

# Internal migration and the development nexus: the case of Bangladesh

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## SUMMARY

**Existing survey results show that all types of migration have recently increased significantly. Rural to urban migration is the most prevalent form of migration in Bangladesh. A recent study found that nearly two-thirds of emigration from among 62 randomly sampled villages was to urban areas. The figure for rural-rural migration was 10% and was 24% for overseas migration.**

People mostly migrate in order to find better jobs. Rural life is changing fast. People are far less dependent on agriculture and related work. They increasingly depend on off-farm livelihoods, which often involve some form of migration. In many cases this entails moving to urban areas and, indeed, migration accounts for about two-thirds of the urban growth seen in Bangladesh since independence. Most economic migrants to urban areas are young males, but this changed significantly with the recent increase in demand for female labour in the ready-made garment factories of Dhaka and other metropolitan areas. Migrants generally face physical insecurity, poor housing, negative discrimination by officialdom and development programmes at their places of destination. They consequently have poorer health and greater vulnerability compared to the general urban population.

Remittances to rural areas generally boost consumption. They also help to expand business in agricultural products and construction materials. Remittances also helped to generate savings, the major source of capital in the absence of institutional credit on easy terms. Migration and remittances have invigorated the land tenancy market in rural areas. Research has challenged the conventional wisdom that migration transfers rural poverty to urban areas. There is ample evidence that urban immigrant households have improved their incomes since arrival. At the same time, household incomes in rural sending areas have benefited from remittances received from migrant members.

Government policy has on the whole failed to address the reality of a changing rural landscape, rapid urbanisation and the contribution to both by rural-urban economic migration. Some donor policies indirectly address migration issues through capacity development programmes in small and medium sized towns, but there is no focused effort on migration issues. With the exception of UNCHR, no donors are working to protect the interests of internal migrants.

The Coalition for the Urban Poor can be considered the most important pro-poor institution supporting migrants. This coalition of NGOs is actively working to

uphold human rights, protect workers and alleviate urban poverty. Among other pro-poor organisations, the Municipal Development Fund has an important role to play in facilitating decentralisation by developing the technical, fiscal and administrative capabilities of municipalities and establishing a transparent and accountable system of fiscal transfer.

## Recommendations include:

- Greater efforts on the part of government to ensure that its poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) addresses the needs of the migrants, particularly urban poor migrants who often suffer eviction, ill health and other problems associated with vulnerability;
- Efforts to institutionalise remittances such that they fulfil their wider development potential;
- Government policy to address the spatial and regional dimensions for development; flood-prone regions and those with favourable ecosystems must be given priority attention in order to expand labour productivity and provide greater scope for occupational mobility.

Since the PRSP is still being formulated, the following strategies are recommended for effective decentralisation:

- Expand telecommunications and other information technologies to stimulate employment creation and decentralise business.
- Develop infrastructure and communication, particularly efficient and safe transportation, and provide a good standard of social services such as hospitals, schools and colleges.
- Decentralise key decision-making authorities within the political, administrative and financial sectors, and liberalise business practices.
- Modify policies to ensure they reflect the needs of the female labour force in general and migrant women in particular.
- Bring all labour legislation under a new labour code to ensure that all factories provide written employment contracts stipulating working hours and wage rates, overtime hours and rates, holidays, dismissal and retrenchment procedures.
- The Ministry of Labour must monitor and enforce the implementation of the unified labour code.
- Provide *khas* land to NGOs and housing companies to ensure low-cost housing and hostel facilities for migrant factory workers.
- Provide skills training to workers to mitigate the negative impacts of the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement in particular and the competitive nature of the global market in general.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, the landscape of Bangladesh has changed remarkably. Persistent mobility of people questions existing development strategies, which are largely based on sectoral approaches that often ignore this dynamic process. Migration has resumed greater importance as a component of people's livelihood strategies and in shaping the national economy following improvements in markets, communications and transport and access to electricity. The countryside is no longer confined to food production but is now a source of labour for urban areas (Toufique and Turton, 2002). However, the linkages between migration and development are not straightforward. Rural-urban migration is but one discernable force of change amidst growing diversity and complexity in the patterns of migration. In the light of the changes sweeping through rural Bangladesh, the links between migration and development need to be re-examined. There is, however, a dearth of knowledge about the migration-poverty interface in Bangladesh (Chaudhury, 1978; Chaudhury and Curlin, 1975; Islam and Begum, 1983; Krishnan, 1978; Rahman *et al* 1996; Hossain *et al* 1999; Afsar, 1999; Hossain *et al*; 2003a). Government policies can influence the impact of migration on development and poverty reduction. This paper summarises what is known about migration and the policy context in the country to enable DFID to understand and work toward maximising the benefits of migration for poverty reduction and to promote the rights of poor migrants.

### *Objectives and the Structure of the Paper*

The paper aims to review existing policies related to migration in order to examine the relationship between migration and development. In doing so, it examines:

- The patterns and trends of internal migration in Bangladesh
- Profile of migrants
- Labour markets – conditions and entitlements
- Key problems faced by migrants
- Consequences of migration including remittances, migration and poverty and inequality
- Government policies and instruments
- Policies and programmes of international agencies and donors
- Welfare entitlements

- Main pro-poor organisations working to support migrants
- Key policy issues, gaps, drivers of change and recommendations

### *Data and Methods*

The paper draws on findings from a thorough search of published information related to migration, both in printed form and from websites. It makes use of data sets generated by the United Nations (UN), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) on the labour force and migration. Note that migration involves a spectrum of movement – from commuting or temporary absence from the home for a couple of days at a time to seasonal or permanent relocation. This paper focuses on rural-urban migration, which involves both permanent and temporary moves in search of employment (or better employment) and livelihoods.

### *Scale and Determinants of Migration*

Existing estimates from the BBS' 'sample vital registration system' suggest that lifetime internal migration has increased significantly. The proportion of lifetime migrants doubled (from 3.4% to 7.4%) between 1974 and 1982, and reached to 10.2% in 1991 (BBS, 2000). The same statistics show that around 46% of the total migration occurred from rural to rural areas in the 1990s. However, if one examines the migration pattern according to gender, the picture changes. Around 40% of male migrants moved from rural to urban areas and 33.4% from urban to urban areas. In contrast, more than 56% of women migrated from rural to rural areas and 28% from rural to urban areas. These figures indicate the high prevalence of marital migration and intra-district marriage and their influence on rural-urban movement.

The net migration<sup>1</sup> (ie migrants/1000 population) increased dramatically from 1.2 to 16.4 in urban areas between 1984 and 1998. In rural areas too, net migration increased from 1.5 to 4 during the same period, but at a slower pace compared to urban areas (BBS, 2000). Estimates from the Demographic Surveillance System (DSS) of Matlab Thana (Police district) also suggest a high rate of migration to the city; of 63% between 1982 and 1996 (Kuhn, 2000)<sup>2</sup>. Rural to urban migration is undoubtedly the most prevalent form of migration in Bangladesh. From panel data generated from 62 randomly sampled villages in

1 Net migration rate (/000 population) was calculated by deducting emigration from immigration.

2 Matlab is a sub district of Comilla. It lies at the junction of the Dhonogoda and Gumti Rivers, in the flood plain of the Meghna River system. Matlab is the location of the Demographic Surveillance System (DSS) of the International Centre for Health and Population Research (known as ICDDR,B). DSS has collated monthly statistics on birth, death, marriage, divorce and migration for every resident of the 149 villages since 1966.

Bangladesh, Rahman *et al* (1996) found that nearly two-thirds of emigration from rural areas was to urban areas. The figure for rural-rural migration was 10% and was 24% for overseas migration.

As data from the vital registration system suffer from sampling and non-sampling errors (BBS, 2000) their reliability is questionable. This paper therefore relies more on sample surveys to elucidate migration patterns and trends within the country. Although rural-urban migration is the most dominant form of migration, rural to rural migration also occurs. This is especially true for 17 coastal districts where silt deposits in estuaries create small islands or *chars* (Kar and Hossain, 2001). This newly accreted *char* land has been partially brought under direct government control through land-reform legislation<sup>3</sup>. Whilst common lands are typically owned by local patrons and are rarely unclaimed or contested (Jansen, 1987), possession or ownership of the fertile *char* lands are often the subject to violent conflict.

From his study of Matlab Thana, Kuhn (2000) observed that loss of homestead land does not necessarily lead to emigration. Matlab lies in the floodplain of the Meghna River system, and almost all land outside Matlab's densely settled household plots are submerged throughout the flood season. This induces a cycle of debt, which can compel small holders to default on repayments, mortgage their land or foreclose (Jahangir, 1979; Cain, 1978; Kuhn, 2000). However, such debt seldom results in seizure of homestead lands unless the family's local social ties are extremely weak. Even after loss of homestead land, people often take refuge on donated land, or on a wealthier household's unused land; only when social ties are weak and the family has no labour to participate in seasonal migration does it permanently leave the village for the town. Kuhn quotes one such experience (2000):

*"We had no land to live in our village. We stayed in the road for two years. The road was undertaken by water... We had to work for them [other people] although we had nothing in our stomachs, so we decided to come here. If we can earn just 50 Taka<sup>4</sup>, we can manage our food here... We lived in their land. That is why they told us to leave and go to another place like the town. It is their loss to help us."*

The lack of year-round employment in rural areas, or recurrent flooding of coastal and other districts such as in Faridpur, Barisal, Noakhali, Sirajganj can also 'push' people into migration. Surveys in Faridpur and Rajbari districts reveal that almost two-fifths of rural households sent adult members to the nearest towns due to lack of year-round employment (Afsar and Baker, 1999). Recent fieldwork by Toufique (2002) revealed that, in some villages, more than 80% of incomes was derived from outside the village and the phenomenon of 'multi-locational' households – in which members may temporarily reside away from the village in order to secure desirable work – is becoming common. From a survey of 1600 households in Northwest Bangladesh, Hossain, Khan and Seeley

(2003) found that 19% of households, across all wealth groups, migrate in the lean agricultural season and, for about 25% of chronic poor households, seasonal migration is an important livelihood strategy. Whether the factors influencing migration are 'push' or 'pull', migration is not a one-off phenomenon that occurs in a specific place at a fixed time.

Furthermore, apart from seasonal and circular migration, migrants maintain connections with their natal families even when they reside permanently at the place of destination. Panel data from 62 villages led Rahman *et al* (1996) to report that some 20% of households studied had migrant members who lived away from their natal family permanently but took assistance in times of need and provided financial assistance to the family. In the context of limited provision of insurance and social security services, urban-rural cooperation and mutual support are important for both migrants and their natal families.

### **Migration and Urbanisation**

Migration is one of the major contributors to urban growth in Bangladesh. In the past century, the urban population grew by about 35 million, an increase of more than thirty-fold. In contrast, the population of rural areas increased four-fold (from 28.2 million to 103.1 million). Rural areas are still home to most of the total population. Migration accounts for about two-thirds of the urban growth seen in Bangladesh since independence. The proportion of people living in urban areas rose from 6.2% in 1965 to 9.9% in 1975 and reached 25% in 2000 (UN, 2002).

The rate of urbanisation increased sharply after the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistani government, mainly due to the prevailing problems of a war-torn economy including a high rate of inflation, almost zero-level productivity and domestic savings (Hossain, 1990) and deteriorating law and order in rural areas (Chaudhury, 1980). Economic and commercial activities began to spread to urban centres<sup>5</sup>.

To reveal migration patterns and trends we used sex ratios as indicators of emigration or immigration. Cities with a high sex ratio are generally considered to be receivers of migrants and those with lower ratios as sending areas<sup>6</sup>. A closer examination of the BBS data from 1974–1991 reveals the following trends (Afsar, 2001b) (see Figure 1, p.14):

1. There is a positive correlation between higher sex ratio and higher urban growth for all metropolitan cities. A high sex ratio suggests that more men than women migrated to these cities. The migration was likely to be temporary, as the men seldom migrated with their families. Over time, however, the sex ratio became more balanced because women began to migrate to urban areas independently, largely as a result of the boom in the mid-1980s in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry<sup>7</sup>. Chittagong had the highest sex ratio, of 155, in 1974, which declined to 119 in 2001. Sex ratios for Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi also fell to 123, 112 and 110 respectively in 2001.
2. Among cities with populations of 100,000 or

3 In 1972, all *char* land was under government disposal but, in 1984, it was made conditional. A clause was added through which the government could transfer land to its original owner or heirs if the lost land re-emerged within 30 years.

4 Approximately US\$0.83 at a conversion rate of US\$ 1 = Taka 60

5 Dhaka alone accounts for nearly half of the country's total employment in manufacturing and textiles, almost all rubber products, publishing, furniture and not quite 75% of jobs in footwear, leather goods and electrical machinery (UN, 1987).

6 Places that have low sex ratios are generally marked by greater male emigration. With women's immigration, the sex ratio becomes more balanced. Thus, sex ratios indicate the gender balance in a population, migration patterns and a city's sending and receiving potential.

7 After 9/11, and the resulting economic downturn in the US and the rest of the world, exports of RMG have declined. Around 300–400 factories were shut down and thousands of female workers were laid off. In 2005, when the GST and Multi-Fibre Agreement cease for Bangladesh, more women are likely to lose their jobs. Note that the RMG sector provided jobs to millions of landless rural women who migrated to Dhaka for employment.

**TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT VIS-À-VIS THEIR COMPARATORS**

Characteristics	Internal Migrants and members of Comparator Groups
Age	Household surveys at destination show that 75% of temporary, 50% of permanent and 33% of non-migrants of Dhaka city were 15 to 34 years of age. Of the female labour force in RMG factories, 90% were under 30 years of age.
Marital Status	Almost 90% of permanent migrants and non-migrants were married at the time of the survey. In contrast, nearly half of temporary migrants were never married. For female workers, almost half were never married and less than 10% were divorced/widowed or separated; the remainder were married. Among the extreme poor, the divorced and widowed women were more likely to migrate.
Gender	The RMG sector absorbed more than 1.5 million workers in the mid-1990s of which 70% were women and more than 90% were migrants. In other industries such as food processing, pharmaceuticals and electronics, migrants constitute about half of the work force and the gender ratio is almost balanced.
Socio-economic Background	Generally it is the landless who migrate as they have nothing to lose and, at the other end, are those who have enough resources to take the risk. Thus 3/4 of women and 2/3 of men working in RMG factories were functionally landless. Migrants to slums had only one year of schooling and were predominantly engaged as agricultural workers prior to migration. On average, a non-poor migrant had 8 years' education and they migrated mainly to give their children a better education. The extreme poor and destitute also migrated to earn money for survival in a situation of social exclusion and having little or no supportive networks.

Sources: Afsar, 2000; Afsar, 2001a; Hossain et al 2003a

more, a higher sex-ratio is found in those that experienced higher urban growth e.g. Sylhet, Narsingdhi, Naogaon, Bogra, Rangpur and Jessore, etc. and have better industrial development and trading opportunities e.g. Narsingdhi and Sylhet. Cities that experienced slow or lower urban growth rates e.g. Saidpur, Jamalpur, Pabna and Tangail are marked by a comparatively lower sex ratio. However, there are some exceptions, such as Barisal, which has a high sex ratio, and Nawabganj, which has a low sex ratio. Note that the overall sex ratio might not reflect the actual situation if not disaggregated by age group.<sup>8</sup>

- There is a close relationship between rapid urbanisation and significant demographic change. For example, Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Narsingdhi, Sylhet, Comilla and Jessore, which urbanised rapidly, also show high sex ratios and the highest proportion of population of an active age. These cities benefited either from industrial and/or trans-border informal trade, or high agricultural growth.

### Profile of Migrants

Migrants are predominantly young adults from low-income families. But the traditional picture of young males leaving their villages to find work to support their families is changing as more and more women join their ranks and, increasingly, migrants are more informed about job opportunities at work destinations. Table 1 presents a profile of the typical migrant and includes, wherever possible, comparisons with non-migrants, male and female migrants and slum and non-slum groups.

### Labour Markets: Conditions and Entitlements

Studies on internal migration clearly demonstrated that greater job opportunities in the cities and metropolitan

areas 'pulled' migrants from rural areas (Skeldon, 1997; Hugo, 1991; Afsar, 1999, 2000b). Table 4 (p.15) shows that around half of the poor migrants who arrived in Dhaka city had been agricultural labourers. Existing estimates suggest that the growth of agricultural income was less than 1% as opposed to nearly 6% annual growth of non-agricultural income between 1988 and 1995 (Hossain et al, 2002). As a result, rural landless agricultural workers had little incentive to remain in agriculture. Instead they chose to migrate to nearby towns or district towns or cities in search of more remunerative non-agricultural jobs. It is important to examine whether they get more remunerative jobs after migration or end up swelling the ranks of unemployed in the urban labour market as predicted by Todaro (1980). Rural poor migrants to Dhaka city generally settle in slum and squatter settlements and three out of every five find work within one week of arriving (Afsar, 1999). Prior to migration, this group invested their time and energy to contact kin, friends and neighbours in Dhaka city. As a result, three-quarters of these migrants secured their first job with the help of their social networks and one-third of them had information about the job prior to arrival. From their longitudinal study on Dhaka City, Hossain et al (1999) estimated that the unemployment rate for active-age members of migrants' households was 4%; this doubled for non-migrant age cohorts. Moreover, the unemployment rate is smaller in the case of recent migrants compared with long-term migrants. Given the fact that poor migrants can hardly afford to remain unemployed, one must go far beyond unemployment data to examine the impacts of migration on poverty. However, for those who live on the edge of extreme poverty in rural areas, migration to nearby towns may give them temporary relief from unemployment.<sup>9</sup>

Table 2 shows the existing labour entitlements for formal sector workers; informal sector workers

<sup>8</sup> Districts such as Barisal, Comilla, Dhaka, Faridpur and Mymensingh had low sex ratios for the 15–34 age cohorts as they consistently sent migrants to Dhaka city.

<sup>9</sup> For an interesting insight on extremely poor migrant's stories, please refer to Hossain et al, 2003a.

**TABLE 2: LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS AND ENTITLEMENTS IN THE FORMAL SECTOR**

Workers' category	Income (Monthly)		Working hours	Paid leave and other entitlements	Factory conditions
	Wage	Others*			
<b>Skilled/RMG</b>					
Male	2000	500	11.1	Nearly 2/3rd of workers do not receive appointment letters. 1/5th and 1/3rd male and female workers had salary cuts for taking sick leave <sup>10</sup> . More than 1/3rd also do not enjoy maternity leave **	Factories generally lack adequate lighting, ventilation and washing facilities, canteen and safe drinking water. Rooms are crowded. Average users per toilet is 81 and 40 for female and male workers.
Female	1800	500	10.8		
	Remarks: delayed, irregular payment and severe penalties for coming late***		Remarks: 30/45 minutes lunch break		
<b>Other Manufacturing</b>					
Male	2800	–	6.5	Hired on regular basis. 90% of women workers demanded paid leave for effective combination of productive and child-care responsibilities	Ventilation, safe water and toilet facilities in most factories are not much better than in RMG factories (except for a few pharmaceutical and electronic factories)
Female	2300	–	6.0		
	Remarks: not much problem in payment		No shift duty in general		

\* Others include overtime and bonus

\*\* A recent BIDS study generated this finding. However getting maternity leave is rare and one-third of the respondents considered it their top priority in the same survey. Moreover, whether they enjoyed 12 weeks leave before and after the delivery as stipulated under the Maternity Benefit Act of 1950 is doubtful since more than 80% are unaware of existing labour laws in Bangladesh.

\*\*\* Whether late for 10 minutes or an hour, the consequence is loss of a full day's pay.

enjoy no such provision. Low and irregular payment of wages is so rampant even in the formal sector, that nearly half of the RMG sector workers leave their jobs for this particular reason. Note that even after controlling for all-important variables (age, education, skills, experience), the income difference between the male and female RMG workers remains at a quarter (Zohir and Paul-Majumder, 1996). Had they not migrated, these women would have remained either unemployed or underemployed. The scope for wage employment is extremely limited in rural areas and this is particularly true for women. Only around one-tenth of the rural labour force is engaged as employees and around one-quarter (34% men and 20% men) as day labourers (BBS, 2002). Moreover the proportion of underemployed (those who worked for less than 35 hours in the reference week) is estimated at 6.5 million. In other words, 16.6% of the total employed populations are underemployed of which 80% live in rural areas and 66% of them are women.

### Problems of Migrants

The main problems that migrants face concern lack of low cost housing, physical insecurity, skewed distribution of the delivery of basic services and subsequent health problems. More than half (53%) of poor migrants live in private slums and 44% squat on public land with about 14 square metres space for a family of average five members or 2.7 square metres per capita space, which increases almost six times for a non-slum resident. Although poor migrants eventually improve their living spaces, for example replacing thatched roofs with corrugated iron sheets for better protection from cold and rain, living in such conditions give rise to many health problems, particularly given the combination of mud floors, flimsy walls, heat and humidity and

torrential monsoon rains (Afsar, 1999). Worse still are the health and environmental risks associated with poor access to water and sanitation services, which determine health and environmental safety. Nearly three-quarters of slum dwellers depend largely on outside water taps, which are shared by 5-6 families. To fetch water for drinking and cooking, a female slum resident must travel an average distance of 69 m daily, adding to her workload and affecting her health and productivity. Nearly 90% of the slum dwellers use hanging and other types of non-sanitary toilets in Dhaka city, whereas 90% of non-slum residents have modern toilets and 25% of households in small and medium towns have septic tanks.

Morbidity rate is estimated at 52% for slum dwellers and 42% for a female worker in a garment factory (Afsar, 1999). Around one-fifth of female garment factory workers also suffer from sexually transmitted diseases (Afsar, 2001 and Paul-Majumder, 1998). Women are the major victims of deteriorating law and order and the resulting human rights violations. Lack of safe, affordable transportation, inexpensive one-stop treatment and medical facilities increases women's vulnerability. Institutions providing childcare, health care and boarding facilities at affordable prices are rare even in the capital city, and much less so in other cities and towns. Policy makers and planners need to address the dearth of affordable services and to strengthen institutions that will support their emergence and maintenance. Hossain, Khan and Seeley (2003) also found that problems of accommodation, sickness and disease, robbery and physical harassment loom large for seasonal migrants at destination. The experience of one migrant – Nuru – is one example.

*Nuru is 18 years old. He works as a day labourer, sometimes excavating soil. A year ago, he moved to Cox's Bazaar with a work crew. There, the work*

<sup>10</sup> According to existing labour laws, a factory employee is entitled to have: i) an hour's break or two half-hour breaks after working for 6 hours at a stretch; ii) 10 to 20 days casual leave; iii) 14 days annual leave, and iv) sick and medical leave. Such laws also stipulates that any factory/establishment employing fewer than 1000 persons must pay wages within 7 days after the expiry of the wage period.

*leader secured a seven-day contract for road construction. After finishing seven days' work they believed that they had completed the contract as agreed: however, they received only three days' wages. When Nuru protested, the contractors threatened to kill him. Nuru has faced various other hardships as a migrant worker. For example, he was once forced to resort to sheltering on the verandah of a primary school when he could not find any other accommodation.*

Worse still is the constant threat of eviction. Squatter settlements are formed with the help of muscle power, strong social networks built on kinship ties and district-based affinities and with the patronage of political leaders. Government authorities and vested interests have made several attempts to evict squatters from most of the large settlements in Dhaka. However, forced eviction is contrary to the 1996 Habitat Agenda, to which the government is a signatory, and violates Article 11 of the Constitution, which guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms to all citizens.<sup>11</sup> The recent attempted eviction by government authorities of squatters in Agargoan and other settlements surpassed all previous records of violence. Here the mastaans (muscle men) raped women and men were mercilessly beaten by police; squatters had no alternative but to leave. On top of the trauma of violent treatment, such eviction creates serious job displacement problems, particularly for women, and increases their insecurity. In their rich documentation of case studies, Hossain, Khan and Seeley (2003) showed how poor migrants are treated as outsiders, deprived from entitlements and denied justice at the place of destination.

### Consequences of Migration

The consequences of internal migration remain unclear. They are influenced by a range of factors including gender, space, time, migration context and the strength of social capital among migrants. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that migration provides material benefits for migrants and their families. It is difficult to prepare cost-benefit analyses from existing studies on internal migration as they seldom provide data on costs.

However, Kuhn's qualitative study (2000) provides some insights. It indicated that the costs of a long weekend sojourn from Dhaka to Barisal Division could be around Taka 500. Added to the income loss of around Taka 100 per day, a four-day trip can consume more than 30% of a month's potential earnings. While travel costs and opportunity costs of internal migration depend on the distance between origin and destination and types of job, it ultimately also depends on the strength of migrants' social capital at destination and origin. Active support and cooperation from social contacts at destination minimise the costs of moving. Three in five permanent migrants, irrespective of whether they are slum or non-slum dwelling, and one in two temporary migrants received wide ranging assistance, which included free or rented accommodation, help in finding jobs, financial help etc (Afsar, 2000).

Nor do such studies usually cover the migrants' places of origin and destination, which is necessary to prepare cost-benefit analyses. Furthermore, according to Hugo: "remittances do not represent the total economic losses or benefits in areas of origin since such elements as transmission of skills, status and experience, flow of ideas, loss of economic and political leaders and social disruption can influence development in the area of origin". In addition, second and third round multiplier effects are often neglected in the impact of internal migration literature in the country.

### Remittances

Remittances from internal migration are difficult to estimate due to the importance of in-kind transfer. In addition to the standard problems of measurement, it is also difficult to separate the contribution of internal migration from international migration since a sending household often has different types of migrant members.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, a one-off household survey is often not conducive to measuring the 'safety-net' impacts of remittances. Generally, panel data and in-depth interviews are needed to capture the role of remittances as a security back-up. Following some estimates, it is argued that rural-urban remittances range around 12–15% of the rural income for Asia and Africa. Among a random sample of older Matlab residents (50+) in 1996, Kuhn estimated that the net transfer from sons living in urban or overseas destination accounted for 18% of the total income for all households and 27% for migrant sending households. Estimates from destination suggest that temporary migrants send around 40% of their urban incomes to rural households, which increases to 64% for married migrants but declines to 27% in the case of unmarried ones (Afsar, 2000a). Given that a married temporary migrant had left his spouse and children at the place of origin, this variation in size of remittances is understandable. However the opposite holds in the case of garment factory workers as the younger, never married and recent migrant among them send more remittances than older, ever-married and long-term migrants (Afsar, 2001a). The intensity of social ties and the types of responsibilities that migrants bear at origin and destination influence remittances (Table 5, p.16). For example, sons who lived in the city with their conjugal families contributed less than their siblings who lived alone in the city (Frankenberg and Kuhn, 2001).

In Bangladesh, like in many other developing countries, migrants' households in rural areas use remittances predominantly (from internal migration) for consumption. Existing evidence suggests that consumption expenditure alone constituted between 80% and 90% of the remittances. In a country like Bangladesh, where half of rural households live below the poverty line, priorities on consumption expenditure can be viewed as consonant with 'basic needs' approach to development; without this the situation of families of migrants would have been worse off (Afsar, 2000b). It is also argued that increased consumption expenditure by migrant households can trigger investment by other households or firms

11 Article 11 of the Constitution states: 'The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for dignity and the worth of the human person shall be guaranteed'. The Habitat Agenda 1996 (para 49 (n)) declares: 'We (governments) further commit ourselves to the objectives of: protecting all people from and providing legal protection and redress for forced evictions that are contrary to the law, taking human rights into consideration; when evictions are unavoidable, ensuring, as appropriate, that alternative suitable solutions are provided'.  
12 Such as recall bias and the tendency to under-report income.

to meet this demand, which may create income multipliers in migrant-source economies (Taylor, 1999). Existing estimates from panel data on rural households (Hossain *et al* 2002) suggest that remittances contributed 12.8% to the household income and that a 10% increase in income would lead to 6.5% increase in the demand for food items. These include mainly vegetables, fruits, fisheries and livestock, indicating stronger potential for the expansion of market for rural processing, storage, trade and transportation activities.

They also estimated that trade and business enterprises accounted for 22% of the rural non-farm (RNF) employment and nearly 43% of the income generated from the RNF sector between 1987 and 2000. Nearly three-fifths of these enterprises were agriculture related. The remainder were involved in construction materials, transport, garment, grocery, suggesting the spread of employment and income generating opportunities, a probable multiplier effect of remittances that needs to be confirmed through further research.<sup>13</sup> From the existing data, we can say only that savings and funding from friends and relatives constituted around four-fifths of the initial capital invested in those enterprises. Future research must address how much of the savings are generated from the remittances. However, existing estimates (Hossain *et al* 2003b) also suggest that income gains from business are the most unequally distributed source of income, followed by services and non-rice agriculture, benefiting the higher income groups more than others.

House repairs, including extensions, building a new room and replacing thatch with corrugated iron roofing sheets, also consumes a significant proportion of remittances. Investment in housing not only helps to expand business in construction materials but also gives rural families protection from natural calamities. In addition, it yields production and storage benefits. Next comes education: around 40% of temporary migrants' families also used remittances to educate children and treat sick members. Existing studies (Afsar, 2001b) reveal that remitters among RMG workers, predominantly sent money directly for family maintenance and education of siblings. School enrolment rates among members of migrants' families in rural areas is greater compared with age cohorts of non-migrant families (Rahman *et al* 1996).<sup>14</sup> Productive use of remittances to purchase irrigation equipment, to establish shops and other businesses also show up in survey data and case studies (Kuhn, 2000).

### **Migration and poverty**

Land-poor households in the 1990s are much less dependent on the agricultural labour market. From panel data, Hossain *et al* (2003b) estimated that the proportion of agricultural workers was halved between 1987 and 2000, due to greater employment opportunities generated in the rural non-farm sector. A new 'class' of people has emerged in rural areas, which depends more on physical and human capital than on land and manual labour. As a result, the

incidence of tenancy has increased, thus providing additional access to land for land-poor households. According to Hossain *et al* 2002:

*Most of the tenants are small landowners who find it economical to rent land to increase the capacity-use of the farm establishment. Nearly 47% of the tenanted land was operated by households owning less than 0.2 hectare and another 40% by households owning 0.2 to 1.0 hectare.*

Rural-urban migration stimulated land tenancy. From their panel data, Hossain *et al* (2002) observed that, in rural areas, 1.3% of the owned land was sold, compared with 1.7% of owned land in 1987/88; land purchase was reported at 2% in 1999/00. The higher incidence of land purchase compared to land sale indicates the important contribution of rural-urban migration to the land market in a land-scarce country. By purchasing rural land, urban settlers become absentee landowners, making tenancy arrangements with relatives to cultivate their land.

Subsequently, some important structural changes can be observed with regard to household income during the reference period. Income from agriculture declined from 59% to 44%, whilst income from trade, services and remittances increased from 35% in 1987/88 to 49% in 1999/00. Hossain *et al* (2002) also observed that the most dramatic increase has been in the share of remittances from relatives who migrated to cities and overseas. The proportion of households receiving remittances in 1999/00 was 21%, almost double the 11% of such households in 1987/88. The contribution of remittances to household income has increased significantly from 7.3% to 12.8% over the period, registering 8.1% annual growth when per capita income grew at 3.2%. Thus, not only have rural households adopted emigration to urban areas as a livelihoods strategy, but rural-urban migration is an increasingly important means of diversifying household and rural economies.<sup>15</sup> Landless and land-poor farmers have left the agricultural labour market for tenancies, wage labour in trade and business enterprises, rickshaw pulling and other manual non-agricultural activities. Members of medium and large landowning households – with correspondingly larger endowments of human and physical capital – switched from cultivating their own farms to services and business. As a result, the proportion of poor people dropped to 43% in 2000 from 59% in 1988, a reduction of 1.2% per year. There is no direct estimate of the contribution of remittances to poverty alleviation but, indirectly, some conjecture can be made in this regard.

From initial estimates in four types of agro-ecological zones, Hossain *et al* (2003b) found that coastal areas had the lowest levels of poverty in 1987 and the most speedy deceleration in 2000. The next poorest zone was drought prone areas, whilst both flood prone and favourable areas had higher levels of poverty and made least progress in poverty reduction over time.<sup>16</sup> In coastal regions, Hossain *et al* (2003b) observed that the amount of land under tenancy was substantially higher (58%) than in other regions (33%).

13 Agricultural productivity itself might have stimulated the rural non-farm sector through linkage effects (Mellor, 1976; Haggblade *et al* 2002). Drawing on data from selected Asian countries, Haggblade *et al* (2002) found that for each dollar increase in agricultural value added, an additional \$0.50 to \$1.0 income is generated in the non-farm sector. Given that there is growing scarcity of labour and the spread of power-operated threshers in rural farms in Bangladesh, one may be tempted to link migration and agricultural productivity.

14 From household income and expenditure data generated by BBS, Hossain *et al* (2002) calculated that a 10% increase in rural income is likely to increase the demand for education, transport, recreation and housing services by 20%, 17%, 23% and around 12% respectively, indicating a probable second and third generation multiplier effects of remittances.

15 The share of non-agriculture to household income has also increased from 30.6% to 40.8% for the bottom 40% of the households in the per capita income scale, and more than 50% for all other income categories during the reference period (Hossain *et al* 2002).

16 In this study, 62 nationally representative sample villages were drawn from 57 districts (for details please refer to Hossain *et al* 2003b). Using geographical location as the primary indicator, they included villages from Cox's Bazaar, Noakhali, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barisal, Pirojpur, Bagerhat, Satkhira and Khulna districts under 'coastal ecosystem'. They classified villages that have most of their land not flooded during monsoon and that generally receive low rainfall from Jessore, Kushtia, Rajshahi and Dinajpur districts as 'drought-prone' regions. In villages where most of the land is flooded at a depth of 50 cm (knee-deep according to farmers' reporting) during the entire monsoon season were classified as 'flood-prone' and the remaining areas classified as 'favourable ecosystems'. The level of poverty in the respective regions was estimated at 31.9%, 44.7%, 45.4% and 43.9% in 2000, compared with 54.8%, 64.4%, 60% and 57.3% in 1987 (Hossain *et al* 2003b).

This, and the fact that remittances account for 20% of household incomes in the region, clearly indicates a very high level of emigration. This shows the significant contribution that migration and remittances make to poverty alleviation, and the need for more rigorous estimation. Improving livelihoods now depends more on diversified agriculture and non-agriculture sectors and better quality of human capital even in rural areas; and the coastal areas outperformed all other regions with respect to income growth on both these accounts.<sup>17</sup> The flood-prone and drought-prone areas ranked the second and the third, while performance was poor in favourable ecosystems (Hossain *et al* 2003b). The coastal region was also endowed with better-educated workers than other regions. Overall, Hossain *et al* (2003b) noted improvement in the level of education of the workers from 3.38 to 4.73 years of schooling during the reference period but, in coastal regions, the average level of education of a worker was 6.37 years in 2000, which reduced to 4.01 years for flood-prone areas. This is consistent with the broad-based geographic regional data generated by the BDHS (NIPPORT *et al* 2001). In both literacy and median years of schooling, the coastal areas of Khulna and Barisal showed the best record whereas the Sylhet Division, mainly a flood-prone region, was the worst performer.

Rural-urban migration is often considered to be a process of transferring rural poverty to urban areas. From their longitudinal study of Dhaka city, Hossain *et al* (1999) came out with the following startling results, which challenge this conventional wisdom:

For households in slum and squatter settlements, the head count ratio for moderate poverty was estimated at 79% in 1991; this dropped to a staggering low of 49% in 1998 and extreme poverty from 44.5% to 23% (Table 7, p.16).<sup>18</sup> These are basically migrant populations from the landless and marginal landholding households in rural areas. Three-quarters of this category were found to be moderately poor in rural areas (Rahman *et al*, 1996). From her study of RMG sector workers, Afsar (2001b) estimated that, from no income of their own prior to migration, more than 80% were able to earn enough to keep them above the poverty threshold after migration.<sup>19</sup> Qualitative measures – such as perceptions about their poverty – also neatly corroborated quantitative measures, which showed declining poverty after migration. Around three-fifths of the migrant households, irrespective of their place of residence (slum or non-slum), reported that their economic situation had improved compared with around two-fifths of rural households (Hossain *et al*, 1999; Rahman *et al*, 1996). The structure of housing, often used as a visible qualitative indicator of poverty and social stratification, also suggests that three-fifths of the households in slum and squatter settlements lived in better accommodation in 1998 than they did in 1991 (Afsar, 1999).<sup>20</sup>

From the panel data from rural sending areas, Rahman *et al* (1996) found that the extent of poverty was much lower (around 30%) for households having

migrant members, much lower than for non-migrant households (around 60%). The proportion of those who perceived themselves poor or extremely poor declined from around 60% to 30% between 1990 and 1995, a -26.7% change. In the case of non-migrant households, a large number (54%) still considered themselves poor or extremely poor and only a small proportion perceived (8.7%) improvement in their situation compared to 1991.

However, existing studies have already pre-warned that economic gains are likely to be offset if not well protected against the vulnerability that could arise from ill health, natural calamity, violence and other socio-political threats, death of the income-earning members of the family, weakening of social capital and human capital etc. (Rahman *et al*, 1996; Kothari, 2002). Mortality and morbidity rates are much higher in urban slums and squatter settlements, where most migrants live (Thwin *et al*, 1996; Afsar, 1999). Hossain *et al* (2003a) have already shown that, although a good number of extremely poor and mobile groups were able to make economic gains, they were often offset by the health and security costs that they had to bear in the process.

### **Migration and Inequality**

Internal migration is often considered a source of intra-village inequality because better-off villages and villagers learn first, and are able to avail new job opportunities whereas the extreme poor groups are generally excluded from such opportunities (Skeldon, 1997). However, this negative picture should not be generalised because empirical research also suggests that various groups have benefited in different ways, depending on types of opportunities. Moreover migration allows the migrants and their families to improve their family's resource base and human capital. In the Bangladeshi context, the difficulties associated with separating overseas and internal remittances and their impacts for the same households have been discussed earlier. Evidence presented on impact of remittances at areas of origin also indicates its positive contribution in poverty alleviation, generating greater and diversified employment opportunities through multiplier effects, and strengthening both material and human capital. At the place of destination however, existing evidence suggests growing inequality between the rich and the poor. A longitudinal study on migration in Dhaka city (Hossain *et al*, 1999) indicates worsening of income distribution between slum and non-slum residents. Slum dwellers, who are predominantly migrants from rural areas, earned around one-third of the income of non-slum households in 1991; this declined to one-fifth in 1998. The bottom 40% saw their income drop from 17% of the income of non-slum households to 11% while the top 10% increased from 27% to 42%. The gini concentration ratio, a measure of income inequality, is estimated at 0.53, a staggering increase from 0.39 in 1991.

Urban inequality is not limited to income distribution but also leads to stunted development

17 Annual income growth from non-rice agriculture and non-agriculture sectors was estimated at 6.8% and 5% between 1987 and 2000, contributing to the 3% annual growth rate of household income and 4.5% per capita income.

18 Head count index was calculated by working out the price of the normative food basket that an average resident in Dhaka city needs to maintain a healthy and productive life, after adjusting for the inflation and on the basis of information that urban households in the margin of poverty spend 60% of their income on food (Hossain *et al*, 1999). The threshold income for extreme poverty is estimated in a similar manner with the added consideration that a person at that level needs 1800 kilocalories and a low intake of protein and vitamins.

19 Please note that poverty incidence fell to 9% for their male counterparts but increases substantially for unskilled production workers. This is understandable because the former have greater opportunity to augment their incomes by virtue of their greater mobility and lesser burden of household chores compared with women, while skills and education are important determinants of urban income.

20 Better housing here means the replacement of a thatched roof with a corrugated iron roof.

of human capital of poorer communities. Although the enrolment rate of their age cohorts in slum and squatter settlements in Dhaka city rose from 41% to 58% between 1991 and 1998, more than 40% of the children remained out of school. Little wonder, then, that Hossain *et al* (1999) found that nearly one-third of children in the 10–15 years age group from slums and squatters were in the labour force; the incidence of child labour remained almost unchanged between 1991 and 1998. Participation in higher education is almost negligible for young adult slum dwellers (Table 6, p.16). It indicates “for low-income households the mobility from low to high-income occupations through human capital formation is limited” (Hossain *et al*, 1999). Thus, although the urban population have been ahead of the rural population on both poverty and social development indicators generally, the urban poor in general and migrants in particular find it difficult to sustain economic gains in the longer run, due to intra-urban inequality in income and delivery of social services.<sup>21</sup>

### Government Policies and Instruments

Since independence, poverty alleviation and economic growth has remained the major focus of the policy of successive governments. In the 1980s, privatisation and liberalisation were prioritised while development of human resources gained ascendancy from the 1990s. The draft national strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction aims for pro-poor economic growth, human development, women’s advancement and closing of gender gaps, social safety nets and participatory governance (ERD, 2002).<sup>22</sup> With declining availability of land the government faces the daunting challenge of generating employment for a labour force that is growing faster than the population. Whilst agriculture and rural development are the cornerstones of the present strategy, non-farm activities are rapidly expanding. However, the government fails to provide an effective regional development framework for decentralising the industrial process around secondary towns and periurban areas, and transforming gains from rural non-farm sectors to high value added activities. Also, it has formulated the National Rural Development Policy 2001 to enhance the capacity and power of the rural poor to develop, protect and sustain their livelihoods but no such policy has been formulated for urban areas, despite its acknowledgement that poor people’s livelihood strategies often straddle the rural-urban divide. It also fails to outline any mechanism to cover the extreme poor and migrant groups, which find themselves largely outside of existing social security schemes of government and development NGOs. There is also public demand for regional development and decentralisation in the face of growing mismanagement and corruption.<sup>23</sup>

It is encouraging that the government allocates around 20% of the development budget for local government and rural development. The government has also outlined both medium and long-term issues to be covered under governance and rural development, ranging from law and order, local governance, better

service delivery and rural infrastructure. Despite that, nothing is mentioned about infrastructural development of periurban and small towns as a precondition for business investment, which in turn would create jobs and enhance the economic mobility of rural peasants. Without effective linkages between rural areas and small as well as periurban towns, it is difficult to address the problems of agricultural growth effectively. Considering that not all districts have the potential for poverty alleviation, the overall development of flood-prone and favourable ecosystems deserves serious attention in order to arrest both intra and inter-regional inequality, a missing dimension in the PRSP. Moreover, inadequate infrastructure and poor and inefficient management of public utilities have created a huge fiscal burden and hinder the infrastructure expansion required to meet the growing needs of the economy.<sup>24</sup> Without decentralising power, finance and other services at the upazila/thana level, and without an effective policy framework for regional development, it is difficult to implement participatory governance. Hence, budget allocations do not fully reflect the government’s priority to deal with growing urbanisation and internal migration and the problems of governance.

### Policies and programmes of international agencies and donors

All donors have poverty alleviation as an overall objective, although approaches vary – from an emphasis on infrastructure development among the large donors to support to the social sectors for social mobilisation and human rights, often among the smaller bilateral donors. Like the government, none have direct policies and programmes for internal migration, although some of the larger donors such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNDP, and other bilateral donors such as Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, indirectly address some migration-related issues through programmes to develop the capacity of small and medium towns. World Bank was involved in the Municipal Services Project for capacity building and effective financial management of Khulna and Rajshahi City Corporations and 14 municipalities, or Pourashava, since 1999 with the help of Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED).<sup>25</sup>

The ADB has been assisting Bangladesh in developing secondary towns as an alternative for those who would otherwise migrate to the larger metropolitan areas since 1990 through the Secondary Towns Infrastructure Development Project. UNDP is promoting broader participation in local decision making and building the capacity of locally elected bodies to better deliver services and to enable communities to address their development needs. UNICEF and UNCHR are also actively promoting the interest of poor migrants. UNICEF runs water, sanitation and primary health care programmes for urban street children and with the help of municipalities and NGOs. It has also used the mass media successfully to promote girls’ education, water-sanitation and public health issues including dengue

21 Existing estimates show that urban poverty is lower than rural poverty (36% versus 43%), a significant gap after secondary level education (40% versus 22%) and infant and under-five mortality rates (74.5 versus 80.7 and 96.7 versus 112.6 deaths/1000 live births) (ERD, 2002; Hossain *et al*, 2003).

22 The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is claimed to have emerged from a consultative process conducted by the government with its planning and the policy-making agencies, NGOs, women’s groups, local and religious leaders, local government representatives, cross-sections of civil society and poor men and women from all walks of life (ERD, 2002).

23 In Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index, Bangladesh is ranked last among 91 countries with a score of 0.4 out of 10, far below India and Pakistan, the two other South Asian countries in the list. Civil society and the media have been vocal in demanding increased transparency and accountability of public agencies.

24 Existing evidence suggests that 18% of the population has access to electricity and fixed telephone line density is only 14%. Here deferred road maintenance amounts to 1% of the GDP and inefficiency in Chittagong Port costs \$1 billion per year. Even the special development authorities created for the four metropolitan cities are labeled as “thoroughly techno-bureaucratic organizations under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, run by officials and without participation of people’s representatives” (Islam and Khan, 2000).

25 The Municipal Service Unit (MSU) was established in LGED to provide institutional support to municipalities in order to improve their planning, financial and management capacities. The Municipal Development Fund (MDF) was created as an independent entity registered under the Bangladesh Companies Act 1994 to enhance better municipal services and poverty alleviation. Municipalities can now borrow from the MDF or get a grant depending on their capability and the types of programme they undertake.

fever prevention and arsenic contamination. UNCHR is primarily working to rehabilitate poor migrants and refugees. In addition to collaborating with the government in implementing its strategy for poverty alleviation, closing gender gaps, developing human capital and infrastructure and participatory governance, DFID has also developed the Human Rights and Governance Program (HUGO). Through this interesting programme, DFID encourages more rights based approaches, which aim to improve governance at local and the national levels. Thus, like the government, donors are also promoting sector-based programmes without much emphasis on regional development frameworks for poverty alleviation and more equitable distribution of scarce resources. With the exception of UNCHR, none is working to protect the interests of internal migrants.

### **Welfare entitlements**

Internal migrants do not enjoy any welfare entitlements from the government. Indeed, existing government development programmes often overlook the needs of internal migrants. Poor girls from municipalities are ineligible for the Female Scholarship Program. Similarly, the government pension scheme does not cover widows of urban poor agglomerations. Welfare programmes for internal migrants are often community based, like the Faridpur Zila Samity, or district based associations in the capital and other cities. They organise cultural events and sports and also assist migrants of the same districts to settle. In addition, these societies aid and support poor migrants in organising marriages, burying their dead and occasionally provide scholarships or even run charitable dispensaries. However, at the national level, there is Bastuhara Federation or federation of landless, which is a political organisation involved predominantly in advocacy for the rehabilitation of squatters in major cities. However, there is a network of NGOs called Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP), which is working primarily for poverty alleviation in urban poor communities (mainly in Dhaka City), the bulk of whom are migrants from rural areas.

### **Main pro-poor organisations working to support migrants – Current and potential roles**

Considering that more than two-thirds of emigration from rural areas are to urban areas, there is a need for improved municipal governance and services. With the establishment of the Municipal Services Unit (MSU) in LGED, a few municipalities are now actively engaged in planning and slum improvement. Moreover, if properly implemented, the Municipal Development Fund (MDF) will encourage municipalities to work for poverty alleviation and infrastructure development. The MDF approach has some important advantages in terms of moving towards decentralisation by developing the technical, fiscal and administrative capabilities of municipalities and establishing a transparent and accountable system of fiscal transfer.

The CUP can be considered the most important

pro-poor institution supporting migrants. It includes BRAC and Proshika, the two largest NGOs in Bangladesh, and 43 others, working on different aspects of urban poverty including advocacy and human rights. Ain o' Shalish Kendro (ASK) and certain other NGOs work for the human rights and legal aid of the migrants. Nari Udyog Kendro (NUK), which addresses governance and gender issues in the development process and caters to the housing needs of the city's low-income and migrant women workers and female students, deserves special mention. The phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) by 2004 will result in the closure of 1200 RMG factories and the retrenchment of 400,000 workers. In response to this and the recession following 9-11, NUK formed the Bangladesh Garment Workers Protection Alliance (BGWPA), a network of NGOs, Trade Unions, workers' federations and human rights organisations, to give voice to concerns and to protect the rights of garment workers.

### **Key policy issues, gaps, drivers of change and recommendations**

This paper has drawn attention to the following trends as having important policy implications:

First, existing literature and policy documents often overlook the important role that migration has played recently in reducing rural poverty. Contrary to conventional wisdom, which often views permanent migration as a hindrance to rural development because it transfers rural resources to urban areas, migration (with the help of urban resources) actually expands rural land and labour markets by making more rural land available for tenancy. Migration and the shift of the rural labour force to non-farm occupations has created labour shortages which have encouraged mechanisation; 70% of land has been brought under power tillers (Hossain *et al* 2003b), which has raised rural productivity and created scope for innovation. While future research must examine this issue seriously, the government's poverty alleviation strategy must address the needs of the migrants, particularly urban poor migrants who often suffer eviction, ill health and other problems. Instead of applying residential criteria to identify the poor, vulnerable groups can be picked up from the work place, organised as occupational groups and provided with loans, food-for-work, crèche and other facilities on a daily basis.

Secondly, remittances from internal migration are generating both direct and indirect benefits with short-term, long-term and multiplier effects on poverty alleviation, regional development and the overall development of the country. However, remittances remain largely a private affair, which is transacted between and among families and friends. In contrast to land-poor households, rural landowning households often derive greater benefits from remittances as they have greater capital endowments which enable them to invest in profitable businesses. If internal remittances can be converted to schemes such as the Deposit Pension Scheme (DPS), there is greater likelihood of institutionalising remittances, thereby increasing the

potential for development work as well as generating savings for land-poor groups.<sup>26</sup>

Thirdly, the government strategy for poverty alleviation has completely ignored the spatial and regional dimensions for development. Clearly, the coastal region made impressive progress in poverty alleviation, and migration is a dominant force behind that. In contrast, flood-prone regions and those with favourable ecosystems must be given priority attention in order to expand labour productivity and provide greater scope for occupational mobility.

There is profound disparity in income distribution and service delivery between space, class and gender, which often hinders the pace of poverty reduction. There are some inconsistencies between the PRSP objectives and budgetary allocations, as well as some significant gaps. Whilst the class and gender dimension of poverty and inequality are considered, the spatial dimension of poverty and inequality get scanty attention in the PRSP. Although successive governments have pledged administrative reforms and devolution of power, concrete action has yet to be taken. While holding elections for Union Parishads (Councils), the government has failed to reinstate the thanas (Police Districts). It is now acknowledged that the development of the thana-upazila complex and transport networks to link thanas to district headquarters and to the capital, as a result of the Reorganisation and Decentralisation Policy of 1982-83, helped to foster investment at local levels, transfer civil and judicial administration and employment opportunities (Afsar, 2000b).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, without a regional development framework, decentralisation efforts will remain *ad hoc* and the growing inequality in income and services distribution cannot be controlled effectively.

Since the PRSP is still being formulated, the following strategies, which emphasise regional development, are recommended for effective decentralisation:

#### **Telecommunications and other information**

technologies should be expanded as this would not only create employment opportunities but also help to decentralise businesses from large cities to potentially lower-cost smaller cities. This would benefit smaller cities and strengthen links with rural areas. Although centralisation of export and import shipping is likely to continue, with good intercity networks, businesses can plan, design, manage, produce and package in small towns, and then ship goods for sale in large metropolitan cities or abroad. The additional investment outside the large cities can be an important regional engine of growth, increasing employment and creating links with other sectors, including the agricultural sector.

#### **Small and medium towns can be made more**

attractive by developing infrastructure and communication, particularly efficient and safe transportation, and providing a good standard of social services such as hospitals, schools and colleges. This process must be complemented by decentralisation of key decision-making authorities within the political,

administrative and financial sectors, and liberalisation and de-control of business practices. Malaysia's rural urbanisation is an example of this option. Local government should be encouraged to deliver education, health and basic services both to the poor and non-poor with the help of NGOs and the private sector. As pro-poor drivers, civil society and independent research institutions must monitor the quality of services and the funds released once they meet the performance criteria.

#### **With increasing urbanisation, migrant women**

are likely to form a larger and larger proportion of the work force. Policies will have to reflect the needs of the female labour force in general and migrant women in particular if they are to elicit the greatest benefits of their contributions. All labour legislation must be brought under a new labour code to ensure effective implementation and monitoring. The labour code must ensure that all factories provide written employment contracts stipulating working hours and wage rates, overtime hours and rates, holidays, dismissal and retrenchment procedures. Factories should also issue identity cards to their workers and provide group insurance. The Ministry of Labour must monitor and enforce the implementation of the unified labour code. To ensure low-cost housing and hostel facilities for migrant factory workers, NGOs and housing companies may be given *khas* land at a reduced price. Considering the phasing out of the MFA in particular and the competitive nature of the global market in general, the workforce should be given access to skills training to equip them to deal with the changing nature of jobs. Development partners can invest funds for skills training of displaced RMG and other workers through the private sector and NGOs.

#### **As a pre-condition of regional development, it is**

important for the government to declare the budget with divisional and regional disaggregation. Without that, it is not possible to promote intra and inter-regional equity in resource distribution. BBS must also develop indicators for regional income, expenditure and well being which may be used to monitor poverty and development. In addition it must also provide data on land tenancy, which appears to be a reliable indicator of emigration.

26 Under this scheme, with Taka 500 deposit in the bank in every month, the capital almost doubles at the end of maturity period, which is 10 years at the most.

27 It is alleged that upazila parishad were often used as an important source of political patronage and the elected chairmen performed poorly. With any new system of elected local government, the risk of capture by the local elites will be high given the embedded patron-client social norms. Without an inbuilt system of people's participation in the decision-making process and effective financial system of accountability, election alone can never ensure accountability.

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**TABLE 3: TRENDS IN POPULATION BY RESIDENCE, 1901-2000**

Census year	National population (000)	Growth rate (%)	Urban population (000)	Growth rate (%)	Rural population (000)	Growth rate (%)	% (Urban)
1901	28928	–	708	0.00	28226	0.00	2.40
1911	31555	0.94	807	1.40	30748	0.90	2.60
1921	33254	0.60	879	0.80	32376	0.50	2.60
1931	35604	0.74	1074	2.00	35428	0.90	3.00
1941	41997	1.70	1537	3.60	40460	1.30	3.70
1951*	44166	0.50	1820	1.70	42346	0.50	4.30
1961*	55223	2.26	31111	5.40	52112	2.10	5.60
1974*	76398	2.48	73901	6.70	69008	2.20	9.70
1981*	89912	2.32	140891	9.20**	75823	1.30	15.70
1991*	109877	2.01	215602	4.20	88317	1.50	19.60
2000***	137439	2.51	34354	5.3	103085	1.73	25.00

1 Adjusted from Post Enumeration Check (PEC) of BBS (1983b and 1992b) which showed under count rate for urban areas in the order of 0.849 for 1961 and 1974 and 0.939 for 1981.

2 Adopted from Jordan (1993: 6) in absence of other rigorous estimates.

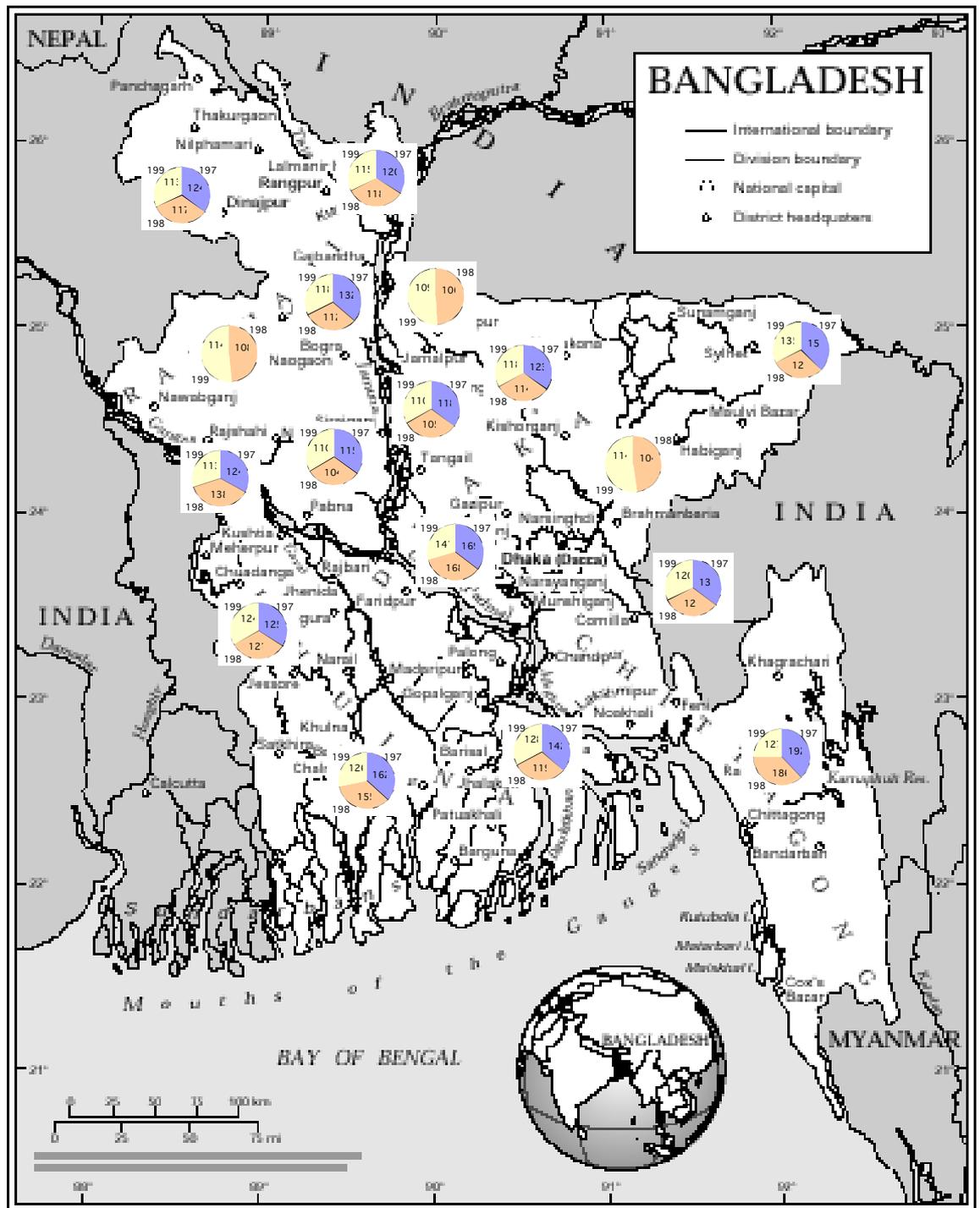
\* Shows adjusted national figures drawn from BBS, 1984: 31, 36, BBS, 1992b: 2.

\*\* Sudden leap in the growth rate of urban population is due to redefinition of urban areas in 1981 which included 3.8 million reclassified urban centres, not earlier defined as urban.

\*\*\* Figure for 2000 is provided from UN estimates. The preliminary enumeration from the 2001 population census suggest a much lower population figure at 123 million, urban share is 28.8 million and rural at 94.34 million (BBS, 2001).

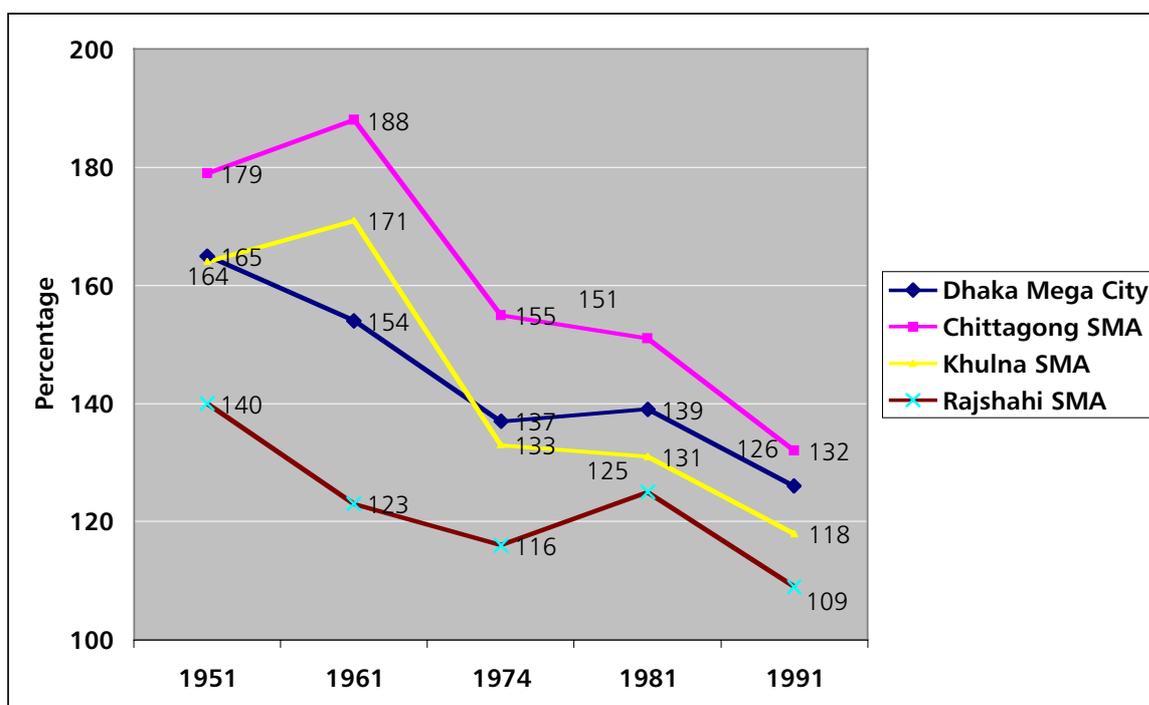
Source: Afsar, 1995

Figure 1: Map showing sex ratios of active age population (15–64) for major cities of Bangladesh.



Source: Afsar, 2001a

Figure 2: Sex ratio of the Statistical Metropolitan areas (SMA) over the years.



Source: Afsar, 2001

TABLE 4: CHANGES IN OCCUPATION BY MIGRATION STATUS, 1998

Occupation Status	Long Term Migrant		Recent Migrant	
	Non-Slum	Slum	Non-Slum	Slum
Pre-migration occupational pattern				
Agriculture	5.4	3.9	–	17.4
Trading 5.1	6.9	21.4	15.2	
Labour: Non- farm	1.8	3.9	–	10.9
Labour Farm	10.5	43.9	7.1	41.3
Services 14.1	3.8	35.7	2.2	
Unemployed	14.4	7.7	21.4	4.4
Not Working	48.7	29.2	14.3	8.7
Others –	0.7	–	–	
Total 100 (277)	100 (130)	100 (14)	100 (46)	
Post migration occupational pattern				
Trading 28.2	31.5	21.4	41.3	
Labour: Non farm	8.7	43.8	7.1	50.0
Services 48.7	21.5	71.4	8.7	
Renting 6.1	–	–	–	
Not Working	7.9	3.1	–	–
Others 0.4	–	–	–	
Total 100 (277)	100 (130)	100 (14)	100 (46)	

Source: Afsar, 1999

**TABLE 5: AVERAGE SIZE REMITTANCES SENT BY RESPONDENTS AND THE MAGNITUDE OF REMITTERS BY MIGRATION STATUS AND AGE, 1996-97.**

	Average Remittances (Tk.)		Remitters (%)		Remittances as % of Income*		Total (No.)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Garment</b>								
Long- Term Migrant	1033.3	600.0	51.4	33.4	34.1	25.8	35	37
Recent Migrant	625.0	457.1	36.8	20.0	39.3	39.6	38	35
All	874.2	535.0	43.8	26.4	38.5	29.6	73	72
10-19	462.5	525.0	12.9	12.5	38.6	45.4	31	32
20-29	880.0	507.1	73.5	40.0	31.4	24.7	34	35
30-39	1250.0	750.0	50.0	40.0	29.3	21.1	8	5
<b>Others</b>								
Long- Term Migrant	1450.0	214.0	83.3	50.0	29.9	11.0	12	14
Recent Migrant	1200.0	–	40.0	–	–	–	5	–
All Migrant **	1411.1	214	70.6	50.0	34.6	11.00	17	14
20-29	1450.0	250.0	42.8	25.0	32.10	8.30	14	12
30-39	1357	167.0	50.0	40.0	46.5	13.2	12	10
All age group***	1411.1	214.0	46.2	31.8	34.6	11.0	26	22

\* Income here refers to average monthly wage and overtime  
\*\* Total for all is not the same for different categories of migrants and different age-groups as there are large number of non-migrants in the case of respondents from other manufacturing industries.  
\*\*\* There were 12 respondents who belonged to 10-19 and 40+ age group but as they did not remit last year, were not represented in this table.  
Source: Afsar, 2001

**TABLE 6: ENROLMENT RATE FOR HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS BY 'AGE GROUP' AND SLUM-NON-SLUM RESIDENCY OF SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS IN 1991 AND 1998**

Area	Age Group	Enrolment rate (1998)			Enrolment rate (1991)		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Slum	6-10	66.7	67.2	66.8	48.9	53.7	51.4
	11-16	44.0	43.5	43.8	29.8	35.0	32.5
	17-24	3.0	1.7	2.4	5.1	3.9	5.2
Non-Slum	6-10	92.3	97.9	95.3	94.4	91.1	92.7
	11-16	97.1	90.7	93.8	93.0	90.9	92.0
	17-24	64.7	59.1	61.5	65.9	52.6	59.7

Source: Afsar, 1999

**TABLE 7: LEVEL AND GROWTH OF HOUSEHOLD INCOMES, AND CHANGES IN POVERTY SITUATION, RURAL AREAS AND DHAKA CITY**

Indicator	Rural areas	Dhaka City				All household	
	(1995)	Slum		Non-slum		1991	1998
		1991	1998	1991	1998		
Household income (US \$)	1320	828	1313	3048	6359	2308	4679
Household size	5.94	5.03	5.20	5.82	5.73	5.56	5.55
Per capita income	222	165	253	524	1110	415	843
Growth of income/year (%)	4.2	-	6.7	-	11.0	-	10.5
Agriculture	1.9	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-agriculture	7.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Head count index (%)	51.7	79.0	49.0	14.5	3.3	36.0	18.5
Poverty-gap index	19.2	26.5	17.6	3.9	0.9	10.9	1.5
FGT index	9.1	11.4	9.1	1.1	0.4	4.5	3.3

Source: Hossain et al, 1999



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The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit is an inter-disciplinary research institution based at the University of Dhaka. It specialises in refugee, migration and displacement related issues, conducting research and organising consultations with policy makers, academics, researchers, civil society activists, professional groups and civil servants to influence public opinion and policy decisions.

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