

Mega city – dhaka essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



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Located on the banks of the Buriganga River lies Dhaka; the capital city of Bangladesh. This megacity is the 7th largest populous city in the world, with an estimated population of 15 million, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. It is expected to reach a staggering population of 25 million by 2025 (growing at a fast rate of 4.2% per year). The number of Dhaka City's young population is relatively high due to the age selective rural-urban migration. About 40% of the total city's population is in the unproductive age groups of 0-14 and 60+ years of age; indicating a high dependency burden on the working age population. This high dependency among the city's population causes poverty, especially among the lower income groups in the city. Under the pressure of its rapidly swelling population, this megacity faces rising real estate prices, exponentially growing slums, unemployment, exploitation, corruption, poor quality housing facilities, inadequate clean water supply and poor sanitation.

These are all similar challenges experienced by other mega-cities. Modern Dhaka is the centre of political, cultural and economic life in Bangladesh and has the most developed urban infrastructure in the world. The city has a growing middle class population, driving the market for modern consumer and luxury goods. This makes Dhaka a primate city i. e. a city that completely dominates other urban centres within the country. The city is located in central Bangladesh and lies on the lower reaches of the Ganges Delta, covering a total area of 360km². Dhaka may be one of the worst situated urban areas in the world; it is located in wetlands and virtually surrounded by some of the greatest rivers in the world. The lowest parts of

the city are little more than 2m above sea level, making the city prone to serious flooding. Below is an illustration of the risk of flood in Dhaka.

As you can see in Figure 7, the areas prone to flooding are greater than that of the ones that are NOT prone to flooding. This also means that necessary urban expansion will become very expensive and the increase in slum settlements will become more acute. The rapid expansion and growth rate of Dhaka City is constrained by these physical barriers i. e. low-lying flood prone areas around the city and also valuable agricultural and forested land will have to be sacrificed in order to increase the area of the city. These problems make the situation worse for Dhaka than it already is. As a professor said in an interview about Dhaka and its rate of growth, “ all the business facilities are available only in the capital”, there is no doubt that a very rapid urban growth (along with a fast increase in population and structural development) started to take place. For the millions of rural poor, the population of the city, Dhaka is increasing rapidly due to rural-urban migration. Low-income migrant people have come from rural areas in search of job and urban amenities. Compared to any other place in the country, Dhaka offers the best chance for economic opportunity; administrative headquarters and civil employments, financial and banking services, internal commerce and business are all largely concentrated in Dhaka.

More than 80% of garment industries in Bangladesh are located in Dhaka. Despite the growth of formal sector industrial and other employment, Dhaka is dominated by the presence of huge informal sector of economic activities. It is estimated that about 65% of all employment in the city is in the informal

sector. Many of the low income groups seek opportunities in the informal sector in order to make their living. A large number of people are involved with the informal economy of rickshaw pulling, roadside business, junk collecting, drivers, mechanics, carpenters, barbers, daily labourers, personal servants etc. These various economic activities and variety of services tend to support a continuous influx of rural-urban migration. A large segment of the migrant population tends to be unskilled, uneducated and inadequately equipped for the city. These migrants migrate with expectations of a better life and education or anything to fulfil their needs and desires which the rural areas of Bangladesh cannot provide.

Evidently, migration to Dhaka causes economic, social and cultural improvements for some people but unfortunately the majority of these migrants constitute the poor. As a consequence of this rapidly growing rural-urban migration to Dhaka (staggering 56.5% rate of population growth) in the last decade there have been cases of worsening urban housing situations (particularly for the lower income groups), shortage of urban land, poor economy and high levels of poverty. The urban benefits fail to benefit the majority of the poor migrants. As rural people are poorer than the urban people, many people fail to afford the living expenses of Dhaka city's residential areas. As a result of this, an adverse effect has occurred where a large number of people have settled in slums and squatter settlements (estimate of 35% of Dhaka city population). Dhaka city alone contains about 3.4 million people in 4966 slums. The overcrowding of people has created severe pressure on the existing social and physical infrastructures and its absorbing capacities.

The state of Dhaka's infrastructure is inadequate and unable to keep up with the growing urban pressure.

The overall physical environment in an urban area is generally determined by some specific facilities such as housing, sanitation, sewerage, drainage, quality of water, gas supply, electricity, garbage disposal and waste; all of these which Dhaka city lack or at an extremely unsatisfactory, poor quality. This is due to the rapid increase of the rapidly growing rate of rural-urban migration population. The city is characterized by high level of poverty and social vulnerability, shortage of housing, infrastructure and social services, poor quality of physical and social environment and inefficient urban management. Several challenges faced by those living in Dhaka include: chronic shortage of housing, congestion in public transport, acute crisis in supply of water, gas and electricity. Shortage of housing facilities and development of slums and squatter settlements: * Shortage of housing is acute as the prevailing situation fails to accommodate the rapidly growing city population * Slums and squatter settlements are widespread

* Most of slums of Dhaka are composed of the rural migrants who have come to the city in search of jobs and for the sake of survival * This situation results in them living in slums or squatter settlements * Most slums and squatters have a single room for an entire family which is extremely unhealthy and unsanitary * The slums are built out of building materials such as bamboo, wood, straw and scraps * They have poor lighting and ventilation which can cause airborne diseases * Social crime is generally associated

Gas and electric supply:

- * Do not have access to gas supply

- * Use traditional ways for cooking such as using fuel like wood, straw, cow dung and waste paper

Water supply and sanitation facility:

- * 49% of the population have access to piped water supply

- * 51% depend on the private hand pumps and unspecified sources

- * People living in slums do not even have access to piped water

- * The piped water is unsafe to drink directly, this causes health risks

- * Only a small portion of the rich have access to a sewerage system

- * Large number of slum or squatters use open space, ditches and drains for defecation

Garbage disposal and waste management:

- * No proper arrangement of collection and disposal of garbage

- * Waste is dumped on open areas, unused land and ditched into nearest water bodies

- * Only 9% of slum population have access to waste management services

Environmental degradation and health problems arise