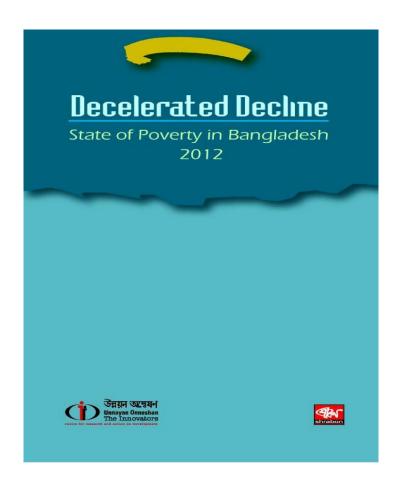
POVERTY AND RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

K. M. Mustafizur Rahman & Suban Kumar Chowdhury





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1 INTRODUCTION

The poorest groups in any society are often bypassed by economic development and it is quite true for the people of rural areas. However, there is a progress in reducing poverty since independence, still a huge number of rural people (35.2 percent) is living below the poverty line (HIES, 2010). Rural poverty results from lack of assets, limited economic opportunities and poor education and capabilities as well as disadvantages rooted in social and political inequalities (IFAD, 2010). Without opportunities for an adequate livelihood in the rural areas, poverty is being increased and this forced many rural poor to seek employment elsewhere, leading to a massive rural-urban migration.

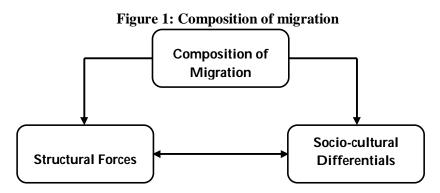
Rural-urban migration reduces the pressure of population in the rural areas and, thereby, should improve economic conditions and reduce rural poverty. However, disparities between the urban and rural areas in terms of income and employment as well as the unavailability of basic infrastructure and services persist. Urban areas offer more and better opportunities for socio-economic mobility of the poor and rural-urban migration, therefore, will continue. It is evident that the incidence of poverty is higher in the rural areas than that of the urban areas. Moreover, the rate of reduction in the rural areas of poverty is also higher in the rural areas than the urban areas. This might be occurred due to the accelerated pace of rural-urban migration (Titumir and Rahman, 2011).

Migration has been a long livelihood strategy in Bangladesh. Now-a-days, in Bangladesh, poverty is considered as one of the key drivers of the rural-urban migration. Rural life is changing fast now. This is because; they are far less dependent on agriculture. Moreover, a dependency on off-farming activities among the rural people is noticeable recently that often leads to migration into the urban areas for better income opportunities. Furthermore, the principle factor that attracts the rural poor people to the urban centre is the rapid expansion of non-agricultural sectors. Another intra-related factor that encourages the rural people in Bangladesh to migrate into urban areas is the frequent recurrence of natural disaster which severely damaged agricultural development and caused food crisis and unemployment, particularly for those who traditionally depends on farming activities as a means to earn their daily livelihood. So, it is very clear that the poorest portion, often cannot migrate since resources are needed to do so. This often led to a debate about the relationship between migration and development. Study on several literature related to rural-urban migration assess that, in comparison with the other least developed countries, a vast majority of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is attributable to the strong pushing factors relatively on the one hand and strong pulling factors on the other hand. In this chapter, an attempt is made to explore the relationship between poverty and rural-urban migration in search of a clear scenario regarding this.

2 BASIC CONCEPT OF POVERTY AND MIGRATION: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

People in different circumstances naturally have different levels of economic welfare at the same level of income. In this aspect, the poverty line of a given individual can be defined considering money. The individual needs to achieve the minimum level of welfare not to be deemed as 'poor', given its circumstances¹. Everyone in the poverty line is taken to be equally badly off, and all those below the line are worse off than all above it. Often, the people who are living below the poverty line tend to migrate to the urban area with zeal to improve their livelihood. Although the evidence is limited and mixed (Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler, 2003), an acceptance of an "empirical regularity" appears to be there that the poorest and richest have lower migration propensities. The severe poor are believed to be almost unable to migrate, or migrate under such bad terms that migration does not improve their wellbeing or makes them worse off, for example, the bonded labour (Mosse et al., 2002).

Basically, migration is a critical concept to define specifically. To be simple, this is occurred due to moving of the people for different reason across or within the country. A migrant could be a person who moves across or within the country to improve respective livelihood; a refuge who crosses the border due to political and religious suppression; or by a person who is displaced by natural disaster. Still, the demographer neither could nor reached to a consensus definition of migration. This is because migration does not occur under a common condition rather the causes of migration are related to specific context in which they take place.



It remains a crucial task for the demographer to illustrate why people migrate from one place to another. A comprehensive theory of migration is required for this. This is because, only the theories of migration can best explain why people are migrating from one place to another within the wider political and economic context. As for example, if migration in Bangladesh is shown as the result of economic factor then, it could be solved through decentralisation of economy within the country. The fact is that often it is almost

¹ Martin Ravallion, Poverty Lines across the World, The World Bank Development Research Group Director's Office April 2010, Policy Research Working Paper 5284, http://www.wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/04/27/000158349_20100427143536/Rend ered/PDF/WPS5284.pdf

unattainable. Furthermore, migration was governed by a push–pull process; that is, unfavourable condition in one place (oppressive laws, heavy taxation etc) "push" people out and favourable conditions in an external location pull them out (Ravenstein, 1889). In the context of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh, the implication is found what Ravenstein (1889) told in his "laws of migration".²

3 OBJECTIVES & FACTORS OF MIGRATION: AN ASSESSMENT ON THE ROLE OF POVERTY IN RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

Migration could not be generalised into a single category depending on demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors. Poverty, lack of work availability, unemployment, natural disaster and socio-cultural factors like marriage, family conflict, better educational opportunities etc. are among the most dominating factors influencing the people to migrate. In Bangladesh, every year a large number of people are pursuing migration as their livelihood strategies. They believe that they can improve their lifestyle by earning more in the urban areas but in reality, they have failed to do so³. It is quite evident that, a strong linkage between migration and poverty exist there. However, in practice, they hardly can do this. In recent times, most of the cities in Bangladesh are experiencing rapid but unplanned urbanisation through the industrialisation and that has resulted in the higher job opportunities in the urban areas. As a result, migration in the urban areas is uprising day by day which simultaneously, increase the growth of urban population compared to national population growth of Bangladesh (Table 5.1). In the year of 1901, approximately 2.43 percent of the country's population lived in the urban areas.⁴ During 1951-1961 due to political and socio-economic reasons, the urban population had increased at approximately 45.11 percent and this percentage is more than twice from the previous decades that was 18.4 percent. The urban population growth in Bangladesh was last reported at 2.85 in 2010⁵. Most of the cities in Bangladesh especially, Dhaka is now experiencing massive migration from the rural areas and this partially is causing the dramatic rise of poverty in the city areas including Dhaka⁶.

² Ravenstein's laws stated that the primary cause for migration was better external economic opportunities; the volume of migration decreases as distance increases; migration occurs in stages instead of one long move; population movements are bilateral; and migration differentials (e.g., gender, social class, age) influence a person's mobility.

³ See Annex A

⁴ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974 (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977).

⁵ For details visit http://www.tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/urban-population-growth-annual-percent-wb-data.html

⁶ Shahadat Hossain, Rapid Urban Growth and Poverty in Dhaka City, Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology. Volume 5 Number 1. January ,2008

Table 1: Urban Population growth in Bangladesh

	National population		Urban population				
Census	Number (Million)	Rate of growth	Number (million)	Share (Percentage of total Population)	Decadal increase of urban population (Percentage)	Rate of growth	
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	
1951	44.17	0.51	1.83	4.14	18.38	1.74	
1961	55.22	2.26	2.64	4.74	45.11	3.74	
1974	76.37	2.53	6.00	7.86	137.57	6.52	
1981	81.91	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 state of infrastructures of Dhaka city is insufficient enough to shelter the extra migrated population. As a result, the rural people, who live below the poverty line are migrating, particularly, towards Dhaka city, and living in the slums, railway stations and streets. Moreover, they also have limited access to the social and economic system of the city⁷.

4 LINKAGE BETWEEN POVERTY & MIGRATION

A complexity exists in defining the linkage between poverty and migration. This is because, a variety of ways are there in which the relationship between migration and poverty is understood and explained reflecting both the diversity of definitions and understanding of migrants and migration as well as poverty and poverty analyses. In the development theory, the dominant representation of the poor as heterogeneous group is noticeable but in practice they are deprived of reflecting differential access to resource, power and control. In Bangladesh, the livelihood of poor people is shaped by particular set of vulnerabilities in different ways that they are experiencing. Thus, the repertoire of decisions, choices and options that they can pursue are similarly assorted. Although migration remains in centre to many household livelihood strategies, it represents one response to conditions of poverty for some people. Migration is often seen simply as a flight from poverty as no available opportunities are there locally and so, people migrate in order to survive (Skeldon, 2003). Lack of opportunities is a very much affecting factor responsible for migration (e.g. education, health, employment etc.) to lead a better life. This is how, migration creates the conditions that lead the people feeling themselves as poor, which in turn, leads to further migration as they move in order to improve their life and livelihood. The expectation that by moving they will find appropriate employment and enjoy a better standard of living does not always materialise and subsequently, those

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⁷ See Appendix B

poor who are migrating can end up only in the category of the chronically poor. Here, it is very important to understand that the role of migration is in chronic poverty. So, to explore the role of migration in chronic poverty it is very crucial to clarify the characteristics of those who migrate and the seasons, process and consequences of migration for those who are excluded from adopting migration as a livelihood strategy as well as who are forced to migrate as a livelihood strategy.

Chronic Poverty

Lack of access to resource;

Weak or absent capitals; and

Discrimination

Stay put

Migrate

Move out of poverty

Figure 2: Migration and poverty dimension

Source: Adopted from Afsar, 1999

In the most areas, migration appears on balance to bring an improved probability of survival and often an alleviation of poverty. At the same time, exploitation and disruption can be an integral part of the transformations associated with the population movement. Migrants have tendencies to contribute to poverty reduction just as they are susceptible to poverty (Moser, 1996). This process is perhaps, at the root the of most migration, giving the impression that poverty is the driving force but in reality, it is the product of a desire to better oneself against new standards rather than the result of absolute deprivation. Migration is thus, both the creator and the product of poverty. This should have revealed the complexity of the relationship between migration and poverty.

The essence of the whole relationship between poverty and migration can be captured as:

Migration is the oldest action against poverty. It selects those who most want help. It is good for the country to which they go; it helps to break the equilibrium of poverty in the country from which they come. What is the perversity in the human soul that causes people to resist so obvious a good? (Harris, 2002)

5 MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

Internal migration is more prevalent in Bangladesh, apart from international migration. In most of the cases, migration had occurred to improve the economic conditions of the migrants. In most of the times, it does not seem as a successful story for the migrants, especially, for the poor who have migrated from rural to urban area⁸. Migration has been

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⁸ See Appendix C

shown to be a significant component in the development of particular social and revolutionary movements, a theme that remains under-researched (Skeldon, 1987). Many links are there that exist between migration and development that are traditionally being treated as separate policy portfolios viewed increasingly today. While development-oriented actions can help tackling the root causes of migratory flows, migration can, in turn, contribute positively to the development, including economic growth, social empowerment and technological progress. On the other hand, migration can also pose challenges to countries' development efforts unless it is well managed. Such phenomenon as 'brain drain', experienced by a number of developing countries in the key development sectors, call for more cohesive and sustainable policies. Greater partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination as well as the full integration of the migratory dimension in development policies and dialogue on all levels are crucial steps in enhancing the development potential of migration.

Now, most of the people in rural villages are dependent upon off-firm livelihood which is caused by some form of migration. In the earlier periods, most of the migrants from rural areas are young men. However, now-a-days, due to the increasing demand in ready-made garment (RMG) industries in the metropolitan cities, the number of female worker is also increasing respectively. They are contributing greatly to increase to production of the ready-made garment (RMG) industries. This has a great impact on the development of Bangladesh economy. Rural-urban migration could also work as a positive factor to generate greater and diversified employment opportunities through multiplier effects, and can strengthen both material and human capital. While migration can be understood as a strategy out of poverty, no guarantee is there that the strategy will be successful. Immediate challenge remains as a requirement to incorporate an appreciation of the potentially positive role of migration in the poverty reduction programmes (De Haan, 2002; Kothari, 2002). Both low and high socio-economic strata are involved in the ruralurban migration in Bangladesh. For the rich people in the rural areas, migration is a strategy of better educational system, health and economic development whereas, for the poor and improvised people it is a strategy to elevate poverty. Therefore, the linkage between migration and development remains a complex and multidimensional phenomenon.

5.6 CONCLUSION

A combination of push-pull factors has influenced the propensity of migration in Bangladesh. The improvised rural people are being migrated into cities as they are attracted by livelihood opportunities here. In a sense, this has a positive implication. Regardless of their skill, the migrated people get diversified job opportunities at cities. It is very rational to assess here that, in the past three decades both international and internal migration has increased significantly in Bangladesh. In 2007, approximately 4.5 million people have migrated internally, of which 75 percent have moved within rural or urban areas. Over 480000 people have moved from rural to urban areas in that year.

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⁹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2008. Report on sample Vital Registration System, 2007.

The inability to attain a "minimum" level of well-being of humanity is the poverty, the most fundamental economic and social problem. It is therefore, stating the obvious to declare that the reduction, and ultimately, the eradication of poverty must be an important goal for the people on this planet including Bangladesh. Increased attention to the reduction of poverty as the central goal of development has highlighted the requirement for an improved understanding of how policies affect the poor. However, government in the developing countries have an 'urban bias' in their development policies and the policies make benefited a small portion of the population, the city dwellers ignoring the majority of population in the rural areas (Lipton, 1977).

Improvements in mobility, skills, and productivity have helped substantial numbers of households to escape from poverty. However, those are remaining impoverished who are living in the remote areas and unfavourable agricultural environments along with limited access to transport, power and other infrastructure, female-headed households being illiterate and agricultural wage labourer. Rural poor people tend to depend on volatile daily wage incomes, to hold liquid financial and livestock assets as they cannot easily access to land. The employment opportunities in non-agricultural production is needed to be increased in the rural areas which emerged during the diversification process of livelihoods, in addition to traditional agriculture, enabling the poor to escape from poverty.

With respect to policies, there broad types of interventions are important: employment generating (including support for income generating activities which also include access to infrastructures and markets), capability enhancing (support for improvement of human resources including education, training and health services), and motivational (so that people aspire for good life, commit themselves for it and work hard to achieve it) as well as planned supportive activities during natural disaster. An adequate understating of riskpoverty linkage is also 'beneficial' in identifying some of the key micro-level binding constraints to poverty reduction: identifying who are the most vulnerable, as well as what characteristics are correlated with movements in and out of poverty, can yield critical insights for policy makers' (Ajay and Rana, 2005). Thus, to address the reduction of poverty as a goal, public policies should not only highlight poverty alleviation interventions to support those who are identified as the poor ex post, but also the poverty 'prevention' interventions to help those who are poor ex ante, that is, prevent those who are vulnerable to shocks not to fall into poverty. The government should strive to provide social amenities and facilities in the rural areas and also provide jobs for the citizens in the rural areas. Considerable attention and resources should be focused on improving deteriorating condition of rural settlements with a view to alleviating poverty and reducing the spate of the rural-urban migration.

It must be stressed that any design and strategy to improve the urban condition must correspond with similar design and strategy to improve the rural areas as well in order to stamp out the prevalence of the rural-urban migration. In other words, tackling the issues of sustainable development, infrastructural distributions are crucial in improving the rural drift. Without ensuring a balanced development between the rural and urban areas, reduction of poverty will remain a distant dream therefore, the rural-urban migration will be continued. Under these circumstances, the government should be creative in redrawing

and revising policies and programmes that could be helpful not only in reducing poverty but also in the rural-urban migration as well.

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Appendix - A

Name : Rehana Akhter

Age : 27 Sex : Female Family Member : 6

Residential Place: Roadside (Panthapath, Dhaka).

Profession : Maid

Rehana Akhter is a woman of 27 years old. She lives on the roadside of Panthapath, Dhaka city. She has been living for five years in Dhaka city, migrated from Jamalpur district with her husband. They have 4 children. Rehana works as a maid in two houses and earns BDT 3000 per month. Her husband is a rickshaw puller who earns BDT 150 to 200 per day. Rehana has no home as well as no roof, over her head where she is living. In her home district, they had a home, but her husband was not able to afford them. So, they had decided to migrate here in Dhaka city.

Here, they found work but they lost their home. They have become the rootless and destitute people. Rehana and her husband are now able to feed their children. Nevertheless, now they are far away from the fulfillment of other fundamental requirements. In case of sanitation, they need to pay five taka in every term while using public toilet. In addition, the scarcity of water is very frequent affecting them even from disease propensity. Their children go to a free school of a non-government initiative where they have their primary level education. Their life is going on. As they have no savings, Rehana feels insecured about the future of her children. They are unable to provide them expenditure for higher education further. In the rainy season, they suffer most. Sometimes, in the rainy season, they have to pass the whole night without sleeping as heavy rainfall occurs. Rehana says that-'I am always poor; I have no home to live'. They spent all of their money for food and medicine. The price hiking and eviction are making their life more vulnerable day by day. If the expenditure of the daily life increases rapidly, they will stop the schooling of their children and engage themselves in any work for earning otherwise. There is no way for survival, they think. Though the amount of Rehana and her husband's income has been increasing but still, they are unable to fulfil the basic needs of their life. Rehana was born in a poor family where she did not get all her basic needs. Still again, she is poor and could not able to meet her basic needs. From begging to present, she is struggling with multidimensional poverty and she does not know that really she will overcome this situation someday or not.

Appendix - B

Name : Sahadat Hossain

Age : 50
Sex : Male
Family Member : 3
Earning Member :

Place of Residence: Boubazar, Nobinagar.

Place of Residence: Boubazar, Nobinagar.

2

Sahadat sell battle leaf, cigarette and chocolates on the footpath of National Monument. Thirteen years ago, he had migrated to the Nabinagar from Bara, Pabna. Sahadat said that the erosion of Padma River had drowned his house three times. For this natural disaster, he had decided to migrate in any other place. He had chosen Nobinagar as one of his neighbours had already stayed here. Sahadat lives with his wife and one daughter at Boubazar, Nobinagar. Sahadat had three daughters. Two of his daughter had died in their infant age. When Sahadat had been asked about the cause of their death, he said that the eldest daughter died in her five day old, and the second one died in pneumonia when she was 18 months old. Sahadat says about his bad luck that he couldn't save his daughters from death. He also says that he was also unable to look after his pregnant wife and the newborn baby because of his poverty. He had no ability to buy good and nutritious food for her pregnant wife. As a result, she has given birth an ill and weak child. Lack of medical treatment was the cause of the death of her second daughter. He had no economic ability to visit a good physician. He lives in one room home at Boubajar, Nobinagar. There, every three family have to share a common bath and kitchen in that house. The house rent for one room is BDT 1000 per month. He earns BDT 300 to 500 per day. Another story is also there. The footpath business in front of national monument is illegal. The hawkers like Sahadat are doing business here by giving bribe to the staffs BDT 20-30 in amount when they demand. Sometimes, police and army have come to evict them. Sahadat's wife works as a servant in the neighbour's house. She earns BDT 1000 per month. His daughter is sixteen years old. Sahadat has dropped her from school as some boys have continuously teased his daughter on the way of her school. On the other hand, he has no interest to spent money for her daughter's education anymore. Sahadat's wife has been suffering from severe long-term headache. They tried to treat this disease by traditional healing system as they do not prefer to visit a doctor because of huge expense. Sahadat and his family members are living at far behind from the basic needs like education, health, healthy housing facilities like this.

Appendix - C

Name : Manik Mia

Age : 30 Sex : Male

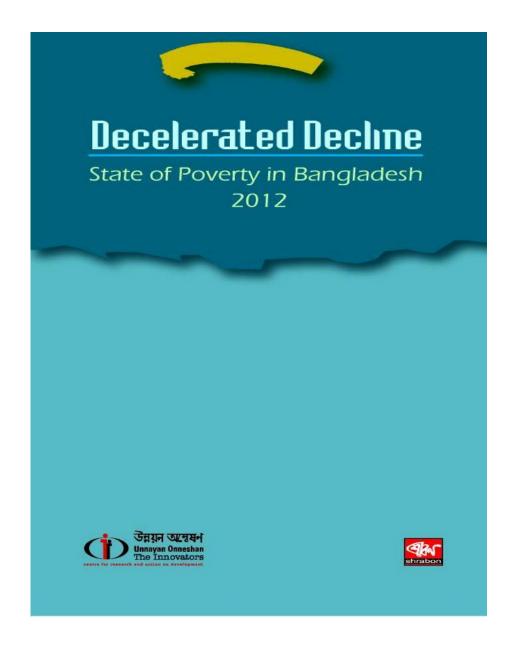
Occupation : Rickshaw puller

Family members : 5 Earning members : 3

Place of Residence: Panthapath

Manik Mia is a rickshaw puller. He is approximately 30 years old. Manik lives with his family on the roadside of Panthapath, Dhaka city. Long time ago, Manik had migrated from Mymensingh to Dhaka. Then, it was his young age, approximately, prior to his 20. River erosion in the banks of Brahmaputra had melted their agricultural land. So, he had decided to migrate here. At present, Manik is living with his family members. Manik's wife, Parveen works as servant in a house adjacent to this road. One of his daughters is selling chocolates near the Panthapath signal. The total income of this family is approximately BDT 8000 per month. They are living here hand to mouth. Manik spent most of his income for food. He also sends some money to his older parents at village. Rice, potato, and pulse are the common menu of meal of their family. Rarely, they eat meat, fish and egg. When he was asked about these foods he said that 'These are the food for the rich people, we are poor so we passed our days by eating rice and pulse'. Manik has two children less than five years of age. It had been noticed that both of them are suffering from malnutrition. They drink water directly from WASA, without purifying it. He memorized about his illness for ten days in the last year. In his word, Due to my illness I was totally unable to drive rickshaw for ten days and in these days, I could not buy food for my family. My wife was also in her 8 month of pregnancy so she also had fired from work. It was a hard time; we had passed our days by taking food one or two times in a day.' At present, government has banned rickshaw from some main roads. Manik feels scared about his future that if government banned rickshaw in all the roads, how he would collect food for his family. According to Manik, there is no guarantee of eating rice three times in a day for the poor people like him. As a citizen of Bangladesh, he has the rights for getting food with others fundamental rights from the state. Manik does not know this and he can't believe this as well. So, the dream with which they have migrated into Dhaka is still elusive.





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