

Feature Development

The Impact of Slums on City Dwellers

by M Kabir



Increased migration putting greater pressure on the city

women and children at health risk but also endanger the urban environment in general.

In addition, as congestion increases, pollution from motorized transportation trends to increase. There are evidences that air pollution, congestion, social disturbances, crime and similar problems also increase disproportionately with city size. The need to dispose of solid wastes become common place problems of the slum dwellers.

Tuberculosis will be increasing among the urban poor as well as infectious diseases which spread easily in crowded and unhealthy housing conditions. Poor housing increases social stress and disruption, domestic abuse, rape, murder and drug use are more common (Chaudhury et al. 1993). Sexually transmitted disease is more likely to spread among the slum dwellers. Women whose health is adversely affected by their environment are much more likely to die as a result of child birth. Pregnancy doubles the risk of death from common diseases which are common among poorly housed and malnourished women. Malnutrition coupled with infections, high fertility and poor sanitary conditions put women in slum at higher risk during pregnancy and child birth (Fronczak, et al. 1993). Lack of access to safe water is inadequate among the slum dwellers. It also a major medium for disease transmission including typhoid, jaundice, cholera and diarrhoea. About 30-40 per cent of the slum dwellers suffer from water born and communicable disease (Aisar 1992). Water borne diseases such as poliomyelitis, malaria, yellow fever are just some of the more commonly known ones.

One major source of urban air pollution is the automobile industries usually situated in or around cities also have an impact on the quality of the environment. Chemical contamination and disposal of toxic wastes are just two elements of the multifaceted problem of industrial pollution. Because lack of proper housing facilities, most of the urban poor live in slums and is the major cause of environmental damage. Open flow of sewerage discharge has been creating health hazards to the slum dwellers. Due to clogging of underground pipes sewerage connections to most of the house are linked with road side drains. The wastes of industries are having cumulative effects on the environment.

The problems of lack of safe shelter, threat of eviction coupled with natural hazards such as floods, fire etc are common in slum. The problems of the slum dwellers are so vast and complex as to seem almost insuperable. Slum settlements arise spontaneously because migrants are determined to survive as individuals and families.

Implications for the Future

The urban poor in Bangladesh is estimated to be about 10 million. By the year 2005 it will be about 15 million. This rapid growth of poor urban population will have many social economic and environmental implications. The fastest growing section of the urban areas are slums. The common feature of slum is that they live in crowded slums and squatter settlements. Lower income group people are mainly employed in informal sectors. Poor families tend to have more children and they suffer from all kinds of pollution and health hazards.

In Dhaka city population growth would be even greater than expected. Dhaka currently has the second highest population growth rate in the world for a large city. Between 1961 and 1991, the population in Dhaka city has increased almost twelve times and could increase 10 times more in next 40 or 50 years to an unimaginable 60 million. Under high fertility scenario, Dhaka's population would be 20 million in the year 2020, more than three times its present size. Under the low fertility scenario, Dhaka's population would be 15 million in 2020. If the present situation continues, it is expected that at least half of the Dhaka city population will live in slum/squatter settlements with little access to basic amenities. For the poor, the main environmental priorities remain improved housing and provision of basic water and sanitation services at affordable costs. This will create many social and environmental hazards to the city dwellers. Demand for housing would be 628000 under high fertility assumption compared 300000 under low fertility assumption. Similarly the demand for water would be 454 million gallon under high scenario as opposed to 351 million under low scenario.

Environment and population are interlinked and mutually dependent systems. The synergistic effects of these two systems have profound consequences on development process at various levels (ESCAP, 1994). The immediate need, therefore, is the formulation of policies and programme from a holistic perspective. Rapid urbanization, particularly the growth of large cities, and the associated problems of urban slums, degraded environment, inadequate health services, unemployment and poverty have emerged among the key socio-economic issues of potentially important political implications in many developing countries (ILO, 1994). Lack of precise knowledge on the sources of environment of slums and squatter settlements, can not of course, be solved by human settlement and environmental policies alone, as they have their roots in poverty and the structures and process that create and maintain it.

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'School's In'

by A M Ahmed

within 2 kilometers or in very inaccessible places. To keep costs low, the buildings are very basic — using concrete pillars and tin or clay-tile roofs. To safeguard students' health, each school will have a tube-well to supply safe drinking water, and a latrine.

Dhekiarum School, Kurigram

One of the first of this new wave of primary schools was in the village of Dhekiarum in Ullupur Thana of Kurigram District. As in other villages, the land for the school has been donated by a local farmer. Abdul Hakim owns only 3.5 acres himself but, recognizing the need in his village, was happy to sign an agreement to give

almost half an acre for the new school.

Dhekiarum also now has a teacher — 32 year old Mahbuba who lives in the village with her husband and daughter. Mahbuba is quite well qualified — having advanced as far as higher secondary school with a total of 12 years education. She will also receive training from RDRS and basic teaching materials.

Education of children is one of the best ways of bringing about development for poor children and poor countries. In northern Bangladesh, many children will benefit from this new programme to provide primary education cheaply and simply. School is 'in' for more poor Bangladeshi children.



Getting ready for school

Political Clouds Obscure the Summit View

by Daniel Nelson

Final preparations are underway of another huge UN conference — the World Summit for Social Development. As usual, reports Gemini News Service, it is not clear whether the get-together will be no more than a talking-shop or whether it will lead to changes in policy and practice.

THE forthcoming UN "Social Summit" initially looked as though it would fail by trying to be all things to all people. Now it is in danger of failing by being nothing to anyone. The UN Children's Fund started the fashion for summitry with its Children's Summit in 1990. In 1992 the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro focused on environment (with development tacked on at the insistence of developing countries). Last year the family planners had their day with a World Population Conference in Cairo.

Children, environment, population — they are fairly clear issues. So is next September's world women's conference in Beijing. But social development? What exactly is it supposed to be about? During the first preparatory meetings it was evident the diplomats and bureaucrats responsible for drawing up the conference declaration were themselves not clear. "There is such a mixed bag of issues under the umbrella of 'social development,'" says Martin Khor of the Malaysia-based Third World Network, "that the Summit process seemed in danger of collapsing under the heavy weight."

The 20:20 initiative

The human development targets, 1995-2005

- Clean water and sanitation
- Family planning services worldwide
- Universal primary healthcare; halving of maternal mortality and moderate malnutrition; elimination of severe malnutrition
- Basic education for all; halving of adult illiteracy

The cost: \$30-40bn

Funding to come from cuts in other expenditure, such as military

The benefit: 'Within 10 years every nation would have reached the basic threshold of development'

The mechanism: Developing countries to earmark 20% of budgets (up from 13% now) to social sectors

Industrialised countries to allocate 20% of foreign aid (up from 7%) to social spending

Prosperity through the Treadle Pump

A Case Study from Aditmari Upazila: Debendranath

Debendranath is 40 years old. Living in East Dolzoi village under Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat district. Debendranath was born in a self-sufficient, small farmer family. As a young boy he attended the local primary school for five years, and as the youngest of a family of seven, he spent his boyhood amidst love and care but as he remembers, with the passage of time, days became harder and harder. After the death of his father in 1974, Debendranath continued to live with three of his elder brothers in a joint family which ultimately broke up eleven years later in 1985.

Socio-economically, Aditmari is a fairly representative area of northern Bangladesh. Located about 12 kilometres northwest of Lalmonirhat town, Aditmari upazila is regularly washed by the mighty Teesta river and is very prone to flood and erosion.

Debendranath's first exposure to the treadle pump technology came when his brother bought a second-hand pumphead from a neighbour. He bought his own pump in 1984 for Taka 335 (\$ 11) including pumphead and installation while he himself provided the bamboo. Unfortunately the pumphead was stolen and later he bought a second pump. In addition to this, he is also sharing water from his brother's pump.

wheat have risen substantially. Tobacco now yields 2.1 t/ha compared to 0.5 or 0.7 t/ha before adopting the pump. Wheat yields have reportedly risen from under 1 t/ha to 2.4 t/ha.

Cropping patterns The main cropping pattern of Debendranath's irrigated land is Aus-T-Aman-tobacco. Seedbeds for China Aus are prepared in the first week of

permitted the introduction of new crops. Wheat can now be grown on medium land Debendranath also grows an astonishing variety of vegetables (cabbage, cauliflower, tomato, potato, carrot, spinach, arid, kangkong). Of these, cabbage has the advantage of being harvested gradually, a few plants at a time, providing a convenient source of cash when needed. The most important change, however, has been the introduction of modern Aus rice. Before adopting the treadle pump, Debendranath grew a direct seeded, local Aus (Palashi) rice which yielded 1.5-2.0 t/ha.



Debendranath

The treadle pump has made it possible to grow a transplanted, modern variety (BR1) which yields 4 t/ha.

Labour use Although Debendranath's wife and eldest son help him operate the treadle pump, he often has to rely on hired labour. Demand for pump labour is highest in the Aus season when Debendranath hires in about 20-25 days of labour. In the rabi season, the pump is operated mainly by family labour. Debendranath



A new means to a better life. Photo-credit — The Treadle Pump-Manual Irrigation for Small Farmers in Bangladesh.

Falgun (15 Feb-15 March) and the seedlings transplanted in the third week. The rice is harvested in mid-June to mid-July. In the Aman season, Debendranath transplants BR11 in the month of Asar (15 June-15 July) and harvests from mid-October to early November. Tobacco is planted after the harvest of T Aman and harvested in early February.

The treadle pump has also

But that is not saying much — certainly not enough for pressure-group leaders such as Khor and the international charity Oxfam. Another controversial proposal for finding cash is the '20:20 formula,' under which developing countries would agree to spend 20 per cent of their budgets on social sectors (instead of 13 per cent at present), and industrialised countries would earmark 20 per cent of their aid budgets for the social sector, rather than the current 7 per cent. The idea has the advantage that no extra money would be required. Instead, additional money could be released by cuts in areas such as defence and debt relief. Its disadvantage is that both developing and industrialised countries resist any policy which tries to tell them how to spend. So the proposal may not make it into the declaration. But even assuming anything worthwhile is agreed in the Summit process, there is another potentially fatal flaw: follow-up. The danger — which dogs all major UN conferences — is clear: without agreement on how decisions are to be implemented, they won't be. While on the resource issue (such as debt relief) there are differences of opinion on the issue of follow-up there appears to be no opinion, commented Chilean Ambassador Juan Somavia, who provided the inspiration of the Summit.