

Dimensions of Poverty among the Lower Income People in Dhaka City

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ABSTRACT

Poverty has become a part of human history, but its meaning has changed through time. Most people in traditional societies were poor, and this was accepted as natural and unavoidable, and that is should be possible to find ways to eradicate it. It can be said that poverty is multidimensional and complex issue but the dynamics of poverty are indeed very much complex, involving many inter-related and often interaction variables, the relative importance of which varies from place to place are any given time. In this study, poverty is defined as the condition of lack of education, inequality in land ownership, landlessness, inequality in income distribution, lack of income opportunities and poor government policies. In Bangladesh, thousands of NGO's are working with micro financing and most of them are based on rural area. The urban poverty is only focused on media to just only focus not take steps to reduce or any preventional steps. Both the limited and lower-income earning people of the cities like Dhaka are facing the atrocious scenario of poverty. So its time to establish a proper education system, taking suggestion form the experts, working against beauracracy, corruption, and ensuring political stability for a poverty free Bangladesh.

Keywords: dimensions, poverty, lower income people

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is the most densely populated agricultural nation in this world, with 140 million people (BBS, 2004). The majority of the people live in rural areas, where problems of poverty are very common. Most of the rural people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. About 60 percent of the labor forces are engaged here for only 30 percent of the GDP (FAO, 1999 and Haq, 2000). Though the growth and development of the county is depended on the agriculture, its laying on with a without proper distribution among the farmers, unequal ownership of the land, unemployment and lack of education and skills too. As a result, with a vast opportunity, the people of the country, mainly the rural areas, suffer from limited income. Most of them neither get the sufficient income form the agriculture nor form a secondary source or working opportunity. Nearly 50 percent of the rural people in Bangladesh live below the poverty line and about 80 percent are landless or marginal farmers

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(The Independent, 2002). Therefore, the poverty takes a permanent position to the center inside of the all other problems and creating the deterrence to the development programs and policies.

Urban poverty in Bangladesh is evident in all the towns and cities. It is estimated that 43% of urban households live below the poverty line among which 23% are considered extreme poor. Around, 35% of the population of six major cities lives in slums which cover only 4% of their land area with limited or no access to services. Fighting poverty in urban area requires a multi faceted approach of economic, social, cultural, political as well as physical agenda. The development practitioners and designers of built environment, working to improve the condition of the urban poor, now face new challenge to accommodate issues arising from climate change and climate variability (Hossain, 2008). In Human Development Report, the United Nations classified a Third-world person as poor if, after adjusting for international differences in price levels, the person is trying to live on less than one dollar a day (World Bank, 2001). A review of 43 participatory poverty assessments from four continents concluded that poor people report their condition largely in terms of material deprivation: not enough money, lack of education and employment opportunities, lack of food, clothing and housing, combined with inadequate access to health service and clean water (IFAD, 2001). Poverty is a condition of social malaise caused by people to circumstances of hunger, illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment and environmental degradation, as well as lack of shelter and sanitation. Considering the above definitions, it can be said that poverty is multidimensional and complex issue too. The dynamics of poverty are indeed very much complex, involving many inter-related and often interaction variables. This study described poverty as lack of education, inequality in land ownership, landlessness, inequality in income distribution, lack of income opportunities and poor government policies.

In Dhaka city, we can often see that in almost everywhere people are living the under poverty line. They work and earn very low, and this type of work is known as lower-income profession, like as day laborer, Rickshaw puller, Hawker, shopkeeper etc. The aim is to find their earning and do that sufficient for their family maintaining. Objective of the study is to get some information about the meaning of lower-income profession, people involved in this group, their main poverty, ways of solving this situation and specific reason behind their present condition.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in four busy neighbourhoods in Dhaka City, Bangladesh between February 2010 to October 2010. These neighbourhoods include Mirpur, Banani, Badda and Dhanmondi. One hundred and sixty respondents were selected from the neighbourhoods proportionately by using random sampling methods. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire constructed on various forms of household adaptations such as, economic activities, expenditure and purchasing pattern, food habit, shelter and environmental services, using social services, social network and community participation etc. Secondary data have also been collected from different websites, previous surveys conducted by the other researcher or any other national and international organization, to get some idea about current scenario of related issues. Only descriptive statistics (percentages) are mainly used for data analysis. There are many reasons behind poverty. Different types of poverty can face to us and here the types of poverty, its concepts and the measurement is discussed. Poverty is not only because of overpopulation, but because of the unequal distribution of productive

resources such as land and capital availability in society. As a result certain groups cannot be productive and are forced into poverty. Employment opportunities are extremely irregular and limited, which happens in most of the poor countries. Overgrowth of population only adds to the poverty affecting those who are deprived and without resources. High population growth also leads to a greater degree of competition for limited resources among the population. Also often deplete available resources before they are fully developed and made more productive than what exists at the present state of technological development. Overpopulation aggravates the problem of poverty in societies where resources are limited, land productivity is stagnating, technological development is at rudimentary level and resource distribution is uneven. Inability to increase land productivity in the face of a rapidly growing population has severely hampered attempts to reduce poverty. The most common is on level of income. A person is considered poor if his or her income level falls below minimum level of necessary to meet basic needs. This minimum level is usually called the “poverty line”. There are several methods to measure poverty. International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD, 2001) agreed that poverty can be measured in the following ways: The Food Energy Method (FEM) estimates a food-energy minimum required to satisfy energy (caloric) requirements and then determines the level of income at which this minimum is typically met; the Cost-of-Basic Needs (CBN) method sets the poverty line as the level just sufficient to buy an exogenously set low-cost adequate diet plus other cheap basic requirements; the Food-Share Method (FSM) estimates the minimum cost of a food basket that satisfies the minimum food energy and multiplies this by the share of non-food expenditure in total consumption of a sub-group defined as a poor; the international poverty line method defines a person as poor if after adjusting for international differences in price levels; they are trying to live on less than \$1 a day; the relative consumption method sets the poverty line at a percentage of national mean of median consumption, often half or one third; poverty lines vary from time to time and place to place, and each country uses lines that are appropriate to its level of development, societal norms and values.

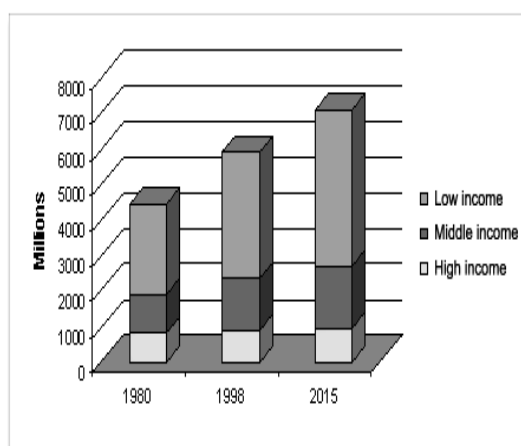
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The UNDP Gender Development Index (GDI) for 2004 ranked Bangladesh 110 among 144 countries, an increase of 13 positions since 1999. This improvement reflects a closing of the gap between men and women in key indicators such as life expectancy. However, a GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) ranking of 76 shows continued low levels of female representation in government, in decision-making positions and in ownership of economic assets. A significant gender disparity persists in both income and human poverty, especially at the lower end of income distribution.

Table 1: Bangladesh poverty condition

Poverty indicators of Bangladesh	
Number of rural poor (million)	101.0
Poor as % of total rural population	53.0
Population living below US\$1 a day (%)	36.0
Population living below US\$2 a day (%)	82.8
Population living below the national poverty line (%)	49.8
Poverty gap ratio at US\$1 a day (%)	8.0
Share of poorest 20% in national income or consumption (%)	9.0

*Source: UNDP, 2007



Source: Neaz, 2004

Figure I: Poverty Scenario of Bangladesh

The female disadvantage in child mortality has remained persistent, while the female-male gap in acute malnutrition has increased over the past decade. On average the incidence of severe malnutrition among girls under five is 2-4 percent higher than among boys. Similarly, compared to male-headed households, female-headed households are more likely to be living in extreme poverty. Overall, Bangladesh's performance with regard to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 4) remains mixed.

Table 2: Day Laborer's Condition

Total Population	40
Earnings	
Less than 2000 tk	40%
2000-5000 tk	60%
5000-15000 tk	0%
Earning satisfaction	
Yes	0%
No	100%
Food balance	
Maintain	0%
Not maintain	100%
Visiting doctor	
When very sick	40%
Never	60%
Sanitation	
Healthy	0%
Not healthy	100%
Water	
Pure	0%
Not pure	100%

*Source: Field survey, March 2010

There has been a narrowing of the gender gap in most social MDG indicators in general and in the education sector in particular, where, as a result of targeted government policies, female enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools exceeds those for males. However, in other areas such as economic and political participation and adult literacy, much still remains to be done to ensure the rights to survival, livelihood and participation.

Table 3: Rickshaw puller's condition

Total Population	40
Earnings	
2000-5000 tk.	40%
5000-15000 tk.	60%
More than 15000 tk	0%
Earning satisfaction	
Yes	0%
No	100%
Food balance	
Maintain	00%
Not maintain	100%
Visiting doctor	
When very sick	70%
Generally sick	0%
Never	30%
Sanitation	
Healthy	0%
Not healthy	100%
Water	
Pure	0%
Not pure	100%

*Source: Field survey, March 2010

It is really a paradox of our time that even in the midst of tremendous technological progress, poverty; hunger and malnutrition still pose a threat to humankind. Today, more than one billion people in the world are estimated to be under the grip of absolute poverty, living on less than one dollar a day (UNDP, HDR 2004). In Bangladesh such a figure accounted for about 59 percent or 59 million people in 1990. In 2000, in percentage terms, it came down to about 50 percent, but in terms of population number the figure rose to 63 million. If present levels of population growth continue, in the near future, the poorer section will constitute 80% of the additional population.

During the early eighties and early nineties, the incidence of income poverty declined by 0.8 percent per year in Bangladesh compared with 1.9 percent for India, 1.4 percent in Pakistan and 3.6 percent in Sri Lanka (World Bank, 2005). Despite improvement of economic growth performance during 1990s, the pace of poverty reduction was very slow due to a plantain of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) during the period from 1993 to 2000. Indeed, during that time, the poverty reduction rate was only one percent against a population growth of more than 1.6 percent. Almost universal literacy played pivotal role in achieving poverty and fertility reduction.

National policies must provide adequate attention to the interaction between growth, equality and poverty in the right proportion. Last few years, the GDP growth of Bangladesh is increasing but it does not ensure poverty reduction unless it is equitably distributed. Population growth also contributing poverty and as such poverty equity and GDP triangle must be synergistically designed with population, education and environment. Other MDG's like Under-Five Mortality Rate (U-5MR) is about 95 percent higher in the poorest quintile than in the richest. (Neaz 2004).

Table 4: Hawker's condition

Total Population	40
Earnings	
2000-5000 tk.	80%
5000-15000 tk.	10%
More than 15000 tk	10%
Earning satisfaction	
Yes	20%
No	80%
Food balance	
Maintain	10%
Not maintain	90%
Visiting doctor	
When very sick	30%
Generally sick	0%
Never	70%
Sanitation	
Healthy	10%
Not healthy	90%
Water	
Pure	20%
Not pure	80%

*Source: Field survey, March 2010

Day laborers are easily found in different places of Dhaka city. Mainly they work for construction, other hard work and so on. This study interviewed forty day laborers to know about them. They earn about less than 2000 taka and this is about 40 percent and rest 60 percent earn within 5000 taka. All of them agreed that, they are not happy with this very much poor amount of money. Even they can not maintain food balance, proper sanitation and pure water too.

Rickshaw pullers are found in different places of Dhaka city. This study took forty rickshaw pullers interview to know about them. They earn about less than 2000 taka and this is about 40 percent and rest 60 percent earn within 5000 taka. They are not happy with this very much poor amount of money. Even they can not maintain food balance, proper sanitation and pure water too. And 30 percent of them never go to doctor and rests of them do not go to doctor otherwise they became very much ill.

Hawkers are found in different places of Dhaka city. This study took forty hawkers interview to know about them. They earn about less than 2000 taka and this is about 80 percent and rest 10 percent earn within 5000 taka and other 10 percent earns about more than 15000 taka. All of them agreed that, they are not happy with this very much poor amount of money. Even they can not maintain food balance, proper sanitation and pure water too. And 70 percent of them never go to doctor and rests 30 percent of them do not go to doctor otherwise they became very much ill.

Table 5: Shopkeeper's condition

Total Population	40
Earnings	
2000-5000 tk.	40%
5000-15000 tk.	40%
More than 15000 tk	20%
Earning satisfaction	
Yes	30%
No	70%
Food balance	
Maintain	10%
Not maintain	90%
Visiting doctor	
When very sick	30%
Generally sick	30%
Never	40%
Sanitation	
Healthy	30%
Not healthy	70%
Water	
Pure	60%
Not pure	40%

*Source: Field survey, March 2010

From forty Shopkeepers interview, its found that 40 percent of them earn about less than 2000 taka and rest 40 percent earn within 5000 taka and only 20 percent are earning more than 15000 taka. They can not maintain food balance, proper sanitation and pure water too. And 30 percent of them never go to doctor 30 percent of them go to doctor for general illness and rests of them do not go to doctor otherwise they became very much ill.

Still a poor country with 31.5% of the population below the poverty line, and per capita GDP of only \$818 in FY2010-11, Bangladesh needs productive employment for a labor force growing by 1.5 million a year (Bangladesh Economic Review,2011; Hye,1996). Significant investments in disaster preparedness, including the development of early warning systems and the creation of a wide network of flood and cyclone shelters, has seen a significant decrease in the number of lives lost each year. However, natural disasters are still responsible for significant property losses with major consequences for the poor. There is, therefore, scope for continued improvement in terms of disaster mitigation and recovery that is targeted to the most vulnerable populations. There has been a significant increase in the reports of

violence across Bangladesh. Accurate information regarding the nature and extent of violence in the country remains scarce due to lack of data. There is, however, an emerging “culture of violence” which is of rising concern. Violence within the family remains the most under-reported crime in Bangladesh. Cases of marital violence are routinely labeled as “domestic disputes”, and as such do not merit assistance within families. This reflects, among other things, the existing patrimonial social structures that force woman into passive acceptance of violence. According to government statistics, one woman is subjected to violence every hour. Poverty for education is highly demanded to reduce this violence scenario. Yet there is plenty of food in the world for everyone. The problem is that hungry people are trapped in severe poverty. They lack the money to buy enough food to nourish them. Being constantly malnourished, they become weaker and often sick. This makes them increasingly less able to work, which then makes them even poorer and hungrier. This downward spiral often continues until death for them and their families.

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