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**Dynamics of poverty, development and population mobility:
The Bangladesh case^{*}**

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* This paper was prepared by Ms. Rita Afsar, Senior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). The Views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations. This paper has been issued without formal editing.

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1.1 Introduction

Over the last decade, the landscape of Bangladesh has changed remarkably with the persistent mobility of people reflecting the dynamic interaction between spaces and poverty, an emerging reality in the development discourse of the country. In response to improvements in markets, communications and transport, and access to electricity, migration has assumed great importance in constructing livelihood strategies of the people and economy of the country. The role of rural areas no longer remains confined to food-production but has also expanded to provide labour for urban areas and across the geographic borders (Toufique and Turton, 2002). However, the linkages between migration and development are often not straightforward, are complex and remain unsettled. Rural-urban migration is one of the consistently discernable forces of change amidst growing diversity and complexity in the patterns of migration. In light of the changing situation in Bangladesh, links between migration and development need to be re-examined. Moreover, there is a considerable vacuum to understand migration-poverty interface in the country (Chaudhury, 1978; Chaudhury and Curlin, 1975; Islam and Begum, 1983; Krishnan, 1978; Rahman et al. 1996; Hossain et al. 1999; Afsar, 1999; Hossain et al; 2003a). The main purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of population mobility on poverty alleviation and document how that impact is changing the development parameters of the country. More specifically, it will examine the impact of migration on the migrants and their families at destinations and then, on overall rural economy and urbanization in order to capture the dynamic interactions between population mobility and other development parameters. It will also examine how far poverty alleviation strategies capture those realities and the gaps and policies that should be adopted will be discussed.

1.2 Data and Methods

The paper is largely based on the author's resurvey data collected by administering a structured questionnaire on randomly selected households in Dhaka in 1991 and 1998. The sample for the survey was drawn using a multi-stage random sampling method. In the first stage, ward was selected as the primary sampling unit. The

ward is the lowest level of administrative unit in municipal areas for government functioning. In 1991 Dhaka had 86 wards from which four were selected for the study using a random number table. The wards selected were Lalbag, Jurain, Purana Paltan, and Mirpur. The 1989-90 and 1996 Electoral Rolls were used as the sampling frame. In the second stage of sampling, all persons in the electoral roll were stratified into six occupational groups and random samples of 100 households were drawn for each ward.¹ The Electoral Roll of 1989-90 was found to suffer from under-enumeration of households in slums and squatter areas. Considering that these households belong to low-income groups and their exclusion would create an upward bias in the estimation of incomes, a supplementary census of all slums and squatter settlements in the selected wards was conducted, and households were listed by their major sources of income. Households were then stratified into three groups on the basis of major sources of income -- transport operation, construction, and others -- and 50 samples for each ward were selected. The sample thus consisted of 150 households for each ward, with those drawn from slums and squatter areas constituting one third of the total sample².

The 1998 survey was conducted in the same four wards. It would have been ideal if the same households could have been identified for the repeat survey. However, given the high mobility of urban residents, this was not possible. The process of selection of samples remained the same as in 1991, using the Electoral Roll prepared for the 1996 election. The Electoral Roll of 1996 had comprehensive coverage of slums and squatter settlements. So, it was possible to depend on the list for selecting the entire sample irrespective of their residence. In this process, again 150 samples were drawn randomly from each of the sample wards based on stratification according to occupation, 50 of them were selected from slums and squatter areas.

To supplement the place of destination based data with those of migrants' origin, a recent review of literature on migration and development done by the author was used (Afsar, 2003a). Panel data generated from rural household survey in 62 randomly selected villages of Bangladesh by BIDS (Rahman et al. 1996) and IRRI (Hossain et al.

¹ A reserve sample was drawn and used as a replacement if a sample from the original list could not be located. The reserve sample was needed because of the high incidence of shifting residences for urban households.

2003b) constituted the major source in this respect. However, other micro studies and official data generated by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) were also used for the paper.

1.3 Scope of the Paper

Although migration involves a large spectrum of movement from commuting or temporary absence of home location for a couple of days to seasonal migration or permanent relocation, due to dearth of data the paper focuses on rural-urban migration that involves both permanent and temporary moves in search of employment (or better employment) and livelihoods.³ Rural to urban migration is the most dominant form of migration in the country. From the panel data generated from 62 randomly sampled villages in Bangladesh, Rahman et al. (1996) found that nearly two thirds of out-migration from rural areas were directed to urban areas. The share of rural-to-rural migration was 10 per cent and that of overseas migration was 24 per cent. Estimates from Demographic Surveillance System (DSS) of Matlab Thana (Police district) also support a high rate of net city migration to the tune of 63 per cent between 1982 and 1996 (Kuhn, 2000).⁴ Considering that poverty is a multi-dimensional concept having both subjective and objective connotations, it is better to delineate the indicators of poverty at the outset. With the help of income and employment, health and education, inequality and vulnerability, indicators of poverty will be examined in this paper. Note that these are all interrelated factors that reinforce each other and permeate long-term consequences.

² The justification for the sampling proportion between slum and non-slum settlements was based on studies conducted by the Centre for Urban Studies of Dhaka University, which reported the proportion of households in the former constitute a third of the total households in Dhaka City.

³ However, rural to rural migration also occurs, particularly in coastal districts where river erodes land and then again creates char (a strip of land deposit at the estuary) by changing its route (Kar and Hossain, 2001). This newly formed or accreted land is known as *char* land and is partially brought under direct government disposal through land reform legislation.

⁴ Matlab is one of the sub-districts of Comilla and is located at the junction of the Dhonogoda and Gumti Rivers, in the flood plain of the Meghna River system. It is the site of the Demographic Surveillance System (DSS) of the International Centre for Health and Population Research (known as ICDDR,B). DSS has collected monthly information on birth, death, marriage, divorce and migration for every resident of the 149 villages since 1966.

1.4 Structure of the Paper

The paper is organized in six sections. After the introductory part, section two presents the profile of migrants supplemented by a brief contextual analysis on why and how migration occurs from rural to urban areas. The dynamics of poverty, development and population mobility is highlighted in section three and four. Section three examines the impact of population mobility on poverty level of migrants and their families at the urban end complemented by data on origin wherever possible. Impact of migration on broader poverty and development parameters, which includes rural economy and urbanization have been examined in section four. This is followed by a brief mapping of the existing government policies. The concluding section presents the major policy implications that follow from the main findings of the paper.

2.1 Profile of Migrants

Migrants in Bangladesh are predominantly young adults from low-income families. The traditional picture of young males leaving their villages to find work to support their families back home is changing as more women join their ranks, and increasingly migrants are better informed of job opportunities in the place of destination. Table 2.1 presents a snapshot of migrants and wherever possible comparison was made with groups, such as non-migrant, male and female migrants and slum versus non-slum.

It is also an incorrect notion that poor people are migrating for 'any job' as the majority are already employed before migration. It is likely that they have little incentive to remain in agriculture because the agricultural productivity per worker is one of the lowest in the world. The growth of farm income was estimated to be around one per cent per annum as opposed to six per cent growth of non-agricultural income between 1988 and 2000 (Hossain et al. 2003b). Rather, they migrated for better and more rewarding employment opportunities than what they had in rural areas. This has been expressed as the major reason for migration to Dhaka City by a large number of slum dwellers both in 1991 and 1998. A quarter of them collected information about their first job prior to

migration and three quarters have strengthened their networks with friends and relatives at the point of destination who helped them secure the first job. Hence, migration occurs from rural to urban areas not merely due to pull or push factor alone but through an interactive process of both push and pull factors combined with active support of social networks.

Table: 2.1 Characteristics of migrants compared with other groups

Characteristics	Internal Migrant
<i>Age</i>	Household surveys at destination show that $\frac{3}{4}$ of temporary, $\frac{1}{2}$ permanent and $\frac{1}{3}$ non-migrants of Dhaka city were between 15-34 years of age. 90 per cent of the women labour of Ready Made Garment (RMG) factories was under 30 years. Among the extreme poor however, aging population 50+ are also involved in the pursuit of mobile livelihoods.
<i>Marital Status</i>	Nearly 90 per cent of permanent migrant and non-migrants were married at the time of the survey. By contrast nearly half of temporary migrants were never married. In the case of women labour, almost half were never married and less than a tenth were divorced/widowed or separated, the remaining were currently married. Among the extreme poor, the divorced and widowed women have a greater likelihood to migrate.
<i>Gender</i>	RMG sector absorbed more than 1.5 million of the workforce in the mid-1990s of which 70 per cent were women and more than 90 per cent were migrant. In other industries such as food processing, pharmaceuticals and electronics, migrants constitute about half of the work force and the gender ratio is almost balanced.
<i>Socio-economic Background</i>	Bi-polar pattern of migration prevails predominated by exodus of landless agricultural workers. Generally migration occurs from landless category who had nothing to lose from migration and on the other end, are those who have enough resource to take the risk. Thus $\frac{3}{4}$ of women and $\frac{2}{3}$ of men labour to RMG factory were functionally landless and had years of schooling. Migrants to slum had only one year of schooling and a non-poor migrant had 8 years education and they migrate mainly for the better education of their children. Extreme poor and destitute also migrate to earn money for survival in a situation of social exclusion having little or no supportive network.
<i>Spatial trends</i>	Almost 90 per cent of poor migrants who settle in slums and squatter settlements come straight to Dhaka from their areas of origin. In contrast, about a third of their non-poor counterparts came via other towns and cities. Hence, the role of small towns as stepping stones does not appear to hold for poorer migrants. Migrants are largely of rural origin. Certain spatial trends have emerged: the poor are migrating out from the central and southern districts of Comilla, Faridpur, Barisal and Dhaka districts. More than 90 per cent of poor migrants originated from these districts (Afsar, 2002). In the non-slum, however more than a quarter of household also migrated from northern districts and Noakhali from where very few migrants settle in slum. Respondents from mess or boarding houses migrated predominantly from Jamalpur which was a part Mymensingh district, as a result of river erosion. Existing estimates on poverty show that Dhaka and Chittagong districts have fewer people living below the poverty line. Using HPI to identify relative deprivation at district level we find that with the exception of Faridpur, all other 'sending districts' have HPI values of 35 per cent or less/an HPI value of over 45 per cent represents performance (Figure 2.1) (BIDS, 2001). ⁵ Thus out-migration is not occurring from the most impoverished districts as held under the conventional wisdom. These districts had strong history of out-migration and it is generally argued that migrants seldom set their feet to uncharted areas.

Sources: Afsar, 2000; Afsar, 2001a; Hossain et al.2003a.

⁵ HPI is composed of 3 indicators to capture 3 types of deprivation in health knowledge and in overall provisioning. Deprivation in health is indicated by vulnerability to death at a relatively early age quantified as per cent of people likely to die before reaching 40 years. Deprivation in knowledge is represented by the percentage of adults who are illiterate. Deprivation in overall economic provisioning is represented by per

3.1 Migration and Poverty

3.1.1 Employment and Income

Studies on internal migration clearly demonstrated that greater job opportunity in the cities and metropolitan areas ‘pulled’ migrants from rural areas (Skeldon, 1997; Hugo, 1991; Afsar, 1999, 2000b). Three out of every five rural poor migrants find work within one week of arrival (Afsar, 1999). Prior to migration, this group invested their time and energy to contact kin, friends and neighbours in Dhaka city. As a result, three quarters of these migrants secured their first job with the help of their social networks and one third of them had information about the job prior to arrival. The unemployment rate for active-age members of migrants’ households was estimated at 4 per cent; this is twice as high for non-migrant age cohorts. Moreover, the unemployment rate is lower in the case of recent migrants compared with long-term migrants. Given the fact that poor migrants can hardly afford to remain unemployed, one must go far beyond unemployment data to examine the impact of migration on poverty. However, for those who live on the edge of extreme poverty in rural areas, migration to nearby towns may give them temporary relief from unemployment.⁶

Rural-urban migration is often considered to be a process of transferring rural poverty to urban areas. The resurvey data yielded the following startling results, which challenges this conventional wisdom:

- For households in slum and squatter settlements, the head count ratio for moderate poverty was estimated at 79 per cent in 1991; this has dropped to a staggering low of 49 per cent in 1998, and extreme poverty also fell from 44.5 per cent to 23 per cent (table 3.1).⁷ These are basically migrant populations from the

centage of people (i) without access to safe drinking water, (ii) without access to health services and (iii) per centage of children under 5 who are moderately and severely underweight.

⁶ For an interesting insight on extremely poor migrant’s stories, please refer to Hossain et al. 2003a.

⁷ Head count index was calculated by working out the price of the normative food basket that an average resident in Dhaka city needs to maintain a healthy and productive life, after adjusting for the inflation and on the basis of information that urban households in the margin of poverty spend 60 per cent of their income on food (Hossain et al. 1999). The threshold income for extreme poverty is estimated in a similar manner with the added consideration that a person at that level needs 1800 kilocalories and a low intake of protein and vitamins.

landless and marginal landholding households in rural areas. Three quarters of this category were found to be moderately poor in rural areas (Rahman et al. 1996). From her study of RMG sector workers, Afsar (2001b) estimated that, from no income of their own prior to migration more than 80 per cent were able to earn enough to keep them above the poverty threshold after migration.⁸ Qualitative measures - such as perceptions about their poverty - also neatly corroborated with quantitative measures, which showed declining poverty after migration. Around three fifths of the migrant households, irrespective of their place of residence (slum or non-slum), reported that their economic situation had improved compared with around two fifths of rural households (Hossain et al. 1999; Rahman et al. 1996).

- Based on the panel data from rural sending areas, Rahman et al. (1996) found that the extent of poverty was much lower (around 30 per cent) for households having migrant members than for non-migrant households (around 60 per cent). The proportion of those who perceived themselves poor or extremely poor declined from around 60 per cent to 30 per cent between 1990 and 1995. In the case of non-migrant households, a large number (54 per cent) still considered them poor or extremely poor and only a small proportion perceived (8.7 per cent) improvement in their situation.

3.1.2 Human Capital Development

Human capital factors are important determinants of income and poverty. In order to examine effects of migration on those factors, school enrolment and morbidity rates of the cross-sections of the sample population are used as indicators. Both education and health are considered essential for productive life in modern society. Measuring deprivation in the dimensions of health and education is not new. Its origin can be traced to noted classical economists such as Malthus, Ricardo and Marx. In his classic study of

⁸ Note that poverty incidence fell to 9 per cent for their male counterparts but increases substantially for unskilled production workers. This is understandable because the former have greater opportunity to augment their incomes by virtue of their greater mobility and lesser burden of household chores compared with women, while skills and education are important determinants of urban income.

poverty in the English city of York in 1899, Rowntree argued that the death rate is the best instrument for measuring the variations in the physical well being of people. However, considering that mortality rates are available from secondary sources the morbidity rate is used to measure vulnerability. Similarly, considering the problems of gross enrolment data, net enrolment rate (showing the ratio of enrolled age cohorts to all population of that age group) is used as indicators of human capital.

The enrolment rate of age cohorts (6-15 years) in slum and squatter settlements in Dhaka city rose from 41 per cent to 58 per cent between 1991 and 1998. More than 40 per cent of the children remained out of school. It is not surprising that nearly one third of children in the 10-15 years age group from slums and squatters were in the labour force and the incidence of child labour remained almost unchanged between 1991 and 1998. Participation in higher education is almost negligible for young adult slum dwellers (Table 3.2). It indicates “for low-income households the mobility from low to high-income occupations through human capital formation is limited” (Hossain et al. 1999). Findings of the study also suggest that the level of poverty declines secularly with the level of education of the head of the households. Incidence of moderate poverty is estimated at 41 per cent for households having heads below the primary level of education, but declines substantially to 17 per cent for those whose heads were high school drop outs. Finally, the proportion of moderately poor households reaches 5 per cent and 2 per cent respectively in the case of household heads having school certificate and higher secondary certificate respectively. A further analysis of re-survey data reveals that polarization in Dhaka City is accrued from the skewed investment on physical capital and human development accounts. The share of top 5 per cent of the households in investment made on physical capital in 1997-98 was 55 per cent, while the share of the bottom 40 per cent was a meager 2 per cent, and that of the middle 40 per cent was only 18 per cent. The Gini concentration ratio of investment for the sample in 1998 is a staggering number of 0.79. Unless positive action is taken to reverse the situation by providing better access to capital and education for the lower income groups, the income inequality will further worsen.

Morbidity: The overall morbidity rate defined as the proportion of sick members during a month preceding the survey to the total household members is 34 per cent. This is nearly double than what is estimated by the DHS for the national level and nearly three times higher than that of rural areas (BBS 2001; Rahman et al. 1996)⁹. Whilst a large majority of sick population suffered from fever, a substantial proportion of children and young adults also suffered from cough. It is surprising that prevalence of diarrhoea is less than 5 per cent even among children under five although it accounts for 20-30 per cent of acute illnesses in rural areas (Rahman et al. 1996). It suggests a high prevalence of air, noise, chemical and other pollution in Dhaka City, which often occurs from a lack of adequate regulation of transport, industry and commercial sectors and from the overall urban mismanagement. However, the incidence of morbidity varies considerably by age, gender, migration and poverty (defined by income levels and slum and non-slum residence) status of respondents¹⁰. Table 3.3 suggests that there is a very high morbidity risk for children under five (57 per cent) and this cuts across slum and non-slum boundaries. Incidence of morbidity among slum dwellers is more than double that of non-slum populations except for the ageing population (60+) with their morbidity rate being strikingly higher among the former than the latter. These findings are not unexpected given that access to water and sanitation varies greatly by slum and non-slum residence and the quality of housing of the respondents.

It is often argued that in selecting their shelter, most poor families give priority to the proximity to work place mainly to minimize the transport cost and also for child care. In doing so they are likely to bear the risk of living in hazardous and/or “illegal areas,” such as along a railway line, drainage, road or in other areas prone to flooding and landslides. However, the question of priority is obviously a subjective issue, which is largely driven by supply factor. Particularly in a situation of almost complete absence of

⁹ It should be mentioned that although the data collected in a one shot survey the period of data collection was spread over a period of eight months, yet the chances of bias by the seasonal pattern of diseases cannot be totally ruled out. Moreover, it was based on reporting of the respondents, which could be exaggerated or might be under-reported considering the intrinsic weakness of recall.

¹⁰ This rate is estimated after controlling for chronic diseases such as: diabetes, blood pressure, rheumatic, weakness and paralysis/stroke, which are found common among the ageing members of the sample households.

low-cost housing, cheap and safe mass transportation system, which are some of the most distinguished features of Dhaka, the poorer sections of population have little room for choice or alternative settlement options. This generally exacerbates the problem of environmental pollution given the poor and hazardous state of water and sanitation.¹¹

3.1.3 Inequality and Vulnerability

Internal migration is often considered a source of inter village inequality because better-off villages and villagers learn first, and are able to avail new job opportunities whereas the extremely poor groups are generally excluded from such opportunities (Skeldon, 1997). However, this negative picture should not be generalized because empirical research also suggests that various groups have benefited in different ways, depending on the types of opportunities. Moreover, migration allows the migrants and their families to improve their family's resource base and human capital. In the Bangladeshi context, the difficulties associated with separating overseas and internal remittances and their impact for the same households have been discussed elsewhere by the author (Afsar, 2003). Evidence presented on the impact of remittances at areas of origin in section 4 also indicates its positive contribution in poverty alleviation, generating greater and diversified employment opportunities through multiplier effects, and strengthening both material and human capital. However, existing estimates (Hossain et al. 2003b) also suggest that income gains from business are the most unequally distributed source of income, followed by services and non-rice agriculture, benefiting the higher income groups more than others. At the place of destination, however, the resurvey data on migration in Dhaka City indicates the worsening of income distribution between slum and non-slum residents. Slum dwellers are predominantly migrants from rural areas, and they earned around one third of the income of non-slum households in 1991; this declined to one fifth in 1998. The bottom 40 per cent saw drop from 17 per cent of the income of non-slum households to 11 per cent while the top 10 per cent

¹¹ This is not to suggest that population density per se is the major factor spreading environmental pollution but it can aggravate the problem in a situation where there is poor management and delivery of urban basic services. Findings of the study suggest that less than 10 per cent of the slum dwellers have access to piped water inside the households, while more than 90 per cent continue using non-sanitary latrines. The situation with regard to their water-sanitation coverage did not change in the last 7 years. Paradoxically, 99 per cent and 91 per cent of the non-slum residents enjoy safe water and sanitation facilities.

increased their income from 27 per cent to 42 per cent. The Gini concentration ratio, a measure of income inequality, is estimated at .53, a staggering increase their income from .37 in 1991.

Existing studies have also pre-warned that economic gains are likely to be offset against the vulnerability that could arise from ill health, natural calamity, violence and other socio-political threats, death of the income-earning members of the family, weakening of social capital and human capital etc. (Rahman et al. 1996: Kothari, 2002). Mortality and morbidity rates are much higher in urban slums and squatter settlements, where most migrants live (Thwin et al, 1996; Afsar, 1999). Hossain et al. (2003a) have shown that, although a good number of extremely poor and mobile groups were able to make economic gains, they were often offset by the health and security costs that they had to bear in the process. Thus, although the urban population is ahead of the rural population on both poverty and social development indicators, the urban poor in general and migrants in particular find it difficult to sustain economic gains in the long run, due to intra-urban inequality in income and delivery of social services.¹²

4.1 Migration and Rural Economy

4.1.1 Land and Labour Market

Rural-urban migration stimulated land tenancy. From their panel data Hossain et al. (2002) observed that in rural areas, 1.3 per cent of the owned land was sold compared with 1.7 per cent of owned land in 1987/88; land purchase was reported at 2 per cent in 1999/00. The higher incidence of land purchase compared to land sale indicates the important contribution of rural-urban migration to the land market in a land-scarce country. By purchasing rural land, urban settlers become absentee landowners, making tenancy arrangements with relatives to cultivate their land. With an increase in the

¹² Existing estimates show that urban poverty is lower than rural poverty (36 per cent versus 43 per cent), a significant gap after secondary level education (40 per cent versus 22 per cent) and infant and under-five mortality rates (74.5 versus 80.7 and 96.7 versus 112.6 deaths/ 1000 live births) (ERD, 2003; Hossain et al. 2003b).

incidence of tenancy, land-poor households got additional access to land. According to Hossain et al. 2002:

Most of the tenants are small landowners who find it economical to rent land to increase the capacity-use of the farm establishment.. Nearly 47 per cent of the tenanted land was operated by households owning less than 0.2 hectare and another 40 per cent by households owning 0.2 to 1.0 hectare.

Subsequently, some important structural changes can be observed with regard to household income during the reference period. Share of agriculture to household income declined from 59 per cent to 44 per cent, whilst that of trade, services and remittances increased from 35 per cent in 1987/88 to 49 per cent in 1999/00. Hossain et al. (2002) also observed that the most dramatic increase has been in the share of remittances from relatives who migrated to cities and overseas. The proportion of households receiving remittances in 1999/00 was 21 per cent, almost double from 11 per cent of such households in 1987/88. The contribution of remittances to household income has increased significantly from 7.3 per cent to 12.8 per cent over the period, registering 8.1 per cent annual growth while per capita income grew at 3.2 per cent. Thus, not only have rural households adopted emigration to urban areas as a livelihood strategy, but rural-urban migration is an increasingly important means of diversifying household and rural economies.¹³ Landless and land-poor farmers have left the agricultural labour market for tenancies, wage labour in trade and business enterprises, rickshaw pulling and other manual non-agricultural activities. Members of medium and large landowning households – with correspondingly larger endowments of human and physical capital – switched from cultivating their own farms to services and business. As a result, the proportion of poor people dropped to 43 per cent in 2000 from 59 per cent in 1988, a reduction of 1.2 per cent per year. There is no direct estimate of the contribution of remittances to poverty alleviation but, indirectly, some conjecture can be made in this regard.

¹³ The share of non-agriculture to household income has also increased from 30.6 per cent to 40.8 per cent for the bottom 40 per cent of the households in the per capita income scale, and more than 50 per cent for all other income categories during the reference period (Hossain et al. 2002).

From initial estimates in four types of agro-ecological zones (Figure 4.1), Hossain et al. (2003b) found that coastal areas had the lowest levels of poverty in 1987 and the speediest deceleration in 2000. The next poorest zone was drought prone areas, whilst both flood prone and favourable areas had higher levels of poverty and made the least progress in poverty reduction over time (Table 4.1).¹⁴ In coastal regions, they observed that the amount of land under tenancy was substantially higher (58 per cent) than in other regions (33 per cent). The fact that remittances account for 20 per cent of household incomes in the region clearly indicates a very high level of emigration. This shows the significant contribution that migration and remittances make to poverty alleviation, and the need for more rigorous estimation. Improving livelihoods now depend more on diversified agriculture and non-agriculture sectors and better quality of human capital even in rural areas; and the coastal areas outperformed all other regions with respect to income growth on both these accounts.¹⁵ The flood-prone and drought-prone areas ranked the second and the third, while performance was poor in favourable ecosystems (Hossain et al. 2003b).

The coastal region was also endowed with better-educated workers than other regions. Overall, (Hossain et al. 2003b) there was notable improvement in the level of education of workers from 3.38 to 4.73 years of schooling during the reference period. In the coastal region, the average level of education of a worker was 6.37 years in 2000, as compared to 4.01 years in flood-prone areas. This is consistent with the broad-based geographic regional data generated by the BDHS (NIPPORT et al. 2001). In both literacy

¹⁴ In this study, 62 nationally representative sample villages were drawn from 57 districts (for details please refer to Hossain et al. 2003b). Using geographical location as the primary indicator, they included villages from Cox's Bazaar, Noakhali, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barisal, Pirojpur, Bagerhat, Satkhira and Khulna districts under 'coastal ecosystem'. They classified villages that have most of their land not flooded during monsoon and that generally receive low rainfall from Jessore, Kushtia, Rajshahi and Dinajpur districts as 'drought-prone' regions. In villages where most of the land is flooded at a depth of 50 cm (knee-deep according to farmers' reporting) during the entire monsoon season were classified as 'flood-prone' and the remaining areas classified as 'favourable ecosystems'.

¹⁵ Annual income growth from non-rice agriculture and non-agriculture sectors was estimated at 6.8 per cent and 5 per cent between 1987 and 2000, contributing to the 3 per cent annual growth rate of household income and 4.5 per cent per capita income. For human capital development indicators, please refer to point 3.1.4.

and median years of schooling, the coastal Divisions: Khulna and Barisal showed the best record whereas the Sylhet Division, mainly a flood-prone region, was the worst performer. Human development is, therefore, considered a pre-requisite for poverty alleviation and growth and development of the country.

4.1.2 Multiplier Effects of Remittances

Remittances from internal migration are generating both direct and indirect benefits with short-term, long-term and multiplier effects on poverty alleviation, regional development and the overall development of the country. In Bangladesh, like in many other developing countries, migrants' households in rural areas use remittances predominantly for consumption. Existing evidence suggests that consumption expenditure alone constituted 37-90 per cent of the overseas and urban remittances. It is argued that increased consumption expenditure by migrant households can trigger investment by other households or firms to meet this demand, which may create income multipliers in migrant-source economies (Taylor, 1999). Existing estimates from panel data on rural households (Hossain et al. 2002) suggest that remittances contributed 12.8 per cent to the household income and that a 10 per cent increase in income would lead to 6.5 per cent increase in the demand for food items. These include mainly vegetables, fruits, fisheries and livestock, indicating stronger potential for the expansion of market for rural processing, storage, trade and transportation activities.

It has also been estimated that trade and business enterprises accounted for 22 per cent of the rural non-farm (RNF) employment and nearly 43 per cent of the income was generated from the RNF sector between 1987 and 2000. Nearly three fifths of these enterprises were agriculture related. The remainder was involved in construction materials, transport, garment, grocery, suggesting the spread of employment and income generating opportunities, a probable multiplier effect of remittances that needs to be confirmed through further research.¹⁶ The existing data, shows that savings and funding

¹⁶ Agricultural productivity itself might have stimulated the rural non-farm sector through linkage effects (Mellor, 1976; Haggblade et al. 2002). Drawing on data from selected Asian countries, Haggblade et al. (2002) found that for each dollar increase in agricultural value added, an additional \$0.50 to \$1.0 income is generated in the non-farm sector. Given that there is growing scarcity of labour and the spread of power-

from friends and relatives constituted around four-fifths of the initial capital invested in those enterprises. Future research needs to address to find out how much of the savings are generated from the remittances.

- 1) Remittances help boost consumption, and through multiplier effects, they expand business in agricultural products. For similar reasons, business in construction materials has also expanded.
- 2) Remittances also helped to generate savings, which constitutes the major source of capital in the absence of institutional credit on easy terms.
- 3) Migration and remittances invigorated the land tenancy market in rural areas. The proportion of tenant-farmers has increased from 42 per cent to 57 per cent between 1988 and 2000, and the land under tenancy cultivation has increased to 33 per cent, an 11 per cent increase from 1988.
- 4) Remittances from expatriate Bangladeshi workers had not only resolved the foreign exchange constraint and helped in improving the balance of payments in the country but under different government schemes it also ensured the imports of capital goods and raw materials for industrial development. Migration of workers also helped in reducing the unemployment rate, which is one of the major problems in Bangladesh¹⁷ (Afsar et al. 2000).

Therefore, on the whole migration has improved rural poverty both directly and indirectly. Clearly, there is a shortage of labour, which is likely to raise rural wages and again greater investment on consumption, a multiplier effect from remittances would reinforce higher wage rates through greater demand for labour in rural areas. Hence, push migration is likely to be weakened. Whilst employment pull would remain one of the major factors inducing population mobility to urban areas, the effectiveness of this will ultimately depend on the quality of urban life. Quality of life in turn depends on the level of infrastructure and supportive services such as low-cost housing, health-care facility and improved water and sanitation situations. Another important factor that induces migration to urban areas is the strength of the social network of migrants. This paper has discussed the disappearance of dualism of rural-urban labour market during the development process thereby corroborating partly with Lewis (1954). The strength of social networks of migrants that minimizes their cost of relocation and risk factors by ensuring job and shelter in the shortest possible time also shows futility of Todaro's (1969) job-lottery and high unemployment view of the urban labour market.

operated threshers in rural farms in Bangladesh, one may be tempted to link migration and agricultural productivity.

¹⁷ Between 1974 and 2000, the population grew at the rate of around 2 per cent per annum, whereas the growth of labour force was much higher, that is 3 per cent per annum during the same period (BBS, 1994, 2002).

4.2 Migration and Urbanization

Bangladesh is a rapidly urbanizing country where the urban base has expanded dramatically from less than a tenth to a quarter between 1970 and 2000. United Nations estimates suggest that the relative share of incremental population by rural areas is likely to decline gradually after 2010 and become stagnant between the years 2020 and 2030. By contrast, urban areas are likely to absorb nearly 46 million incremental populations during this period (table 4.2). Migration played the most dominant role contributing around two-thirds to urban growth of the country since independence (United Nations, 1993; Jordan, 1993). The percentage of the population residing in urban areas has increased from 6.2 per cent to 9.9 per cent between 1965 and 1975 and reached 25 per cent in 2000 (United Nations, 2002). The rate of urbanization increased sharply after the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. This was due to the prevailing problems of a war-torn economy such as a high rate of inflation, almost zero level productivity and domestic savings (Hossain, 1990), deterioration in the law and order situation in rural areas (Chaudhury, 1980), and the subsequent spread of economic and commercial activities in the urban centres.¹⁸ Moreover heavy concentration of urban population in its capital: Dhaka City alone containing around 40 per cent of urban population is a matter of great concern. Dhaka is likely to become the second largest urban agglomeration with 22.8 million people in 2015, surpassing all major cities, namely Sao Paulo, Mexico City, New York, Mumbai, Los Angeles and Kolkata (United Nations, 2002). However, the paper has demonstrated clearly that by adopting migration to Dhaka city as a livelihood strategy, poor peasant and agricultural labourers diversified their income and improved their poverty situation, but income gains reaped by migrants can be short lived. This is particularly true in the context of high morbidity rate and in the absence of opportunities inducing lower investment on human capital by poorer migrants. The study also identifies staggering income inequality and the conspicuous gap in quality of life indicators between the rich and the poor in Dhaka city. It deserves serious attention of planners and

¹⁸ For example, Dhaka alone accounts for nearly half of the country's total employment in manufacturing and textile, around 100 per cent in rubber products, publishing, furniture and less than three-quarters of jobs in footwear, leather goods and electrical machinery (United Nations, 1987).

policy makers because there is no explicit policy on urbanization since the Reorganization and Decentralization Policy, 1982/83.¹⁹

5.1 Existing Government Policies

Since independence, poverty alleviation and economic growth remained the major focus of the policy of the successive governments. In the 1980s, privatization and liberalization were prioritized while the development of human resources gained ascendancy since the 1990s. The draft national strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction (popularly known as I-PRSP) aims for pro-poor economic growth, human development, women's advancement and closing of gender gaps, social safety nets and participatory governance (ERD, 2003).²⁰ With declining availability of land, the government faces the daunting challenge of generating employment for a labour force that is growing faster than the population. Whilst agriculture and rural development are the cornerstones of the present strategy, non-farm activities are rapidly expanding. However, the government fails to provide an effective regional development framework for decentralizing the industrial process around secondary towns and peri-urban areas, and transforming gains from rural non-farm sectors to high value added activities. In addition, it has formulated the National Rural Development Policy 2001 to enhance the capacity and power of the rural poor to develop, protect and sustain their livelihoods but no such policy has been formulated for urban areas, despite its acknowledgement that poor people's livelihood strategies often straddle the rural-urban divide. It also fails to outline any mechanism to cover the extreme poor and migrant groups, which find themselves largely outside the existing social security schemes of government and

¹⁹ It was implemented primarily to achieve the twin objectives of decentralization and rural development by upgrading *Thana* (Police District) headquarters as the urban centers and converting *Thana* centers into *Upazila* centers, and placing it next to district by abolishing sub-divisions from administrative hierarchy. As a result, there was massive development of roads and transportation networks linking *Thana/Upazila* to district headquarters and Dhaka, and also resulted in the revival of decaying medium sized towns (Afsar 1999).

²⁰ The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is claimed to have emerged from a consultative process conducted by the government with its planning and the policy-making agencies, NGOs, women's groups, local and religious leaders, local government representatives, cross-sections of civil society and poor men and women from all walks of life (ERD, 2002).

development NGOs. There is also public demand for regional development and decentralization in the face of growing mismanagement and corruption.²¹

It is encouraging that the government allocates around 20 per cent of the development budget for local government and rural development. The government has also outlined both medium and long-term issues to be covered under governance and rural development, ranging from law and order, local governance, better service delivery and rural infrastructure. Despite that, nothing is mentioned about infrastructural development of peri-urban and small towns as a precondition for business investment, which in turn would create jobs and enhance the economic mobility of rural peasants. Without effective linkages between rural areas and small as well as peri-urban towns, it is difficult to address the problems of agricultural growth effectively. Considering that not all districts have the potential for poverty alleviation, the overall development of flood-prone and favourable ecosystems deserve serious attention in order to arrest both intra and inter-regional inequality, a missing dimension in the PRSP. Moreover, inadequate infrastructure and poor and inefficient management of public utilities have created a huge fiscal burden and hinder the infrastructure expansion required to meet the growing needs of the economy²². Without decentralizing power, finance and other services at the Upazila/Thana level, and without an effective policy framework for regional development, it is difficult to implement participatory governance. Hence, budget allocations do not fully reflect the government's priority to deal with growing urbanization and internal migration and the problems of governance. Like the government, donors are also promoting sector-based programmes without much emphasis on regional development frameworks for poverty alleviation and more equitable distribution of scarce resources. Although Asian Development Bank and World Bank have

²¹ In Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Bangladesh is ranked last among 91 countries with a score of 0.4 out of 10, far below India and Pakistan, the two other South Asian countries in the list. Civil society and the media have been vocal in demanding increased transparency and accountability of public agencies.

²² Existing evidence suggests that 18 per cent of the population has access to electricity and fixed telephone line density is only 14 per cent. Here deferred road maintenance amounts to 1 per cent of the GDP and inefficiency in Chittagong Port costs \$1 billion per year. Even the special development authorities created for the four metropolitan cities are labeled as "thoroughly techno-bureaucratic organizations under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, run by officials and without participation of people's representatives" (Islam and Khan, 2000).

been working towards capacity building of some municipalities in Bangladesh (less than 10 per cent), this is inadequate to ensure balanced regional development and poverty alleviation in the long run.

6.1 Conclusions and Policy Implications

This paper has drawn attention to the following issues as having important policy implications:

First, existing literature and policy documents often overlook the important role that migration has played recently in reducing rural poverty. Contrary to conventional wisdom, which often views permanent migration as a hindrance to rural development because it transfers rural resources to urban areas, migration (with the help of urban resources) actually expands rural land and labour markets by making more rural land available for tenancy. Migration and the shift of the rural labour force to non-farm occupations have created labour shortages which have encouraged mechanization; 70 per cent of land has been brought under power tillers (Hossain et al. 2003b), which has raised rural productivity and created scope for innovation. While future research must examine this issue seriously, the government's poverty alleviation strategy must address the needs of the migrants, particularly urban poor migrants who often suffer eviction, ill health and other problems. The government's pledge to cater to water sanitation needs of the urban poor under I-PRSP cannot be fulfilled in reality without ensuring tenancy rights and ultimately providing low-cost housing for them. Similarly, the safety net programmes planned by the government are not broad enough to include the need for social security and occupational hazards of migrant labour that constitute the backbone of the country's economy. Instead of applying residential criteria to identify the poor, vulnerable groups should be picked up from the work place, organized as occupational groups and they are provided with loans, food-for-work, crèche, one-stop health care services and other facilities on a daily basis.

However, remittances remain largely a private affair, which is transacted between and among families and friends. In contrast to land-poor households, rural landowning households often derive greater benefits from remittances as they have greater capital

endowments, which enable them to invest in profitable businesses. If internal remittances can be converted to schemes such as the Deposit Pension Scheme (DPS), there is a greater likelihood of institutionalizing remittances, thereby increasing the potential for development work as well as generating savings for land-poor groups.²³

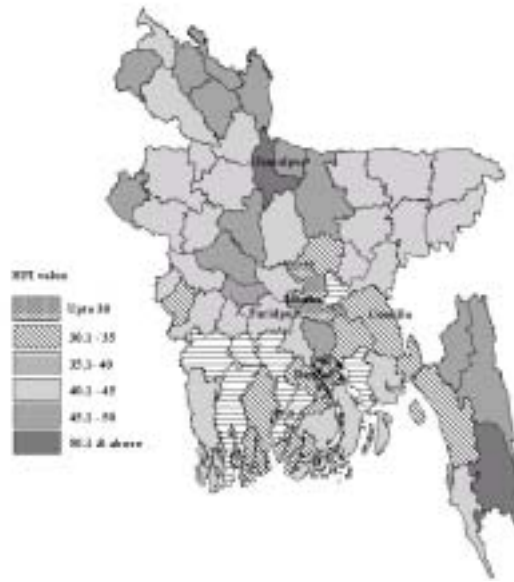
There is a profound disparity in income distribution and service delivery between space, class and gender, which often hinders the pace of poverty reduction. There are some inconsistencies between the PRSP objectives and budgetary allocations as well as some significant gaps. Whilst the class and gender dimensions of poverty and inequality are considered, the spatial dimension of poverty and inequality get little attention in the PRSP. Clearly, the coastal region has made impressive progress in poverty alleviation, and migration is a dominant force behind this progress. In contrast, flood-prone regions and those with favourable ecosystems must be given high priority in order to expand labour productivity and provide greater scope for occupational mobility. Although successive governments have pledged administrative reforms and devolution of power, concrete action has yet to be taken. While holding elections for Union Parishads (Councils) and Pourashavas (Municipalities), the government has failed to reinstate the *Thanas* (Police Districts). It has been acknowledged that the development of the Thana-Upazila complex and transport networks to link Thanas to district headquarters and to the capital, as a result of the Reorganisation and Decentralisation policy of 1982-83, helped to foster investment at local levels, transfer civil and judicial administration and employment opportunities (Afsar, 2000b).²⁴ Moreover, without a regional development framework, decentralisation efforts will remain ad hoc and the growing inequality in income and services distribution cannot be controlled effectively. As a pre-condition of regional development, it is important for the government to declare the budget with divisional and regional disaggregation. Without that, it is not possible to promote intra

²³ Under this scheme, with Taka 500 deposit in the bank in every month, the capital almost doubles at the end of maturity period, which is 10 years at the most.

²⁴ It is alleged that *Upazila Parishad* were often used as an important source of political patronage and the elected chairmen performed poorly. With any new system of elected local government, the risk of capture by the local elites will be high given the embedded patron-cliental social norms. Without an inbuilt system of people's participation in the decision-making process and effective financial system of accountability, election alone can never ensure accountability.

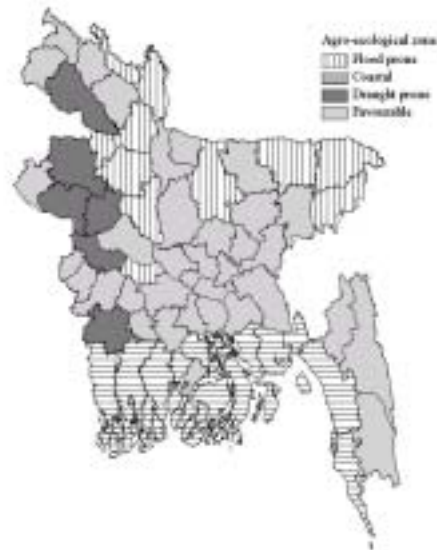
and inter-regional equity in resource distribution. BBS must also develop indicators for regional income, expenditure and well-being that may be used to monitor poverty and development. In addition, it must also provide data on land tenancy, which appears to be a reliable indicator of emigration.

Small and medium towns can be made more attractive by developing infrastructure and communication, particularly efficient and safe transportation, and providing a good standard of social services such as hospitals, schools and colleges. This process must be complemented by decentralization of key decision-making authorities within the political, administrative and financial sectors, and liberalization and de-control of business practices. Malaysia's rural urbanization is an example of this model. Local government should be encouraged to deliver education, health and basic services to both the poor and non-poor with the help of NGOs and the private sector. As pro-poor drivers, civil society and independent research institutions must monitor the quality of services and the funds released once they meet the performance criteria.



Source: BIDS, 2001

Figure 2.1 Regional variation of poverty in Bangladesh



Source: Hossain et al. 2003b

Figure 4.1 Agro-ecological zones of Bangladesh

Table 3.1 Level and growth of household incomes, and changes in poverty situation, rural areas and Dhaka City

Indicator	Rural areas (2000)	Dhaka City					
		Slum		Non-slum		All household	
		1991	1998	1991	1998	1991	1998
Household income (US \$)	1,348	828	1,313	3,048	6,359	2,308	4,679
Household size	5.92	5.03	5.20	5.82	5.73	5.56	5.55
Per capita income	228	165	253	524	1110	415	843
Growth of income/year (per cent)	3.4	-	6.7		11.0	-	10.5
Agriculture	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-agriculture	5.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Head count index (per cent)	43.0	79.0	49.0	14.5	3.3	36.0	18.5
Poverty-gap index	16.0	26.5	17.6	3.9	0.9	10.9	1.5
FGT index	8.4	11.4	9.1	1.1	0.4	4.5	3.3

Source: Compiled from Hossain 2003 b and 2002; and re-survey data set, 1998.

Table 3.2 Net enrolment rate for household members by 'age group' and slum and non-slum residency of sample households in 1991 and 1998

Area	Age Group	Enrolment rate (1998)			Enrolment rate (1991)		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Slum	6-10	66.7	67.2	66.8	48.9	53.7	51.4
	11-16	44.0	43.5	43.8	29.8	35.0	32.5
	17-24	3.0	1.7	2.4	5.1	3.9	5.2
Non-Slum	6-10	92.3	97.9	95.3	94.4	91.1	92.7
	11-16	97.1	90.7	93.8	93.0	90.9	92.0
	17-24	64.7	59.1	61.5	65.9	52.6	59.7

Source: Re-survey data set, 1998.

Table 3.3 Morbidity rate for different age group by gender, types of illness and slum and non-slum residency

Age Group	Fever	Cough	Asthma	Dysentery & Jaundice	T.B	Pain	Gastro-enteritis	Skin disease	Others	Total No.	per cent
0-4											
Male	62.1	25.3	2.3	5.7	-	2.3	1.2	1.2	-	87	62.6
Female	57.1	27.1	5.7	2.9	-	1.4	2.9	2.9	-	70	52.6
5-14											
Male	61.4	21.1	3.5	5.8	1.2	1.8	1.2	2.3	1.8	171	42.1
Female	60.1	30.8	0.7	3.5	-	2.1	0.7	0.7	1.4	143	37.5
15-44											
Male	53.4	22.1	3.4	1.0	1.0	4.8	11.5	1.0	1.9	208	23.6
Female	50.2	20.7	1.9	1.5	1.1	5.7	9.8	1.9	7.2	265	30.0
45-59											
Male	30.1	17.2	4.3	3.2	6.5	9.7	19.4	3.2	6.5	93	43.7
Female	23.4	18.2	6.5	-	1.3	15.6	20.8	9.1	5.2	77	38.5
60+											
Male	35.5	12.9	12.9	3.2	6.5	-	12.9	12.9	3.2	31	29.0
Female	13.8	10.3	10.3	-	-	10.3	27.6	20.7	6.9	29	32.6
All											
Male	52.4	21.0	3.9	3.6	2.0	4.1	8.3	2.4	2.4	590	33.8
Female	48.1	23.1	3.1	1.9	0.7	5.8	9.1	3.6	4.6	584	34.6

Age Group	Non-Slum			Slum			All		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-4	59.3	48.2	53.6	69.0	60.4	65.1	63.3	52.6	58.1
5-14	32.3	27.2	29.6	56.7	60.0	58.1	42.6	37.5	40.1
15-49	20.9	24.1	22.5	42.1	51.9	46.9	26.4	30.7	28.6
50-59	37.7	40.0	38.7	63.3	30.4	49.0	43.4	38.0	41.0
60+	26.7	36.2	30.8	47.7	25.0	35.1	29.9	33.7	31.6
All	27.5	28.2	27.9	51.2	52.7	51.9	34.6	34.6	34.6

Note: Others included Gallbladder stone, Heart disease, Kidney disease, Female disease, Cancer and Chicken Pox.

Source: Re-survey data set, 1998.

Table 4.1 Changes in head-count ratio of poverty, poverty-gap ratio and squared poverty-gap ratio by ecosystem

Ecosystem	Head-count ratio (per cent of poor people)			Poverty-gap ratio (per cent)			Squared poverty-gap ratio (per cent)		
	1987	2000	Change	1987	2000	Change	1987	2000	Change
	Flood-prone	60.0	45.4	14.6	24.4	18.2	6.2	13.0	10.0
Coastal	54.8	31.9	22.9	20.3	9.4	10.9	9.5	4.3	5.2
Drought- prone	64.4	44.7	19.7	27.3	14.6	12.7	14.3	6.8	7.5
Favourable	57.3	43.9	13.4	21.4	17.2	4.2	11.2	9.3	1.9
All ecosystems	59.2	43.0	16.2	23.4	16.0	7.4	12.1	8.4	3.7

Source: Hossain et al. 2003.

Table 4.2 Share of incremental population by rural and urban areas

Year	Population (million)		Share of incremental Population (million)		percentage of the total	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1950	40.0	1.8	-	-	95.7	4.3
1960	48.8	2.7	8.9	0.9	94.8	5.2
1970	61.4	5.1	12.5	2.4	92.3	7.7
1980	72.7	12.7	11.3	7.6	85.1	14.9
1990	88.3	21.8	10.6	9.1	80.3	19.8
2000	103.1	34.4	14.8	12.6	75.0	25.0
2010	115.7	52.2	12.6	17.8	68.9	31.1
2020	123.2	74.4	7.5	22.2	62.3	37.7
2030	124.1	98.6	0.9	24.2	55.8	44.3

Source: Computed from UN 2002: Table 3 and 4.

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