CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND CHALLENGES OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION IN BANGLADESH

By

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Abstract

The present study attempts to contribute toward the greater understanding of the urbanization process in Bangladesh. It focuses particularly on the rural-urban migration process, explaining the causes of mobility and stability and the consequences flowing from that movement for the wellbeing of migrants and their families. The study is based upon analysis of a range of secondary information, a small scale survey of 710 randomly selected migrant and non-migrant households drawn from four randomly selected municipal wards of Dhaka city and more detailed case studies of stayers, return as well as 'failed' migrants and families of temporary migrants in the areas of origin through a tracer survey.

The first chapter is essentially introductory and outlines the aims, objectives and justifications for undertaking the study. In chapter two, by examining critically the context in which urbanization is taking place in Bangladesh and its relationship with economic development, some of the existing myths with regard to the rapid urban process are dispelled. The next two chapters conceptualize the patterns and process of the rural-urban migration and specify the scope and coverage of the study, sources and methods of data collection. The contextual analysis of the 'setting' in which migration occurs and the determinants of the mobility and stability at the individual, family and community levels are examined in chapters five and six. The validity of some of the theories regarding the determinants of migration are examined in the light of the empirical findings of the present study and a simple model explaining rural-urban migration is presented in chapter six. The selectivity of the mobility process is then examined by analysing the 'most important characteristics' of migrants and non-migrants and also those of different types of movers. By employing quantitative, qualitative and comparative techniques, a critical evaluation of the impacts of migration upon the level
of wellbeing of migrants and their families is presented in chapters eight and nine. The final chapter summarizes the major findings of the study and their implications for policy makers and planners and presents an agenda for future research.

The study finds that rapid urbanization does not necessarily hinder productivity and nor does productivity automatically lead to prosperity unless there is a strong back up of adequate policy, efficient institutional frameworks and sound financial systems, and this questions the validity of the over-urbanization theory in the Bangladesh context. By combining the three fundamental questions: who migrates? why and how one migrates? in one model the study adopts an integrated approach to the explanation of migration which is lacking in many of the existing studies. It also shows that rural-urban migration is predominantly a part of family based poverty alleviation strategy in Bangladesh. Considering the inevitability of such migration the government should invest more in rural infrastructure development to encourage more commuting and other forms of non-permanent migration, and adopt a more flexible 'user pays' type of approach for a cost-effective delivery of basic services in urban areas rather than the existing land ownership oriented delivery system. Urban poverty alleviation which has been hitherto neglected should get priority through income generation and educational programs for the poorer migrants if goals of higher productivity and real development of the country are to be advanced.