

Urbanization AND Climate Refugees: A Study on Some Selected Victims of Dhaka Metropolitan Area

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Introduction

Urbanization and in migration are closely linked. Urbanization process intends to attract people on cities. In some case in migration is expected for economic, social and cultural benefit for cities. Migration is one of the major contributors to urban growth in Bangladesh (Afsar, 2005). But in migrants forced by the climatic disorders who become refugees in cities definitely have an adverse impact on urban socio-economic environment symbolized in the form of increasing the number of urban vulnerable communities who are involved in begging, informal activities, street prostitution and many other socio-economic activities. History of economic development of many countries signifies the emergence of migrants people in the cities for economic growth and urban development. The economic and human development of many states has been associated with population movement over the centuries (Siddiqui, 2005).

According to a report conducted by Association for Climate Refugees (ACR), an organization for and by the climate refugees mentioned that the cyclone Sidr of 2007, Nargis of 2008, Aila of 2009 and Laila of 2010 are the annual extreme events among a number of other hazards. Bangladesh had to endure the entire attack of Sidr while sharing that of Nargis with Myanmar and Aila plus Laila with India. (ACR, 2013) Around one million people have been rendered homeless due to river erosion in the mainland river basins over the last three decades as the mighty Brahmaputra-Jamuna continues to widen due to decrease in its depth for heavy rush of sediments from the upstream and poor erosion management in the downstream (ACR, 2013). The people who become homeless must be prioritized in getting govt. khas land but which is not mentioned in national land use policy. According to sources, National land use policy

exists but it is replete with aspirations and lacks in details actions to be taken (World Bank, 2013). Tidal floods have already badly affected 56% of the 422 *unions* (lowest unit in the local government) of the 48 *upazillas* (sub-districts) in the exposed coastal zone of Bangladesh. This study will represent qualitative analysis on the life and livelihood of some selected victims in migrated in Dhaka for their survivability and focus on the policy implications for addressing the issue in future.

Qualitative Information on Selected Victims

Manik Miah hails from Chatianchar village under Nikly Thana of Kishoregonj District. In his early childhood his parents' houses were destroyed by erosion of Meghna river. His family cannot afford his study. He took the profession of street vendor by selling readymade tea to the visitors specially at Ramna park and Suhrawardy Uddan area. He lives in a mess of a slum in Keranigonj area. He has three kids and wife living in his village home. He poses a semipucca tin shade home which was damaged during last storm surge which cannot be re-built due to monetary crisis. He requires Minimum Tk 10,000 monthly for his family livelihood including basic needs, education costs of their kids. He earns taka 7000/- monthly. He works and dreams for well being of his kids.



Figure 1: Manik Mia at his service

Modhumala is at the age of 75 who begs in different parks of Dhaka city. She along with his only son Abul and his wife live under tents in Suhrawardy Uddyan. They hail from Charmohon under Faridpur. Their homstead were destroyed by river erosion. Moreover, Modhumala was divorced by her husband at her age of 26. She rears her son employing as a canteen boy in a student hall of Dhaka University. She contributed to his sons family by begging. She was noticed to take rice with only korola lunch during interview date.



Figure 2: Modhumala sitting in front of her tent

Rina lives in the tents in a park with three kids at the age of 10, 8 and 4 years. She was not willing to take photographs of her family. Her husband left her along with his kids. She lives by prostitution. Her father had a preece of land in Shariakandi, Bogra which was devoured by river bank erosion of Jamuna. As a result, her family cannot support her. She dreams to rear her children hoping for a better future.

Nur Islam and Monowara are disabled beggarmen couple who lived in a park in Dhaka. They hail from Bakergonj, Barishal. After a cyclone struck in 1991, Monwara was seriously ill and she became handicapped following chronic diseases. As they are physically disabled, they have to hire two little boys to pull their hand pull carts and have to pay Tk. 1000 per month to each boy and supply three meals a day to the boys. They have two kids who live in their village home with his mother in law and continuing study at class nine and six respectively. They think that they are not able to rent a cottage with their income. Sometime they cook food in the park and sometime they buy readymade food from the park.



Figure 3: Nur Islam and Monowara playing games

Habib at the age of 11 hails from Badurgacha village of Dumuria thana under Khulna District. His mother died by a road accident and his father has married again. He left his home as his new mother started torturing him. After the incidence of aila the land of his father was inundated and he faced severe crisis of food and livelihood. One day he quarreled with his mother and left home. He stayed six months in Kamlapur rail station and later shifted to a park and got a job of pulling cart of a disabled beggerman who pays him Tk 900/ per month and give three meals daily. His dreams is to collect capital fund and start the business of tea selling in the park. He is unwilling to live with his father untill his father divorced the women who tortured him.



Figure 4: Habib with pullcart

Shaheb ali and shaheda are happy with their floating lives in public premises. They are happy because they have to pay no money or tax for their accommodation. They have three sons and four daughters who live with them. They hail from Kalika bazar, Fulchhari under Gaibandha district. Shaheb ali lost his house after a seasonal flood which washed away his land by erosion of Dhalshwari river. Since then he along with his family lived in the footpath. He lives on income as a seasonal rickshaw puller. sometime he works in the construction sites as day labourer. Shaheda does not do any work except begging.



Figure 5: Shaheb ali and shaheda

Nuru hails from Vola sleeping on the footpath is an injecting drug user. His habitation was destroyed by erosion followed by coastal storm surge. His family lived in slums near his previous home residence. As he has to live alone he was habituated to drug motivated by some friends. He could not send money to his family during last two months. He does not know how his kids and spouse are. He was repenting for his mistake and hope to return to his normal life for the sake of his family.



Figure 6: Nuru is sleeping on footpath

Zulhas Mia is a rickshaw puller living with his wife and two kids in a street footpath in Dhaka. They came from Shahbajpur, Jamalpur where Zulhas still remembers river bank erosion memory of his early childhood. He mentioned the severe crisis of affordable housing in Dhaka. He told that there can be rented house available with the cost of taka 4000-5000/- but there is no connection of electricity and gas and severe scarcity of water supply where as in footpath they get electricity from street light and water from nearby source and they cook food collecting leaves of trees.



Figure 7: Zulhas Mia with family

Banu is at the age of 45 who hails from Jamalpur who lives in a street footpath with her only son. In her early childhood she saw the destruction of the homestead of her father by erosion of Jamuna river. She works as house maid. Her husband left her and married again. Her son was seriously injured following a serious accident of electrocution. She had to pay taka fifty thousands to save life of her only son. Her son required medicare costs for his treatment and she allows him to beg at the streets. She dreams with his kid to survive and getting a job in future.



Figure 8: Banu Mia with family

Sabur Ali and Sahara Khatun live in a street footpath with bag and baggage. They hail from Bahadurabad, Jamalpur. After cyclone in 1991, they lost their house. Since then they are living in different slums in Dhaka. Now they live comfortably where they have to pay no house rent. Sabur is being noticed to bath on the footpath and his wife is prepared to cook on footpath as well.



Figure 9: Sabur Ali and Sahara Khatun

Policy Implication

All the incidents discussed above pose a direct or indirect functional interrelationship with the climatic disorders. Climate vulnerabilities induce internal migration and urban vulnerabilities. It increases the growth of urban informal sectors. Such type of affected people is involved in urban informal activities and put pressure on urban utility services and tend to make city environment dirty and unclean. Due to the impact of extreme poverty they can be targeted by the miscreants to use them as agents of drug dealings and crime. They may be hired in political violence and other criminal activities too. If the problems of climate vulnerable people could be addressed sustainably at the source level, there is less risks of increasing immigration and urban vulnerabilities.

Impacts of Climate Victims on Urban Socio-economic Activity

Urban informal sector consists thousands of new jobs for the informal people to provide them a challenge to survive which attracts them to migrate to the urban areas. As a result of immigration, the following impacts are immediately visualized in the urban areas:

- It increases the number of street floating people who live inhuman life occupying street footpaths, parks and open space, public land which create an ugly scenario in urban life.
- It tends to urban environmental pollution by dumping wastes, human excreta here and there in the public land, parks and open spaces
- It creates a hazard to the safety of the pedestrian movement as footpaths are occupied by the street floating people
- It creates pressure on the utilities and services including water supply system, gas and electricity, wastes management
- It may have a correlation to increase criminal offences of terrorist activities, illegal weapons and drug dealing, street prostitution
- It induces the risks of gender violation, abuse of the women and children who are the bottom lined vulnerable groups to survive among the climate victims
- It challenges the safety and security of social life of the inhabitants of the city by increasing the number of unskilled people

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been provided to address the issue:

- Climate displacement issue should be resolved in Bangladesh in a right-based approach incorporating housing, land and property rights as a role-model and promote this as an inherent political agenda.
- Housing schemes for the affected people should be launched by the local government of the concerned locations
- Effective training should be provided to the vulnerable people for their rehabilitation and social inclusion for their survivability
- Re-settlement of landless people should be prioritized and it should be facilitated creating self employment.
- Rural poverty eradication and social security should be addressed in sectoral policies.
- Local level Governance should be ensured to implement social development programs successfully in accountable and transparent manner.

Conclusion

There is scope of social and economic mainstreaming of the climate refugees in developmental process considering options of new employment for them as the country is still developing, there is scope for inclusion of their rights in development agenda. It is needed the realization of the political economy to understand the problems, right and equity of the marginalized people as and when one become a climate victim. Institutional and social capacitating is utmost to address urban vulnerability. A little lift to them can lead bigger hands for their life and livelihood to survive as a significant contributor to the humanity.

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