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Engendering Social Exclusion: *Evidence from Slum of Narayangonj City Corporation of Bangladesh*

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Abstract- Marginalization of certain groups or clans occurs in most societies including developed countries and perhaps it often occurs in under developed countries. Women, especially the slum women are far more excluded than any other groups in the society. It is clearly demonstrated that the number of slum dwellers is increasing day by day with the increased demand for employment opportunity, rapid rural-urban migration and rapid growth of urban population. The current study has expounded the nature of Social exclusion of women in the selected slums of Narayangonj city. Moreover, the study aimed to explore the reasons, causes, dimensions, impacts and pattern of exclusions for different socio-economic groups. This study had a critical outlook in examining the overall social-environment that perpetuated exclusion of women in slum areas. Findings of this study has presented a social exclusion index of three selected slums and a women poverty index in order to critically examine both the exclusion index and poverty index of women extensively. Finally, the study has examined the ineffectiveness/inaction of existing law and rules in protecting the disadvantaged women folk of slums.

Keywords: *social exclusion, engendering, women, slum, bangladesh.*

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Engendering Social Exclusion: *Evidence from Slum of Narayangonj City Corporation of Bangladesh*

Pratima Dev [α] & Abu-Hena Mostofa Kamal [σ]

Abstract- Marginalization of certain groups or clans occurs in most societies including developed countries and perhaps it often occurs in under developed countries. Women, especially the slum women are far more excluded than any other groups in the society. It is clearly demonstrated that the number of slum dwellers is increasing day by day with the increased demand for employment opportunity, rapid rural-urban migration and rapid growth of urban population. The current study has expounded the nature of Social exclusion of women in the selected slums of Narayangonj city. Moreover, the study aimed to explore the reasons, causes, dimensions, impacts and pattern of exclusions for different socio-economic groups. This study had a critical outlook in examining the overall social-environment that perpetuated exclusion of women in slum areas. Findings of this study has presented a social exclusion index of three selected slums and a women poverty index in order to critically examine both the exclusion index and poverty index of women extensively. Finally, the study has examined the ineffectiveness/inaction of existing law and rules in protecting the disadvantaged women folk of slums.

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I. Introduction

One in every eight people living in slum all around the world and the projected number for 2030 is 2 billion (CBS News, 2003; UNHABITAT, 2008;Mahabir, R., Crooks, A., Croitoru, A. et al, 2016; Rashid 2009; Khan and Kraemer, 2008). Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets to improve the standard of living of at least 0.1 billion people by 2020(Rashid 2009;Barrett and Dunn 2006). Key development issue of 21st century is to ensure sustainable health and human rights for people living in urban slums(Rashid, 2009). The lack of access into basic services make women and girls of urban slums to face stigmatization, inequity, administrative isolation and pass poor quality of life compared to their male counterpart in slums and others in the mainstream society (Radoki & Lloyd, 2002, Goswami, 2013).Women and girls have to perform invisible and double work burden (i.e. taking care of family members, ensure that the family members get meal every day, collecting potable water and getting rid of wastewater, etc.) inside their home(Goswami, 2013).Considering women's socio-economic and political status they are regarded as the most disadvantaged class in the society(Goswami, 2013). Due to traditional social norms and values very often girls are not sent to school. Women at their early age do not have access into everyday city life which make them anxiety prone and distressed (Goswami, 2013).The unhygienic environment, denial of basic rights (education and health care) stunted women's mental and physical growth from a very early age (Goswami, 2013). In addition, socio-economical and physical insecurity, feminization of poverty, unequal distribution of income and opportunities, sexually abuse and culturally conditioned practices causes adverse impact on health and standard of living of female slum dwellers (Goswami, 2013). According to the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (1972) government is responsible for creating an environment for its citizen so that they can improve their lives through access to basic services, like health, education, etc. (Rashid 2009). In spite of these proclamations and rapid growth of urban population, Bangladesh has no explicit or comprehensive policy on controlling urbanization and/or managing urban poverty (Barrett and Dunn 2006). As of 2015 some 30% of the total population of Bangladesh (over 160 million) lived in urban areas (The Daily Star, 2015) and urban growth rate was 3.5% annually (Rashid 2009). Moreover, the number of female slum dwellers was 1.09 million in 2015(bdnews24.com). It is evident from the national survey statistics that the number of slum populations have been almost doubled from 1.5 million in 1996 to 3.4 million in 2006(BBS,2006) reflects the nature of social exclusion of rural populations who have been forced to migrate in urban slum areas. The study population of Narayangonj City Corporation is no more exception of such trend. Although we refer Narayangonj as City Corporation, in reality, the area consisted of many thousands of households and sections within a larger contiguous area, and everyone referred to the larger area as Narayangonj. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore socio-economic and political factors related to social exclusion of female slum dwellers. For instance, people who live in a slum may effectively be denied the opportunities for self betterment that most people in society have. It focuses attention on a broad range of factors that prevent individuals and groups, especially the women. The study also aimed to explore the influence of poverty on exclusion.

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II. Methodology

The data have been collected from secondary and primary sources. To collect primary data from female slum dwellers regarding gender based social exclusion in slum both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used. Following convenience sampling method total 200 respondents were enrolled for face to face interview from three slums, namely *Rally Bagan*, Sweeper's colony and Rail line slum area under Narayanganj city of Bangladesh. A semi-structured survey questionnaire was used to explore the nature of social exclusion in slum and local people's perception about exclusion in slums. In addition, eight focus group discussions (FGD) and 10 case studies were conducted to investigate features of social exclusion experienced by female dwellers of the selected slums. Moreover, the closest contact (both participatory and non-participatory observation) with slum dwellers and participant observation of their challenging life enabled great objectivity of our research. Nonetheless, secondary data was collected and compiled from the books, reports, published and unpublished papers, leaflets, booklets, news paper, municipal records and governmental circulars and non-governmental circulars.

a) Ethical Consideration

The protocol was approved by internal faculty of Sociology department, University of Dhaka. Information has been collected in a neutral investigator.

III. Result and Discussion

The nature of social exclusion of women we found in this study has been determined in terms of patriarchal social structure and women's exclusion, political empowerment and participation, feminization of poverty, income and employment and access to health care services.

a) Nature of Gendered Social Exclusion in Slum

Based on questionnaires compiled from field surveys, the finding of the research illustrates the nature of social exclusion of female slum dwellers. Figure-1 shows that a great majority of the participants did not have proper access to health care services. Due to not having proper education, awareness and communication skill they did not even know the proper place from where they could get health care services and/or types of services they availed as a citizen. Findings of the study conducted by Raihan et al. (2014) showed that due to unhygienic living condition slum women frequently suffered from various types of diseases, like- headache, worm, skin diseases, diarrheal diseases, gastric, cough, fever, etc. and some women visited traditional healers for treatment due to not having access to health care services. Their study also indicated lack of awareness of the female slum dwellers in respect to health care seeking behavior. In addition, findings of the current study demonstrate that women of the slum were considered both physically and mentally weak to perform any major responsibilities. On the other hand, 90% of the total participants said that the female representatives of the local government had some signatory roles only; were not considered important while making major decisions. However, respondents also experienced lack of governmental support to act as potential entrepreneur (figure-1). Furthermore, gender neutral working environment is one of the significant indicators to measure women's social exclusion. Study conducted by Stamarski and Hing (2015) showed that the complex phenomena of gender based inequality or gender bias is deep rooted in culture and structure of organizations and institutions in the society. Forms of gendered inequality they found in their study were rooted in hiring, training, pay and promotion of women. Majority of the participants of this study experienced sexual harassment, impartial attitudes from higher authority for being female and even wage gap or income inequality was also prominent. Moreover, over half of the participants mentioned that they did not find liberty to do their assigned duties. Apart from the society, slum women were victim of physical and psychological hostility done by their family members. Along with all those exclusion women had to face patriarchal domination and maintain strong and sometimes unusual veil (*purdah*) system. *Purdah* is considered to be a form of religious practice among the Muslims and an instrument of social exclusion (Yusuf, 2014; Khan, 2014) which has great impact on women's accoutrements (Feldman and McCarthy, 1983) and participation in income generating activities apart from home.

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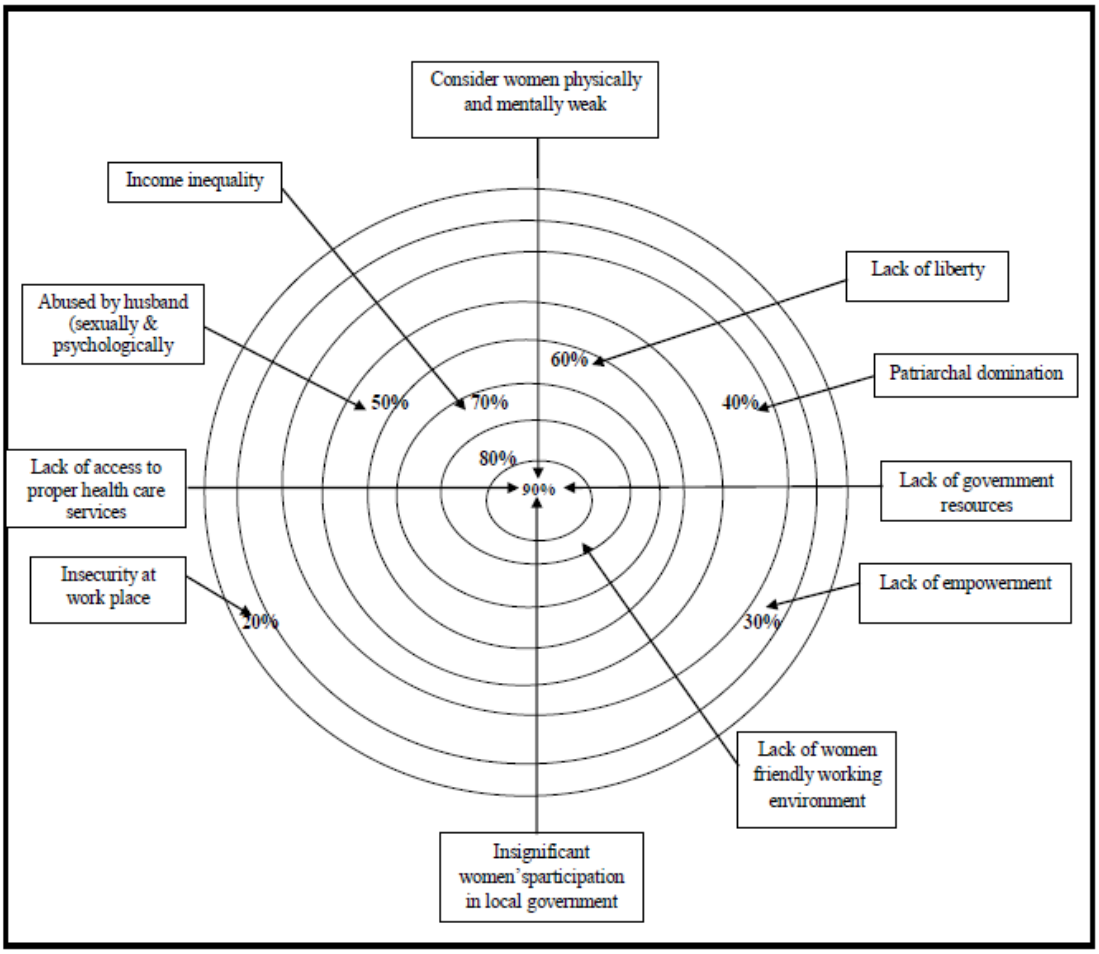


Figure 1: Nature of social exclusion faced by female slum dwellers

b) Access to Basic Services and Feminization of Exclusion

Slums are considered as spatial symbolization of urban poverty, social exclusion and improper urban governance policy (Sclar and Northridge, 2003). Slums are also characterized by poorly structured houses, poor environmental management, inhuman standard of living, etc (Harpham, 1986). As a human being and citizen of the country slum women should have access to basic services likewise people of all other sectors of the society. Slum dwellers, especially women does not have proper or adequate access to basic services, like health care services, access to political institutions and job opportunities (Unger and Riley, 2007). Findings of this study show that participants experienced irregular right to entry into basic services. For clear understanding and precise discussion we have categorized and summarised those sectors. First of all, we found patriarchy as a barrier for female slum dwellers to enjoy access to basic services. Participants mentioned that they were not able to contribute in family decision making. More clearly, their opinions regarding their family affairs were not given priority. A great majority of the participants opined that women were both mentally and physically weak to do hard task. So they were only responsible for doing comparatively easier and invisible works. Women's political participation has been considered as a key indicator of women's empowerment. Almost all the participants (99%) said that women's participation as elected member of the city corporation were not significant in terms of their contribution. They could not participate in decision making. They also reported that in spite of having institutional authority they were not able to solve local issues due to patriarchal societal attitudes. Some female ward commissioners (female representative at local city corporation) mentioned that they had only signatory roles while formulating major policy under City Corporation. Furthermore, findings of this study suggest that no woman from slum was representative at the city corporation. Emerging perception around the globe is that poverty is increasingly becoming feminized (Moghadam, V.M., 2005). The idea of feminization of poverty refers that percentage of women's poverty is disproportionate and linked with increasing incidence of female headed household (Chant, 2006). Findings indicate that wage disparity (almost half compared to men)between men and women, socio-cultural dogmas regarding women's engagement in income generating activities, disgraceful status of women in the society and

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inhuman living condition made slum women more subjugated in the society. A significant number of participants (70%) said that they were often harassed by their male colleagues in their workplace. A major disparity was observed in case of women's access to health care services. Slum women of the study area mentioned that they did not get their expected treatment for their residential status. Even male members of their slums received better treatment compared to them. In addition, female slum dwellers felt shy or embarrassed to share their problem with male physicians. Besides, instead of giving treatment in case of complicated health condition they were often asked to go to district level hospital (see: table-1).

Table 1: The Nature of Social Exclusion of Women

Patriarchy and women's exclusion	Political representativeness	Feminization of poverty	Income and employment	Access to health care services
No prominent role in decision-making (93%)	Insignificant representation as elected member of city corporation (99%)	Inhuman living condition (23%)	Discrimination in labor market in terms of wage and salary (74%)	Lack of preferential treatment in comparison to males (76%)
Subjugate in family (28%)	Insignificant representation in city corporation as ward commissioner (32%)	Strong prevalence of patriarchy (92%)	Patriarchy play dominant role in determining wage and salary (42%)	No support for complicated diseases (46%)
Lack of empowerment (24%)	Unable to solve the local people's problem due to lack of power and authority of female ward members (99%)	No liberty and freedom (36%)	Often harassed in work place (70%)	Unable to get proper treatment due to economic vulnerability (61%)
Verbally, physically, sexually, psychologically abused by husband (45%)	Not empowered for executing development program as female ward members (81%)	Despicable status of women (23%)	Females are paid almost half wages of males (74%)	Females can hardly consult with physicians for treating diseases (77%)
Consider women as weak both physically and mentally (93%)	Female slum dwellers does not have any representation in city corporation (76%)	Acute income inequality in comparison to males (74%)	Cultural and religious barriers in getting jobs (91%)	Hardly consult with physicians' regarding gynecological complications (93%)
No Liberty (38%)	Signatory role of female ward members in policy formulation (92%)	Cultural barriers in getting involved in income and employment (50%)	Not equally treated as male labors 15%	Infected with viral and contagious diseases due to lack of nutritional food (9%)
		Lack of subsistence level of occupation (25%)		Lack of access to health care services (93%)

Field Survey, 2014

c) Exclusion and poverty index

Urban growth is one of the key concerns worldwide, especially in the context of developing world. Funding organizations are emphasizing to address urban poverty and social exclusions in slum in order to equalize (Alamgir, 2009). To indicate the social exclusion indicators more clearly, we have formulated an exclusion and Poverty index following Gordon PSE Survey in Britain (Pantazis, C., et al., 2006). Empirical evidence of social exclusion and poverty index of slum women has been summarized in the following table:

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Table 2: Analysis of exclusion and poverty index

Exclusion Index			Poverty Index		
	Response (%)		Lack of items which make not to be poor (%)		Adults women
Experiences	Yes	No	No	Yes	
Perception about being poor	100.0	0	50.0	50.0	Own house
Perception about being excluded	65.5	34.5	100	0	Households furniture
Freedom in any sphere of life	56.5	43.5	100	0	Refrigerators
Unpaid worker in family	44.5	55.5	100	0	Telephone
Employment opportunity play important role to reduce exclusion	100.0	0	35.0	65.0	Television
Shopping facilities	84.5	15.5	35.0	65.0	Satellite connection
Watch cinema / theatre or visit museum	52.0	48.0	82.5	17.5	Cassette player
Library facilities	0	100	42.5	57.5	CD player
Three meals in a day	39.5	60.5	100	0	Car
Hospitals	15.5	84.5	100	0	Ownership of motorbike
Post office	78.0	22.0	50.0	50.0	Camera
Corner shop	90.0	10.0	100	0	IPS /generator
Co-operative society	47.5	52.5	72.5	27.5	Charger light
Gas	26.0	74.0	73.5	27.5	A fan at home
Electricity	26.0	74.0	100	0	Carpets in living room
Water	24.0	76.0	100	0	Replace worn out furniture
Help with caring responsibilities for children / Aged / disabled.	84.0	16.0	100	0	Daily news paper
Someone to look after home	57.0	43.0	15.0	85.0	Mobile
Someone to talk if depressed	46.0	54.0	32.5	67.5	New clothes in every month
Disengagement in voting system	0	100.0	77.5	22.5	Having trendy cloths
Threat in voting system	89.0	11.0	77.5	22.5	3 Pair of shoes
Women group or organization in the locality	0	100.0	100	0	Wrist watch
Feel unsafe walking alone in the area after evening	79.0	21.0	85.0	15.0	Meat fish, fruits or vegetable every other equivalent day
Satisfaction with the area as a place to live	8.0	92.0	100	0	A meal in restaurant in every week
Noisy neighbours or loud parties beside home	18.0	82.0	35.0	65.0	Visit friends or relatives
Rubbish lying around home	67.0	33.0	47.5	52.5	Celebrating especial occasions (Eid, Puja etc.)
Poor street lighting in locality	37.0	63.0	62.5	37.5	Celebrating weeding day /birth day etc.
Street noise (traffic jam, factories)	36.0	64.0	50.0	50.0	Attending weeding/ funerals
Lack of open public space	65.5	34.5	92.5	7.5	Gifts to friends / family once a year
Get political aims if needed.	0	100.0	65.0	35.0	Hobby or leisure activity
Experiencing in recording case doing in police station.	0	100.0	90.0	10.0	A good job
32. Received govt. Allowance	0	99.5	34.0	66.0	Regular monthly savings
Satisfaction with the education system in locality.	31.0	69.0			

Source: Field survey, 2014

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In the above analysis we have divided social exclusion index of slum women in 3 broad categories:

1) Exclusion from labour market
2) Exclusion from services
3) Exclusion from social networks

The most significant indicator of women's poverty was found in their domestic and/or household level which indicates that 50 percent respondents did not have their own house. They lived in rent houses made up of old clothes, Plastic and bamboo. During rainy season they often could not sleep at night and their poor houses became submerged with water. About 85 % of the total respondents mentioned that they could not eat nutrias food. All most all the respondents reported that they did not have access to modern technological devices, like- refrigerator, gas woven, telephone, motorbike/car, camera, CD/DVD player, etc. In contrast, a great majority of the respondents (85%) had access to mobile phone. Findings show that respondents rarely visited their relatives and friends house or went outside (park, restaurant, etc.) home for recreation. On the other hand all the respondents opined that equal working and/or income opportunities might reduce social exclusion in slum. 69% of the respondents mentioned about their dissatisfaction regarding the existing education opportunity for slum dwellers. Besides, their living place was reported to be unhygienic and inhuman.

IV. Conclusion

Women are most excluded section of the society though they represent half of the total population of the world. An overwhelming majority of urban poor lives in overcrowded slums. However, slum women lead awfully disadvantaged lifestyle (Raihan et al; 2014). The features of slum women of Narayangonj city corporations are no exception to it. This paper addressed the livelihood of slum women in Narayangonj city, a town about 17 km Southeast of Dhaka, Bangladesh. We tried to analyze overall exclusion pattern of the slum women. It is also evident from the findings that the tendency of social exclusion was highly related with poverty. It was also observed that exclusion of women was highly related with patriarchal society. The ultimate wellbeing of slum women is broadly conceived to include not only consumption of goods and services but also the accessibility of all sections of the population. It is necessary to improve physical infrastructure (e.g. providing education, ensuring equal access to health care service, creating gender friendly work environment and equity in income and distribution, and employment opportunity for slum women, etc.) and human capital of the slums. In addition, overcoming socio-political, cultural and economic constraints is also needed to reduce social exclusions for female slum dwellers. Here in this regard public-private partnership might be a potential initiative to ensure social welfare and establish good governance in the slum area. Overall, women's empowerment and freedom in the slums are utmost important to make them useful social capital to contribute in the national development.

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