

Rapid Urban Growth and Poverty in Dhaka City

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the nature of urban growth and poverty in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. It has highlighted the city of Dhaka as the urbanisation of the whole country is interlinked with the intense development of the city. The paper is based on data collected through surveys of population censuses and relevant studies. It reveals that the historical process of urban development of Dhaka City presents various trends based on its political development. The rapid urbanisation of the city since its emergence as the capital of an independent state is due mainly to massive migration of rural population. The paper also reveals that significant portions of the city dwellers are settled mostly in slums and squatter settlements and are living below the poverty lines as the rapid urban growth of the city is not commensurate with its overall development. The paper, however, argues that the experience of poverty in the city of Dhaka follows the pattern of urbanisation without development, the opposite of the expectations and aspirations of the poor there.

1. Introduction

The paper deals with the urban challenges in Bangladesh focusing on rapid urban growth and poverty in the megacity of Dhaka.⁹ It starts with a general profile of the city highlighting its geography and population characteristics. It is important to note that the urbanisation of Bangladesh is interlinked with the intense development of Dhaka City which has developed as a politico-administrative centre, having gained and then lost its position through the political development of the country. Due to the concentration of both domestic and foreign investment Dhaka City has experienced massive migration from the rural population of Bangladesh in recent decades but a critical downside to this has been the dramatic rise in poverty. In light of this, the paper deals with the trend of poverty in Dhaka City. In addition, the state of Dhaka's infrastructure is inadequate and unable to keep up with growing urban pressures. Significant portions of the city's population are living in slums and squatter settlements and are experiencing extremely low living standards, low productivity and unemployment. The slum population mostly live below the poverty line in terms of both calorie intake and the cost of basic needs. Moreover, despite having lived in the city for a long period of time the urban poor have limited access to the economic and social systems of the city.

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⁹ The term 'megacity' is frequently used as a synonym for words such as super-city, giant city, conurbation, and megalopolis. There has been little agreement about the size of the megacity. Megacities are defined as cities that were expected to have at least ten million inhabitants by the year 2000. Please see World Bank's *Urban Policy and Economic Development: An Agenda for the 1990s* (Washington: World Bank, 1993).

2. A brief profile of Dhaka City

Dhaka City is centrally located in Bangladesh, in the southern part of the district of Dhaka. It is situated between latitudes 24°40' N to 24°54' N and longitudes 90°20' E to 90°30' E and defined by the Buriganga river in the south; the Balu and the Shitalakhya rivers in the east; Tongi Khal in the north and the Turag river in the west. The city has developed on the higher elevated Pleistocene terrace land or Order Alluvium of the central part of Bangladesh, otherwise referred to as the Madhupur-Bhawal Garh Region. In addition, a substantial portion of the adjoining low-lying areas have recently been brought under the structured zones of the city due to the accelerated rate of the urban growth in Dhaka.¹⁰

According to the adjusted population of the 2001 Census the size of Dhaka's population is 10,712,206 of which 5978482 are male and 4733724 are female.¹¹ This makes Dhaka a megacity. The population growth of Dhaka stands at 56.5% in the last decade, which is very high. This means that during the last decade the city's population has grown by 3,868,077. The sex ratio of the population is calculated as 123.4 based on the current population census.¹² Moreover, the sex ratio of Dhaka City has decreased over the years due mainly to the reunion of females to their male partners living in the city and the increase in the number of single females in the urban work force.¹³ The number of the Dhaka City's young population is relatively high due to age selective rural-urban migration.¹⁴ About 40% of the total city's population is in the unproductive age groups of 0-14 and 60 and over, which indicates a high dependency burden on the working age population.¹⁵ The high dependency ratio among the city's population causes poverty, especially among the low income groups in the city.

3. National urban growth and Dhaka City's predominance

3.1. *The trend of urbanisation and urban growth*

The growth of the urban population in Bangladesh prior to the 20th century cannot be termed urbanisation in the truest sense because the change in rural life concomitant with urbanisation was not evident.¹⁶ The growth of the urban population in Bangladesh since 1901 is depicted through the following periods. In 1901 only 2.43% of the country's population lived in urban

¹⁰ Asaduzzaman and Rob, *Environmental Control over Urbanisation of Dhaka City* (Dhaka: The Mappa, 1997).

¹¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2003).

¹² Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 2001 Preliminary Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2001).

¹³ K. Siddiqui, S.R. Qadir, S. Alamgir and S. Haq, *Social Formation in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1993).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997).

¹⁶ Centre for Urban Studies, *Squatters in Bangladesh Cities: A Survey of Urban Squatters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna- 1974* (Dhaka: CUS, 1976).

centres.¹⁷ During the next two decades the urban population remained almost static. Between 1911 and 1921 there was only an 8.8% increase in the urban population.¹⁸ Plagues caused large scale depopulation in many urban centres during this period. Since 1921 there has been slow but steady growth - except when thousands left the cities out of fear during World War II. But a famine which ensued soon pushed millions from rural areas back into urban areas.¹⁹

In Bangladesh the first significant phase of urbanisation started in 1947.²⁰ During the 1951-61 decade there was a 45.11% increase in the urban population, more than twice the previous decade's 18.4%. The factors causing this were many, some political, others socio-economic.²¹ Large scale migration of Muslims from India in 1947 and afterwards was a major factor. The emigration of a large Hindu population from Bangladesh to India was mostly from rural areas, while the immigrants from India, mostly concentrated in the urban areas of Bangladesh, thus outnumbering the emigrants from the urban areas. Moreover, there was substantial development of new centres of trade, commerce, industry and administration in Bangladesh after it attained a new political status in 1947.²²

Despite the growth in the urban population, the nature and characteristics of urbanisation has remained similar to the pattern during the British period.²³ During the Pakistan period, the West Pakistani rulers treated East Pakistan (Bangladesh) as their colony. There was no significant industrialisation in this part during the first half of Pakistani rule. During the 1960's there was some industrial development which was not significant.²⁴ The most phenomenal urban population growth in Bangladesh occurred during the 1961-74 inter-census period. Over 6 million people were living in urban areas constituting roughly 8.0% of the total population.²⁵ Thus the percentage increase of the urban population during the 13 years was striking. That accelerated growth is to a great extent the result of the very recent influx from rural villages. The growth rate of the urban

¹⁷ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Centre for Urban Studies, *Squatters in Bangladesh Cities: A Survey of Urban Squatters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna- 1974* (Dhaka: CUS, 1976).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh National Population Census Report 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977).

²² N. Ahmed, *An Economic Geography of East Pakistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

²³ Centre for Urban Studies, *Squatters in Bangladesh Cities: A Survey of Urban Squatters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna- 1974* (Dhaka: CUS, 1976).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1981, Report on Urban Area: National Series* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1987).

population was 5.4% during the 1981-1991.²⁶ The total urban population increased to 28.6 million by 2001.²⁷

There was a general decline of urban population in Bangladesh after the British took over in the mid 18th century²⁸ and there were no urban centres left with populations of over 100,000 until 1891. In 1901 there were only 2 and that did not change up to 1951. There were no other urban centres in the range of 25,000 - 49,999 (population) up to 1911, but by 1921 there were. Then there were 5 in 1921. Most urban centres fell in the range of 10,000-24,999 population. They were 14 in 1872 and this increased to 23 in 1911, then decreased to 20 and remained so up to 1951.²⁹ Urban centres within the range of 5,000-9,999 population size increased from 5 in 1872 to 19 in 1941. The total number of urban centres increased from 22 in 1872 to 59 in 1941, an increase of 168% during a span of nearly 70 years. Thus urban growth was rather slow throughout the period of 1872-1947.³⁰

After the partition of India in 1947 Dhaka City became the provincial capital of East Pakistan and the growth of the urban population began to increase substantially.³¹ In 1951, Dhaka City had a population of 411,279 which increased to 718,766 in 1961. Then there was a rapid growth of urban centres followed by an explosive growth of big cities after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.³²

Table-1: Urban population growth in Bangladesh (1901-2001)

| Census | National population | | Urban population | | | |
|--------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| | Number (million) | Growth rate (% annual) | Number (million) | Share (% of total Population) | Decadal increase of urban population (%) | Growth rate (% of annual) |
| 1901 | 28.2 | 0.70 | 2.43 | - | - | - |
| 1911 | 31.65 | 0.94 | 0.80 | 2.54 | 14.96 | 1.39 |
| 1921 | 33.25 | 0.60 | 0.87 | 2.61 | 8.85 | 0.84 |
| 1931 | 35.60 | 0.74 | 1.07 | 3.01 | 22.20 | 2.00 |
| 1941 | 41.99 | 1.66 | 1.54 | 3.67 | 43.20 | 3.71 |

²⁶ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997).

²⁷ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2003).

²⁸ See below.

²⁹ A. Z. Eusuf, 'Urban centres in Bangladesh: their growth and change in rank-order' in N. Islam and R. M. Ahsan (eds.), *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.7-20.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Centre for Urban Studies, *Squatters in Bangladesh Cities: A Survey of Urban Squatters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna- 1974* (Dhaka: CUS, 1976).

³² A. Z. Eusuf, 'Urban centres in Bangladesh: their growth and change in rank-order' in N. Islam and R. M. Ahsan (eds.), *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.7-20.

| | | | | | | |
|------|--------|------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| 1951 | 44.17 | 0.51 | 1.83 | 4.14 | 18.38 | 1.74 |
| 1961 | 55.22 | 2.26 | 2.64 | 4.78 | 45.11 | 3.74 |
| 1974 | 76.37 | 2.53 | 6.00 | 7.86 | 137.57 | 6.52 |
| 1981 | 89.91 | 2.56 | 13.56 | 15.08 | 110.68 | 10.97 |
| 1991 | 111.45 | 2.17 | 22.45 | 20.15 | 69.75 | 5.43 |
| 2001 | 129.25 | 1.54 | 28.60 | 23.1 | 37.05 | 3.15 |

Source: Centre for Urban Studies, *Squatters in Bangladesh Cities: A Survey of Urban Squatters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna- 1974* (Dhaka: CUS, 1976) & Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977); *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997); *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2003).

The number of urban centres with populations of 100,000 doubled from 2 in 1951 to 4 in 1961. Urban centres with populations of 50,000-99,999 increased from 2 to 5 during the same period, while urban centres of all categories increased from 63 in 1951 to 78 in 1961.³³ However, the overall increase in the urban population and newly emerging urban centres has to some extent been counter-balanced by the declining number of small sized towns. In fact, towns of 5,000-9,999 decreased from 19 in 1941 to 12 in 1974, while towns with population less than 5,000 remained more or less steady from 3 in 1941 to 4 in 1971.³⁴ This declining trend in the lower order towns is partly due to the proportion of smaller cities developing into large cities by virtue of population growth. The persistent decline in the importance of small towns is perhaps an indication of the limited economic functions there and the consequent movement of the population towards bigger cities in search of better economic opportunities.³⁵

After the liberation of Bangladesh, there was an explosive growth of big cities.³⁶ Cities with a population of 100,000 increased from 4 in 1961 to 6 in 1974, 13 in 1981 to 23 in 1991.³⁷ This shows an increase of about 383% during 1961-91. And the total number of urban centres increased from 78 in 1961 to 492 in 1991, an increase of over 647% during a span of 30 years.³⁸ The growth of urban centres by size/class indicates that there is a strong association between city size and city growth rates, that is the large and medium sized cities are increasing more rapidly simply because of the graduation of cities occurring in that class.³⁹ Cities with a population between 25,000 and 49,999 increased from 15 in 1961 to 45 in 1981, an increase of 300%. During the same period cities with a population of 5,000 to 9,999 increased from 21 in 1961 to 129 in 1981 and those with a population less than 5,000 increased from 10 to 168.⁴⁰ In summary,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ N. Islam, 'Urban Research in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: towards an agenda for the 1990s' in R. Stren (ed.) *Urban Research in Developing World* (Toronto: Centre for Urban & Community Studies, University of Toronto, 1994) pp.101-169.

³⁷ A. Z. Eusuf, 'Urban centres in Bangladesh: their growth and change in rank-order' in N. Islam and R. M. Ahsan (eds.), *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.7-20.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

the urban population of Bangladesh grew at a much faster rate from 1961-1974 (8.8%) and reached its peak during the period 1974-1981 (10.97%). And about 30% of the total increase during 1974-1981 can be explained by the extended definition of urban areas in 1981.⁴¹

The 1991 Census shows data in relation to only 110 municipalities.⁴² It does not give a complete picture of the total number of urban centres of different size categories.⁴³ The population census report gives the figure of the urban municipal population as 1,22,55,307 and the population of 4 Statistical Metropolitan Areas (SMAs) as 10,40,60,79, which constitutes 84.91% of the total municipal population. Out of the existing 110 municipalities, 28 are in the Rajshahi division where there is an urban population of 16.09%; 33 in Khulna where there is an urban population of 14.98%, 27 in Dhaka Division with an urban population of 45.83% and 22 in Chittagong Division, having 22.95% of the urban population.⁴⁴ Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi municipalities constitute 50.26% of the total municipal population. There are 20 municipalities with a population of 50,000-99,999, which constitute 10.70% of the population. The number of municipalities with a population of 25,000 to 49,999 is 41, with an urban population of 12.29%. There are 17 municipalities with population of 10,000-24,999 constituting 3.77% of the municipal population. And the number of municipalities with populations less than 5,000 is one, which constitutes 0.07% of the municipal population.⁴⁵

Some urban centres have recorded a very rapid population growth (above 50%). In the 1951-61 period 12 urban centres recorded a growth of more than 50% in their population with Khulna, Chuadanga and Dhaka showing a very high (above 200%) increase.⁴⁶ Khulna recorded high growth due to industrialisation, Dhaka due to its importance as the provincial capital, and Chuadanga due to the influx of refugees from India. In the 1961-74 period, 36 urban centres recorded a growth of more than 50% in population size with Dhaka showing a 936% increase; due to its importance as the new capital city and due to the expansion of commercial activities. During this period 8 urban centres recorded the highest growth of 180.2%.⁴⁷ The 1991 census recorded 11 urban centres with a 50-112% increase from 1981 to 91.⁴⁸ During that period 4 urban centres recorded growth of more than 100%. Sherpur, Dhaka, Moulvi Bazar, Cox's Bazar,

⁴¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1981: Analytical Findings and National Tables* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1984).

⁴² Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Preliminary Report on Population Census 1991* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1991).

⁴³ A. Z. Eusuf, 'Urban centres in Bangladesh: their growth and change in rank-order' in N. Islam and R. M. Ahsan (eds.), *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.7-20.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997).

Rangamati and Jessore have shown more than a 50% increase in three consecutive intercensal periods while Feni and Naogaon experienced over 50% increase throughout the period.⁴⁹

Table-2: Ranking of major urban centres in Bangladesh (1901-2001)

| Urban centres | 1901 | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 | 1941 | 1951 | 1961 | 1974 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Dhaka | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Chittagong | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Sirajgonj | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 6 | - | 10 | - | - | - | - |
| Rajshahi | 4 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Bramanbaria | 5 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Comilla | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 9 | - |
| Barisal | 7 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Pabna | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Jamalpur | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Madaripur | 11 | - | 6 | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Nawabganj | - | 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Mymensing | - | 10 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| Chandpur | - | - | - | - | 8 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Rangpur | - | - | - | - | 10 | - | - | - | 9 | 5 | 6 |
| Saidpur | - | - | - | - | - | 4 | 6 | 8 | - | - | - |
| Khulna | - | - | - | - | - | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Dinajpur | - | - | - | - | - | 10 | - | - | - | 10 | 10 |
| Narayanganj | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | 4 | - | - | - |
| Jessore | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 10 | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| Sylhet | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 8 | - | 5 |

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977); *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997); *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2003).

In Bangladesh, historically, the major urban centres developed around industrial concentrations of cotton and silk production and indigo processing.⁵⁰ During the British rule most of the urban centres served as tax collection and export-import centres for the British Empire. Other urban centres were used as administrative or religious centres, and many of these centres subsequently

⁴⁹ A. Z. Eusuf, 'Urban centres in Bangladesh: their growth and change in rank-order' in N. Islam and R. M. Ahsan (eds.), *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.7-20.

⁵⁰ N. Ahmed, *An Economic Geography of East Pakistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

flourished as commercial and industrial centres. Administrative centres gained momentum due to increasing educational and cultural centres, infrastructure and better communication.⁵¹

There has been considerable movement, up and down, of the relative and political importance of the major urban centres over the years. Dhaka and Chittagong have remained in first and second position respectively since attaining city status at the beginning of the century.⁵² Khulna, the third largest city has gained its ranking since just before independence in 1971 through industrialisation.⁵³ The fourth largest city, Rajshahi held the same ranking in the early decades of the last century but lost it position for socio-political reasons and then again regained its position.⁵⁴ Other cities like Serajganj and Barisal have had a history of ups and downs during the last century. The city of Sylhet has emerged as one of the important cities and occupied 5th position in recent times. It started to grow very rapidly immediately after its establishment as a divisional headquarter.⁵⁵

The historical process of urban development in Bangladesh presents different trends based on the political development of the country.⁵⁶ Although the history of Bangladesh in the early periods is obscure due to a lack of sufficient information, it is evident that Bangladesh acted as a passive periphery of West Bengal and India. Though the rulers of Bengal often revolted against the central authority, these were sporadic efforts and did not have any marked impression on the spatial development of the region.⁵⁷ During the British rule, Bengal attracted many colonial interests. As Calcutta was the primary city of Bengal, Bangladesh (then East Bengal) became a passive periphery of the region. During Pakistani rule, hostile relations developed when Bangladesh attempted to become an active periphery of the country.⁵⁸ Thus historically, the political-spatial development process of Bangladesh has passed through passive and active stages followed by cooperation and accommodations as well as hostile situations.

The legacy of spatial development in Bangladesh has led to the development of a few cities - particularly the capital city of Dhaka. The failure of planning initiatives is directly linked with the

⁵¹ A. Z. Eusuf, 'Urban centres in Bangladesh: their growth and change in rank-order' in N. Islam and R. M. Ahsan (eds.), *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.7-20.

⁵² Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1981, Report on Urban Area: National Series* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1987).

⁵³ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Barisal and Sylhet were set up as divisional headquarters in the 1990s. The cities were upgraded to city corporations in recent times. In the latest population census of 2001 Barisal and Sylhet were categorised as Statistical Metropolitan Areas (SMA) along with Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. Please see Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2003).

⁵⁶ M. H. Khan, *Urban Social Structure and Urban Planning in Dhaka: A Test of MaueI Castells' and David Harvey's Model* (Research Monograph), (Dhaka: Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka, 1996).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

urban mismanagement and increasing inequality and poverty in the city of Dhaka during the period of independent Bangladesh.⁵⁹ Like the colonial development of a landed aristocracy, an 'urban housing class' developed in Dhaka City through the process of 'sub-urbanisation' which is one of the main causes of today's urban land crisis and the proliferation of slums and squatters in Dhaka City.⁶⁰

In fact, the urban government needs to play a very significant role in adopting and implementing policies to reduce urban inequality and poverty. While macroeconomic trends have pushed towards a diminished role for the state over recent decades, more recent efforts at rehabilitating the state are increasingly focused on the local level. But the urban government has failed to play its effective role in urban development of Bangladesh due to the multiplicity of institutions and the overlapping nature of their jurisdiction.⁶¹ The result has been rivalry, bickering and blaming each other for inadequate and insufficient services. Due to inadequate funds the local government of Dhaka City is absolutely dependent on grants from donor agencies and hence has to work within limits set by the conditions of such grants. This kind of control adversely affects the quality of urban services provided to the urban poor by the authorities. In addition, a lack of accountability and transparency of Dhaka City's urban government also makes it corrupt and inefficient.⁶²

3.2. *The growth of Dhaka City*

The majesty and peculiarity of Dhaka City has developed over a long span of time. The city was under the suzerainty of different kings and rulers and its growth was hindered and distributed from time to time. Sometimes the growth gained momentum during the reign of some rulers at other times it did not.⁶³

The history of Pre-Mughal Dhaka is very vague. This period ranges from the 13th century to the beginning of early 17th century.⁶⁴ Its importance as a market centre started in that period.⁶⁵ The city began to flourish as a commercial and political centre, expanding in the west up to Chandi Ghat during 1602-1604.⁶⁶ After the Sultans the Mughals took over the city and started to attribute more importance to it. During the early Mughal rule, the city covered an area of about 2.20 sq. km and was confined within the small continuous zone of the present old city.⁶⁷ Dhaka City got its pomp and splendour during the Mughal rule and attained the prestigious position of the premier

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ N. Islam and M. M. Khan, 'Urban governance in Bangladesh and Pakistan' in N. Islam (ed.), *Urban Governance in Asia: Sub-regional and City Perspectives* (Dhaka: Centre for Urban Studies and Pathak Shamabesh, 2000)

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ M. Asaduzzaman and A. M. Rob, *Environmental Controls over Urbanisation of Dhaka City* (Dhaka: The Mappa, 1997).

⁶⁴ A. M. Chowdhury and M. S. Faruqui, 'Physical growth of Dhaka City' in S.U Ahmed (ed.) *Dhaka: Past Present Future* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1991).

⁶⁵ A. Haider, *A City and Its Civic Body* (Dhaka: East Pakistan Gov. Press, 1966).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

city of the empire. The city gained its reputation as a capital during the early period of the 17th century.⁶⁸ To check the attacks of the Magh and Arakanese pirates, Emperor Akbar stationed several hundred soldiers in Dhaka City. It was made capital of the province of Bengal in 1608 by Subadar Islam Khan Chisti for its political and military importance, and being a capital, it required more space for administrative, military purposes and accommodation. Centring on the old market, the provincial capital Dhaka began to develop rapidly as a major city of the province.⁶⁹

During the rule of the Mughals Dhaka City grew in a north-western direction. D'oloy shows that the greatest urban growth took place under Subadar Saista Khan (1662-1667 and 1679-1689).⁷⁰ At that time, the city extended from the Buriganga river in the south to Tongi Bridge in the north, a distance of about 25 km (in a north-south direction) and from Jafrabad (Sarai Jafrabad) in the west to Postagola in the east, a distance of about 15 km in a east-west direction.⁷¹ Of course, this huge Mughal city incorporated many villages and suburbs within its urban area and at that time the city had a population of over a million.⁷² The city then started to lose its glory with the shifting of the provincial capital to Murshidabad in 1717 (due to a personal clash between the Emperor Azim-Us-Shan and Subadar Murshid Kuli Khan).⁷³ From that time a number of influences from European traders started to increase in Bengal.⁷⁴ At that time the size of Dhaka City was about 4.5 sq. km and the population was about 1 million.⁷⁵ The main city was confined in a small area on the northern bank of the river Buriganga around the Lalbagh and Chawk-Mughaltoli area where the older part of the city is today.⁷⁶

Under the control of the East India Company after the decisive battle of Plassey in 1757 Dhaka City became a declining urban centre and between 1757-1864 it had a tremendous decrease in population and area.⁷⁷ The population of Dhaka City which was estimated to be nearly 200,000 in 1800 dropped to 51,000 in 1873.⁷⁸ The energetic controller of Dhaka, Mr. Walters founded the Dhaka Committee in 1830 and under his chairmanship began the development of Dhaka town. The inclusion of Rammna Green Pasture, an area from Old Paltan to Nimtoli, Dakesshware Temple to Azimpur under the town's jurisdiction took place in this period. The total urban area during that time rose to a total of 14.5 sq. km and the total population was 51,635 in 1867.⁷⁹ The

⁶⁸ M. Asaduzzaman and A. M. Rob, *Environmental Controls over Urbanisation of Dhaka City* (Dhaka: The Mappa, 1997).

⁶⁹ A. H. Dani, *Dacca: A Record of Its Changing Fortune* (Dhaka: Asiatic Press, 1962).

⁷⁰ C. D'oyly, *Antiquities of Dacca* (London, J. J. Landseer and Company, 1824).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² J. Tavernier, *Travels in India* (Translated from French Edition of 1976 by William Crooke) (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

⁷³ A. Karim, *Dacca-The Mughal Capital* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of East Pakistan, 1964).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ J. Taylor, *Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca* (Calcutta: Military Orphan Press, 1840).

⁷⁶ M. Asaduzzaman and A. M. Rob, *Environmental Controls over Urbanisation of Dhaka City* (Dhaka: The Mappa, 1997).

⁷⁷ W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal: Dhaka* (London: Trubner Co, 1976).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

urbanised space started to expand towards the north on the Pleistocene terrace high lands during this time, mainly for residential and recreational purposes.⁸⁰

Table-3: Population and area size of Dhaka City (1700-2001)

| Year | Periods | Population | Area (sq.km) |
|------|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| 1608 | Pre-mughal | 30,000 | 2 |
| 1700 | Mughal period | 900,000 | 40 |
| 1800 | British period | 200,000 | 4.5 |
| 1867 | British period | 51,636 | 10 |
| 1872 | British period | 69,212 | 20 |
| 1881 | British period | 80,358 | 20 |
| 1891 | British period | 83,358 | 20 |
| 1901 | British period | 104,385 | 20 |
| 1931 | British period | 161,922 | 20 |
| 1941 | British period | 239,728 | 25 |
| 1951 | Pakistan period | 411279 | 85 |
| 1961 | Pakistan period | 718766 | 125 |
| 1974 | Bangladesh period | 2068353 | 336 |
| 1981 | Bangladesh Period | 3440147 | 510 |
| 1991 | Bangladesh period | 6887459 | 1353 |
| 2001 | Bangladesh period | 10712206 | 1530 |

Source: J. Taylor, *Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca* (Calcutta: Military Orphan Press, 1840) & Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977); *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997); *Population Census 2001 Preliminary Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2001).

Dhaka City began to rise from a declining and stagnant condition after the transfer of power to the Crown in 1858 by the British East India Company. The first local administration, the Dhaka Municipality was found in 1864 by Mr. Skinner.⁸¹ After 1864, the lowland areas in the north of Islampur, Tantibazar, Kamrangir Char, Goalnagar were gradually filed for urbanisation and at the same time Wari, Gandaria, Old Cantonment (Purana Paltan) Narinda, Hazaribagh, Nawabganj, Sarai Jafarbad, Race Course Green Pastures and Rayar Bazaar (to name a few) were also brought under the town's jurisdiction.⁸² Moreover, during that period in order to protect the river bank of Buriganga from flooding and erosion and to add a face lift to the river side, the Buckland Embankment was completed. Thus the area of Dhaka City was expanded into 17.0 sq. km. and Dhaka City started to flourish again, its population increasing to a total of some 90 thousand in 1901 and reaching over a hundred thousand in the subsequent ten years.⁸³ In 1941 the population of Dhaka was more than 200,000 and in 1947, it passed 250,000. But within a decade,

⁸⁰ M. Asaduzzaman and A. M. Rob, *Environmental Controls over Urbanisation of Dhaka City* (Dhaka: The Mappa, 1997).

⁸¹ S. M. Taifoor, *Glimpses of Old Dacca* (Dhaka: Saogal Press, 1956).

⁸² P. Geddes, *Town Planning Report on Dhaka, Bengal*, (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Pub, 1917).

⁸³ M. Asaduzzaman and A. M. Rob, *Environmental Controls over Urbanisation of Dhaka City* (Dhaka: The Mappa, 1997).

after the annulment of the division of Bengal, again this urban growth of Dhaka declined and it remained as a mere district till the independence of Pakistan in 1947.⁸⁴

The growth of Dhaka City gained momentum again after 1947. The influx of people from India on the one hand and the onrush of people to the newly established administrative, commercial and educational centre on the other contributed to an unprecedented growth of the city.⁸⁵ The need for office space for administrative and commercial purposes as well as residential needs resulting from the increase in population led to the growth of the city on several levels. During this period, the Dhaka Improvement Trust (DIT) was created in 1956 (which was later transformed into RAJUK in 1987) for supervision of the overall planning and development of the city. Beside different urban development projects, DIT developed a number of residential areas to meet the housing needs of the emerging elite class.⁸⁶ A central Business District (CBD) was also developed to meet the demand for space required for increasing commercial and government administrative activities.⁸⁷ Initially, the needs for official, educational, residential and administrative spaces were fulfilled by the expansion of the city in Purana Paltan to Naya Paltan, Eskation to MoghBazar, Siddiheswari, Kakkrail to Kamlapur through Razar Bagh and Shantinagar, the Segun Bagicha, Azimpur, Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Shre-e-Bangla Nagar, Tejgaon, Gulshan Model Town and other areas were encroached on between 1950 and 1960. The Banani and Gulshan areas were acquired by the government in the early sixties under the 1959-Master Plan of Dhaka City and by 1961, the city population grew to 718,766 and the area at that time was about 125 sq. km.⁸⁸

The urbanisation process achieved tremendous growth to meet the needs of the newly independent country's capital. The city's population suddenly increased to 2,068,353 in 1974, it began to expand in all directions including the low-lying areas of the east, such as Jurain, Goran, Badda, Khilgaon, Rampura, and to the west including the areas of Kamrangirchar, Shyamoli, Western Mohgammadpur, Kallyanpur.⁸⁹ As very rapid urban growth (along with a fast increase in population and structural development) started to take place a new structural plan was needed. The population leapt to 3 million within a decade of the independence of the country and the city

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ K. Siddiqui, J. Ahmed, A. Awal and M. Ahmed, *Overcoming the Governance Crisis in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000).

⁸⁶ M. H. Khan and S. Hossain, 'Changing urban environment in Dhaka City' in *Bangladesh Political Science Review*, Vol.1, no.1, pp.93-104 (2001)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997).

⁸⁹ *Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977) & A. M. Chowdhury and M. S. Faruqi, 'Physical growth of Dhaka City' in S.U Ahmed (ed.) *Dhaka: Past Present Future* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1991).

covered an area of about 510 sq. km. by 1981⁹⁰. During this period the swamps and wetlands within the city started to disappear quickly and new areas of residential, administrative, business and commercial importance began to develop. In addition, slum and squatter settlements also sprang up in different areas of the city.⁹¹ Keeping pace with the magnitude of the urban growth, the new urbanised areas began encroaching on the low-lying areas within the city limits and even on some adjacent outlying areas.⁹²

Dhaka City has faced its highest rate of physical and population growth during 1981-1991, with the population doubling during that decade and the city expanding from 510 sq. km to 1353 sq. km. The city now includes the surrounding areas of Gazirpur, Savar, Narayangong, Bandar thanas and the entire thana of Keraniganj.⁹³ In 1995, a new master plan was prepared for the further development of Dhaka City and the recent construction of a bridge over the Buriganga river has encouraged the expansion of Dhaka City in a southerly direction to the other side of the river. A second bridge which is likely to be completed within the next five years will further increase this process.⁹⁴

However, the expansion of Dhaka City is constrained by physical barriers such as the low-lying flood prone areas around the city. Also, valuable agricultural and forested land will have to be sacrificed if the built-up area is to increase. But as mentioned, the population of the city is increasing very rapidly due mainly to rural-urban migration. The population of the city reached to 10.7 million in 2001 and the population growth of Dhaka has been 56.5% in the last decade, which is very high.⁹⁵ Understandably, these additional people have created tremendous pressure on the urban utility services and other amenities of urban life. This has resulted in an adverse effect on the urban environment where a large number of people have settled in slums and squatter settlements where they live below the poverty line.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ K. Siddiqui, J. Ahmed, A. Awal and M. Ahmed, *Overcoming the Governance Crisis in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997).

⁹⁴ K. Siddiqui, J. Ahmed, A. Awal and M. Ahmed, *Overcoming the Governance Crisis in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000).

⁹⁵ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2003).

⁹⁶ S. Hossain, 'Urban poverty and social marginality: the case of Bangladesh' in F. Lovejoy and L. Adorjany (eds) *Celebration, Causes, and Consequences* (Sydney: UNSW Printing Section, 2003) pp.69-76 & 'Poverty, household strategies and coping with urban life: examining 'livelihood framework' in Dhaka City, Bangladesh, in *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, Vol.2, no.1 (January 2002).

4. Urban poverty and Dhaka City's predominance

4.1. The trend of urban poverty

Bangladesh Household Expenditure Surveys (HES) constitute the main source of information for most of the available studies on urban poverty. These surveys have limitations due to diversity in the method of imputation, lack of data at the household level, uniform methods of recording the data flow and of time sampling, faulty memory recall method and the problems of missing cases.⁹⁷ Despite the limitations of data of HES these are nonetheless mainly relied on for measuring the extent of urban poverty. In fact, these surveys are the only existing source of macro level data on poverty in Bangladesh. Beside these, the Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) has conducted a number of micro level studies on the urban poor. These studies explain the partial scenario of urban poverty in Bangladesh.⁹⁸ Two methods – the Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) and the Cost of Basic Need (CBN) methods are currently used for measuring urban poverty by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.⁹⁹

The Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) method is traditionally used by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics for determining the poverty line. According to this method the urban poor are categorised as 'absolute poor' and 'hardcore poor' based on their daily calorie intake. The poor who take 2122k.cal per day per person fall below Poverty Line-1 (and are known as the absolute poor) whereas the poor who take 1805k.cal per day per person fall below Poverty Line-2 (these are termed the hardcore poor). At the national level the percentage of population in Poverty Line-1 decreased from the 47.8% to 44.3% in the survey year of 1988-89 to 2000. But in urban areas the percentage of population below Poverty Line-1 increased from 47.6% to 52.5% from the survey period of 1988-89 to 2000 due to the migration of the rural poor to the urban areas. In the case of Poverty Line-2 the situation is to some extent different. The percentage of hardcore poor has decreased over the years at both the national and urban contexts. But the rate of decrease is comparatively lower in urban areas.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ N. Khundker, W. Mahmud, B. Sen and M. U. Ahmed, 'Urban poverty in Bangladesh: trend, determinants and policy issues' in *Asian Development Review*, Vol. 12, no. 1, pp.1-31(1994)

⁹⁸ Centre for Urban Studies, *The Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: CUS, 1979); *Slums in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: CUS, 1983); *The Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: CUS, 1990).

⁹⁹ The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) uses the DCI and FEI poverty lines for its Household Expenditure Survey (HES) which has been conducted since 1973/74, but in the first 1995/96 survey the DCI and CBN poverty lines were used with the assistance of the World Bank. Please see Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2000* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2002).

¹⁰⁰ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Analysis of Basic Needs Dimensions of Poverty (Vol. 3)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1998) & *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2000* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2002).

Table-4: Urban population in Bangladesh below the poverty line (DCI method)

| Survey year | Poverty line-1 Absolute poverty (2122 k. cal per day per person) | | | | Poverty line-2 Hardcore poverty (1805 k. cal per day per person) | | | |
|-------------|---|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---|--------------|---------------------|--------------|
| | National | | Urban | | National | | Urban | |
| | Number (million) | % of Pop. | Number (million) | % of Pop. | Number (million) | % of Pop. | Number (million) | % of Pop. |
| 1988-89 | 49.7 | 47.8 | 6.3 | 47.6 | 29.5 | 28.4 | 3.5 | 26.4 |
| 1991-92 | 51.6 | 47.5 | 6.8 | 46.7 | 30.4 | 28.0 | 3.8 | 26.3 |
| 1995-96 | 55.3 | 47.5 | 9.6 | 49.7 | 29.1 | 25.1 | 5.2 | 27.3 |
| 2000 | 55.8 | 44.3 | 13.2 | 52.5 | 24.9 | 20.0 | 6.0 | 25.0 |

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Analysis of Basic Needs Dimensions of Poverty (Vol. 3)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1998) & *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 2000* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2002).

Table-5: Recent trends in urban poverty in Bangladesh (CBN method)

| | Upper poverty line (%) | | Change (upper line) 1995-96 to 2000 | Lower poverty line (%) | | Change (lower line) 1995-96 to 2000 |
|----------|---------------------------|------|--|---------------------------|------|--|
| | 1995-1996 | 2000 | | 1995-96 | 2000 | |
| National | 51.0 | 49.8 | -1.2 | 34.4 | 33.7 | -.7 |
| Urban | 29.4 | 36.6 | +7.2 | 13.7 | 19.1 | +5.4 |

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Preliminary Report of Household Income & Expenditure Survey- 2000* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2001).

Table-6: Incidence of poverty in selected urban areas in Bangladesh (CBN method)

| Urban areas | Upper poverty line (%) | | Lower poverty line (%) | |
|-------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|
| | 1995-96 | 2000 | 1995-96 | 2000 |
| | National | 51.0 | 49.8 | 34.4 |
| Dhaka | 40.2 | 44.8 | 27.8 | 32.0 |
| Chittagong | 52.4 | 47.7 | 28.6 | 25.0 |
| Khulna | 55.0 | 51.4 | 36.4 | 35.4 |
| Rajshahi | 61.8 | 61.0 | 46.9 | 46.7 |

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Preliminary Report of Household Income & Expenditure Survey- 2000* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2001).

Due to the problems of the calorie intake method, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics has used the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) method. Unlike the traditionally used DCI method, the CBN method considers other basic needs (along with food) for measuring poverty. The poor are categorised by an 'upper poverty line' and a 'lower poverty line'. This estimation reveals the alarming situation of urban poverty in Bangladesh despite the overall improvement of the poverty situation at the national level. According to this method, from 1995-96 to 2000 the percentages of the urban population below both the upper poverty line and lower poverty line have increased by 7.2% and 5.4% respectively.¹⁰¹ Poverty is mainly concentrated in urban Dhaka due to the predominance of Dhaka City. In urban Dhaka the percentages of the population below both the upper poverty line and the lower poverty line have increased by 4.6% and 4.2% respectively during 1995-96 to 2000.¹⁰²

4.2. Poverty and slums in Dhaka City

The phenomenon of slums and squatters in Dhaka is as old as the city itself.¹⁰³ But the city has experienced a prolific growth of slums and squatters since the independence of the country in 1971.¹⁰⁴ By the end of 1976 only 10 slums existed with a population of 10,000. The number increased to 2,156 settlements with a population of 718,143 in 1993, and 3007 settlements with a population of 1.1 million in 1996.¹⁰⁵ About 90% of the total number of slums and squatter settlements have developed in the last three decades. The highest concentration of growth (45%) took place between 1981 and 1990 followed by the previous decade's 26%. Only 18% of these clusters were established since 1991.¹⁰⁶

Slums and squatter settlements are not distributed uniformly throughout the Dhaka Metropolitan area but rather they are concentrated mostly on the fringes of the city. Due to an acute demand for land and high land prices, especially in the central zones and in upper class residential areas, the slums and squatter communities have moved or are moving towards the city's peripheries in the search for cheap shelter.¹⁰⁷ According to CUS among the 3007 slums and squatter settlements an overwhelming majority of these poor communities are located on land owned by private individuals (1270 clusters, or 42.2%), or under multiple private ownership (1047 clusters or 34.8%). Only 644 clusters (21.4%) are located on government and semi-government land,

¹⁰¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Preliminary Report of Household Income & Expenditure Survey- 2000 (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 2001)*.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ J. Taylor, *Sketch of the Topography and Statistics of Dacca* (Calcutta: Military Orphan Press, 1840); P. Geddes, *Town Planning Report on Dhaka, Bengal*, (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Pub, 1917) & C. Arams, *Housing in the Modern World: Man's Struggle for Shelter in Urbanising World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).

¹⁰⁴ S.R. Qadir, *Bastees of Dhaka City: A Study of Squatter Settlement* (Dhaka: National Institute of Local Government, 1975).

¹⁰⁵ Centre for Urban Studies, *Survey of Slums and Squatter Settlements in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: CUS, 1996).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ A.Q.M. Mahbub and N. Islam, 'The growth of slums in Dhaka City: a spatio temporal analysis' in S. U. Ahmed (ed.) *Dhaka Past Present Future* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1991) pp.508-521.

while a few settlements (only 35 in number, 1.2%) are found on land belonging to non-government organisations.¹⁰⁸ Slum and squatter settlements did not develop in the central part of the city like Mothijheel, Kotoali, Sutrapur or Lalbagh Thanas in the last decade. They mostly developed in the peripheral thanas of Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Demra.¹⁰⁹ In recent times a number of slum clusters were evicted by the urban development authorities in Dhaka City and the poor were forced to settle in a resettlement slum in the peripheral thana of Mirpur.¹¹⁰

The demographic features of the slum population are to some extent different from the other urban population. There is a high propensity of young people to migrate to the city of Dhaka. More than 50% of 'migrant populations' in the city were less than 35 years of age.¹¹¹ Young populations predominate in urban centres because they are usually not yet integrated into rural traditional systems and they are more likely to leave the village than the older population. The proportion of the elderly population who have lost their ability to perform labour-intensive jobs is negligible in the slum areas.¹¹² Despite the relative increase in the female population, there is still a substantially greater proportion of males in the city owing to the initial high rate of male migration. However, with more single poor women joining the urban labour force, especially in the garment industry it is possibly decreasing.¹¹³

The distinctive aspect of urban poverty in Dhaka City's slums is its close connection with recent migration. The slum dwellers have mostly migrated to the city from rural areas. As Dhaka is well linked to the entire country by land, water and air, and can be reached within a day from any part of the country, there are opportunities for migrants to arrive in the city using transport within their reach.¹¹⁴ The majority of urban poor migrate to Dhaka City from a few districts like Faridpur, Barisal and Comilla.¹¹⁵ The rural poor migrate to Dhaka City due to some push and pull factors. The push factors include over-population, floods and natural disasters, river erosion, growing landlessness and exploitation by the rural elites and moneylenders.¹¹⁶ In this agriculture based countries land is the main means to generate subsistence and surplus and is the most valuable asset to the rural poor. Increased loss and fragmentation of land among the poor and increased

¹⁰⁸ Centre for Urban Studies, *Survey of Slums and Squatter Settlements in Dhaka City* (Dhaka, CUS, 1996).

¹⁰⁹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 1997 (Vol.3)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1999).

¹¹⁰ S. Hossain, 'Urban poverty, vulnerability and policies in Bangladesh' Paper Presented in The 2005 Social Policy Association Annual Conference, 27-29 June, 2005, University of Bath, UK.

¹¹¹ R. Afsar, *Rural-Urban Migration in Bangladesh: Causes, Consequences and Challenges* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000)

¹¹² Opel, A. E.A, 'Livelihood of the Vulnerable: An Ethnographic Illustration of Life in Dhaka Slums', *Urban Livelihood Monograph-2* (Dhaka: Proshika, 1998)

¹¹³ K. Siddiqui, S.R. Qadir, S. Alamgir and S. Haq, *Social Formation in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1993).

¹¹⁴ N. Islam, Dhaka: *From City to Mega City* (Dhaka: Urban Studies Program, 1996)

¹¹⁵ K. Siddiqui, S.R. Qadir, S. Alamgir and S. Haq, *Social Formation in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1993).

¹¹⁶ T. M. Shakur, *An Analysis of Squatter Settlements in Dhaka*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, UK, 1987

concentration of land among the rich, coupled with a high natural growth rate of population raise the number of landless and the hungry. In the absence of other sustenance opportunities in villages, many of the landless in rural Bangladesh are forced to migrate to cities to seek better opportunities although their chances of improving their conditions are limited.¹¹⁷ Along with push factors the pull factors also contribute to the increasing rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. These pull factors are mainly employment opportunities in the informal sectors of the economy, better opportunities in the city and relative freedom for female workers.¹¹⁸

The slum population in Dhaka City faces extreme poverty due to its low level of earnings and the majority are living below the poverty line in terms of both calorie intake and cost of basic needs. What is more, the slum dwellers are mostly involved in low paid jobs in informal sectors of the urban economy. To be precise there is a predominance of day labouring and rickshaw pulling among this poor group of city dwellers.¹¹⁹ Moreover, there are occupational variations between males and females in slum and squatter settlements in Dhaka City. Among these there are eighty different types of occupations held by males in slum and squatter settlements. Females are found to belong only to occupations such as maidservants and housewives.¹²⁰ The urban poor involved in the formal urban sectors of the economy have better economic conditions than the poor in the informal sectors. There is a significant difference in the wage rate between the formal sector poor and informal sector poor in Dhaka City.¹²¹ The formal sector poor receive various benefits, which means that they are better off compared with their informal sector counterparts. There is also a variation in poverty among the poor employed in informal occupations based on their level of skills.¹²² Skill differentials were found to be an important factor in determining differences within the informal manufacturing activities in Dhaka City¹²³

Slum populations in Dhaka City are 'vulnerable' in terms of their access to urban land.¹²⁴ Slum dwellers have mostly settled temporarily on public or private land and they are often evicted from their settlements. In the overwhelming majority of house construction the roof is of tin and the wall beams are of bamboo. Only a small proportion of poor settlements (9%) were made of brick,

¹¹⁷ J. Alamgir, 'Rural-urban migration in Bangladesh: theoretical approaches to understanding the internal and external dynamics' *Journal of Social Studies*, Vol. 59, pp. 26-48 (1993)

¹¹⁸ T. M. Shakur, *An Analysis of Squatter Settlements in Dhaka*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Liverpool, UK, 1987

¹¹⁹ A.T.M.N. Amin, 'Dhaka's informal Sectors and its role in the transmission of Bangladesh economy' in S. U. Ahmed (ed.) *Dhaka Past Present Future* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1991) pp.446-470.

¹²⁰ Centre for Urban Studies, *Slums in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: CUS, 1983).

¹²¹ K. Siddiqui, S.R. Qadir, S. Alamgir and S. Haq, *Social Formation in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1993).

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ N. Khundker, W. Mahmud, B. Sen and M. U. Ahmed, 'Urban poverty in Bangladesh: trend, determinants and policy issues' in *Asian Development Review*, Vol.12, no. 1, pp.1-31 (1994)

¹²⁴ S. Hossain, 'Poverty and vulnerability in megacities: the case of slum communities in Dhaka City, Bangladesh' Paper Presented in the 2005 Annual Conference of the Australian Sociological Association (TASA), 5-8 December, 2005, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia.

cement and tin.¹²⁵ About 68% of slum families in Dhaka City have a single room unit, 20% have two small rooms and at least 5% have to share a room with other families.¹²⁶ The average floor spaces of poor urban households are only 125sq. ft, with only 100 sq. ft in Dhaka City.¹²⁷ Very often slum and squatter settlements in these areas are prone to annual flooding, and they are environmentally unsuitable for housing as they are located in low-lying areas and along risky canals and railway tracts.¹²⁸

Slum dwellers in the city are disadvantaged in terms of their access to urban services like safe water, electricity, gas supply, toilet facilities and garbage disposal. The quality of these services has been found to be poor and the supply remains highly irregular and inadequate.¹²⁹ Most slum dwellers have access to safe water for drinking purpose only. And most use unsafe water for washing, bathing and other purposes. A small proportion of the urban poor (20%) use sanitary latrines and the majority still use a variety of non-hygienic latrines.¹³⁰ The study shows that 67% use electricity and another 33% still have no access to electricity. The study also found that 72% of the urban poor use traditional fuel for cooking and only 22% have access to gas facilities. More than 60% of the poor just dump their garbage on the road or on the ground.¹³¹ And a very small proportion (12.4%) of these poor households has access to the underground drainage system.¹³² Slum populations also have limited access to health and education. Though theoretically the urban poor have equal access to the public health facilities in the city, in reality very little are available to them.¹³³ They are the most deprived groups in the city as they have very limited access to the existing educational opportunities. This is true for both primary education and general and technical education for adults. It has been evident from official statistics that although enrolment in primary school in urban areas is higher than that for rural areas, the enrolment of the slum population is very low.¹³⁴

¹²⁵ A.Q.M. Mahub, 'Rent affordability and rent policies for slum dwellers in Dhaka City' in N. Islam and R.M. Ahsan (eds) *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka, Urban Studies Program, 1996).

¹²⁶ Centre for Urban Studies, *The Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: CUS, 1979).

¹²⁷ N. Islam, N. Huda, F.B. Narayan and P.B. Rana, *Addressing the Urban Poverty Agenda in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1997).

¹²⁸ N. Islam, 'The state of the urban environment in Bangladesh' in N. Islam and R.M. Ahsan (eds) *Urban Bangladesh* (Dhaka, Urban Studies Program, 1996) pp.21-31.

¹²⁹ Centre for Urban Studies, *Survey of Slums in Dhaka Metropolitan Area-1991* (Dhaka, CUS, 1993); Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 1997 (Vol.3)* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1999) & S. Hossain, 'Research on slums and squatters in Bangladesh: a critical review' in *Social Science Review*, Vol.18, no.2, pp.67-76.

¹³⁰ Centre for Urban Studies, *Survey of Slums and Squatters in Dhaka City* (Dhaka, CUS, 1996).

¹³¹ R.M. Ahsan and N. Ahmed, 'The urban poor's access to water and sanitation' in N. Islam (ed.) *The Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Centre for Urban Studies, 1996).

¹³² K. Siddiqui, S.R. Qadir, S. Alamgir and S. Haq, *Social Formation in Dhaka City* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1993).

¹³³ K.M. Fariduddin and A.U. Khan, 'Health profile of the urban poor' in N. Islam (ed.) *The Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Centre for Urban Studies, 1996).

¹³⁴ Government of Bangladesh, *Zila Primary Education Statistics* (Dhaka: Ministry of Education, 1991).

In the adverse urban environment social networking based on kinship and community play a significant role in urban adaptations of slum communities. Such networking works as a source of social capital in the context of migration to the city - by providing information related to migration and adaptation to city life, and by providing initial accommodation and employment information.¹³⁵ Most of the slum dwellers migrated to the city with direct or indirect help from their relatives or fellow villagers who live in the city. These networks are most important in the village before departure although they continue to play a significant role after arrival in the city.¹³⁶ The urban poor have strong kin connections with rural areas, though in their neighbourhoods kinship ties are not so distinctively visible because of the financial crisis of the residents.¹³⁷ The slum dwellers often come to the city from lineage based organisations and extended family, and kinship plays a significant role to encourage the poor from rural areas to come to the city and settle down in their neighbourhoods.¹³⁸ The host community in the city (relatives, friends or fellow villagers) play a significant role in offering the poor their first shelter and food when they arrive in Dhaka City. Temporary residential/sublet arrangements are made until the newcomer finds a job and a suitable rental unit. Kin groups and fellow villagers offer hospitality in the form of food, accommodation as well as finding a job and knowledge about the city, which is as necessary as practical help at the initial stage.¹³⁹

However, poverty of slum population is an extension of rural poverty of Bangladesh. The process seems to be influenced by the existing superstructure which is dominated by the rural rich and which plays a strong role in maintaining and legitimising poverty.¹⁴⁰ Poverty is caused by the stagnation of productive forces and production over time and government policies and development measures which only help the rural rich to get richer and increase inequality.¹⁴¹ Ahmed has outlined a number of factors as causes of poverty including socio-economic and political factors - particularly inequality in the distribution of economic and political power, insincerity and the indifferent attitude of the ruling power elite who control resources, external factors such as the role of metropolitan capital, foreign aid and loans (in which again the role of the national power elite is critical) and lack of poor people's participation in decision making and the development process.¹⁴² CUS has also identified some specific causes of urban poverty and

¹³⁵ S. Hossain, *Urban Poverty and Adaptations of the Poor to Urban Life in Dhaka City, Bangladesh*, PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2006.

¹³⁶ P. Dannecker, *Between Conformity and Resistance: Women Garments Workers in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2002).

¹³⁷ M. Mizanuddin, *Social Organisation of the Urban Poor in Bangladesh: A Case Study of Squatter Settlements in Dhaka*, PhD Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, 1991.

¹³⁸ T. K. Das, *Social Structure and Cultural Practices in Slums* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2000).

¹³⁹ P. Dannecker, *Between Conformity and Resistance: Women Garments Workers in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2002); R. Khun, 'Identities in motion: social exchange networks and rural-urban migration in Bangladesh', *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, vol. 37, no. 1&2, pp. 311-338.

¹⁴⁰ K. Siddiqui, *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: National Institute of Local Government, 1982).

¹⁴¹ Centre for Urban Studies, *The Urban Poor in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: CUS, 1990).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

slums in Dhaka City. These include the socio-political and economic structure, that have developed in a long colonial and feudal history and exploitation and social injustice; oppression by the vested interest groups and ruling power elite; corruption of the ruling elite and the neo-rich, foreign aid and debt; natural hazards and consequent landlessness; lack of government assistance for the poor; and population explosion (and lack of its control).¹⁴³

5. Conclusion

The urbanisation of Bangladesh is interlinked with the intense development of Dhaka City. The historical process of urban development in Dhaka City presents different trends based on its political development. Dhaka developed as a politico-administrative city and subsequently economic and commercial activities have also concentrated in the city making it the prominent city of the country. The urbanisation activities in Dhaka City have been achieving tremendous growth for the needs of the newly independent country's capital. Overall, Dhaka City has experienced its highest rate of physical and population growth in recent decades that transformed it into a megacity.

As urban growth of Dhaka City is not commensurate with the economic and social development of the city, significant portions of the urban population are living below the poverty line. The percentage of the urban population in Bangladesh below the poverty line has been increasing over the years. The percentage of the urban population living below the poverty line is comparatively higher in Dhaka City than other urban centres of the country. Consequently, the city has had a massive growth in slums and squatter settlements in recent decades. The fact is, the socio-political and economic structures of the country are generally responsible for urban poverty and the emergence of slums in Dhaka City.

The formation of slums is closely associated with rural-urban migration. Poor people living in the city slums have mostly migrated there from rural areas rather than other cities or towns. Both the pull and push factors - including low incomes in rural areas, river erosion of agricultural land and job opportunities in the city are the main factors behind this rural-urban migration. And urban poverty of Dhaka's slums is closely linked with the participation in the informal sectors of the economy. The poor are mostly involved in informal activities as they are excluded from the formal sectors of the economy through lack of education and employment training. Employment in the informal sectors is generally characterised by a low level of income and high level of vulnerability in terms of risk and harassment.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

In the context of poverty and vulnerability social networks play significant support roles in migration and the adaptations of the poor to the city. Poor people maintain both kin and non-kin based social networks in Dhaka City's slums. After their move to the city poor migrants gradually develop non-kinship social networks, which also play a significant role in their social life. The urban poor often provide and/or receive assistances from their relatives, friends and neighbours to help them cope with their poverty and vulnerability. In fact, social networking generally works as 'social capital' in urban adaptations of poor migrants, who have limited access to the formal sources of support.

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