Addressing Slums as an Impact of Urban Poverty and Social Exclusion: An Investigation into Three Types of Slum Community in Dhaka

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Abstract

Rapid urbanization, socio-political and economic structures have led towards an increasing proportion of socially excluded urban poor in megacity Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Although these excluded groups make an important contribution to the welfare of the society, they are often deprived from the virtues and services of society, access to public spaces as well as from adequate housing. On one hand, urban poverty and social exclusion is manifested in degraded housings like slums, while on the other hand slums characterized by its spatial, social and economic inadequacies contribute to poverty, social exclusion and inequality. There is a knowledge gap in Dhaka’s slum discourse about how these inter-relationships work in slum communities of varied socio-cultural background. The main purpose of the paper is to investigate three types of slum communities in Dhaka and understand the consequences of urban poverty and social exclusion on their respective housing situations. Research methodology included empirical investigation as well as literature review. Findings indicate that as an impact of urban poverty and social exclusion, the slum residents suffer a vulnerable life subjected to a vicious cycle influencing even the next generations. It also reduces the prospect of their proper participation in social life. Future research on such urban agenda may result in solutions, both in policy and planning interventions to provide adequate, sustainable housings to fulfill the physical, socio-cultural and economic needs of socially excluded urban poor, thereby minimizing social inequality an opening access for their prospective contribution to society and nation.
Research Context

- Bangladesh

Source: http://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/bangladesh/location.html
Bangladesh, one of the largest and most densely populated countries in the world, has a population of about 166,563,167 within an area of about 130,170 Km² (50,259 sq. miles). In 2050, the projected population is expected to be at least 201,926,816 million with an urban population of 55.7% (World meters, 2017).

This vast population includes a non-elitist section known as “Urban Poor”, who are characterized by an economy below “subsistence level” (Islam, et al, 1997).

According to the Census of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2.23 million people live in slums across the country (BBS, 2015).
Research Context

- Dhaka

- Dhaka megacity (UN Habitat, 2006), capital of Bangladesh is the principal administrative, commercial, industrial, educational and recreational center.

- The Greater Dhaka Area has a population of over 18 million as of 2016.

- It is the 10th largest urban agglomeration in the world; the second fastest rate of population growth with a density of 23,234 people per square kilometer within a total area of 300 square kilometers.

- In Dhaka, around 10 million people live in slums (Ahmed, 2007).
Objective of the study

The expected outcomes are:

- To identify the different types of social exclusion in the selected areas.
- To investigate poverty situation as an impact of their social exclusion.
- Impact of urban poverty and social exclusion in their housing situations.
Methodology

- Literature review
- Empirical Investigation by Mixed Method approach using both Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection
- Both primary and secondary data
- Analysis of various visual methods such as images, maps, videos, newspaper and media interviews, etc.
- Gathering information through questionnaire interview, physical survey and in-depth discussion with the respondents – approximately 10-15 dwellers from each location.
- Analysis of collected information and findings.
Study Area

- Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh
- Duaripara Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur
- Bihari Camp at Kalshi, Mirpur

Source:
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

- The original residents of Ganaktuli slum were the migrated Hindu Dalits.

- They were brought to Bangladesh (then Eastern part of Bengal) from India, by the British colonial administration during the first half of the 19th Century.

- Dalit' groups, referred to as “The Untouchables” were subjected to extreme form of social exclusion.

- Different research shows that 94 categories of Dalits live in Bangladesh.
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

- In Ganaktuli, mostly Dalits like Rabidas (Cobblers), Dom and Harijan sweepers live in houses once allotted to their predecessors.

- Social exclusion exist in every layer of the Dalits’ lives. Discrimination prevails in different aspects like access to basic needs including housing, adequate health facilities, education, choice of occupation employment facilities etc.

Source: Google Earth Pro, 2018
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

- Dalits face five types of exclusions such as spatial, social, cultural, economic and political.

- Spatial exclusion is visible by the restriction of their living quarters in a separate settlement.

- Socio cultural exclusion facilitates inaccessibility to public facilities and failure to have free interaction in the mainstream city life.

- Their economic exclusion includes lack of free choice regarding occupation and standard employment opportunities.

Source: Google Earth Pro, 2018
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

❖ Housing and Social Condition

❖ Dalits live in designated residential settlements usually secluded from the mainstream peoples’ housings

❖ High residential density in slum like conditions with often three generations of 8-12 people living in one small room/s.

❖ Unhealthy environment and unhygienic sanitation is distressful environment with serious bad odor of dirt and garbage.

❖ No support on maintenance or repair.

❖ Pure drinking water is unavailable all over the colony because of dirty water supply

Source: Field Survey, 2008-2018
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

❖ Housing and Social Condition

- Designated temple area only for the dwellers for religious rituals
- Open, unhygienic market place for the dwellers
- Dirty approach road with solid waste in front of dwellings

Source: Field Survey, 2008-2018
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

❖ Housing and Social Condition

- Burnt down dwellings after a fire hazard in Ganaktuli
- Slippery common baths/wash areas without privacy for both male and females
- Dirty common toilets for both male and female residents
- Dark, wet corridor and mud ovens in front of houses is a threat to accidents and fire hazard

Source:
Field Survey, 2008-2018
Case Study 01: Slum at Ganaktuli, Hazaribagh

- **Spatial Organization of Dwelling Units**

  - Plans showing single roomed and single room with attached service space dwelling units

  - Bed and cooking in same space
  - 3 Generations sleep in one space
  - An attached space

Source: Field Survey, 2008-2018
Case Study 02: Duari PARA Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur

- Urban slum settlements are generally excluded from publicly provided resources - formal education, healthcare services, safe water supply and hygienic sanitation.

- Disadvantaged places with poor housing, little or no basic services, limited employment opportunities, high levels of congestion and overcrowding, illiteracy, high crime rate and violence.

- Occupied mostly by the rural migrants forced to migrate due to poverty and lack of income opportunities in the rural areas.

Source: Google Earth Pro, 2018
Case Study 02: Duaripara Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur

- Basic services such as water, sanitation and proper drainage often do not reach the urban poor living in slums, that are developed on government or semi-government vacant land, because municipal authorities do not recognize many informal settlements, shanty towns for political and administrative reasons, thus making them ineligible for services.

- The rents are comparatively higher in the private slums and in those which are located nearer to the city centre compared to those located near the periphery.

Source: Google Earth Pro, 2018
Case Study 02: Duaripara Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur

- **Housing and Social Condition**

- Most of the houses are rented and some are owned.
- There are 2 types house. One storied and two storied.
- Most of the houses have 11 to 13 living units.
- Most of the houses are semi-pacca (brick wall and tin shade roof).
- Size of living unit is 8’x10’.
- Drinking water is supplied through pipe connection by public tap/standpipe and tube-well that is connected to the WASA.
- Water and electricity are not supplied legally.
- Sanitation facilities are provided by the NGOs.
- Local pharmacies and NGO clinics are the most widely known health care facilities.
Case Study 02: Duaripara Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur

❖ Housing and Social Condition

- Water line on the road
- Drain and sewerage disposal
- Narrow road in between the houses

Source:
Field survey at Studio Work of Level-4, Department of Architecture, State University of Bangladesh, 2017
Case Study 02: Duaripara Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur

- Dwelling Unit 01

Plan of single stored Dwelling

Source:
Field survey at Studio Work of Level-4, Department of Architecture, State University of Bangladesh, 2017
Case Study 02: Duaripara Slum at Pallabi, Mirpur

- Dwelling Unit 02

Source: Field survey at Studio Work of Level-4, Department of Architecture, State University of Bangladesh, 2017
Case Study 03: Bihari Camp at Kalshi, Mirpur

- The Bihari people are known as the Stranded Pakistanis, who are Urdu-speaking Muslim people living in Bangladesh after the partition of India in 1947.

- They have limited access to health services, educational facilities, labor-market and social services.

- Most of the Camp dwellers are rickshaw pullers, day laborers and construction workers whose incomes are inadequate for maintaining their family.

Source: Google Earth Pro, 2018
Bihari people are mainly facing five types of exclusions such as social, economic, political, cultural, and spatial.

The major factors that cause political exclusion in any Bihari camp are: (i) minimal facilities provided by the state, (ii) partial voting rights, (iii) no access to passport, bank account, bank loan, and insurance facilities, (iv) no participation in the National Election, and (v) received minimal facilities provided by the GOs, NGOs and INGOs. They also do not have access to file a case and have no power to make protest against grievances.

Source: Google Earth Pro, 2018
Case Study 03: Bihari Camp at Kalshi, Mirpur

- Housing and Social Condition

- The environment is very dirty, unhygienic, unclean and unhealthy.
- Inhuman living conditions without having minimal access to basic needs and rights.
- More than 8 people live in a small room and share for sleeping.
- Serious shortage of sanitation facilities- 10 to 15 families share a single toilet.
- The numbers of bathrooms are also insufficient and pitiful.
- All through the year the sewerage system gets blocked with garbage.
- Have no access to gas to cook or for other purposes.
- All have access to electricity.
- Have no access to safe water in their camp- collect water from the street, outside the camp.
Case Study 03: Bihari Camp at Kalshi, Mirpur

❖ Housing and Social Condition

Gathering space for the community in narrow roads

Shared Toilet

Roads blocked by dirty sewerage water

Narrow roads

Source: Field survey at Studio Work of Level-4, Department of Architecture, State University of Bangladesh, 2018
Case Study 03: Bihari Camp at Kalshi, Mirpur

❖ Dwelling Unit 01

Ground floor plan of a housing unit with shared services

Source: Field survey at Studio Work of Level-4, Department of Architecture, State University of Bangladesh, 2018
Case Study 03: Bihari Camp at Kalshi, Mirpur

- Dwelling Unit 02

Ground Floor Plan

- Bed 01
- Bed 02
- Toilet
- Kitchen

First Floor Plan

- Bed 01
- Bed 02
- Toilet
- Kitchen

Source: Field survey at Studio Work of Level-4, Department of Architecture, State University of Bangladesh, 2018
Findings & Conclusion

- Apart from social exclusion, Ganaktuli slum reflects spatial exclusion, Duaripara slum is economically excluded and Bihari camp is more to the politically excluded group.

- Informal status and lack of tenure ship makes the dwellers of these settlements unwilling to invest their scarce resources to build water and sanitation facilities and improve their dwellings—thereby improving their socio-economic condition.

- Acute poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and unhygienic living environment with little access to basic services, lack of political commitment to poverty alleviation, periodic eviction and violation of human rights are the constituent factors to facilitate poverty and social exclusion; these adverse living conditions eventually influence the future life-course of the next generations and thus form a vicious circle.

- Mindset and awareness to uphold humanity as well as positive social and physical planning can play important roles in providing adequate and sustainable housings to cater to the physical, socio-cultural and economic needs of urban poor and excluded groups, minimizing social inequality.