to build a new house, or paid for a wedding. 'Survival' homeless people seldom return home. The land and housing of 'supplementary' homeless people is improved by their homelessness, whilst any land or housing the 'survival' homeless group did have falls into disrepair.

Although the cases given thus far have been from India, many people can be found in similar situations around the developing world. In cities around the world the numbers of people living under makeshift shelters in squatter settlements at the periphery of the cities is vast. In one settlement alone, San Juan de Miraflores, in Lima, Peru, there were approximately 370,00 people in 2000. The vast majority of these people live in extremely dilapidated dwellings, certainly no better than those of many of the construction workers on the roadside in Bangalore, India. Moreover, their location, on the periphery of the city, limits employment possibilities.

It is not that these people have no homes, or have lost their homes through national or personal crisis. Again, in many cases, they have had to swap adequate housing but inadequate earnings in their rural villages, for inadequate housing but slightly improved earnings potential in the city. Frequently, however, as in the case of migrant labourers in India, the earnings

potential is still too poor for them to both subsist singly in the city and improve

their initial situation at home. They lose the choice of returning home and

their only option is to continue their homelessness.

There is a fine and debatable line between street homeless and squatters.

This paper does not seek to engage in that debate and acknowledges the

many differences in terms of potential, if not actual, security and the

development of social networks. However, it must be emphasised that the

actual physical living conditions in many squatter settlements are little better,

even after considerable a time, than those experienced by some roadside

dwellers, as the following photograph of dwellings on one Peruvian settlement

shows. This is one reason why current typologies based on quality of

dwelling, such as FEANTA's or Cooper's are not appropriate for developing

countries. Moreover, both squatters and street homeless people's actions are

frequently underpinned by the same thing – a desire to survive and a

misguided belief that the deprivation will be temporary. It is for that reason

that we include some squatters in the survival homeless category.
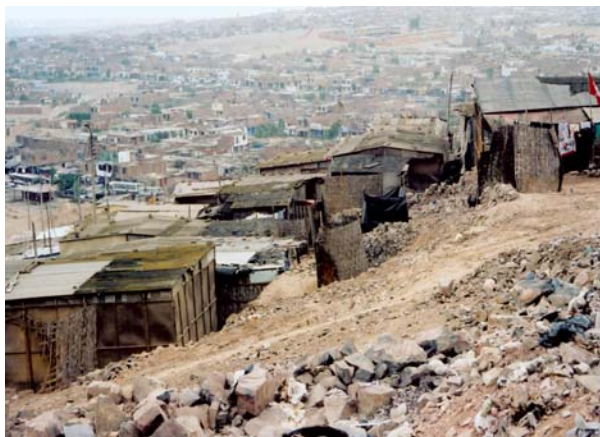
Hundreds of thousands live in Dwellings constructed from straw matting in Villa El Salvador, Peru

<u>Crisis - Street homelessness as crisis management</u>

We turn now to our third category of homelessness, which we have called 'crisis homelessness'. Those who fall into this category have the least chance of exercising choice or control over their situation and are unlikely to experience homelessness as an opportunity or upwards trajectory. Few developing countries have any form of support for people made homeless due to personal or household crisis. Even those made homeless as a result of natural disaster have little support. For example, in Bangladesh, one of the most disaster prone countries in the world, there is little government support even for those made homeless because of flooding, the county's most common and recurrent disaster. In Peru, the government has a programme of finance for the rebuilding of homes lost through recent earthquakes. However, there is no support for the many thousands of people who have to leave houses so poor or dilapidated as to be dangerous, or which simply fall down around them, as in the case of some of the tugurios[65] in Lima.

Photograph 3. Dilapidated Tugurio in Lima, Peru

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[65] Tugurios are old city centre courtyard house, many of which have become hugely overcrowded in recent years and which, in many cases, are so dilapidated as to be a serious health hazard.

Photograph 3 shows the situation for one family who live in the remaining part of their upper floor apartment, using plastic sheeting to keep out the rain. Other apartments in the block have collapsed completely, in some cases killing the occupants.

As in most developing countries, people who find themselves facing personal or household crises, which so often lead to homelessness, such as the death of a spouse, unemployment or family breakdown, are left to fend for themselves. Just as domestic violence and family breakdown are major causes of women's homelessness in the West, the same is true in developing countries. A number of authors have highlighted the degree to which family violence exists in many countries of the world, and its implications for women's homelessness (Vadera,1997; Valentine 1989). Even without the trauma of violence, much of women's homelessness is brought about by men. Box 1 tells the story of one woman in Bangladesh, forced to leave her home after being abandoned by her husband.

Many countries have, in theory at least, legislation protecting a woman's rights to inherit property on her husband's death. Nevertheless, cultural traditions can mean that the husband's relatives force the widow, and her children, out of the family home. In India, Bangladesh, Peru and Bolivia, the study on which this article is based encountered women who had been made homeless through the death of their husbands. Despite having small children, they were reduced to living on the streets.

Soon after the birth of her first child Rita's husband developed an extra-marital affairs with one of her co-workers. While she was pregnant for a second time, her husband deserted her and had taken with him many valuables that were not bought by his income. At his desertion without a divorce, she fell into a deep crisis. A few weeks later she became homeless because she could not pay the rent.

Her present abode is a cover of polyethylene over a small stretch of footpath alongside many other street dwellers in Katobon area. She now begs as well as collects waste papers from which her daily income is Tk. 15. Even this income is irregular. This amount is insufficient to feed her two children and herself. At least Tk. 100 are required daily for bare subsistence. Her problem is that she could not again take a steady job at garment factory for there is no one to take care of her children while she is away from home.

Whilst the main causes of homelessness may vary from country to country, the causes of child homelessness, and the increasing number of children living on the streets alone, are remarkably consistent internationally. The two main causes of children dislocating fully from their families are extreme poverty and abuse. The literature about street children frequently refers to children leaving home in search of a way of feeding themselves or fleeing abuse from alcoholic parents and step parents (Korboe 1996; Lusk 1992;. Bibars 1998). This was also the case for the children in all of the 9 countries of our study. In South America particularly, Copping (1998) notes that '*beatings of women and children by men within the household is considered to be pervasive'.* This high incidence of abuse of children in South America is again noted by Lajoie (1998) who reports that between 75% – 80% of the street children one worker in Guatamala deals with have been physically or

sexually abused. In this respect the street homelessness of many lone children can also be classed as 'crisis homeless'.

Whether they are children or adults, those in our category of 'crisis homeless' are in the worst position. They have the least control or choice over their situation and may have been pushed into it by the actions or inadequacy of others.   For this group, homelessness is seen, from the outset, as another problem, rather than part of a strategy to improve life or a solution to other problems, such as poverty, overcrowding or the need for independent accommodation.

Some of the characteristics of Hertzberg's (1992) categories can be seen in the differences between our survival and supplementary homeless groups even though, in reality, their time spent as homeless people may be similar. Our Supplementary homeless people are somewhat like Hertzberg's 'resistors', in that they view their homelessness as temporary and fully intend to return to their normal situation. However, they could not be said to be resisting homelessness in the way in which Hertzberg suggests, as many could house themselves more effectively but choose not to in order to save money.

Our survival homeless people equated more closely to Hertzberg's 'accommodators', in that they have learned to accept their situation, and were giving up hope of returning. However, we did not find them to have no hopes for the future, as with Hertzberg's 'accommodators'. Quite the opposite, many

have now developed entirely new hopes and plans, based on the reality of their situation. In particular, they often hope and plan for their settlements to be regularised and upgraded, or to be allowed to vote or to receive ration or registration cards, giving them access to education and other services. Their hopes are to improve on their homeless situation and dwellings, where they are, rather than to leave that place or return to an original home.

However, our category of 'crisis homeless' does not equate to Hertzberg's 'teeterers', in that they do not necessarily have significant personal barriers to stability such as mental illness or alcoholism.   Rather, the cause of their homelessness is circumstantial and due largely to external influences. Nor are most of them in any way accepting of their situation.

Conclusions

What we have tried to show is that there are degrees of choice in even the most abject manifestations of homelessness.   This paper does not mean to imply that the choice is an easy one, or one which any human being should be expected to make. It does not suggest that the choices made in the developing world can be equated to the choices made by homeless people in the West. However, it does suggest that the reasons behind that choice are as important in determining the type and level of assistance to be offered as the conditions of homelessness itself.

For example, in the case of the supplementary homeless people, housing may not be their prime concern, for they are not intending to remain in their current situation. What they most need is a way of improving their rural livelihoods, allowing them to return home. It may be that flexible credit, to support their household's economic plans, or to deal with a specific problem, could prevent them needing to earn extra money in the city. If they do need accommodation for their time in the city, it is most likely to be for single people and at virtually no cost. They may not need much in the way of support or advocacy services, as their homelessness is not related to personal problems or inadequacies.

Many people within the second category of 'survival homeless' are homeless as a means of absolute economic survival. Their rural livelihoods are too poor to be salvaged. They need to establish new livelihoods, either in the city or in their rural villages. Their greatest need is for improved access to land, or economic development, which would allow them to make a living in their rural villages. Alternatively they may need to be supported, with training, possibly with credit, to establish new livelihoods in the city. Once in the city, they may need family accommodation with a range of services such as health care, childcare and training and education.

For others of this group, it is a complete failure of the housing supply system to provide adequate housing which drives them to homelessness. As new households develop, most have no option but to establish poor dwellings in squatter settlements as a means of their household unit surviving

independently. These homeless people need security of tenure, housing finance and credit to help them turn their poor and temporary dwellings into better, more permanent houses. They also need basic services, such as water and sanitation, for their newly forming communities.

The crisis homeless people frequently need a range of support with personal difficulties such as physical and mental health issues, education confidence and empowerment. They generally need prolonged provision of housing before they are able to support themselves. For this group, a holistic approach to assistance along the lines of that given to some homeless people in the UK may be needed. They may need immediate, temporary or long-term housing, counselling, basic skills training and ongoing support to rebuild their lives.

Legislation exists in many developing countries to protect the rights of women and children to shelter. However, ultimately a major cultural change is needed if many are not to be forced into this category of crisis homelessness by abuse, desertion and widowhood.

What is being suggested here is that 'accommodation oriented' definitions of homelessness can be misleading because the level of accommodation deprivation which a person or household considers tolerable depends on how they perceive their homelessness. The same is true of definitions oriented on time, as the time a person is prepared to live in a specific situation again depends on their reasons and the degree of choice they feel they can

exercise. Perhaps one of the most useful contributions to defining

homelessness comes from the last few words of this quotation from Springer

(2000)

"there are as many classifications and definitions of homelessness as there are different

points of views. A definition of homelessness might refer to a special housing situation, to

a special minimum standard, to the duration and the frequency of a stay without shelter,

to lifestyle questions, to the use of the welfare system and to the being part of a certain

*group of the population, to the risk of becoming houseless and to **the possibility to move***

***or not if desired**." (author's emphasis)*

Whatever the eventual definition, our efforts to develop interventions might

best be focused on those people with the least ability to move on from it, if

desired. This would mean acknowledging that some people can cope

perfectly well with, and even choose, what others would see as the most

abject form of destitution.

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