Sustainability of Slum Improvement Program in Bangladesh: An Approach of Capacity Building, Community Participation and Empowerment

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Abstract

Slums providing housing to 30-70% of urban population in many developing countries have grown dramatically. Governments with international assistance, despite improving tenure security, environment, income and resources in many of these, could not eradicate the problems. Benefits could not be sustained due to lack in institutional development, policy implementation, governance, participation etc. This is more evident in Bangladesh where about 10 million poor in its urban areas suffer from substandard housing. Initially acting as a 'provider', the government could achieve little in terms of effects and numbers, this made the approach unsustainable. Thereafter, it shifted to providing training, finance, assistance in education, health, capacity building and environmental improvements so that the slum-dwelling poor could be 'enabled' to make sustainable solutions to their housing problems. This paper discusses this changed approach, and evaluates the achievements and sustainability of the Slum Improvement Program undertaken in last quarter of a century. Thus it will provide an insight into the way housing of the urban poor in the developing countries should be approached.

Introduction

Urbanization of poverty and social inequality manifests in a huge growth in the number of slum dwellers in the developing world, to be doubled by 2030. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) urged to improve the lives of only 100 million of 1.4 billion slum-dwellers by 2020 (UN 2000). Given their socio-economic and political situation, most of them can manage only substandard houses. Yet, little has been done by nations to reduce poverty through governance and progress (Holden et al. 2008). This paper draws an outline of Sustainable Development (SD) in housing in the context of low-income groups (LIGs) in Bangladesh, and evaluates the various components of the Slum Improvement Program in terms of their sustainability.

Sustainable Development and Urban Housing

Cities aspire to achieve SD principles as in 'Agenda 21': adequate shelter for all, improving human settlement, and promoting sustainable land-use and construction. SD, a political act that involves human decisions and ways of life (Robinson 2004), has revolutionary implications for urban development (Greider 1997). It bridges the gap between socio-economic concerns about development issues and ecological concerns about the consequences of human actions (Robinson 2004). SD advances social equity, expands effective organization, builds capacity, and validates attention to environmental conservation and protection (Roseland 2000).

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Integration of community and quality takes SD beyond planning and policy domains (Stead, Stead 1996). As the arguments shifted towards meeting own needs by reducing poverty and maintaining ecological resources, the post-industrial societies increased efforts to embrace sustainability through a sound approach to social development, public participation, good governance, and environmental policies and practices (Budd et al. 2008). These addressed social and economic equity, participation, environmental quality, economic vitality, and supportive planning. Accordingly, a city should preserve a quality environment and low ecological impact, use efficient energy and resource, have equitable access to utilities, health services and economy, optimize human potential, and pursue social equity and engagement (Kates et al. 2005).

'Agenda 21' asks the local governments to make broad, participatory and sustainable improvements. Housing affects sustainability by using three-quarters of the world's resource and causing as much pollution and waste (NTFEE 1987). Forster-Kraus et al. (2009) found social aspects of housing as important as the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability; yet the concept of sustainable housing emerged late (Choguill 1999). Economy, addressing social justice and accompanying the environmental sustainability, became an important element of it.

Moore and Scott (2005) linked SD with the quality of life, well-being and liveability, all related to housing. McLaren (1996) outlined relevant issues: environmental protection, use of renewable resources, economic vitality and diversity, community self-reliance, individual well-being, and meeting basic needs. The effects of the environmental impacts of housing may be worst for the LIGs (Huby 1998), who often live on derelict land where quality spaces and services are lacking. Inability to improve environment deprives them of good life, negatively impacting their physical state.

Poverty, Development and Housing

In studying the reciprocal relationship between poverty and capability to expand social opportunity in markets, state policy and households (HHs), Sen (1999) based well-being on development that expands people's freedom and capabilities through economic and income growth, technological progress, or social reform. He criticised the dependence of institutional and ecological economics on individual capabilities and 'social capital' in addressing SD. According to him, capacity building of the poor should ensure their freedom to convert economic wealth into desirable outcome.

That sustainability cannot be achieved under poverty linked environmental degradation with human development, and downplayed the role of wealth (Robinson 2004; Roseland 2000). So the World Bank took a strategy to promote growth around macro-economic stabilization for the developing countries in the early-1980s (Pugh 2000). This in the next decade emphasised on urban issues and poverty alleviation through socio-economic transformation, and sustained economic growth and modernization for balancing urban development. The approach targeted improvement of living qualities, poverty reduction, job creation, production and environmental sustainability.

Combining sustainability with development is paralleled by calls to restore a socio-economic purpose of housing equity of the LIGs (Clark 2001). Cities now attempt to eradicate environmental degradation produced by economic growth and trickled down wealth creating the resources for social progress (Simon 1981). But Holden et al. (2008)

opined that benefits trickling down from the state to the city, and from the market to the consumer, may exacerbate the very problems they are to eliminate unless collective institutional responses and social responsibility grow. Environment requires significant social and economic changes, as technical solutions alone cannot protect progress and institutions. Hence the reformists suggested promoting sensitive human development to remain sustainable.

Community Participation

Slum problems can be alleviated by vesting resources and decision making to the dwellers. Effectiveness of development projects through community empowerment gained by participatory decision making is a major MDG Strategy that can sustain the benefits (Narayan, Shah 2000). Sara and Katz (1997) established participatory approaches as means to improve community ownership needed for SD. Drakakis-Smith (1981) observed that involvement in project design and implementation brings commitment and community connectedness.

Governments through decentralization of decision making can achieve community participation, develop capital, sustain resource and service provision, and manage resources (Rondinelli 2006; Patrick, Scott 2011). Other benefits via the community-based organizations (CBOs) include greater access to policy and collective solutions at government levels in democratic decision making, and accountable authorities (Watt et al. 2000; Clark et al. 2007). This eliminates control over local development acts by the elite and politicians (Paul 2010; Patrick, Scott 2011).

CBOs can facilitate participation, foster development processes, and mediate between the community empowerment and individual change. Channelling individual and collective efforts, these help to grow capacity and connectedness towards SD (Gaye, Diallo 1997). By fostering community welfare, healthcare and women skill, the CBOs enhance interaction, social relations, control and confidence (Rovai 2002). This is a cost effective and sustainable means to identify and address community's concern (Nelson, Prilleltensky 2005). Huchzermeyer (1999) too supported the CBOs' support for community's say over decision-making.

Institutional reform in housing was imperative as benefits couldn't be sustained without good governance. This encouraged communities to adopt more transparent and accountable processes to enable people to improve the squatter settlements themselves (Keare, Jimenez 1983). The UN (2005) spoke about a bottom–up approach to alleviate poverty by empowering the community through participation, local capacity building, and institutional strengthening. Shifting their emphasis from centralized to community-based development, the international agencies too adopted such strategies, and stressed upon integrating the informal sector in decision-making.

Agyeman et al. (1996) urged to take a concerted local level action to implement the Agenda 21 focussed on community, participation, partnership, accountability, etc. Habitat II furthered the idea of public-private partnership of the stakeholders to identify and transform priorities into action, and building participation and capacities. Municipalities pledged to implement this through accountable planning and developments for sustainable communities (Roseland 2000). Such participation, essential in environmental improvements, can generate action plans, partnership and self-help,

define stakeholders' responsibilities, and distribute costs through transparent management.

Empowerment and Capacity Building

Fetterman (2007) related participation, capacity building, and empowerment with sustainability. Empowerment is a capacity building process; it enables individuals or groups transforming choices to actions and favourable outcomes (Alsop, Heinsohn 2005). To Bennet (2002), it was a tool to enhance community capacities and assets that can influence decisions by the local institutions that affect their lives. Empowerment, a means to provide people with opportunities to participate, enables them to exercise action to improve the quality of lives (Sidorenko 2006). This can be used in influencing the economic, political and institutional decisions regarding projects.

Clark et al. (2007) identified importance of empowerment in development policies. This helps communities to gain expertise, self-confidence and control over local developments (Bebbington et al. 2006). The process consists of recognizing the benefits individuals and communities get by participating in planning and decision-making, improving capabilities through trainings, and sharing local knowledge (Narayan, Shah 2000). Laverack (2006) and Zimmerman (2000) identified participation (working together to improve capacities and skills), organizational capacity (managing local resources), and accountability (participating in decision making) as three interlinked elements of empowerment.

Sustainability means government bodies and groups deliver efficient services (Chavis 2001). Linked to development and diffusing social phenomena, Mansuri and Rao (2003) found this as the focus of programs based on community engagements. Community empowerment brings inclusion to overcome the livelihood barriers and put pressure on institutions and policy makers to reform access to assets and quality of life (Bennet 2002; Saegaert 2006). Such participatory community-based initiatives will help citizens to improve their capabilities for collective action leading to significant development outcomes, e.g. access to basic necessities and improved quality of life, and increasing inclusion and equality (Gutberlet 2009).

Capacity-building is rooted in development; it increases community abilities to define, asses and address the issues related to its members (Laverack 2006). It is also the combined outcome of community's commitment, resources, and skills that can be deployed in order to improve its strengths and address local problems. The economists advocating state's benevolence in institutional reform, property rights and governance quality, focused on institutions influencing long-term performance in urban development, governance, and policy agendas (Pugh 2000).

With enablement, technical know-how of the development agencies and available resources can be utilised. These include efficiency and entrepreneurship of private enterprises, mediation between the HHs and agencies by the CBOs providing management expertise, and self-help resources and local know-how of the participants (Pugh 2000). The problem of converting environmental improvements into action plans and partnership can be resolved by a participatory and transparent management through assigned responsibilities. As weak institutions, biasness, corruption and market manipulation could fail it, the international agencies provided support to develop institutions and deregulate the land and housing markets (LaNier et al. 1987).

Urban Poverty and Housing in Bangladesh

Urbanization in Bangladesh is outpacing the services, infrastructure and job provisions, making living difficult for the LIGs. Dhaka, the capital city with 16 million people, has grown tenfold in last 3 decades. More than 350,000 destitute migrants arrive annually to the city (BBS 2003; Lall 2006). In major cities of Bangladesh, 30-55% of the population live in the bastees (slums); these housed 25% of Dhaka's population in 1996 and 37.4% in 2003 (Le Blanc, Buckley 2006). Nearly 3 million people lived in 2156 bastees in Dhaka Metropolitan Area in the 1980s; the number of bastees increased to over 2800 in the next decade and to 3007 by mid-1990s (IDSS et al. 1996).

Bastees feature poverty, high density, lack of infrastructure and utilities, illiteracy, crime, environmental and psychological degradation, etc. (IDSS et al. 1996). These grow on waste dumps, open drains, embankments, low land, and along rail lines, 65% of which get inundated by rain (UNCHS 2003). Most basteebashis, working in the informal sector, face low wages, long working hours and insecurity (Le Blanc et al. 2006). Less than 20% of them are satisfied with 8 out of 11 services; among the poor in Dhaka the proportion was less than 5% (Rashid, Hussain 2006). The utility agencies shun these settlements, which manage low quality services limitedly from government, non-government organizations (NGOs) and individual sources, often illegally.

Poverty Situation

Bangladesh, a country of 150 million people, reduced the number of poor from 63 million in 2000 to 46 million in 2010 (TW 2013). BBS (2010) shows poverty declined at 1.47% annually since 1991; it was halved by 2012. But this has generally focused on the rural poor, though 9.4 million poor (21.3% of all urban) live in its urban areas (BBS 2010). Poverty leads to landlessness and limiting access to basic services and opportunities for education and employment. Thus accumulation of human capital becomes difficult. Little social protection makes the urban poor more vulnerable, and extends the possibility of remaining poor.

Public Housing

The developing countries faced with escalating urbanization, overcrowding and poverty, could not eliminate informal settlements, reduce shortage, or meet the demand of the LIGs. The policies and institutions in Bangladesh failed to facilitate the LIG an easy access to land and shelter. Cost and scarcity of resources and lack of access to finance and decision-making marginalized them. Housing and land provisions by government agencies and real-estate developers served only the privileged higher echelon. The government is failing to address shelter and basic needs of the majority, the poor, and assist others to supplement its efforts.

As the government could not provide secured land and affordable infrastructure and services in a large scale, the poorer HHs depended on the informal sector (Rahman 2002). It covered 85% of 1 million units in Dhaka; public sector units serve less than 10% of the population (Islam, Shafi 2008). Rahman (2010) identified gaps between the policies and programs the government dependent on external funds lacks commitment. Investment was left to the profit-driven private sector as the government considered housing not a productive good. Despite the programs producing little, the subsidized sites-and-services plots and staff housing, concentrated mainly in Dhaka, continued to dominate public

housing in Bangladesh.[1]

The government admitted its inability to meet the housing demand with meagre resources in the Fourth 5-Year Plan (1990-95).[2] It gradually intervened to plan and develop land, infrastructures and services, arrange finance, and stimulate private participation in order to increase the supply through public-private cooperation. The 1995-2000 Plan declared to improve people's quality of life and working environment by providing infrastructures, loans and other services. This led to the Slum Improvement Program consisting of consecutive projects that aimed at empowerment and capacity building in the bastees through participation, and social, economic and environmental development(s).

Approach to Bastees

Jacobs (1961) articulated functional aspects of what many label as slums; Stokes (1963) called them slums of hope. Yet states seldom tolerate them (UNCHS 1996; Abbott 2002). The government of Bangladesh abhors these bastees.[3] Eviction, which prevails strongly, only redistributes poverty to less valuable area (Rahman 2001). Instead, the 1990 Slum Problem Eradication Committee, 1990 Task Force Report and the 1993 National Housing Policy suggested upgrading the bastees.

Housing schemes by the NGOs show the poor's capability to improve housing increasing productivity and income. Yet these suffered from lack of land tenure (Rahman 1999, 2001). The Association of Development Agencies' intervention in an eviction in 1995 led to a project of 16,000 low-cost units through government-NGO collaboration. The project[4] ignored the need for an environment conducive to living with basic amenities and a price

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[1] Annually over 83,000 housing units were needed in Dhaka in the mid-1990s; this was 33% of the total urban area needs. MacDonald et al. (1997) projected a requirement of 2.34 million new units for a period till 2025 in Dhaka city, half of those for the LIG. The UNCHS estimated a need of 120,000 units in Dhaka and 400,000 units in other urban areas in 2003.

[2] The rich were favoured by the government agencies, shunning attention and investment for the others (Two Year Plan, 1978-80). Conventional approach couldn't solve the massive housing problem (Second Five Year Plan, 1980-85); hence own resources ought to be used selectivity to ease the shortage, increase the stock by providing plots, utilities and credit, and reduce the residential entitlement to optimize resource-utilization. The next Plan (1985-90) opined that the policy of developing posh enclaves amidst the bastees was to be reversed by providing civic facilities and comforts to others too.

[3] 173,000 squatters were evicted in one government move in 1975. Thereafter at least 135 cases were recorded in Dhaka in quarter of a century (Ahmed 2007). The Housing Minister told the BBC on 09.08.99 that the "bastees are overcrowded, ugly, unworthy of existence, and safe haven of miscreants, drug traders and abusers. Strict measures would be taken to remove the criminals' dens. We can no longer provide charity; they have to solve their own problems" (Amirul 1999). The military had the Destitute Camp created near the cantonment shifted in 1977.

[4] The Vashantek project, slowed by political and bureaucratic entangles, has 9024 200 ft² flats for the original basteebashis and 6000 300 ft² flats for others. The estimated cost including for land was US$ 770 mil. The price after adding 25% profit was to be recouped in 12 years by the developer.

affordable to the target group as financial constraints restricted such schemes.[5]

The government with the support of international agencies initiated various slum improvement projects implemented mainly by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), and some municipalities and government agencies. These included IG, infrastructure improvements, skill, hygiene and nutrition training, and community mobilization (Rahman 1999). The projects alleviated the unhygienic and unsanitary conditions of some bastees by constructing drains and sewage lines, footpaths, latrines, garbage bins, tube wells, flood protection, and street lighting. However, Chowdhury and Amin (2006) found that piecemeal implementation barring proper assessment, staffing and coordination contribute little.

Table 1: Summary of Slum Improvement Projects in Bangladesh, 1985-2015

	Name of Project	Funding Agency	Project Duration	Cost, US$ m (slum only)	No. of Municipals	No. of Slums	No. of Families
1	Slum Improvement Project	UNICEF	1985-88	0.10	5	25	2000
2	Slum Improvement Project II	UNICEF	1988-96	4.60	25	200	43000
3	Secondary Town Infrastructure Development Project I (slum component)	ADB	1992-97	0.62	10	43	255
4	Secondary Town Infrastructure Development Project II (slum component	ADB	1996-01	1.28	22	100	10000
5	Secondary Towns Integrated Flood Protection Project II	ADB	1992-98	0.61	6	49	8356
6	Urban Basic Service Delivery Project	UNICEF	1996-01	5.8	4		165000
7	Community Empowerment for Urban Poverty Alleviation	UNDP	1996-01	10	4		120000
8	Municipal Services Project (slum component)	WB	1995-00		16		0
9	Urban Poverty Reduction Project	ADB	1998-02		1		0
10	Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation Project	UNCHS-UNDP	2000-07		11		
11	Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction	UNCHS-UNDP	2008-15	120	23		813,005

Slum Improvement Program in Bangladesh

The Department of Social Services implemented a project in Bangladesh during 1982–1985, based on a UNICEF-funded study of poor in four large cities. It aimed to provide IG loans and healthcare to women, establish day-care centres, and build tube-wells and latrines in few bastees. The project slowed by lack of experience in delivering basic urban services and shortage and frequent transfers of staff. Hence LGED was asked to

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[5] UNDP et al. (2007) estimated that conventional upgrading would cost US$ 35/capita 'on-site' infrastructure upgrading and US$ 15/capita 'off-site', needing a total of US$ 300 million over 10 years. Moreover, an additional US$ 125 million would be required to deal with the newly arriving 250,000 people during the 'transition'.

coordinate it and strengthen institutional collaboration (UNICEF 1988). Since then, it has implemented a number of slum improvement projects with various components.

While UBSD addressed the basic service needs, LPUPA assisted the communities to alleviate poverty through partnership, women empowerment and participation. As UNICEF-funded Support for Basic Services to Urban Areas (SBSUA) project was similar, the second phases of both LPUPA and SBSUA were merged to run till 2007. The LGED implemented the program with technical assistance from the UNCHS through a Community Development Fund (service infrastructure) and Poverty Alleviation Fund (training and IG). Phase I of the project included supply of basic facilities, poverty alleviation, empowerment and capacity building; Phase II added savings and credit, education and hygiene to sustain the project benefits. These were delivered through Community Development Committees (CDCs). Micro-credit was given to the credit groups organized by them.

Organization

In the slum improvement projects, about 20 slum-dwellers, a majority of them women, are mobilized into Primary Groups (PGs). The PGs in turn form the CDCs, that took a year to train, representing about 200-300 HHs. Cluster Committees are formed with several CDCs to share experiences and lessons through networking. Federations of clusters provide training, assist in establishing partnerships and linkages, and channel resources from government agencies. These also provide oversight for the CDCs and SCGs, advocate for pro-poor planning, and monitor the distribution of local government resources. Till June 2014, the CDCs mobilised 813,005 poor HHs (UPPR, 2015).

The composition, responsibilities and the hierarchical structure of the Project Implementation Committees (PICs) in SIP was often grey; the dual management created problem. The elected Commissioners represented the community in most of the development and socio-political activities, conveyed community opinion, and were mediating access to municipality resources. But according to Ghafur (2000), little power in the committees reduced their interest, affecting participation in environment and income related municipal activities.

Inhibition and lack of social skills made it difficult for the CHWs (Community Health Workers educating and building health awareness) and COs (Community Organizers motivating and organizing the beneficiaries) to communicate with the beneficiaries. They could overcome this through the pilot projects that engaged the communities and gained their trust (Rahman 1999). Slum power structure often prevented the COs from reading community's needs and wishes unbiasedly, who succumb to the leaders' influence.

Participation

Ghafur (2000) found that the SIP-beneficiaries did not understand participation though were critical of municipality's role. The isolation and deprivation that result from exclusion of HHs from the decision-making process, made the communities reluctant to receive social development facilities available to them. This inhibited the municipalities playing an 'enabling' role allowing 'community participation'. Later projects, trying to facilitate decision making by the beneficiaries, overcame some of the participation problems.

Menon (1998) termed SIP as a community based effort despite little participation by the beneficiaries. Decisions were influenced by community leaders and committee members who ignored residents' opinion and needs, viz. in laying out and locating infrastructure. The elected representatives and local leaders were to facilitate addressing poverty, assisting the CDCs to partner the LIGs in developing infrastructure, and linking them to the development process as 'partners', not 'beneficiaries'. However, the opportunity for winning contracts lures many to participate in local politics and manipulate resource allocation (Ghafur 2000).

Disenfranchisement starts with the authority identifying HH-needs similar to those of standard urban HHs (Choguill 1994). But, an innovative and inclusive 'Participatory Identification of the Poor' method is used in the UPPR to target the poorest HHs. Communities discuss and set social, economic and physical criteria to identify and categorize HH economic status. Certain accountability was achieved by adhering to guidelines, monitored through regular reports and visits by government and funding agencies. The beneficiary representatives had nominal voice in the committees as the Municipality Chairman was not accountable to them. As officials were included, the manner in which meetings were held disadvantaged the slum members.

Capacity Building

Capacity building initiatives in the slum improvement projects included training of representatives, officials and leaders on poverty alleviation through on-field participation, focus group discussion, construction guidance and training, and literacy of finance, negotiation, contract management, etc. The projects also introduced the concept of safer cities and development strategies. SODEV (1999) identified inadequate backup support to field staff, rigidity in implementing the physical components, and selection procedure as problems in the SIP. This was overcome by participatory decision making facilitated by capacity building, e.g. in UPPR.

HHs' ability to identify problems played no role in SIP's top-down approach; participation gradually eliminated that. The CDCs identified needs and prepared Community Action Plans (CAPs) to devise ways for improving the living conditions; the demand-driven approach set no target or fund at the onset. 615 CDCs, 8,000 primary groups and 145,000 families implemented various components of the program through the CAPs (UNDP et al. 2007). Each CDC also received support to prepare, deliver and manage infrastructure and service contracts. Such exercises help community members realize their capacity and right, and create leadership scope.

The CHWs required more training, instrument, medicine and better pays (SODEV, 1999). Health awareness grew considerably as evident in reduced child mortality (UPPR, 2015). But management capability was not strengthened to match the rate of program-expansion. Maintenance plan and fund and skilled manpower could sustain the achievement. Apprenticeship gave hope and reduced criminal propensity among the unemployed youth. In UPPR, 65,234 beneficiaries have received skill development training till June 2014 (UPPR, 2015). Of the 7000 apprentices trained till 2003, 85% found jobs within 6 months of training, and businesses were expanded. Construction related and organizational jobs were also created within the slums.

Discussion

The developing countries took a variety of housing delivery approaches, often revising previous efforts. As direct delivery failed to reach the LIGs in the 1950-60s, 'aided self-help' and 'site-and-services' followed in the next decades. But poor economy and small output made them unsustainable. It was evident that no benefit could be sustained without a holistic approach to supplement the ability of the LIGs. Though participation and partnership facilitated by the governments emerged as a mode, institutions with governance at its core ignored economic freedom of the urban poor. Bangladesh needs a radical approach to housing activities to close huge gaps.

Amidst a scarcity of assets and technical knowledge, Ghafur (2000) suspected that only top-down interventions could improve the slums. Dependence on external resources and technical assistance would have to be continued as the dwellers would fail to mobilize resources and acquire technical knowledge to design and implement developments. He advocated for their entitlement to state patronage to improve slum environment and livelihood. But according to CIVIS (2003), patronage shuns capabilities, forces dependence on external assistance, and makes housing unsustainable. Transparent management, participatory decision-making, and building skill and institutional and organizational capabilities could bring good governance. Notwithstanding no participation in top-down approaches, project participation since 1999 has been enabling the communities to make decisions and find solutions with available resources.

Ghafur (2000) also refuted two assumptions: the SIP-beneficiaries and the slums would be homogenous socio-economically, and project guidelines that did not fit contextual peculiarities would bring desired outcome. Moreover, efforts to prepare the guidelines, build staff capability, motivate and organize the beneficiaries, and convince the landowners, became useless as the lessons of the pilot projects were not analysed and synthesized. As slums were selected without background study, some worse or larger ones got left out. The later projects gradually added more components, yet could not include the squatters without tenure.

Data was available only from sources within LGED or from reviewers engaged by it. Continuous project funding depended on achieving numerical targets. But attributes like empowerment, capacity building, etc. cannot be measured by numbers. Post-project effects could only be measured and evaluated through monitoring. Also some aspects that had affected the condition of the beneficiaries, e.g. their health and hygiene situations, were not measured over a period and compared with pre-project situations to gauge the changes. Available data suggest positive effects of awareness, capacity building, skill training, credit, women's emancipation, and environmental improvement on the shelters, though not adequate.

Housing programs in Bangladesh set numbered targets that many failed to reach (Rahman 2010). Though the LIG should have the priority, most of the projects catered for select groups. Some changes in government approach started to emerge only to meet the requirements of the international agencies funding various infrastructure projects in the developing world (Rahman 1999). As the government gradually shifted from being the 'provider' to focus on social, economic, environmental and institutional developments of the urban poor, the slum improvement projects removed the notion of 'shelter' as an 'end product'.

Conclusion

Bangladesh, a low-income populous country, cannot wait for resources and technology to become available. It should promote human development, taking collective institutional responses and social responsibility through improvement of living qualities, poverty reduction, job creation and production, environmental sustainability, and economic enhancement, building individual capabilities to convert resources into desirable outcome to be transmitted through time. The slum improvement program through various projects is 'enabling' the basteebashis to make and sustain housing improvements. Active participation of all countries in achieving the MDG is necessary for development. They could modernize institutions, infrastructure investment, and macroeconomic stability, and enhance human capabilities with better health and education (Costantini, Monni 2008). Considerable gaps remain between SD rhetoric and operations (Jepson 2007). Due to imminent concerns like cost of living, ill governance, and pollution, cities stop pursuing sustainability. The world has pinned its hopes on this to solve the environmental and societal problems (Roseland 2000). Though, policies for sustainable housing for the poor alone may not solve the urban problems, without them no solution can be found.

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