

Social Exclusion and Residential Densification: Implications for Integration of the Urban Poor in Dhaka, Bangladesh^{*}

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Abstract: This paper reviews social exclusion of the urban poor and residential densification, under rapid urbanization of Dhaka, to show how they deprive the urban poor from their access to shelter. While exclusion and densification persist, integration of the urban poor becomes an agenda that this paper addresses in relation to sustainable urban development (SUD). SUD accommodates and maintains a balance among all income groups, in particular, in their access to shelter to live a decent life. Observation based on secondary sources and satellite images, however, shows that this balance is absent now in Dhaka: Exclusion and densification displace the poor from their informal settlements while contributing to the residential consolidation of the non-poor in their formal (planned) settlements. This observation has two site- and city-specific implications respectively, for integration of the urban poor. First, insecurity of land tenure compounded by high-price and scarcity of land renders site-specific interventions in informal settlements, in city core and periphery, unsustainable in the long-term. Second, emergent urban structure and form exclude the urban poor by limiting their life-chances, to earn, learn, and live long. This paper concludes by drawing attention toward poor's integration in society, first, to the need to adopt an equity perspective for integration of the urban poor. Second, to consider planned residential densification—medium-rise and high-density—as an alternative option for the poor's integration to mediate fair distribution of life-sustaining resources.

Keywords: social exclusions, residential densification, integration, urban poor, Dhaka

Introduction

Population density in Bangladesh, estimated 834 per sq. km. during 2001 census, is among the highest in the world that creates heavy pressure on land for living and livelihoods. Proper utilization of land, therefore, attains a top priority in Bangladesh. Under the current trend of urbanization, industrialization, and river erosion, the country is reported losing 1 percent of its arable land, or 82,900 hectares each year (The Daily Star, 01.11.03). Within this trend, the capital city of Dhaka is expanding by 4.5 sq. km. per year (The Daily Star, 02.04.98); consequently, population density increases along side densification of the built environment, especially, residential area to accommodate increasing urban population. As city grows in area and population without due increase in employment opportunities and access to basic

services, social exclusion of the urban poor becomes a reality in Dhaka. While Dhaka continues to grow, how social exclusion and residential densification have contributed to inequality among urban dwellers, especially, in depriving the urban poor from their access to shelter has remained unexamined. Gap in knowledge accompanies lack of policy directives. Existing literature on urbanization and housing in Dhaka in general, and compact cities and townships in particular (Mahtab-uz-Zaman and Lau, 2000; Rashid, 2001), fails to suggest ways in which city ought to address urban poor's integration amidst persistent exclusion and densification.

While this gap at the local level persists, public authorities' conventional urban development task of ensuring employment, shelter, and services to the urban poor attains a 'sustainable development' imperative in the context of the dwindling land resource and prevailing social exclusion in developing countries (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 1996). A concern for sustainable urban development

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(SUD) has arisen initially in the west to address, especially, environmental problems broadly related to excess energy consumption and carbon emissions. The debate generated later in making and managing sustainable urban form—compact city (Jencks et al, 1996)—relates, among others, to the social and economic exclusions it created or would likely to create (Smyth, 1996); social equity effects of compact city later came under critical scrutiny (Burton, 2000). When rapid urbanization in developing countries has been associated with people's unequal access to opportunities and rights (UNCHS, 2001a), few argue that a city ought to be inclusive. Existing wisdom suggests that strategies for achieving social equity, social integration, and social stability are essential underpinnings of sustainable development of a well-functioning urban society (UNCHS, 1996, 422). SUD in Dhaka has a relevance insofar it accommodates and maintains a balance among all income groups, in particular, in their access to shelter to live a decent life.

This paper examines social exclusion and residential densification, during rapid urbanization of Dhaka, to show how they contribute to deprive the urban poor from their access to shelter. This examination contributes to develop a basis, first, for integration of the urban poor in society with reference to the 'intra-generational equity' principle of SUD; second, to search later an option of their 'sustainable shelter'¹, as part of an alternative to the prevailing policy regime that prescribes city expansion without specifying poor's access to land and livelihood. This examination is based on secondary sources; some of their data are dated but are believed to suggest trends that are valid even today. An introduction outlines

the specific topic and question of this article. Next, a brief account on urbanization and urban poverty in Dhaka sets a background to the paper. The following two main sections of this paper examine the nature, extent, and implications of social exclusions and residential densification, during rapid urbanization. This paper concludes by drawing attention toward poor's integration in society in two areas: First, to the need to adopt an equity perspective for integration of the urban poor. Second, to consider planned residential densification—medium-rise and high-density housing—as an alternative option for poor's integration to mediate fair distribution of life-sustaining resources.

Urbanization and Urban Poverty in Dhaka

Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has been undergoing rapid urbanization while Dhaka has always remained the largest city. Urban population in Dhaka has increased from a modest .55 million in 1960 to 9.91 million in 2001. Population in Dhaka has increased due to unabated rural to urban migration and natural increase of its existing population with an attendant aerial expansion of the city. The annual growth rate (AGR) of urban population has always been much higher than the rate of national population. Despite decreasing AGR of urban population and Dhaka since 1981, Dhaka will eventually become one of the top megacities. At present rates of population increase Dhaka City would be the 6th largest mega-city in the world in 2010, with 18.4 million people (UNCHS, 2001b).

Table 1 Population in Bangladesh by Rural and Urban Areas, 1960-2001. (in million)*

Area	1960/61*	1974	1981	1991	2001
Bangladesh	55.22	76.39	89.91	111.45	129.24
Urban	3.11 (5.6)	7.39 (9.7)	14.09 (15.7)	21.56 (19.34)	28.8 (23.39)
Dhaka	0.55	1.61	3.44	6.11	9.91
National AGR	2.26%	2.48%	2.32%	2.01%	1.48%
Urban AGR	5.40%	6.70%	9.20%	4.20%	3.76%
Dhaka AGR	5.20%	9.30%	10.0%	7.10%	--

Note* : Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Source: BBS (2001), Asfar (2000) and Islam et al (1997).

¹ UN-Habitat (2005, 164) defines sustainable shelter that is "environmentally, socially and economically sustainable because it satisfies the Habitat Agenda requirements of adequacy. Its acquisition, retention, and maintenance are affordable by those

who enjoy it. It does not overburden the community with unaffordable costs. Finally, it is located in areas that do not constitute a threat to people or to the environment".

With this rapid increase in urban population, different public authorities have failed to address increasing demands for employment opportunities, adequate housing, and services. A visible manifestation of this failure is the extent in which informal sector flourished and slums and squatter settlements proliferated. According to mid-1980s estimate, 47 percent of Dhaka population lived in informal settlements and 64.6 percent population worked in the informal sector economy (Amin, 1989). A concomitant feature of this rapid urbanization is the presence of a large urban poor population. Among a host of reasons, falling real incomes, rising living costs and lack of access to adequate shelter and basic services contribute to urban poverty. Hardcore urban poverty in Bangladesh, based on Direct Calorie Intake method, has decreased from 25.02 percent to 27.27 percent between 1995-96 and 2000 (BBS, 2003, 38); however, its absolute number increased from 5.24 million to 6.33 million. Urban poverty not only sustained and increased the gap between the rich and poor also widened. Between 1999 and 2004, the urban poor household income fell by 5.34 percent while the non-poor's income increased by 7.96 percent. On the other hand, while per capita income of all urban dwellers registers 14.60 percent increase, the figures between the poor (2.22%) and non-poor (11.54%) remain wide apart (BBS, 2004).

Dhaka has become a socially unjust city, divided in two societies in presence of two economies (Sobhan, 1998). Increases in income disparity between the rich and poor, their asymmetric access to power, and spread of slums and squats are the major outcomes of this premise. While measurable manifestations of inequality are evident, existing urban poverty discourse does not reveal their underlying explanations (Islam, 2004; Sen, 1998). Dominant discourse in Dhaka (Islam et al, 1997; Pernia, 1994; Khundker et al, 1994) follows a 'residual' approach, putting emphasis on identifying 'how many poor there are, where they are, their characteristics etc'. The concepts of 'entitlement' and 'basic needs' hold central position in defining poverty to guide policy directions for poverty reductions (Islam et al, 1997, 30). An assumption that the poverty exists outside socio-economic system characterizes the residual approach; moreover, poor's entitlement failure is not linked to social relations and institutions to explain how they influence as well as reproduce poverty (de Haan and Dubey, 2004). Although poor's deprivation from basic needs are described and quantified, multi-dimensional profile of deprivation is less noted. These profiles once examined would explain the specific position the urban poor have within the observed social divide.

Profiles of Social Exclusion of the Urban Poor

The concept of 'social exclusion' is a useful category to capture the multi-dimensional profiles of deprivation, and the processes and relations that underlie deprivation (de Haan, 1999; Sen, 2000). Literature claims that the term 'social exclusion' as useful for explaining deprivation in developing countries despite it had originated and seen wider application in different European countries. The term denotes the process through which "individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live" (de Haan, 1999). At a functional level, social exclusion denotes a group's or individual's "lack of access to at a level regarded by the wider society to be both normal and appropriate to the key offerings of society – in education, health care, housing and recreational facilities" (Townrow, 1996). Social exclusion, generally speaking, can result either from unforced choices, imposed circumstances or by the attitudes and behaviour of others. Social exclusion is a multivalent phenomenon, manifesting in a variety of ways in different times and places. Madanipour (1998), however, suggests that economic, political, and cultural arenas are the three broad spheres to identify and analyze manifest social exclusion. Next are sketches of social exclusion of the urban poor in Dhaka, manifested during rapid urbanization. Views on relational causation to deprivation in each arena are indicative and not exhaustive.

Exclusion at the Economic Arena

Gainful income opportunities are not available equally in Dhaka like most other major cities in the developing world. Studies have noted that one's social identity, education, and asset base are linked for his/her access to these opportunities. Hossain et al (1999) carried out a survey in 800 households in Dhaka. According to this study, per capita income of Dhaka dwellers has doubled in the last seven years (1991-1998); it rose from US\$ 415 to US\$ 843. However, this increase in per capita income is not homogenous, especially, among slum and non-slum dwellers in Dhaka. Less income from businesses and commerce and fixed assets contributed to half and one-fourth of all disparity respectively. Seeds of (urban) income disparity are embedded in poor people's initial fixed asset disparity. In Dhaka, the lower 50 per cent households control only 7 per cent of all fixed assets in Dhaka. Whereas, the upper 5 per cent households control 40 percent fixed assets. To create earnings from business, commerce and assets, especially in the formal sector, one needs

considerable capital and good education. In this case, formal financial and educational institutions do not favour the poor. On the other hand, the reality of daily subsistence does not allow them to accumulate capital or pursue education beyond the primary level. Dimension of income disparity depends on education, health, and housing. Existing gap between the rich and poor is likely to increase as the urban poor's spending on these fields is very low.

Exclusion at the Political Arena

The urban poor households have failed to receive their fair share of resources despite being a significant section of the city due to their exclusion in the political arena. Age-old formation of an exclusionary class-conscious attitude within the land owning rural elites toward the poor has its trickle down implications to guide present individual behaviour. This attitude encourages patronage distribution for gaining poor's support than treating them fair and square. A pre-existing hierarchy-patronage relationship has been aided further as "neither constitutionally nor through any legislation nor other special act, any provision was made to ensure representation of the poor in the lower [local government] bodies" (Afsar, 2001, 11). Consequently, ruling elite exclude the urban poor from all forms of social and political participation, and benefiting from basic civic amenities. Poor people feels disenfranchised, and withdrew them from participating in any initiatives to solve their problems. A recent report captures this state of withdrawal succinctly, "The urban poor households are pushed into the city, with a very weak sense of identity and belonging. Rates of participation in community activities are very low, with 94% of households not associated with any society or organization. Urban slums are often outside the main stream of governance and long-term strategic development planning. This creates the operational space of exploitation" (CARE-IFPRI, 2001, 2).

Exclusion at the Cultural Arena

Poor rural migrants arrive in a city with little if no education, without a job, and a place to live. They make use of their kin- or region-based social networks to get a foothold in the city. Their rural experience-based values and norms largely influence their adaptation of dwelling in the unplanned and illegal parts of the city. While dwelling, in slums and squatter settlements, their social structure and cultural practices remain different from the mainstream urban society. In terms of education, dress pattern, the structure of belief and superstition, and thought pattern one can notice greater degree of continuity of

rural modes among squatter dwellers. Urban poor living in squatter settlements live a normative life, the breakdown of norms is almost absent among them despite their constrained socio-economic profile (Das, 2000). Associated implications that arise from where they live in and whom they socialize with contribute to their deprivation in different forms.

Whether casual inter-personal interaction or formal job interview, one's identity usually comes first in most cases. Homeless people who are in search of a job, women in particular, have been frequently denied a job for living in the street. On the other hand, homeless people are socially stigmatized. Society imposed an alleged identity on them based on prejudices and class-consciousness. As a result, society deprives the urban poor in general and homeless people in particular from their access to employment, education, and health based on 'who they are' (Ghafur, 2002)

Elite perception of poverty in Bangladesh is homogenous without any 'social distinction'. A recent study notes that elite tend to identify shades of difference in terms of regional or district stereotypes than more meaningful social distinctions (Hossain, 2005, 43). Elite perceive the poor as non-threatening to their interests and well-being, considers above reproach for their poverty who deserve help and assistance. In development practice and governance, these passive and benign views of the poor guide texts in public documents in one way or the other. While the gap between the rich and poor is widening in Bangladesh, absence of social distinction contributes to make ground for 'social cohesion' between the rich and poor. Different studies have suggested that denial of social distinction and call for 'social harmony' or 'cultural solidarity' is an ideological ploy by the ruling elite to maintain their control over resources (Wood, 1994; Arens and van Beurden, 1980). The participatory research has shown that social distinction of the poor in general, and their classification into types in particular, is more beneficial to the poor than to the rich (Nabi et al, 1999, cited in Hossain, 2005).

Implications of Social Exclusions on Poor's Access to Housing

Discrete profiles of exclusion from gainful employment, voice and participation, and identity, in the economic, political, and cultural arenas respectively, attest the multi-dimensionality of deprivation in urban poverty. They have 'constitutive relevance' for deprivation, meaning that they by themselves first cause deprivation, and may later lead to further

deprivations. Full examination of the relational features—causal connections—in each and among them is beyond the scope of this paper. This paper, however, postulates the following implications for the urban poor's exclusion from housing –

- Lack of employment leads to the poor's failure to raise resources to buy or rent a shelter.
- Lack of voices and participation in the public decision-making processes restrict the poor's access to land, finance, and services for shelter construction and consumption.
- Lack of identity contributes to the poor's isolation from the mainstream society to their entrapping in a discriminatory slum sub-culture.

These implications have hindered the urban poor's access to housing in at least two areas. The first area broadly relates to the 'critical imbalance' between housing prices to household income ratio that characterizes housing supply in Dhaka by affecting household's owning and renting houses. Urban poor who have difficulty in affording a minimum acceptable standard shelter typically lie in the 0-50 percentile range. Median household income has increased as high as 85% between 1993 and 1998. Three types of land i.e. highly developed land, developed land, and raw land have increased 7%, 53% and 13% respectively during the same period (UDD, 2000). This higher increase in income apparently decreases land price-to-house ratio. This decrease in ratio, however, means nothing for households within the 0-50 percentile range. On the other hand, a survey by the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) in late 1999 reports about 177 percent increase in house rent in Dhaka in the last ten years (The Daily Star, 10.01.00). During 1998-99, the survey observed the highest 26 percent increase of rent in slums. High land price and rent have been the two critical factors prohibiting the urban poor's access to the urban land and rental market.

These implications, in the second area, make as well

as maintain the urban poor's status as slum dwellers. An individual or a social-group, according to UN-Habitat (2003), becomes slum dwellers if lack(s) any of the followings: access to water and sanitation, living without over-crowding, structural quality of shelter and security of tenure. A recent study, carried out in slums and squatters in Dhaka City, reports that 37.4 percent of city dwellers (3.42 million) live in 5.1 percent of land (3840 acre); 85.4 percent of them are urban poor (CUS et al, 2006). The density has a contrasting profile: 891 person per acre in slums and 121 person per acre in the city.

Social exclusion of the urban poor has enforced their living in slums and earning livelihoods in informal sector as a survival strategy. The poor households' deprivation from access to shelter in turn has excluded them from fair distribution of life sustaining resources to earn, learn, and live a healthy life.

Densification of the Residential Space

Gradual densification of the built environment, with attendant rise in population density, is the other major impact of rapid urbanization in Dhaka. Table 1 shows that in the last fifty years, under rapid urbanization, while the city area has increased sixteen times its population increased twenty four times. These unequal rates of increases create a context of physical densification. Under densification, first, built-up area in a given plot increases with attendant rise in building height and volume; densification taken place within residential areas results in producing more dwelling units. Second, new buildings are constructed in vacant plots or land. Separate but linked to these two categories is a third where water bodies are filled up and open spaces and agricultural lands are developed for land sub-division or future construction; it sets a context for future densification. This section explains the ways in which densification of residential areas affects different income groups, poor and non-poor in particular. It notes deprivation

Table 1: Changing Profiles of Dhaka City 1700-2001 (Area in sq.km)

Year	Dhaka Status	Approximate Area*	Population	Density (per sq.km)
1951	Provincial Capital	85.45	411,279	4,838
1961	Provincial Capital	124.45	718,766	5,796
1974	National Capital	335.79	2,068,353	6,156
1981	National Capital	509.62	3,440,147	6,745
1991	National Capital	1352.87	6,487,459	4,795
2001	National Capital	1352.87	9,910,000	7,324

Note*: In 1991, the area of the Dhaka Statistical Metropolitan Area was increased to 1352.87 sq.km.

Source: BBS (1997, 90).

of the urban poor from their lack of access to shelter and the emerged inequality in access to shelter between the rich and poor as the two most significant implications of densification.

The Nature and Extent of Densification

Dhaka has been undergoing densification due to increasing demands for living and working space. Densification has had different manifestations in not only the old and new (post-1947) parts of Dhaka but also between planned and unplanned (but formal) areas in new Dhaka. The following sub-sections briefly describe the nature and extent of densification in Dhaka.

Increase in Land Coverage and Building Height

Old Dhaka, situated beside Buriganga River, has been the traditional centre of trade, commerce, and industry. Informal sector employment opportunities with the availability of low-rent housing in different parts of old Dhaka have always attracted unskilled poor migrants. Without possibilities of expansion, natural increase of the native old Dhaka population and continued influx of migrants had initiated densification of its physical fabric long ago. Old Dhaka possesses 15 percent of the population living in the city's urbanized area while occupying only 7 percent of the city's gross built-up area (DMDP, 1997). The gross urban density here is 323 person per acre, while in some areas in excess of 2000 person per acre. The indigenous city form of old Dhaka has problems in accommodating modern urban services and amenities like road, water, electricity, gas, and open spaces. Low incomes of a large section of landowners and their inability of housing improvement and maintenance have largely contributed to the deterioration of the existing housing stocks with the subsequent formation of slums. On the other hand, existing buildings on smaller plots with very high land coverage, due to land divisions for inheritance, are growing vertically

well beyond their foundation capacity; these developments, for example in Shankhari Bazaar, proceed despite recent incidents of building collapses with human casualties (Ghafur, 2004). Excessive densification in different localities of old Dhaka, with attendant deterioration of living environment, has entrapped a large section of its lower-income people; while the well-off section has been opting to move out to new Dhaka for better housing and civic amenities (Khatun, 2003).

New Dhaka had started expanding rapidly ever since Dhaka became the provincial capital of the then East Pakistan in 1947. Dhaka—the provincial capital—had to meet increased demands, among others, for housing the government employees, different professionals, and businesspersons. As a response, the government acquired agriculture lands to develop a few planned residential areas for the higher income groups while significant parts of Dhaka remained unplanned. Dhanmondi Residential Area (DRA) is the first of these initiatives, of about 473 acres, which started during the early 1950s by the Dhaka Improvement Trust (now Capital Improvement Authority, RAJUK); 810 plots with an average size of 1,296 sq.m were distributed among the affluent section of society. Gulshan, Banani, Uttara, Baridhara, and Nikunja are the other major planned residential areas developed later by the government during 1960-1990. Among these areas, self-initiated densification has now approaching fast to its saturation in DRA (Figure 1); the ongoing densification process is evident in Uttara (Figure 2). The rate of growth in household numbers and density, i.e. person per sq.km, complements the rate of growth in residential densification, noted in Table 2; this observation suggests that different locality in Dhaka have different pace of densification as indicated in Figure 1 and 2. Old Dhaka, as evident in the case of Sutrapur thana, shows much lower annual growth rate of household increase and density, compared to other thanas during the 1991-1981 inter-census period. While Uttara thana has the highest rates of annual growth followed by Dhanmondi.

Table 2: Selected Thana Household, Density and Annual Growth Rates (AGR) in Dhaka: 1991-1981

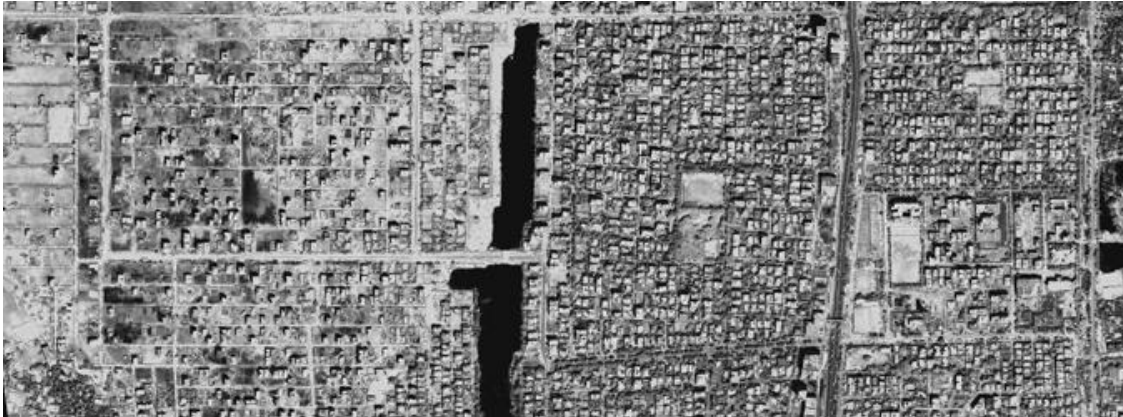
	Sutrapur (Old Dhaka) 4.38 sq.km			Dhanmondi 9.74 sq.km			Mohammadpur 11.65 sq.km			Uttarra 36.91sq.km		
	1991	1981	AGR	1991	1981	AGR	1991	1981	AGR	1991	1981	AGR
Household. Nos.	49,286	46,471	0.59	33,451	20,691	7.08	57,551	36,795	4.57	19,413	7,409	10.11
Density per sq.km	70,202	68,182	0.29	16,881	11,603	5.95	27,142	18,851	3.71	2,928	1,167	9.64

Source: BBS (1993)

Figure 1: A Section of Dhanmondi Residential Area with adjoining unplanned area, 2002



Figure 2: A Section of Uttara Model Town showing ongoing Densification, 2002



Source of Figure 2 and 3: CEGIS

Figure 3: Mohammadpur Locality on the Western Fringe with Adjacent Flood-prone Area – Mid 1970



Source: Sthapattya O Nirman

In DRA, Islam and Khan (1964) note from their survey in 1961 that 72.9% buildings were single storied, 89.1% dwellings were single-family households, and 78.3% dwellings had large lawns. Since then, building density and ground coverage in DRA has increased many folds; a recent survey has found 1166 plots and 37 % of them now have 6-

storied buildings (Majumder, 2004). DRA has a locational advantage in terms of its close proximity to different institutions and civic amenities that led to its densification. Amidst housing shortage in Dhaka city, private sector developer-initiated six-storied apartments transformed DRA into a medium-rise and multi-households area for the high-income groups.

The 6-storey limit is a development control imposed by RAJUK for all planned residential areas. Beyond these areas, developers built apartments are also highly concentrated in the central (unplanned) area, including Iskaton, Shantinagar, Siddheswari and Malibag (Siraj and Alam, 1991). In Dhaka, private developers have constructed around 47,713 apartments in the last twenty years, and at a rate of 4252 apartments per year for the last five years (Seraj, 2005). The demand side of this increasing construction by the private sector developers can be argued linked to the economic prosperity of the rich mentioned earlier.

New Buildings in Vacant Lands

Pockets of land in different parts of Dhaka remain vacant in absence of land use planning. These vacant lands are either government allocated plots for residential and institutional use or land initially acquired for different public institutions. According to an early 1990 estimate, around 500 acres of land remain vacant within the metropolitan city of Dhaka (Das 1992, 142). These unused lands are usually the sites of squatter settlements; in 1988, 29% squatters were located in these public lands. In recent years, there has been a drive of evicting these squatter settlements from the public land without compensation and relocation; the intention is either to regain control over land or for new construction. In cases where new developments are housing, they provide accommodations only to elite, including high government officials and members of the parliament (MPs). Agargaon slum, considered one of the largest in Dhaka with 40,000 people living in 66.66 acres of land, is one of the cases where eviction took place. An estimated 200,000 people had been affected and US\$ 2.5 million worth of property were destroyed in 30 cases of major forced evictions in Dhaka from 1990 to 1992. According to the Coalition of Urban Poor, a local pressure group, 42 squatters were evicted between May and August, 1999. A total of 21,933 families living in 34 of these were affected (different sources cited in Ghafur, 2002). Prior to eviction, many of these squatter settlements were sites of NGO development interventions, especially, in areas of sanitation, education, and micro-finance. NGOs view these evictions as human rights violation and constraints against development.

City Expansion through Land Developments

In Dhaka, public institutions including RAJUK develop land—sites and service schemes—to meet the housing need of an increasing urban population. The land acquired for this purpose is peripheral

agriculture land (Figure 3). RAJUK follows a selection procedure for allocating plots among applicants. Professionals without a house in Dhaka and expatriate Bangladeshis, who would pay in foreign currency, receive preference in the selection. Political affiliation also influences the plot allotment process. Application criterion, as in use today, precludes the urban poor at the out set from applying for failing to provide specific income Tax Identification Number. Failure to take note that the poor do not pay tax restricts an equal opportunity for all. Moreover, poor native old Dhaka applicants complain about their exclusion from applying despite living in over-crowded housing. In reality, RAJUK provides housing plots below market prices to politically influential and higher income groups, and thereby, contribute to urban land market distortions (Chowdhury, 1992). Since early 1980s, the private sector has also been involved in land development for housing in a significant scale. Private sector land developments often take place by violating wetland preservation rules. Illegal *khas* (public) land grabbing is another serious allegation that they are charged with lately; a specially commissioned parliamentary committee has recently revealed that around 6000 acres of *khas* land, located outskirts of Dhaka, are illegally occupied by different vested interest quarters, including land developers (The Daily Star, 04.02.05).

Observations on densification (and city expansion) so far help us reflect on the future projections by the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP, 1997). DMDP has an area of 1528 sq.km. In this projection, population of Dhaka will increase from 7.35 million in 1990 to 15.57 million in 2015. Table 3 shows projected increases in the percentage share of the city population in different areas and the respective development strategy.

Trend in the projection suggests a gradual densification of the established urban area (31,700 acres), by the middle- and high-income groups who could afford buying apartments in the context of high land price. Drop in share of the total city population in the established urban area from 75% to 52% during 1995-2015 implies that the urban poor will be driven out from there due to their lack of affordability. Density will increase from 199 persons per acre in 1990 to 240 ppa (in 2005), to stabilize later at 259 ppa in 2015. But this increase in density is unlikely to accommodate only the rich and powerful. Past trend of physical exclusion—70% people live in only 20% of the total city residential area (Islam, 1988)—is unlikely to improve in the future. Consequently, poor urban households will

either be confined within inner-city slums or displaced from established urban core to peripheral lands. Inner-city slums of the urban poor, meanwhile, might fall in the hands of the developers for redevelopment schemes for the non-poor households. Almost half of the projected increase will take place outside established urban area. This means that future land has to be located outside urban core in urban fringe, new urban and peripheral areas. While the urban poor have been on the move from one place to another, it is difficult to imagine how will they ever get access to land and consolidate their housing permanently, i.e. not benefiting from densification. Their prospect of settling down seems remote as DMDP itself “always assuming that policies and mechanism are in place which ensure the urban poor access to affordable land with secure tenure rights” (DMDP, 1997, 36), which were never there.

Inequality and Deprivation: Implications of Densification

Under densification, urban space in Dhaka has been rearranging steadily with contrasting implications for different income groups. The manifest contrast is evident at the city and dwelling levels. At the city level, urban-core has extended well beyond old Dhaka while fringe has shifted to a newer and distant edge. While city-core densifies and extends, medium- and high-rise multi-household apartments have evolved as well-adapted and accepted housing types for the middle- and high-income groups.

The supply side of the market tends to provide different types of housing for the high-income groups even to an extent of over supply (Nabi et al, 2003). Dhaka’s densification goes on parallel to the growth and spread of these types, but without developments commensurate to the needs of the lower-income groups. At the dwelling level, a transformation of the residential circumstances has been noted. At the advent of the developer-built housing, in a context of high land price, construction costs, and change in urban life-style, typical dwelling unit has become ‘compact’ than before in terms of allocation and utilization of domestic spaces of all but the urban poor. This compact dwelling made possible high-density apartment construction. Because of this compaction-densification, provision and maintenance of several services and facilities like security, elevator, electric generation and garbage collection are now better feasible than before.

As slums and squatter settlements remain invariably single-storied temporary structures and without significant increase in total area over-crowding causes decrease in floor area. Overcrowding in low-income households, besides health hazards, affects students in their academic performances (Farzana, 1996, cited in Begum, 1996, 112). Table 4 shows the trend of how the total floor space available per household has decreased significantly over the years; we should note here that 89 percent of all poor households in Dhaka live in one room (Islam et al, 1997, 205). Not only the poor are affected more by

Table 3. Percentage Share of Total Population of Dhaka City by Location

Location	1990	2005	2015	Development Strategy
Established Urban (pre-1983 urban area)	75	60.5	52.5	Consolidate
Urban Fringe (converted from rural use ,1983-91)	7.5	10	12	Accelerate
New Urban (new developments after 1991)	0.0	14	20	Promote
Peripheral (north and north-west of Dhaka)	17.5	15.5	15.5	Partially enable or otherwise discourage

Source: DMDP (1997, 48)

Table 4: Floor Area (sq.m) per Household in Urban Areas by Income Groups and Time

Income Group	Percentile (Approx.)	1974	1981	1990
High	2	460	280	185
Middle	28	280	185	140
Lower	20	93	74	46
Urban Poor	50	19	9.5	6

Source: UNDP-UNCHS, 1993, 24

the decrease in floor area than others, the rent per square feet they pay is also equal if not higher than others. Nabi et al (2003, 55) report from their study of 991 sample in 20 localities in Dhaka that renting *pucca* house of 801 to 1000 sft cost Tk. 6.6 per sft while Tk. 11.11 per sft. for those less than 100 sft. kutchra house in slums.

Dwellers of different income groups are constantly competing for their places in the city, with outcome either as a benefited land/dwelling owner or as deprived squatting/homeless loser in the process. A two-fold spatial implication of this competition embodies an inequality in access to housing:

First: Involuntary displacement of the urban poor. Low-rise, and high-density informal settlements in Dhaka are reducing in numbers due to state-sponsored evictions to make ways for densification; the evictees then resettle either in the already overcrowded inner-city slums or in the undeveloped peripheral lands. Livability further deteriorates, Iqbal (1994) reports, as locations of the polluting industries overlaps with dense (low-income) residential areas in Dhaka. Eviction deprives the urban poor of their housing rights; dwelling in slums and squatter settlements without access to services deprives them from human development, i.e. ability to earn, learn and live with good health.

Second: Residential consolidation of the non-poor. Gradual densification of the planned and unplanned (but legal) areas, by the private sector developers, tends to favour without exception the higher-income groups. This housing allows them living close to their place of work and consuming available best urban services and utilities like road, electricity, water and gas. Private housing construction and finance sectors have been facilitating this market-led densification by managing construction and providing loans to buy apartments or lands. As a result, Dhaka becomes a city to cater the residential expansion and consolidation of the non-poor.

Discussions on exclusion and densification have two site and city specific implications respectively, for any possible approach toward integration of the urban poor. They are –

- Insecurity of land tenure compounded by high-price and scarcity of land renders site-specific interventions in informal settlements, in core and periphery, uncertain in the long-term.
- Emergent urban structure and form exclude the urban poor by limiting their life-chances, to earn, learn, and live long.

Conclusion

Social exclusion of the urban poor and densification of the built environment are the two key outcomes of rapid urbanization that contribute to the deprivation and inequality among dwellers in Dhaka. Social exclusion and residential densification are not discrete but inter-linked in depriving the urban poor from their access to shelter—known to mediate their abilities to earn, learn, and live healthy. Market-led medium- and high-rise and multi-family apartments—manifest densification—have served well the upper income groups to live along side densification of the city while adapting to the consequent dwelling unit compaction. This trend is likely to continue in the future by maintaining the exclusion of the urban poor from its coverage. Inequality in getting access to shelter has been linked to the ways in which the public and private sector develops and allocates land (and apartments) and provides finance for shelter construction. This inequality persists as housing of the poor and non-poor remain separate.

The way housing of the urban poor and non-poor is discussed now a days has a corollary with the ‘separate spheres’ notion observed in gender discourse in Bangladesh (White, 1992). It is argued that viewing women in their own space is least helpful when they should be positioned in relation to men. As long as housing of the poor and non-poor are slotted in separate spheres, an equitable distribution of limited resources remains distant. Separate spheres in urban housing erode chances of unmasking relational deprivations, augmented by social exclusion and manifested in residential densification.

A way to overcome this inequality in access to land, in particular, would require the urban poor’s integration by taking an equity perspective in relation to the principle of intra-generational equity of SUD. As population increase puts pressure on land, an equity perspective to SUD would have two inter-related objectives: first, to accommodate and maintain a balance among all income groups in their access to ‘sustainable shelter’ to live a decent life; second, to guide eradication of the prevailing exclusions of the urban poor by ensuring their access to ‘sustainable shelter’. Shelter becomes sustainable when it is both adequate and affordable to its occupants. A careful reconsideration of the provision of ‘social housing’ for the poor within the concept of sustainable shelter, adhering to both adequate and affordable notions of shelter, has potentials to mediate fair distribution of life-sustaining resources. Recent post-occupancy evaluation study makes a

case to rethink multi-storey social housing in Dhaka (Ghafur, 2005).

As densification is inevitable under rapid urbanization, future integration of the urban poor from an equity perspective, therefore, has to work through the ways in which densification takes place. It implies acknowledging as well as directing our attention to the following three emerging issues for further research:

- A departure from the conventional interventions in single-storied and high-density slum and squatter settlements, e.g. settlement upgrading, is required. Planned medium-rise high-density housing should guide slum redeveloped for its original tenants as long-term option.
- Indiscriminate eviction has to stop to vacant an illegally occupied land—squatter settlements—for future construction; future construction if deemed necessary for optimum utilization of land should include the urban poor's access to land for medium-rise high-density housing.
- Future allocation of land for the urban poor has not to be in terms of allocating small individual plots but large land conducive for planned medium-rise high-density housing.

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