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## Urban health status in slum areas gets worse for lack of basic amenities: Study

FE Report

Absence of basic amenities like water, sanitation and waste disposal makes the urban health status in slum areas worse than the rural population, a Brac study revealed Friday.

The research report titled 'Bangladesh Health Watch Report 2014-- Urban Health Scenario: Looking Beyond 2015' also said nearly 30 to 45 per cent of slum dwellers are ill and 60 per cent of children are chronically malnourished.

The situation gets worse due to mismatch in the authority as it is the responsibility of local government to ensure urban healthcare facilities, but it cannot provide the urban population with necessary care due to lack of resources and expertise.

The 5th report of Bangladesh Health Watch was launched on the sidelines of a three-day conference on 'Realising UHC Goals: Bangladesh Realities and Way Forward-A policy and solution conference' that began at a city hotel on Thursday.

Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) with support from the Rockefeller Foundation and the World Bank has organised the conference in partnership with Ganoshasthya Kendra, ICDDR,B, Bangladesh Diabetic Samity, CIPRB, Centre of Excellence for Universal Health Coverage and Association for Medical Education.

Malabika Sarker, acting dean of James P Grant School of Public Health, Brac University, presented the research findings at the event while former secretary Dhiraj Kumar Nath unveiled the report. PPRC executive chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman and Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) chairman Professor Nazrul Islam spoke on the occasion.

The report showed that in the context of fastest growing urbanisation in Bangladesh, the urban population is predicted to grow from current 53 million to 79.5 million by 2028.

With 400,000 people migrating to the city annually, Dhaka and Chittagong are among the fastest growing cities in the world comprising over 80 per cent of urban population along with 90 per cent of slum population in Bangladesh.

The report said water insecurity is extremely high for low income people since the existing systems and regulations often don't allow them to legal source of water.

In between 1990 and 2011, the urban population has grown by 8.0 per cent while the use of improved water sources has declined by 2.0 per cent. Access is difficult for low income people and that many people don't have access to minimum acceptable quantity of water.

Only 10 per cent of the water facilities were owned by the poor people individually or collectively and 33 per cent water sources were not legal.

Only 36.3 per cent urban HHs are food secure compared to 53.4 per cent and 53.5 per cent in HHs in rural and urban non-slum HHs respectively.

The report said urban health inequities and urban health governance are two additional issues that need attention and proper action.

In his comment, Hossain Zillur said urban poverty is distinct from that of rural poverty in a sense, poor people are allowed to come here with some conditionality of engaging themselves in economic activities.

"Though poor people engage in economic activities for poverty reduction, they hardly can reduce social poverty," said Mr Rahman.

Prof Nazrul said Bangladesh will be sociologically, politically and economically urban by around 2040. The trend has already started as 65 per cent of the GDP is provided by the urban economy.

He said 60 per cent of Dhaka population live in slums, but the government is not happy with this statistics. The government claims it to be 20 per cent and as per CUS data, it is 35 per cent.

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