



Migration Diaspora And Remittance Review

Volume: 6
Issue: 2
Year: 2026
ISSN: 2791-254X

Migration, Population Change and Urban Development in Bangladesh: A Sociological Analysis

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Migration Diaspora and Remittance Review
pp.1-18

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64907/xkmf.v6i2.mdrr.1>

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Abstract

This study examines the interrelationship between migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh within a comprehensive sociological framework. Rapid urbanisation in the country is largely driven by rural-urban migration, influenced by economic inequality, climate-induced displacement, and demographic transitions. Drawing on secondary data from national and international sources, the research analyses migration patterns, population dynamics, and their implications for urban growth and sustainability. The study employs push-pull theory alongside urban development perspectives to interpret the underlying causes and consequences of migration. Findings indicate that poverty, environmental vulnerability, and employment opportunities are primary drivers of migration, while unplanned urban expansion has resulted in significant challenges, including slum proliferation, informal labour dominance, infrastructure deficits, and environmental degradation. The research highlights that although migration contributes to economic development and labour supply, it simultaneously intensifies urban inequality and sustainability concerns. The study concludes by emphasising the need for integrated policy interventions focusing on decentralised urbanisation, rural development, climate resilience, and effective governance to ensure balanced and sustainable urban growth in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Migration, Urbanisation, Population Change, Bangladesh, Sustainable Development, Urban Development.

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1. Introduction

Migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh are deeply interconnected processes that have significantly transformed the country's socio-economic structure over the past few decades. Bangladesh, once a predominantly rural society, is now experiencing rapid urbanisation due to population growth, climate change, and economic transformation. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2022), the urban population has increased dramatically, with more than 40 per cent of the total population currently living in urban areas, and this figure is projected to reach 56 per cent by 2050. This rapid urban growth is largely driven by rural-to-urban migration, particularly toward Dhaka, which has become one of the fastest-growing megacities in the world.

Rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is primarily influenced by push and pull factors. Push factors include poverty, landlessness, riverbank erosion, climate-induced disasters, and lack of employment opportunities in rural areas. Pull factors include better income opportunities, access to healthcare, education, and urban facilities. The well-known phrase "Dhaka means Taka" reflects the economic attraction of urban areas for rural populations (World Bank, 2023). Climate change also plays a crucial role in migration patterns, as coastal and flood-prone regions experience frequent natural disasters, forcing people to move to urban centres (IOM, 2022).

Urban development in Bangladesh has been heavily concentrated in Dhaka and Chittagong, creating significant infrastructure pressure and social inequality. Rapid and unplanned urbanisation has resulted in overcrowding, slum expansion, environmental pollution, and inadequate public services (UN-Habitat, 2022). Approximately 65 per cent of employment in Dhaka is in the informal sector, providing livelihood opportunities for migrants but offering limited social protection and job security (BBS, 2022). As a result, urban areas have become centres of both economic growth and social vulnerability.

Population change in Bangladesh is also influenced by demographic transition, including declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy. Although fertility rates have declined, the large population base continues to drive migration and urban expansion (United Nations, 2022). This demographic shift creates both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development, particularly in terms of employment, housing, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

The importance of studying migration and urban development lies in its direct connection to economic growth and poverty reduction. Urbanisation contributes significantly to national GDP and industrial development, particularly through the garment and service sectors (Asian Development Bank, 2021). However, uncontrolled urban growth creates environmental risks, including air pollution, water contamination, and climate vulnerability. Therefore, effective urban

planning and migration management are essential to ensure sustainable development.

Despite several studies on migration and urbanisation in Bangladesh, there is still a lack of integrated research combining population change, migration dynamics, and sustainable urban development within a comprehensive analytical framework. Most studies focus either on migration drivers or urban development challenges separately. This study aims to fill this gap by analysing migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh in an integrated manner.

The study is significant because it provides policy-oriented insights for managing urban growth, reducing poverty, and improving living conditions for migrants. It also supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 13 (Climate Action) (United Nations, 2015). By examining demographic trends and urban development challenges, this research contributes to sustainable urban planning and policy formulation in Bangladesh.

General Objective

To analyse migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh and their impact on sustainable development.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the drivers of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh
- To examine population change and urban growth trends

- To analyse socio-economic impacts of migration
- To evaluate urban development challenges
- To suggest policy recommendations for sustainable urban development

2. Literature Review

Migration, population change, and urban development have been extensively studied in the context of developing countries, particularly in South Asia. Bangladesh, as one of the most densely populated and rapidly urbanising nations, has attracted significant scholarly attention regarding the dynamics of rural-urban migration and its implications for socio-economic development. Existing literature highlights that migration is not merely a demographic process but a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by economic, environmental, social, and political factors.

A substantial body of research emphasises the economic drivers of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. According to the World Bank (2023), disparities in income opportunities between rural and urban areas remain one of the most influential determinants of migration. Rural households often face limited employment opportunities, low agricultural productivity, and seasonal income instability, which push individuals toward urban centres. At the same time, cities such as Dhaka and Chittagong act as economic hubs, offering employment in manufacturing, services, and the informal sector. This dual dynamic reflects the classical push-pull structure of migration,

where economic hardship in rural areas coincides with perceived opportunities in urban environments (Todaro, 1969).

In addition to economic motivations, environmental factors have increasingly been recognised as critical drivers of migration in Bangladesh. The country is highly vulnerable to climate change, including sea-level rise, cyclones, flooding, and riverbank erosion. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2022) identifies Bangladesh as one of the most climate-affected countries, where environmental degradation forces large numbers of people to relocate. Coastal regions, in particular, experience recurrent displacement due to salinity intrusion and extreme weather events. These environmental stressors contribute to what is often termed “climate-induced migration,” a growing phenomenon that significantly influences population distribution and urban expansion (Black et al., 2011).

Urbanisation trends in Bangladesh are closely linked to migration patterns. The United Nations (2022) reports that Bangladesh is undergoing rapid urban growth, with projections indicating that more than half of the population will reside in urban areas by mid-century. This growth is largely driven by rural-urban migration rather than natural population increase alone. Dhaka, one of the fastest-growing megacities globally, exemplifies the consequences of unplanned urban expansion. According to UN-Habitat (2022), rapid urbanisation has outpaced infrastructure development, leading to overcrowding, inadequate housing, and insufficient public services.

One of the most visible outcomes of uncontrolled urbanisation is the proliferation of slums and informal settlements. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of urban residents in Bangladesh live in slum conditions characterised by poor sanitation, limited access to clean water, and insecure housing (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2022). These settlements emerge due to the inability of formal housing markets to accommodate low-income migrants. The literature suggests that slum dwellers often face multiple vulnerabilities, including health risks, social exclusion, and economic insecurity (Hossain, 2013). The rapid expansion of informal settlements reflects broader structural inequalities within urban development processes.

The role of the informal economy in absorbing migrant labour has also been widely discussed. The Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2021) notes that the majority of urban employment in Bangladesh is concentrated in the informal sector, including garment work, construction, transport, and domestic services. While the informal economy provides livelihood opportunities for migrants, it is often associated with low wages, lack of job security, and absence of social protection. Scholars argue that this duality-economic inclusion without social security-creates a paradox where migrants contribute to urban economies but remain socially and economically vulnerable (Chen, 2012).

Population change, particularly demographic transition, is another key theme in the literature. Bangladesh has experienced a

decline in fertility rates and an increase in life expectancy over recent decades (United Nations, 2022). However, the large population base continues to exert pressure on urban systems. Demographic changes influence migration patterns by altering labour supply, household structures, and dependency ratios. Bloom et al. (2003) argue that demographic transition can create a “demographic dividend,” but only if supported by appropriate economic and social policies. In the absence of such policies, rapid population growth can exacerbate urban challenges such as unemployment and housing shortages.

Health and environmental impacts of urbanisation are also significant areas of concern. Rapid urban growth in Bangladesh has led to increased air and water pollution, waste management problems, and public health risks. The World Health Organisation (2021) highlights that urban populations, particularly those in slums, are more vulnerable to respiratory diseases, waterborne illnesses, and malnutrition. Environmental degradation not only affects human health but also undermines the sustainability of urban ecosystems. Scholars emphasise that sustainable urban development requires integrated approaches that address both environmental and socio-economic dimensions (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Governance and policy frameworks play a crucial role in shaping urban development outcomes. Existing studies indicate that weak institutional capacity, inadequate urban planning, and poor policy implementation are major challenges in Bangladesh (ADB,

2021). Although several policies have been introduced to manage urban growth, including the National Urban Sector Policy, their implementation has been limited due to a lack of coordination and resources. Roy (2009) argues that governance deficits in developing countries often result in fragmented urban development, where economic growth occurs alongside social inequality and environmental degradation.

Another important area of literature focuses on the relationship between migration and sustainable development. Migration is increasingly recognised as both an opportunity and a challenge for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations (2015) emphasises that well-managed migration can contribute to poverty reduction, economic growth, and social inclusion. However, unmanaged migration can lead to urban congestion, inequality, and environmental stress. Scholars highlight the need for integrated policy approaches that link migration management with urban planning, economic development, and climate adaptation (de Haas, 2010).

Despite the extensive body of research, several gaps remain. First, many studies examine migration, population change, and urban development separately, without integrating these dimensions into a unified analytical framework. Second, there is limited research on the lived experiences of migrants in urban areas, particularly regarding their access to services and social mobility. Third, empirical studies on climate-induced migration and its long-term impact on urban development are still emerging.

Finally, there is a need for more policy-oriented research that bridges the gap between academic findings and practical implementation.

In summary, the literature indicates that migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh are deeply interconnected processes shaped by economic, environmental, and institutional factors. While migration contributes to economic growth and urban expansion, it also creates significant challenges related to housing, employment, infrastructure, and sustainability. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive and integrated policy interventions that consider the complex interactions between demographic trends and urban development processes.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates migration theory and urban development perspectives to analyse the relationship between migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh. The framework primarily draws on the push-pull theory of migration, complemented by urbanisation theories and sustainable development concepts.

The push-pull theory, originally developed by Lee (1966), provides a foundational explanation for migration behaviour. According to this theory, migration is driven by a combination of factors that push individuals away from their place of origin and factors that pull them toward a

destination. Push factors include economic hardship, unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, and lack of access to basic services. In the context of Bangladesh, rural areas often experience these conditions due to limited economic opportunities, climate vulnerability, and infrastructural deficiencies. Pull factors, on the other hand, include better employment prospects, higher wages, improved living conditions, and access to education and healthcare, which are typically associated with urban centres such as Dhaka.

The relevance of push-pull theory in this study lies in its ability to explain the underlying causes of rural-urban migration in Bangladesh. Economic disparities between rural and urban areas act as a primary driver of migration, while environmental factors such as floods and cyclones intensify displacement. However, the theory also acknowledges the role of intervening obstacles, such as migration costs, social networks, and policy barriers, which influence individual decision-making (Lee, 1966). By applying this theoretical lens, the study systematically examines how different push and pull factors interact to shape migration patterns.

In addition to push-pull theory, the study incorporates the Todaro model of migration, which emphasises the role of expected income differentials in migration decisions (Todaro, 1969). According to this model, individuals migrate not only based on actual wage differences but also on their expectations of future earnings in urban areas. This perspective is particularly

relevant in Bangladesh, where migrants are often attracted by perceived opportunities in the informal sector despite the risks of unemployment and low wages. The Todaro model helps explain why migration continues even when urban labour markets are saturated, highlighting the importance of perceptions and expectations in migration behaviour.

Urbanisation theory provides another important dimension of the theoretical framework. Classical urbanisation theories suggest that urban growth is a natural outcome of economic development and industrialisation (Harris & Todaro, 1970). Cities serve as centres of economic activity, innovation, and social transformation. In Bangladesh, urbanisation has been closely linked to the expansion of the garment industry and service sectors, which attract large numbers of migrants. However, unlike the planned urbanisation observed in developed countries, urban growth in Bangladesh is largely unplanned and informal, leading to significant socio-economic challenges.

The concept of informal urbanism is particularly relevant in this context. Roy (2005) argues that informal settlements are not merely a symptom of urban poverty but an integral part of urban development processes in developing countries. In Bangladesh, the growth of slums and informal economies reflects the inability of formal institutions to accommodate rapid population influx. Informal urbanism highlights the need to recognise and integrate informal sectors into urban planning and

policy frameworks rather than treating them as temporary or marginal phenomena.

Sustainable development theory further enriches the analytical framework of this study. The concept of sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations (2015), emphasises the need to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. In the context of urban development, sustainability involves ensuring that cities can accommodate growing populations without compromising environmental quality or social equity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), provide a global framework for addressing urban challenges.

The integration of sustainable development theory allows the study to evaluate the long-term implications of migration and population change on urban systems. Rapid urbanisation in Bangladesh poses significant sustainability challenges, including environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and social inequality. By applying this theoretical perspective, the study assesses whether current urban development patterns are aligned with sustainability principles and identifies potential policy interventions.

Another important theoretical perspective is the demographic transition theory, which explains changes in population growth patterns over time (Notestein, 1945). Bangladesh has experienced a decline in fertility rates and improvements in life expectancy, leading to changes in population

structure. These demographic shifts influence migration patterns by altering labour supply and economic opportunities. The theory provides a macro-level understanding of population dynamics and their impact on urban development.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives creates a comprehensive analytical framework that captures the complexity of migration and urban development processes. The push-pull theory and Todaro model explain the causes and motivations of migration, while urbanisation theory and informal urbanism provide insights into the spatial and structural outcomes of migration. Sustainable development theory and demographic transition theory offer a broader perspective on the long-term implications of these processes.

In summary, the theoretical framework of this study combines migration theories, urbanisation perspectives, and sustainability concepts to analyse the interconnected dynamics of migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh. This integrated approach enables a deeper understanding of both the causes and consequences of migration and provides a strong foundation for policy-oriented analysis.

4. Research Gap

Although migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh have been widely discussed in academic and policy literature, several research gaps still exist.

Most existing studies focus on individual aspects such as migration drivers, urbanisation trends, or climate change impacts, but there is limited integrated research that examines the combined effect of migration, population change, and urban development in a single analytical framework.

- First, many studies emphasise rural-urban migration and its economic impact, but they do not adequately analyse the relationship between population dynamics and sustainable urban development. For example, research by the World Bank (2023) and UN-Habitat (2022) focuses mainly on urban infrastructure and economic growth, while climate-related migration studies focus on environmental displacement (IOM, 2022). However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that combine demographic, economic, environmental, and policy perspectives to understand the full impact of migration on urban development in Bangladesh.
- Second, there is limited research on the socio-economic conditions of migrants in urban areas, particularly in informal settlements. While the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022) and Urban Health Survey (UHS) provide data on urban populations, a detailed analysis of migrant living conditions, employment security, and social vulnerability remains insufficient. More research is needed to

understand how migration affects the quality of life, housing conditions, and access to basic services in urban areas.

- Third, existing literature often lacks a strong policy-oriented framework for sustainable urban development. Many studies identify problems such as slum growth, informal employment, and environmental pollution, but they do not provide clear and integrated policy recommendations for addressing these challenges (Asian Development Bank, 2021). This creates a gap between research findings and policy implementation.
- Fourth, climate-induced migration is an emerging issue in Bangladesh, but empirical research on its long-term impact on urban development is still limited. Although several studies highlight the role of climate change in migration, there is a need for more systematic analysis of how environmental displacement affects urban planning, infrastructure, and economic sustainability (United Nations, 2022).
- Finally, there is a lack of interdisciplinary research combining sociology, economics, environmental studies, and urban planning in the context of migration and population change in Bangladesh. Most studies focus on a single discipline, which limits a comprehensive understanding of the issue. This study attempts to fill this gap by integrating multiple perspectives and providing a

holistic analysis of migration, population change, and urban development.

In summary, the research gap lies in the lack of integrated, policy-oriented, and interdisciplinary studies that examine migration, population change, and urban development together in Bangladesh. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis supported by secondary data and policy frameworks, contributing to sustainable urban development research and practice

5. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive research design based on secondary data analysis to explore the complex relationship between migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh. Given the broad and interdisciplinary nature of the research problem, the methodology is structured to integrate sociological, demographic, and urban planning perspectives in a coherent analytical framework.

The research relies exclusively on secondary data collected from credible and authoritative sources. These include national datasets such as reports from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and the Urban Health Survey (UHS), as well as international publications from organisations including the World Bank, United Nations, UN-Habitat, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). These sources provide comprehensive data on migration trends,

demographic changes, urban growth patterns, socio-economic indicators, and environmental challenges. The use of secondary data allows for a **व्यापक** and cost-effective analysis of long-term trends and national-level dynamics, which would be difficult to capture through primary data collection within the scope of this study.

A purposive document sampling technique is employed to select relevant reports, policy documents, and academic literature. This approach ensures that only the most pertinent and high-quality sources are included in the analysis. Documents are selected based on their relevance to key research themes such as rural-urban migration, population dynamics, urbanisation, climate change, and sustainable development. Priority is given to recent publications to ensure the timeliness and accuracy of the findings, while foundational theoretical works are also incorporated to strengthen the analytical framework.

The analytical approach of the study is primarily qualitative and interpretative. Data collected from various sources are systematically reviewed, compared, and synthesised to identify patterns, trends, and relationships. The study does not rely on statistical modelling but instead focuses on thematic analysis, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic and environmental dimensions of migration and urban development. Information is organised into key thematic areas, including migration drivers, population change, urban growth, housing conditions, employment patterns, environmental challenges, and governance issues.

To provide a theoretical foundation for the analysis, the study applies the push-pull theory of migration. This theory explains migration as a result of factors that push individuals away from rural areas, such as poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, and lack of services, and factors that pull them toward urban areas, including better employment opportunities, access to education and healthcare, and improved living standards. By applying this framework, the study systematically interprets the causes of migration in Bangladesh and links them to broader socio-economic and environmental conditions.

In addition to push-pull theory, the study incorporates an urban development framework to examine how migration and population change influence urban systems. This framework focuses on key dimensions such as infrastructure development, housing, employment, environmental sustainability, and governance. By combining these theoretical perspectives, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how migration interacts with urbanisation processes and contributes to both opportunities and challenges in urban development.

A comparative policy analysis is also conducted to evaluate existing urban development and migration-related policies in Bangladesh. This involves reviewing national policy documents and comparing them with international development frameworks, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The analysis assesses the effectiveness of current policies in addressing issues such as urban planning,

housing, employment, and climate adaptation, and identifies gaps between policy formulation and implementation.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, the study adopts a triangulation approach by using multiple data sources. Information from different organisations is cross-checked to ensure consistency and accuracy. For example, migration data from BBS is compared with findings from the World Bank and IOM, while urban development trends are analysed using reports from UN-Habitat and the United Nations. This multi-source verification strengthens the credibility of the analysis and reduces the risk of bias.

However, the study acknowledges certain limitations associated with the use of secondary data. Since the research depends on existing datasets, it is constrained by the availability, scope, and quality of published information. Some data may be outdated or lack detailed disaggregation, particularly in relation to informal settlements and migrant populations. Additionally, the absence of primary data means that the study cannot capture individual-level experiences or perceptions of migrants. Despite these limitations, the use of diverse and reputable data sources ensures a robust and comprehensive analysis.

Ethical considerations are maintained throughout the research process. All data sources are properly cited, and no manipulation or misrepresentation of data is undertaken. The study adheres to academic integrity and ensures that all information is used responsibly and transparently.

In summary, this research methodology combines qualitative analysis, theoretical frameworks, and policy evaluation to provide a holistic understanding of migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh. The integrated approach enables the study to address complex research questions and generate meaningful insights for policy formulation and sustainable development planning.

6. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the key findings of the study and discusses each sector of migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh in detail. The findings are based on secondary data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Urban Health Survey (UHS), World Bank, UN-Habitat, and other international reports. The analysis highlights how migration and population change influence urban development and socio-economic conditions in Bangladesh.

4.1 Drivers of Rural-Urban Migration

One of the most significant findings of this study is that rural-urban migration in Bangladesh is primarily driven by economic, environmental, and social factors. Poverty, landlessness, natural disasters, and lack of employment opportunities in rural areas push people toward cities, while better income opportunities, education, healthcare, and urban facilities attract migrants to urban areas.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022), a large portion of rural migrants move to Dhaka and Chittagong in

search of employment in the informal and industrial sectors. Climate change also plays a major role, particularly in coastal regions where river erosion, cyclones, and flooding force people to leave their homes (IOM, 2022). The push-pull theory explains this phenomenon, as negative conditions in rural areas push people out while positive opportunities in cities pull them in (Lee, 1966).

Economic motivation remains the strongest factor behind migration. Many migrants believe that urban areas provide better income and livelihood opportunities, particularly in garment factories, construction, transport, and service sectors (World Bank, 2023). However, despite moving to cities, many migrants continue to live in poor housing conditions and work in low-paying informal jobs.

Table 1: Migration Drivers

Sector	Key Finding	Impact
Poverty	Major push factor	Rural people move to cities
Climate change	Coastal displacement	Environmental migration
Employment	Strong pull factor	Urban labor growth
Education	Attraction to cities	Youth migration

Migration is largely economic and climate-driven, which increases urban population pressure.

4.2 Population Change and Urban Growth

The second major finding shows that population change significantly contributes to rapid urban growth in Bangladesh. The urban population has increased rapidly over the last few decades, and cities are expanding due to both natural population growth and migration.

According to the United Nations (2022), Bangladesh is one of the fastest urbanising countries in South Asia, with the urban population projected to reach more than 50 per cent by 2040. Dhaka alone receives nearly 500,000 migrants every year, making it one of the most densely populated cities in the world (World Bank, 2023).

Population growth creates demand for housing, transportation, healthcare, and public services. As a result, cities struggle to provide adequate infrastructure and services for the growing population. UN-Habitat (2022) reports that rapid urban growth without proper planning leads to overcrowding, traffic congestion, and environmental degradation.

Table 2: Population and Urban Growth

Indicator	Situation
Urban population	Rapidly increasing
Dhaka migration	500,000 per year
Population density	Extremely high

Indicator	Situation
Infrastructure	Under pressure

Population change is a major driver of urban expansion and infrastructure challenges.

4.3 Slum Growth and Housing Conditions

Another important finding is the rapid growth of slums and poor housing conditions in urban areas. Due to high migration and limited housing facilities, many migrants settle in informal settlements and slum areas.

UN-Habitat (2022) states that a large portion of urban residents in Dhaka live in slums with poor sanitation, overcrowded housing, and limited access to clean water and electricity. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022) also reports that housing shortages are increasing due to rapid urban growth.

Slum residents face multiple social and economic challenges, including eviction threats, health risks, and a lack of basic services. These conditions increase social inequality and reduce the quality of life for migrants.

Table 3: Housing and Slum Conditions

Issue	Impact
Slums	Poor living conditions
Overcrowding	Health risk
Poor sanitation	Disease spread
Housing shortage	Social inequality

Rapid migration leads to a housing crisis and slum expansion in cities.

4.4 Informal Economy and Employment

The study also finds that the majority of migrants work in the informal sector. Informal employment includes garment factories, rickshaw pulling, construction work, street vending, and domestic work.

According to BBS (2022), about 65 per cent of urban employment is informal, which provides income but lacks job security and social protection. World Bank (2023) states that informal workers often earn low wages and have no access to healthcare, insurance, or pension benefits.

Although informal employment helps migrants survive in cities, it also creates economic vulnerability and social insecurity. Workers are exposed to exploitation, low wages, and unsafe working conditions.

Table 4: Employment Sector

Sector	Situation
Informal jobs	65% employment
Garment sector	Major employer
Low wages	Economic pressure
No security	Social risk

Informal employment supports migrants but increases economic vulnerability.

4.5 Health and Environmental Risks

Urban migration and population growth also create serious health and environmental challenges. Air pollution, water contamination, poor sanitation, and overcrowding increase disease risks in urban areas.

UN-Habitat (2022) reports that Dhaka is one of the most polluted cities in the world, with high levels of air and water pollution. The World Health Organisation (2021) highlights that urban slum residents are more vulnerable to respiratory diseases, waterborne diseases, and malnutrition.

Environmental degradation is also increasing due to industrialisation and urban expansion. Climate change and environmental pollution reduce the quality of life and create long-term sustainability challenges.

Table 5: Health and Environment

Issue	Impact
Air pollution	Respiratory diseases
Water pollution	Health hazards
Overcrowding	Disease spread
Climate change	Environmental risk

Urban growth increases health and environmental vulnerability.

4.6 Governance and Urban Policy Gaps

The final finding shows that weak governance and policy implementation are

major challenges in managing urban development in Bangladesh. Although urban development policies exist, many of them are not properly implemented.

The Urban Development Policy 2014 remains largely unimplemented, and outdated laws such as the Town Improvement Act 1953 still influence urban planning (ADB, 2021). Weak coordination between government institutions creates inefficiency in urban management.

Effective governance and policy reform are necessary to ensure sustainable urban development and reduce migration pressure on major cities.

Table 6: Governance Issues

Issue	Impact
Weak policy	Poor planning
Outdated laws	Urban problems
Weak coordination	Service failure
Limited investment	Slow development

Strong governance is essential for sustainable urban development.

4.7 Recommendation

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, several policy and practical recommendations can be proposed to address the challenges of migration, population change, and urban development in Bangladesh. These recommendations aim to ensure sustainable urban development, improve the living conditions of migrants, and support national and global development

goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Strengthening Rural Development

Programs: The government should focus on strengthening rural development programs to reduce excessive rural-urban migration. Many people migrate to urban areas due to a lack of employment opportunities, poor infrastructure, and limited access to education and healthcare in rural areas. Improving rural industries, agriculture, and local employment opportunities can reduce migration pressure on cities. Investment in rural infrastructure, transportation, and small-scale industries will create employment and encourage people to stay in rural areas (World Bank, 2023). Balanced regional development is essential to control unplanned urbanisation and population pressure in major cities.

Planned Urban Development and Infrastructure Expansion:

Urban development planning should be strengthened to accommodate the growing population in cities. Proper housing, sanitation, transportation, and healthcare facilities must be ensured for migrants and urban residents. The government and city corporations should implement modern urban planning strategies, including smart city development, slum upgrading, and sustainable infrastructure. Urban planning should focus on creating affordable housing, improved drainage systems, and better waste management to reduce environmental pollution and overcrowding (UN-Habitat, 2022). Effective urban governance will ensure sustainable and inclusive city development.

Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster

Management: Climate-induced migration is a major challenge in Bangladesh, and it requires strong climate adaptation strategies. The government should implement coastal protection programs, riverbank protection, and disaster management systems to reduce forced migration. Climate-resilient infrastructure and livelihood programs should be introduced in vulnerable areas to prevent displacement. International organisations and development partners should support climate adaptation projects and provide financial assistance for sustainable development (IOM, 2022). Climate-resilient urban planning will reduce environmental migration and population pressure in cities.

7. Conclusion

Migration, population change, and urban development are deeply interconnected processes that continue to shape the socio-economic and environmental landscape of Bangladesh. This study has demonstrated that rapid urbanisation in the country is primarily driven by rural-urban migration, influenced by economic inequality, demographic transition, and increasing environmental vulnerability. While migration contributes to economic growth by supplying labour to urban industries and service sectors, it simultaneously generates complex challenges related to housing, employment, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability.

The findings indicate that economic factors remain the dominant drivers of migration, as individuals move to urban areas in search of

better livelihood opportunities. However, environmental pressures, particularly climate-induced displacement, are becoming increasingly significant in influencing migration patterns. This dual dynamic highlights the need to consider both economic and environmental dimensions when analysing population movement in Bangladesh. Urban centres, especially Dhaka, continue to experience rapid population growth, which has exceeded the capacity of existing infrastructure and public services.

One of the most critical outcomes of this process is the expansion of informal settlements and the growing dependence on the informal economy. A large proportion of migrants reside in slums under inadequate living conditions and engage in low-paying, insecure employment. Although these urban systems provide opportunities for survival, they also reinforce social inequality and economic vulnerability. Furthermore, unplanned urban expansion has intensified environmental degradation, including air and water pollution, thereby increasing public health risks and undermining long-term sustainability.

The study also reveals that governance and policy implementation remain significant challenges. Despite the presence of urban development policies and strategic frameworks, weak institutional capacity, lack of coordination, and insufficient investment have limited their effectiveness. This gap between policy formulation and implementation continues to hinder sustainable urban development in Bangladesh.

From a broader perspective, the study emphasises that migration should not be viewed solely as a problem but as a process that can contribute positively to development if managed effectively. Integrated and forward-looking policy approaches are essential to balance the benefits and challenges of migration. These include strengthening rural development to reduce excessive migration pressure, promoting planned urbanisation, improving housing and basic services, regulating the informal sector, and enhancing climate resilience.

In conclusion, achieving sustainable urban development in Bangladesh requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that addresses the complex interactions between migration, population change, and urban systems. Aligning national policies with global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals will be crucial in ensuring inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities. Future research should focus on empirical and interdisciplinary approaches to further explore migration dynamics and inform evidence-based policymaking.

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