

**Urbanization, Rural to Urban Migration and The Street Children
in Hazardous Condition: A Case Study in Rajshahi City**

*Salima Sarwar
&
Sadikur Rahman*

**Research Cell
Association for Community Development-ACD**

H-41, Sagarpara, Rajshahi-6100, Bangladesh

Tel.: 880-721-770660 (PABX)

Fax; 880-721-775383

E-mail: rajacd@librabd.net

Keywords: Urbanization. Migration. Street Children. Hazardous.

Abstract

Rural to urban migration in Bangladesh is the key factor of urbanization. As a result the number of street children is increasing in urban areas in alarming rate and they are facing hazardous situation to survive. The findings of this study are that about 70 percent of street children migrated from rural areas and the rest of 25 percent from urban settings. Most of them are adolescent and their types of work are hazardous and temporary in nature. The socio-economic backgrounds of the children are very weak i.e. they came from the lower income group of families. Consequently, this disadvantaged section of children are not properly socialized and thus they are using by the political persons to gain political game and some of them are involved in smuggling, prostitution etc. which are very harmful for them.

1. Introduction

Urbanization is one of the most dramatic global social transformations of the present society. From an overwhelmingly rural dominance in 1900, the world has fast transformed itself into an urban society. Today in the world as a whole the process of urbanization is accelerating rapidly. Bangladesh is one such country.

Bangladesh, a country of 147.960 Sq. km. is one of the most density-populated countries of world. It has a population of 122 million and its per capita income is US \$ 245 (BBS: 1996). Bangladesh suffers from different natural disasters, which affect a large number of populations who are vulnerable to different exploitation.

The recent Asian economic crisis as well as the effect of globalization did not effect Bangladesh directly, but it has affected the local market and on the consumers (Fawzia: 1999). As a result the price of important goods have gone high and the majority population are slowly losing their purchase capacity as their earnings have not been enhanced neither employment situation have been improved. The vast rural areas of Bangladesh do not generate sufficient employment. As there exists a constant battle to survive, migration from rural to urban areas are increasing. But the new economic fields also do not answer to the constant problem or meet the survival needs.

Children under 15 comprise 40% of Bangladesh population of 122 million and among them 16% are less than 5 years. About 5.4 million children work in the formal sector forming 11.3% of the total child labor force (Valerie: 2001). Children working in the non-formal sector are a sizable number and may run into millions (Valerie: 2001). In the non-formal sector many of the children work on the street and they are known as street children. The presence of street children in Bangladesh is the symptomatic of social phenomena of broken families and under development, such as poverty, over population, unemployment and illiteracy. With the escalation of polygamy, remarriage after death or divorce, lack of family responsibility and others, children are forced to the streets. It is clear that most of the street children migrated from rural to urban for various socio-economical causes and they are in a hazardous condition in urban.

In the days of urbanization and the destruction of rural socio-economic condition as well as the polarization of socio-economic condition of rural society, people migrate from the rural to urban internally for the hope of better livelihood option. In this way, the children have been also migrated with his/her family as well as without their family at the various social causes and they level in the city as like floating people and live in hazardous condition. It is needed to find out the state of street children in accordance of their original residence and related circumstances.

2. Area of study and methodology

The area of study was limited in Rajshahi city, a metropolis with about one million people in 93.95 square kilometer. One hundred randomly selected samples were interviewed by trained data collector. Besides, their exclusive case studies were taken meeting and talking several times. Among the sample, age between 10 to 14 years, 80 were male and 20 were female. They were selected from some points in Rajshahi Metropolis. The survey was conducted with an opened structured questionnaire from June to September, 2004. Then sampling were statistically processed by researchers and report was written. Primary and Secondary data were used.

3. Urbanization: Bangladesh Perspective

According to UN projections (1990: 125), the size of the urban population in Bangladesh will be about 100 million by the year 2025. While the size of its urban population draws one's attention, rapidity of the growth of its urban population deserves special emphasis. Urban population in Bangladesh is projected to grow more than 5 times.

Between 1951 and 1974, a consistent definition of urban areas was followed in the censuses of Bangladesh (BBS, 1974; Census Commission, 1961). In 1981, urban places were redefined following the decentralization policy, which was fully implemented all over the country in 1982. The preliminary counts of the 1991 census of Bangladesh show one tenth of the total population of Bangladesh live in municipalities and following Jordan, it may be safely assumed that about one-fifth of its population live in urban areas (BBS, 1991: 10-13 Jordan, 1993: 12).

3.1 Trends and Patterns of Urbanization

From the beginning of 20th century (1901) till 1991, about 21 million people were added to the country's urban population, showing more than 30 fold increase as opposed to only about 3 fold increase (from 28.2 to 88.3 million) or rural population. From the trend of growth of urban population, it may be said that the urban population grew at an annual rate of 1 to 2 percent during the British period and about 4 percent during the Pakistan period, with two noted exceptions.

The rate of urbanization shot up after liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan and subsequent spread of economic and commercial activities in the urban centers. The number of urban centers sprang up from 78 in 1961 to 108 in 1974 and 491 in 1981 (UN, 1981: 24; CUS, 1990:13). Before 1974, there were no million cities in Bangladesh¹. After 1974, Dhaka emerged as the only million cities in Bangladesh and Chittagong joined that rank in 1981. These two cities absorbed a little over a third of the urban population in 1981. Cities having a population of

¹ Using census definitions (Census of Pakistan, 1961, Vol. 2), urban areas with a population of 100,000 or more were regarded as cities.

between 100,000 and a million remained stationary at two between 1901 and 1951 and then rose to 5 in 1974 (from 4 in 1961) and 11 in 1981. Up to 1921, there were no intermediate size towns, having population of between 15,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. In 1921, there were only 5 such towns, which rose to 69 in 1981.

In sharp contrast, even a cursory look at the urban population distribution over the years reveals that much of the increase of the urban population is concentrated in the four major cities of Bangladesh, particularly in recent years. Each of these cities constitutes a part of the four major regions of the country, viz., Dhaka Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi.

3.2 Role of Migration in the Urbanization Process

Across the LDCs of Asia, this has been a consistent acceleration of urbanization and an increase in the tempo of population redistribution from rural to urban areas, since 1970s (Hugo, 1992: 10). It is generally hypothesized that an early stage of development, when the levels of urbanization are low and rates of both urban and rural natural increase are moderately high, net migration will be more important to urban population growth than natural increase. At an intermediate stage of urbanization, natural increase will predominate. At a late stage, with high levels of urbanization and low rates of natural increase, the relationship may be reversed again in favor of net migration (Salas, 1986: 4)

With about one-fifth of its national population living in urban areas, Bangladesh is categorized as a less urbanized country. Yet it shows a very low rate of natural increase of urban population indicating the important contribution of both internal migration and reclassification components towards urban growth. Reclassification of urban areas contributed about a third of the urban growth between 1974 and 1981. Despite that rural-urban migration has been contributing maximum to the urban growth. According to an estimate based on census data of 1974, 52 percent of the total urban populations in Bangladesh were life long residents and the remaining 48 percent were immigrants, mostly from rural areas or smaller towns (Chowdhury, 1982: 34). However found that two-thirds of the urban growth in the 70s is attributable to internal migration and reclassification. According to Richardson's rural-urban migration accounted for 80 and 60 percent respectively to the urban growth for the sixties and seventies (Richardson, 1984). According to 1991 census estimates, rural to urban immigration rate is about 50 percent (BBS, 1992).

Therefore rural-urban migration contributed nearly two-thirds to urban growth between 1981 and 1991. Consequently it is undeniable that it plays most important role in the urbanization process in Bangladesh.

4. Rajshahi City

The Rajshahi City is the headquarters of the Rajshahi division of Bangladesh comprising the northwestern districts. From a small city population of only about 40,000 in 1951 the city has currently grown into the fourth largest city in Bangladesh. Its legal and administrative status has changed over the years paralleling its growth in population and importance in the national urban hierarchy. It became a municipality in 1876, a Municipal Corporation in 1987 and finally a metropolitan City Corporation in 1992. According to census data, the population has grown at about 6.4% per annum over the past decade. At present conservative estimates of population projection for Rajshahi city in the year 2000 is around 0.9 million and over 1 million in the year of 2004. Migration from the rural to City Corporation of Rajshahi is being a regular feature. (SDRC: 1998).

4.1 The Scenario of Children

Migration of rural children is an increasing phenomenon in Bangladesh. It is mainly because of unbalanced development between city and village, growing unemployment or under employment, landlessness and lack of opportunities in the villages. Most of them come from underprivileged families and their family backgrounds are broken and standard of living is low. Employment of migrant children in different types of work in Rajshahi is ever on rise. Every year, thousands of new children are brought into Rajshahi by labor recruiters to supply cheap labor in the carpet factories, domestic service, restaurants and so on. Here the children work and live in the most difficult circumstances and are deprived of their fundamental rights.

In a base line survey of ACD's research cell, it has been observed that, the 11,377 street children of Rajshahi City are working as van drivers, garbage collectors, tempo helpers, tailors, domestic workers, shop assistants; vegetable, fruit, flower and fish sellers, hotel boys etc.

5. Findings

The study findings have shown that 47 per cent of the total children are in the age group 8 – 10, 31 and 22 per cent are in the age group 11 – 12 and 12 – 15 respectively and 80 and 20 per cent are male and female respectively.

According to the family back ground it is observed that among the total street children 68 percent have parents, 28 percent only mothers and 3 percent only fathers and the rest 1 percent have no parents, where 54 percent of the total who have parents have informed that their mothers are housewives and never do outside work. Mothers of 12 percent work as maidservants in others households and messes.

Regarding fathers, 21 percent street children's fathers of 68 are rickshaw or rickshaw-van pullers, 15 are day laborers, 12 are small businessmen, 2 fish

seller and 2 are butchers. Fathers of 8 respondents were older and workless. In the case of original places of the children it is observed that 75 percent children have come from rural areas and the rest 25 percent from other urban areas.

It has been observed that the 43 percent out of the total children would go to school and the rest 57 percent would not go to school. But the 43 percent who would go to school have been dropped out in a time.

The findings have shown that 40 percent of the total children work as binti. They have small and open wicker-baskets to carry on goods on head and the rest 60 percent children are engaged in groundnut, bidi and cigarettes sale; water supply for fish and vegetables markets; ferries of small items; newspaper hawking; scooter-helper; collecting of rejected paper etc.

The children have got work in the city individually, by father, mother, brother, friends or by relatives or neighbors. Where the majority percent have got work without one's help and a remarkable percent by relatives or known any one.

It has been observed from the study that 23 percent and 3 percent children continuously work from 8 to 12 and above 12 hours respectively.

The Street Children are involved in Political Activities and the findings regarding this have shown that 20 percent of the total children take, part in such activities and in the case of the causes of Participation In political Rally or procession, it has been observed that 15 percent of the total participants in political activities do so for money, 15 for snacks or tiffin, 50 for spontaneously, 5 for being forced and the rest 15 percent who join in political activities have not given any answer. About 9 percent informed that they have worked for different parties during hartal or clash. They damage motor vehicle, rickshaws or leaked out tires of rickshaws and even supply pieces of bricks. Sometimes, these floating children have been used to do terrific acts such as setting ablaze. In most cases, they do it for very small amount of money or gifts like chocolates.

The study findings regarding Street Children in Smuggling and Prostitution have shown that 10 percent of children indirectly act with smugglers. One of them says: "He earn double by carrying Indian goods than working as a porter all day long.

Besides, there has been communication and relations between street children and prostitutes. Here 10 respondents acknowledging the relation among them 6 are boys and the rest 4 are girls. They are only 10 to 12 years old.

Out of all the respondents, 35 percent have mentioned that they play in leisure time and about 18 percent of the total have responded that they want to study during leisure period. 53 percent among the respondents get holiday for one day in a week, which is not a specific day of the week. The rest, 47 percent said that

they could not get it. In the holiday they do not get meals for break fast, lunch or dinner.

6. Conclusion

In terms of speed, rapidity and enormity, urbanization in Bangladesh poses the most serious challenge to the country's development planners and policy makers. It is important to provide a comprehensive assessment of the urbanization process in Bangladesh, by examining its scale, growth and patterns, the components of growth, role and patterns of internal migration and its potential contribution to the economic development of the country (Rita: 1993).

After independence, country's urban areas have been acquired more priorities than villages regarding development strategies. Cities and towns have been main attraction for working people. It is the main cause behind migration of rural people to urban. Besides, the other cause is gradual increase of rural population: Only agricultural products cannot able to mitigate over burdened population. In addition, natural calamities like flood, tornado, river erosion etc. and extortion of moneylender are very much existing. And this is the root cause of landlessness.

As people have been moving towards urban just like floodwater, the normalcy in urban lives have been being hampered. Slums have been being increased. Children of these have been being used as "machines" for income.

Though Bangladesh was an important country among 22 others firstly signing UN Charter on child rights on August 03, 1990 and ratifying it since September 02, 1991 but children's basic rights including food, clothes, shelter, medical facilities, education etc. are yet to be realized. The conditions of children are such worse that it deserves no explanation.

The basic objectives for the betterment of societies as well as the poverty-stricken country, Bangladesh should be: Well protection for children's lives and future. This consciousness should be developed in each and every person.

References:

1. Davis, Kingley-1955, "The Origin and growth of Urbanization in the world," *American Journal of Sociology*.
2. Fawzia Karim Firoze "Migration leading to trafficking A scenario of Bangladesh". Workshop report, migrant labor and trafficking of women. Kathmandu, Nepal, 1999.
3. Valerie Jaques (International Expert on Child Counseling) 'Draft Final Report' Arise- BGD/97/028, 2001.
4. United Nations 1991. *World Urbanization prospects 1990-2009*. New York.
5. Rita Afsar 1993 'challenges of urbanization in Bangladesh'. *Challenges of Rural poverty by the year 2010*. Rural Social Science Network's National workshop Publication. Dhaka, 1993.
6. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1978. *Bangladesh Census Report, National Volume, Ministry of Planning, Dhaka*.
7. Bangladesh Bureau of statistics, 1990, *statistical yearbook of Bangladesh, Dhaka*.
8. Bangladesh Bureau at statistics, 1991. *Preliminary report on 1991 census, ministry of planning Dhaka*.
9. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992. *Supplementary No 1 to the preliminary report on population census, 1991. ministry of planning, Dhaka*.
10. *Census of Pakistan, Vol. No.-2. 1961. Pakistan*
11. *Bangladesh Population Census, 1981. Ministry of Planning, Dhaka*.
12. Center for urban studies (CUS), 1990. *The urban poor in Bangladesh, volume 1, comprehensive poor summary report, university of Dhaka*.
13. Jordan. D. 1993. "Urbanization: Bangladesh and Dhaka" *Dhaka metropolitan development planning. UNDP, Habitat, GoB and RAJUK, Dhaka*.
14. Bangladesh Bureau of statistics, 1984. *Statistical yearbook of Bangladesh, Dhaka*.
15. Hugo. G.J. 1992. 'Migration and Rural urban linkages in the ESCAP Region' Paper prepared for Pre. Conference seminar of the Fourth Asia and Pacific Population Conference on 'Migration and Urbanization: Interrelationships with Socioeconomic Development and Evaluating Policy Issues' seoul, Republic of Korea.
16. Salas, R.M. 1986. *The state of world population, United Nation Fund for Population Activities, New York*.
17. Chowdhury, R.H. 1980. *Urbanization in Bangladesh, Center for Urban Studies, University of Dhaka*.
18. Richardsen H.W. 1984. 'Urban Develop in Bangladesh' unpublished manuscript prepared for South Asia Project Department, Urban and Water Supply Division, World Bank.
19. *Social Development of Rajshahi City (SDRC) 1998, Situation Analysis, Rajshahi Healthy City, Rajshahi City Corporation and World Health Organization, Dhaka*.
20. Rahman Sadikur: 2004, *The Situation of Children in Hazard Condition. An Unpublished Article*.

Case Study

Rubel is 13 years old son of a poor family. There are 6 members in his family. They are landless. His father is a day laborer and sometime works as rickshaw/van puller. In the mean time, they had to pay 20,000/- Tk. Dowry for his elder sister's marriage. His father collected all these money from various Somittee / committee but they had to pay back with a lot of interest. And it became a very tough task for his father. He had to work in various houses for earning some money for his family instead of going to school. But, he did not get the due money from the place where he was involved in work rather he was often tortured by his house lord. So, he was bound to leave this work and came at Rajshahi in Search of work. Coming at Rajshahi he starts to work as koolie at Shaheb Bazar area.