

# **Contextualizing urban social protection in Bangladesh**

## **Social Protection and Jobs – South Asia Region**

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASPIRE	Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance & Development
BITA	Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (original name)
CITY	Chattogram Low Income Area, Inclusion, and Poverty Survey
CMC	Central Management Committee
FLFP	Female labor force participation
FYP	Five Year Plan
GCC	Gulf Council countries
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	General Economic Division
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HH	Household
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICU	Intensive care units
IT	Information Technology
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LM	Labor Market
LMIC	Lower Middle-Income Countries
MCP	Master Crafts Persons
ME	Micro Enterprise
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
PKSE	Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PPRC	Power and Participation Research Centre
ROSC	Reaching Out-of-School Children
RMG	Ready-made garment
SA	Social Assistance
SI	Social Insurance
SMA	Statistical Metropolitan Area
MSME	Micro, small, and medium enterprise
SP	Social Protection
SPL	Social Protection and Labor
STAR	Skills Training for Advancement Resources
UCD	Urban Community Project
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPHSCDP	Urban Primary Health Care Project
USD	United States Dollar
WDI	World Development Indicators
WSDFM	Women's Skill Development for Freelancing Marketplaces

## Executive Summary

**While urbanization has substantially contributed to Bangladesh's economic development, urban poverty has remained high.** Bangladesh has been more rapidly urbanizing than its South Asian neighbors. In 2018, 36.62 percent of Bangladesh's population lived in urban areas, compared to 23.59 percent in 2000 (WDI 2020). By 2050, more than half of the country's population will live in urban areas. While many Bangladeshis moved out of poverty in the past decades, many households in urban areas are still poor. In 2016, about 20 percent of Bangladesh's urban population was poor (HIES 2016).<sup>1</sup>

**Urban poor households tend to be poor in not just consumption, but also have relatively less access to a range of services.**<sup>2</sup> Basic services such as electricity and piped water are more accessible for the urban poor in Dhaka and Chattogram than those in the other urban areas and the rural areas. However, urban slum-dwellers in the two megacities often face a comparatively worse quality of access to basic services due to congested housing. Besides, financial products such as micro-credits and service delivery systems are much less accessible for poor urban households in Dhaka and Chattogram than for poor households in rural areas and the other urban areas (HIES 2016). Access to health care services may be limited for urban poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram due to the comparatively high costs.

**In addition, low female labor force participation (FLFP) in urban areas enforces the precarious economic situation of urban poor households in the current COVID-19 crisis.** FLFP has been falling in urban areas in recent years due to a decline in job growth in the (ready-made garment) RMG and textiles sectors. Whereas in 2010 34.5 percent of women worked in urban areas, it was 31 percent in 2017 (Kotikula, Hill, and Raza 2019). Apart from economic trends, conservative gender norms across Bangladesh still prevent many women to gain education and access employment. For instance, women in slum areas have on average 2.90 years of education compared to 3.68 years of non-poor women (Kotikula, Hill, and Raza 2019).

**In the past, policies and institutions have been put into place in Bangladesh to oversee the delivery of urban social protection service systems providing support to the urban poor.** Major policy directives such as the Sixth and Seventh Five-Year plans (2010-2015, 2016-2020) stressed the various challenges, associated with urbanization in the country. The 2015 National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) outlined the role of central and local government agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in implementing social protection programs in urban areas (GED 2017). Currently, there is a multitude of programs that provide labor market support, social security, and social insurance to the most vulnerable urban populations, especially women and youth (BIGD and BRAC University 2020a).

**However, there are few urban social protection programs, relative to rural programs, and they tend to be mostly focused on social assistance.** 91 social protection and labor market projects in Dhaka and Chattogram are being assessed based on 16 criteria to better understand the characteristics of urban service delivery systems (BIGD and BRAC University 2020b). 44 of the selected programs are sole social assistance, 25 projects are labor market programs and 18 projects offer a combination of labor market support and social assistance. The majority of the

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<sup>1</sup> Poverty rate measured as poverty headcount rate (%), upper poverty line.

<sup>2</sup> As of November 25, 2020, Bangladesh has confirmed 454,146 cases of COVID-19 infections. Among those have been 6,487 deaths (Johns Hopkins University 2020).

labor market projects and those with labor market components focus on job quality and access rather than job creation. 41 percent of the selected 91 urban service delivery programs are urban-natured based on a specific target population and only a minority are specifically mandated and/or designed for the urban context. The project beneficiaries, selected in rigorous selection processes, are vulnerable individuals, poor, urban women and children as well as marginalized groups. 31 domestic and international governmental and non-governmental institutions are responsible for implementing the selected 91 programs.

**The program assessment reveals that existing urban social protection programs are not always tailored to either the specific needs of the urban poor, or designed to deliver services in a way that accounts for urban service delivery challenges.** The assessment of 91 urban labor market and social protection programs in Dhaka and Chattogram reveals that they contribute to alleviating urban poverty but not in the most effective way possible. Only a few of the analyzed programs are specifically designed to reach the urban poor or have a mandate that explicitly states the goal to support vulnerable urban groups. Most of the time, these urban projects are simply an extension or a duplication of already existing rural programs. A minority of the selected projects is labor market programs, which focus more strongly on job quality and access rather than job creation.

**The COVID-19 crisis has been especially difficult for the urban poor.** Even in normal times their livelihoods are at risk, as they cannot reap the financial benefits from internal and international migration. Internal migrants from rural areas have contributed to congestion and increased the competition about jobs in urban areas. Internal migration in Bangladesh usually happens from rural to urban areas, with the majority of individuals migrating to Dhaka. In 2016, 16.1 percent of poor rural households had at least one member migrating to urban areas, with Chattogram as the primary destination (HIES 2016).

**The COVID-19 crisis has helped identify programming gaps, and weaknesses in service delivery.** The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) announced immediate measures amounting to 80 billion BDT (about USD 0.93) aimed at providing assistance to vulnerable groups, in addition to arrange of other support, such as helping ready-made garments manufacturers pay salaries of workers. However, the pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of Bangladesh's urban social protection programming. Now is the right time to evaluate the pre-COVID-19 status quo and make fundamental changes to help the urban poor being better prepared for future shocks, i.e. economic crisis, epidemics, and climate change-related challenges. Vulnerable groups in urban areas, particularly to workers in the RMG and informal sectors, should be offered programs combining training and access to micro-credit products. Better access to training, financial products, and childcare services may be provided to poor urban women. Service delivery programs that help returnee migrants to successfully reintegrate into Bangladesh's labor market. Spatial pressures in the two megacities may also be reduced by interventions to make Bangladesh's secondary cities more economically attractive for individuals and companies. Finally, the COVID-19 crisis could boost public health policies to make health care services more accessible to urban poor households.

## 1. Unpacking urban poverty in Bangladesh

**Bangladesh has made substantial progress in poverty reduction, but the progress has been uneven across the urban divide.** From 2000 to 2016, Bangladesh's poverty rate declined by 50 percent, from 48.9 percent to 24.3 percent (WDI 2020).<sup>3</sup> Urbanization has gone hand in hand with the labor market's structural shift from agriculture to services and industry. In 2017, Dhaka SMA accounted for 45 percent of all industry jobs and 39 percent of all services jobs in the country. Over the period 2003-2013, Dhaka and Chattogram had the fastest growth of all nonagricultural establishments (Farole et al. 2017). However, Bangladesh's many urban poor have not been able to reap the benefits of urbanization. In 2016, about 20 percent of urban households in Bangladesh were still poor (HIES 2016).<sup>4</sup>

**The country is urbanizing faster than its South Asian neighbors.** Over the period 2015-2020, Bangladesh's urbanization rate of 3.17 percent was the highest in the South Asia region. The country was closely followed by Nepal, which had an urbanization rate of 3.15 percent (Figure 1). In the same period, India and Pakistan urbanized much more slowly with urbanization rates of 2.37 percent and 2.53 percent, respectively. In the past five years, Bangladesh's urbanization rate was significantly higher than the average rate of Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) (UN DESA 2019). Projections for the period 2045-2050 show that Bangladesh's urbanization rate will significantly slow down compared to its South Asian neighbors. The country will urbanize at a rate of 1.30 percent, compared to India at 1.54 percent, Nepal at 2.05 percent, and Pakistan at 2.18 percent. At that point, Bangladesh's urbanization rate will be below the average rate of LMIC (UN DESA 2019).

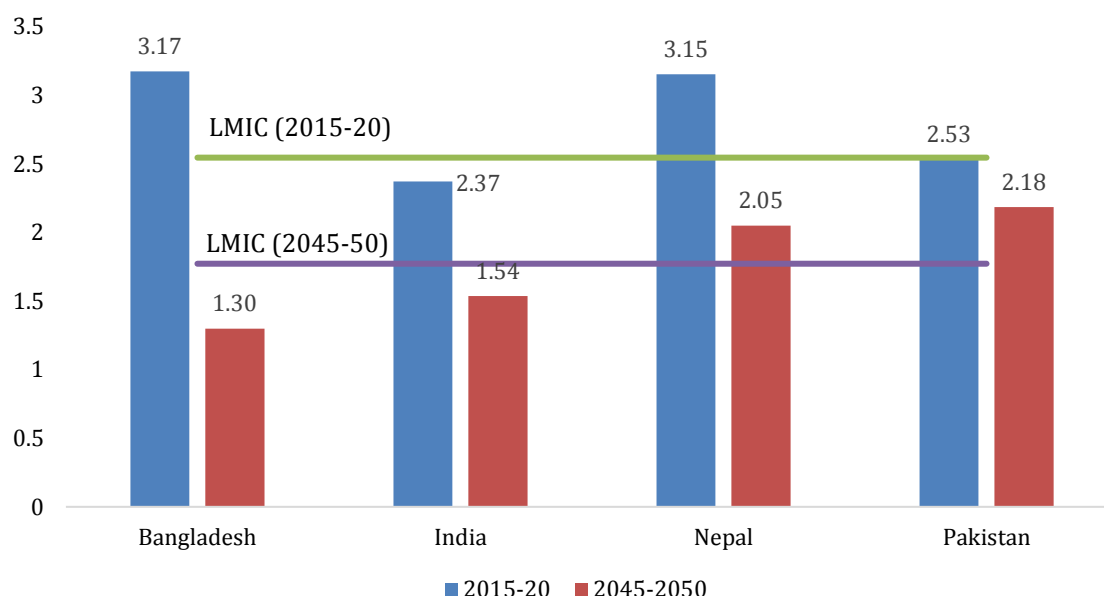
**This report reviews recent evidence on urbanization, urban poverty, and urban social protection necessary for planning policy interventions, and future programming.** Section 2 will synthesize recent studies profiling the urban poor, and highlight key findings from the latest household survey data and labor force surveys. Section 3 will then review existing social protection service delivery for the urban poor, and synthesizes a stock-taking analysis conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), whereby a range of social protection programs in Dhaka and Chattogram were reviewed. Section 4 will discuss some of the social protection coverage over the course of the COVID-19 outbreak, while Section 5 concludes with issues identified for action beyond the pandemic.

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<sup>3</sup> Poverty rate measured as percent of population below lower poverty lines.

<sup>4</sup> Poverty rate measured as percent of population below upper poverty lines.

**Figure 1: Bangladesh urbanization rate has been more rapid than its South Asian neighbors.**



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) 2019.

Note: The chart shows urbanization rates (%) over the periods 2015-2020 and 2045-2050. Horizontal lines represent the average urbanization rates for Lower Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) for the periods 2015-2020 and 2045-2050, respectively.

## 2. Profiles of the urban poor

### 2.1 Trends in urban poverty

**While many Bangladeshis have moved out of poverty in the past, urban poverty rates remain high.** In the past two decades, Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in poverty reduction (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> Rural poverty declined by 52.3 percent in 2000 to 26.7 percent in 2016. In comparison, urban poverty declined by from 35.1 percent in 2000 to 19.3 percent in 2016. In the past decade, progress has also been made in terms of reducing extreme poverty. In 2000, 19.9 percent of the country's urban population lived in extreme poverty compared to 8 percent in 2016.

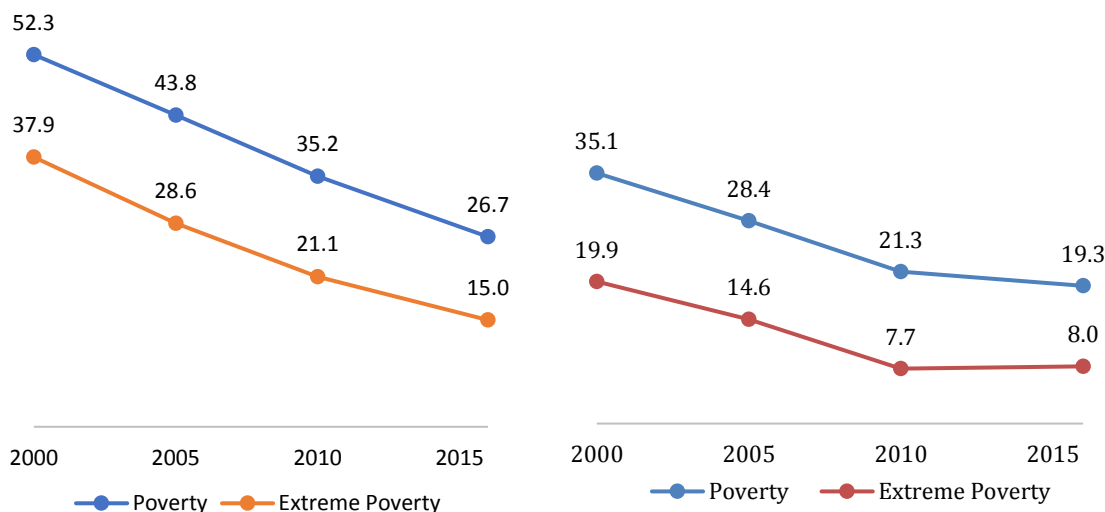
<sup>5</sup> Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (percent of population).



**Figure 2: Poverty has declined in urban and rural areas.**

**A: Rural Areas, 2000 to 2016.**

**B: Urban Areas, 2000 to 2016.**



Source: Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) Bangladesh 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2016.

Note: National poverty and extreme poverty headcount rates (%) in rural and urban areas.

**Bangladesh's two largest cities, i.e. Dhaka and Chattogram, stand out among the country's urban areas.** In 2018, the combined population of Dhaka and Chattogram was around 24.39 million.<sup>6</sup> The two megacities together thereby host more than 40 percent of Bangladesh's total population (UN DESA 2019). Dhaka, which comprises as primate city one-third of the country's urban population, is projected to become the world's fourth-largest city by 2030 (Aparicio and Mizzini 2013).<sup>7</sup> While being three times smaller than Dhaka, Chattogram is still comparable to Dhaka in terms of economic and absolute terms as it is the country's next most important urban center (Chakma and Saha 2020).

**A differentiation between the two megacities and the rest of the urban areas is useful due to substantial differences in size and quality of life.** The rural-urban typology is often applied to populations and locations when economic issues are geographically disaggregated. However, this approach tends to mask the heterogeneity within each rural and urban spatial group (World Bank 2013b). In fact, urban areas in Bangladesh are very heterogeneous in terms of population size. In 2018, the population of all other divisional capitals – secondary cities - such as Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Barisal, Comilla, and Rangpur combined was 3.92 million, six times smaller than the combined population of Dhaka and Chattogram (UN DESA 2019). Heterogeneity of urban areas does not only express itself in terms of population size but also quality of life. Rahman (2016) tries to capture these variations within urban areas by classifying them into four categories: the two largest cities of Dhaka and Chattogram; secondary cities comprised of every other city

<sup>6</sup> In 2018 the total population of Dhaka was around 19 million, and of Chittagong around five million.

<sup>7</sup> A city is called a country's primate city if it accounts for at least 40 percent of the urban population in a particular year (UN DESA 2019). Aparicio and Muzzini (2013) define a city to be primate if it is at least twice as large as the next biggest city in a country.

corporation besides Dhaka and Chattogram; the “mofussil” areas which are the small towns that fall outside city corporation (Table 1) (Chakma and Saha).<sup>8</sup>

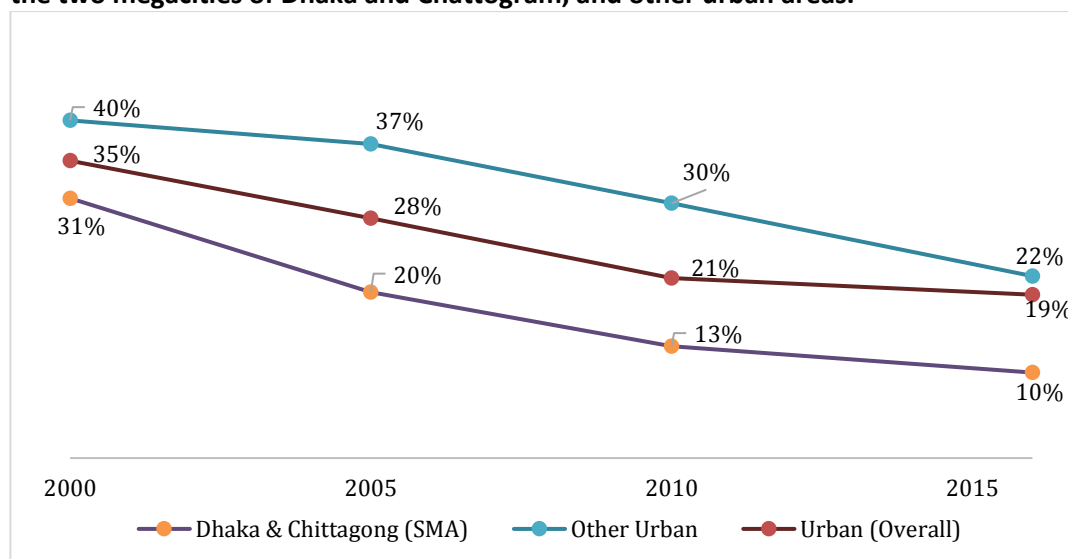
**Table 1: Framework for disaggregating the urban-rural spectrum.**

Urban (Overall)			Rural (Overall)
Dhaka and Chattogram	Other urban areas		
	Secondary cities	Mofussil areas	
The statistical metropolitan areas of Dhaka and Chattogram.	Secondary cities/ city corporations/municipality areas aside from Dhaka and Chattogram SMA.	Small towns that fall outside the city corporations and are not part of the rural areas.	All rural areas of the country.

Source: Adapted from Chakma and Saha 2020.

**Poverty trends have been substantially different between the two megacities and the other urban areas.** Over the period 2000-2016, urban poverty in Dhaka and Chattogram declined from 31 percent to 10 percent (Figure 3). Urban poverty in the two megacities was below the national average in this period. In comparison, the urban poverty rate of the other urban areas, which was 40 percent in 2000 and fell to 22 percent by 2016, was above the national poverty rate.

**Figure 3: Disaggregating within urban areas reveals divergent trends in poverty between the two megacities of Dhaka and Chattogram, and other urban areas.**



Source: HIES Bangladesh 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2016.

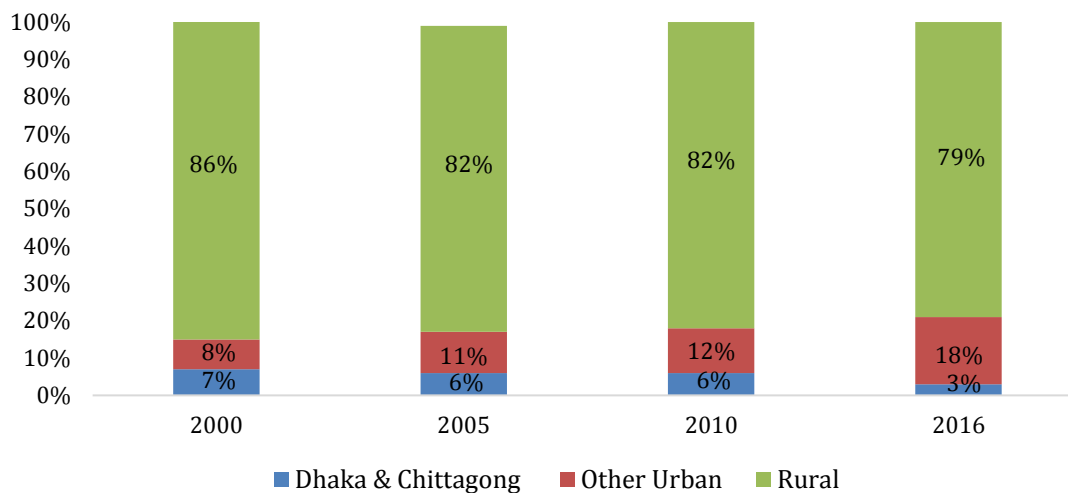
Note: National poverty headcount rates (%). For details on the urban, rural and intra-urban classifications, please consider Table 1.

**In the past two decades, the share of the total poor has declined in rural areas and in the two megacities but has more than doubled in the other urban areas.** In 2000, 86 percent of

<sup>8</sup> Rahman et al. (2019) using a hierarchical cluster analysis classify 331 cities in Bangladesh into six clusters along five spatial dimensions, and thus demonstrate that these clusters are significantly different along non-spatial dimensions. The results show that the quality of life in the two megacities is vastly different than in small towns. Therefore, a disaggregation of urban areas into distinct sub-categories with different underlying characteristics can be useful for policymaking and program design purposes.

Bangladesh's total poor lived in rural areas compared to 79 percent in 2016 (Figure 4). The share of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram also declined from seven percent in 2000 to three percent in 2016. In contrast, the share of poor households in the other urban areas doubled over the same period. In 2000, eight percent of all poor households lived in the other urban areas compared to 18 percent in 2016.

**Figure 4: Megacities have seen a decline in the share of the total poor, not so the other urban areas.**



Source: HIES Bangladesh 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2016.

Note: Share of the total poor (%) across the rural-urban spectrum.

## 1.2. Characteristics of poor urban households<sup>9</sup>

**Poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram are younger and have a higher dependency ratio than those in the other urban areas and rural areas.** The average age of household heads in Dhaka and Chattogram is 38.6 years, compared to 42.6 years in the other urban areas and 43.5 years in rural areas (Annex 1). The dependency ratio of 101 percent for poor urban households in the two megacities is higher than for poor households in the other urban areas (84 percent) and rural areas (89 percent).<sup>10</sup> Whereas the number of poor households with children aged 12 years or younger is the highest in Dhaka and Chattogram, the number of poor households with senior citizens aged 65 and older is lower in the two megacities than in the other urban areas and rural areas. The household size of poor households is with around 4.6 individuals the same in Dhaka and Chattogram, the other urban areas, and rural areas.

**In terms of educational attainment and spending, the poor in the two megacities are worse off than poor households in rural areas and the other urban areas.** 71 percent of household heads of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram have received no schooling, compared to 64 percent

<sup>9</sup> The profiling of poor urban households in this section is based on data analysis of the HIES 2016, which can be found in the Annex 1 of this report.

<sup>10</sup> The dependency ratio indicates the ratio of those not in the labor force aged 0-14 and 65+ and those in the labor force, aged 15-64.

of household heads of poor households in rural areas and 57 percent in the other urban areas (Annex 1). Poor individuals aged 17 or older in the two megacities attend school for 2.1 years on average, which is less than poor individuals in rural areas (2.8 years) and poor individuals in the other urban areas (3.3 years). On average, poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram spend 4,576 BDT annually for educational activities, which is less than the amount poor rural households (5,106 BDT) and poor households in the other urban areas spend (5,894 BDT).

**Inequality in education is higher in the two megacities than in other urban areas and rural Bangladesh.** Data from the 2019 Chattogram Low Income Area Inclusion, and Poverty (CITY) study shows that 40 percent of slum dwellers in Chattogram have no schooling compared to only 29 percent of non-slum households (Raza et al. 2020c). Slums in Bangladesh tend to face higher supply constraints, with less access to educational resources and schools, and higher rates of school-of-school children than wealthier urban areas and rural areas (World Bank 2013a). Private tutoring of children which is especially common in Dhaka exacerbates social inequalities because poor families cannot afford tutoring that middle-income and rich families rely on (Mahmud and Bray 2017).<sup>11</sup> In the past, governmental institutions may have been reluctant to take care of educational needs of children residing in somewhere illegally like a slum (Cameron 2010). Traditionally, many NGOs have had a stronger rural focus in their provision of education, which however has seemed to change in the past years (Cameron 2010; BRAC 2012).<sup>12</sup>

**Poor urban households tend to work predominantly in the services and industry sectors, while poor rural households tend to be in agriculture.** 37 percent of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram work in the services sector, followed by 33 percent poor households working in the industry (Figure 5). 40 percent of poor households in the other urban areas work in the services sector, followed by 22 percent in industry and another 20 percent in agriculture. In comparison, 49 percent of poor rural households work in agriculture, only 22 percent in the services sector, and 14 percent the industry.

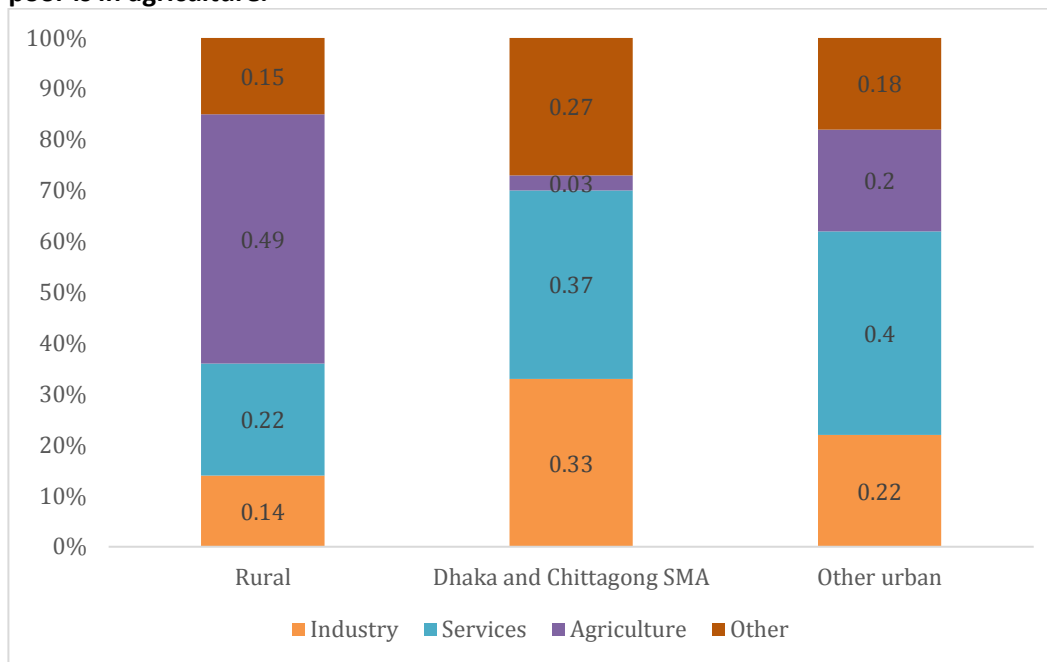
**Informal employment contributes to the vulnerability of the urban poor.** Less than 40 percent of wage employees have a written contract in Bangladesh. Whereas the number of informal wage employees is higher in urban than in rural areas, informal employment is widespread in urban areas (Farole et al. 2017). Especially in Dhaka and Chattogram, rural-urban migrants and urban dwellers that are not wage-employed by the formal sector tend to find employment in small-scale production and distribution of goods and services in the informal sector such as in retail, transport and food (Hasan et al. 2017; World Bank 2020a). These workers despite are often from households that are just above the poverty line, and are neither covered by existing social safety nets nor protected by labor laws and regulations, the latter by dint of their informal employment status (Farole et al. 2017).

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<sup>11</sup> In the past decades, job creation in the manufacturing sector rather than improved access to education has been the main driver behind poverty reduction in urban centers (Farole et al. 2017; World Bank 2019).

<sup>12</sup> In 2012 BRAC started to establish 2,000 single classroom schools in the urban slums of Bangladesh to enroll 62,000 out-of-school children into appropriate primary school programs (BRAC 2012).

**Figure 5: The urban poor works predominantly in services and industry while the rural poor is in agriculture.**



Source: HIES Bangladesh 2016.

Note: Charts presents percentages.

**Poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram tend to have better access to basic services, such as water and electricity, than in other urban areas.**<sup>13</sup> More poor in Dhaka and Chattogram live in brick or cement structures (41 percent) than the poor in the other urban areas (23 percent) and in rural areas (25 percent). 68 percent of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram have piped water. In comparison, 18 percent of poor households in the other urban areas have access to piped water and only two percent of rural households (Annex 1). 99 percent of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram have access to electricity, compared to 83 percent of poor households in the other urban areas and 53 percent of rural households.

**At the same time, poor households in Chattogram and Dhaka often experience various forms of congestion.** 94 percent of poor households in the two megacities share the kitchen with others, compared to only 54 percent of poor households in the other urban areas, and 34 percent of rural areas. 96 percent of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram use shared toilets, compared to 40 percent of poor households in other urban areas (Annex 1). Besides, some basic services such as the access to water may not be well maintained in the poor areas of Dhaka and Chattogram. Long lines may increase the opportunity costs, and sewage and pollutants may lead to contamination (Lucci et al. 2018). Due to congestion in the slums of the two megacities, quality of basic services may be worse than in the other urban areas and rural areas. It becomes clear that access alone is not a sufficient indicator for the quality of life in Bangladesh's major urban areas.

<sup>13</sup> See Annex 1 for a detailed overview of various indicators of poor households for Dhaka and Chittagong, other urban areas, and rural areas.

**The cost of health services is substantially higher in Dhaka and Chattogram than in rural areas and the other urban areas, which may ultimately limit their accessibility for poor households.**

The average cost for in-patient medical treatment amounting 26,300 BDT annually for poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram is more than twice the annual amount for poor rural households (13,174 BDT) and poor households in the other urban areas (11,291 BDT) (Annex 1). 14 percent of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram have at least one member with an illness or disability. In comparison, 25 percent of poor rural households and 21 percent of poor households in the other urban areas have at least one ill or disabled member.

**Social safety nets are less available for the urban poor in Dhaka and Chattogram.** Two percent of poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram have access to a social safety net program, compared to 36 percent of poor rural households and 21 percent of poor households in the other urban areas (Figure 5). However, the annual amount of transfers received from the social safety net is for the poor households in the two megacities 3,451 BDT on average, which is much higher than for poor rural households (2,047 BDT for poor rural households and poor households in the other urban areas (2,292 BDT). This unequal access may be the result of the rural focus of social protection programs in Bangladesh. Besides, poor urban households may not meet the prerequisites to receive social safety payments, as they are younger and have fewer disabled family members (Chakma and Saha 2020).

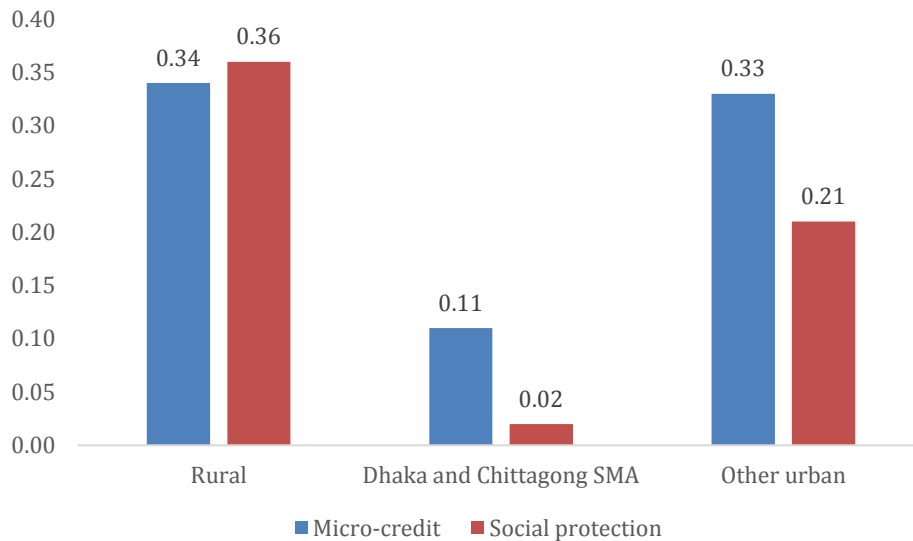
**Financial services are less accessible for poor households in Dhaka and Chattogram than for rural poor households and poor households in the other urban areas.** Eleven percent of poor households in the two megacities have access to micro-credit, compared to 34 percent of poor rural households, and 33 percent of poor households in the other urban areas (Figure 6).<sup>14</sup> Similar to the social safety net, micro-finance institutions might see a lesser need with the poor urban population for micro-credit.

**The self-employed poor in Dhaka and Chattogram are less likely to access loans than in the other urban areas.** On average, 20 percent of poor households who have taken out loans and 10 percent of poor households without access to loans run enterprises in Bangladesh (Figure 7). 14 percent poor households in Chattogram and 21 percent of poor households in Dhaka with access to loans are entrepreneurs. In comparison, only seven percent of the poor in Chattogram and 13 percent of the poor in Dhaka without access to loans are entrepreneurs. In all urban areas (including Dhaka and Chattogram), 24 percent of poor households with access to loans and only 14 percent without access to loans are entrepreneurs.

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<sup>14</sup> According to the CITY (Chattogram Low Income Area, Inclusion, and Poverty) Survey 17 percent of slum-dwellers use commercial bank services compared to 24 percent of households in non-slum areas in Chittagong (Raza et al. 2020a).

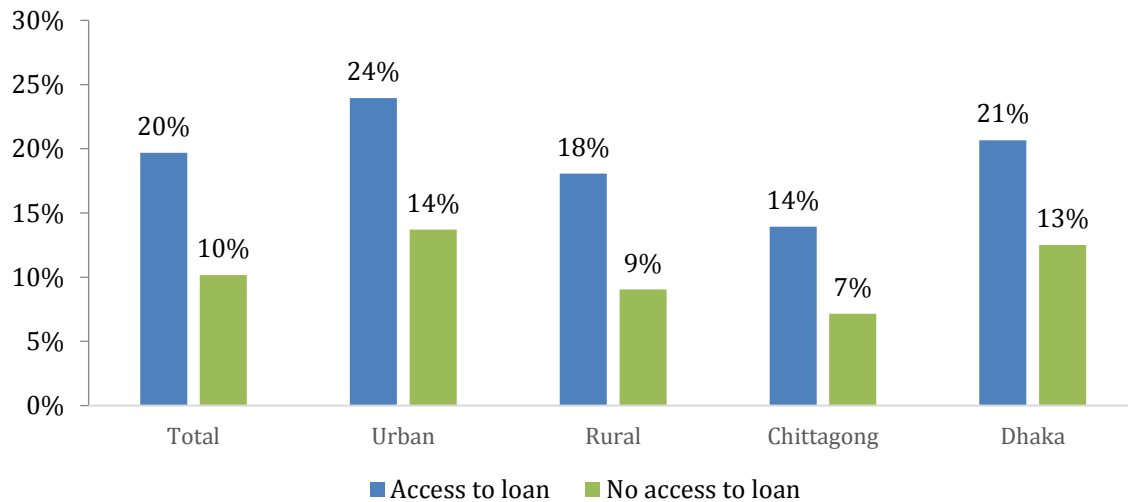
**Figure 6: Financial services and social protection programs are less accessible in urban areas**



Source: HIES Bangladesh 2016.

Note: Chart presents percentages.

**Figure 7: The access to loans is lower for entrepreneurs in the two megacities than in other urban areas.**



Source: HIES Bangladesh 2016.

Note: The variable loan is a dummy indicating whether the surveyed household has taken a loan in the last year.

**Many slum-dwellers in the two megacities may not meet the eligibility criteria for micro-finance products.** In Bangladesh, microfinance predominantly follows the Grameen microfinance model which is geared towards the rural poor rather than slum-dwellers. To be eligible for a loan, prospective borrowers must form a voluntary group of about five borrowers to guarantee the repayment of the loans. The assumption behind this approach is that those who live close together have a profound understanding of each other's creditworthiness (Haldar and Steglitz 2016; Osmani 2016). In urban slums, however, people might live more anonymously than in rural

areas where social relations are much more tight-knit. Especially internal migrants migrating mostly to Dhaka and Chattogram may be in a disadvantage as they may not have a network of individuals around them that they know well enough to form a group with.

### 1.3 Vulnerability of urban women

**Female labor force participation (FLFP) in urban areas has been falling in the recent years due to slow jobs growth in the RMG sectors.** FLFP rates have been declining in urban areas with 34.5 percent in 2010 and 31 percent in 2016 and 2017, respectively (Kotikula, Hill, and Raza 2019). The declining FLFP in urban areas can be mostly attributed to the sharp decline of job growth in RMG. In the period 2003-2010, jobs in the RMG and textiles sector grew at 11.0 percent annually compared to 1.5 percent in the period 2010-2016 (LFS Bangladesh 2003, 2010, and 2016). Women in the two megacities predominantly work in the RMG and textiles sectors. In 2013, 55 percent of women worked in those two sectors, followed by 20 percent in the social and personal services sector (Economic Census 2013).

**The still prevailing conservative gender stereotypes enforce low labor force participation of poor urban women.** Urban women are much less likely to participate in the labor force than men. For instance, in the Dhaka SMA, 32 percent of women currently participate in the labor force compared to 81 percent of men. In the Chattogram SMA, 30 percent of women participate in the labor force compared to 76 percent of men (LFS Bangladesh 2016). Women who participate in the labor force tend to earn substantially less than men. In Chattogram they make on 17 percent less than men (an average of 12,924 BDT vs. 15,487 BDT a month). In Dhaka women's income is half of men's earnings (on average 5,551 BDT vs 11,356 BDT a month) (Raza et al. 2020b). Across Bangladesh, conservative gender norms are still restricting women's physical mobility and imposing a variety of social practices on them in relation to marriage, education, and work (Raza et al. 2020b). For instance, poor women in Dhaka are on average 15.78 years when they marry. Women in slum areas have on average 2.90 years of education compared to 3.68 years for non-poor women (Kotikula, Hill, and Raza 2019). Besides, a strong factor of low FLFP in urban areas is the women's perception of the lack of safety in public spaces (Kotikula, Hill, and Raza 2019).

## 3. Programs and policies for urban social protection

**This section provides an assessment of existing urban social protection programs, and their service delivery.** The GoB has increasingly stressed the challenges related to urbanization and the consequences for vulnerable groups in urban spaces. To tackle urban poverty, a variety of social assistance and labor market programs projects have been initiated. They provide various forms of financial support, skills training, and micro-credits for entrepreneurship to improve the wellbeing of the urban poor. In 2016, 19.3 percent of Bangladesh's urban population was poor. Urban poverty has gone hand-in-hand with a lack of employment opportunities in urban areas. In the period 2010-2016, job growth at 1.8 percent annually was slow, productivity growth was relatively weak in manufacturing, and productivity levels remained low (Farole et al. 2017).

### 3.1. The institutional framework for urban social protection



**The GoB's long-term vision recognizes the particular challenges of the urban poor.** The "Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021" adopted by the GoB in 2012 outlined the ambitious target to reduce the national poverty rate from 31.5 percent in 2010 to 13.5 percent in 2021 (GED 2012). The government's vision stresses programs and policies that focus on promoting equal access to services in urban areas and their fair and equitable provision to reduce urban poverty. In particular, the government has especially emphasized the importance of improving the economic situation of women and children hit hardest by poverty (GED 2012).

**Five Year Plans (FYPs) outline the country's major policies on urban development.** The Sixth FYP, adopted for the period 2010-2015, stressed the economic, social, and physical challenges related to the rapid growth of the urban population (GED 2015). It emphasized the importance of the development of sound urban institutions, urban resource mobilization, and the improvement of city governance (GED 2015). Previously, urban strategies of the Bangladesh government addressed infrastructure maintenance, rehabilitation needs, and capacity development of municipalities.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the Seventh FYP, adopted for the period 2016-2020, emphasizes the support for vulnerable individuals in urban areas rather than the importance of institutions. It aims to provide a safe and healthy environment for the poor, improve their access to income, and to integrate marginalized groups into society through more focused and targeted strategies than in the past (GED 2015).

**The 2015 National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) provides guidelines to ensure progress towards more inclusive social security.** The 2015 NSSS is aimed to ensure a more efficient and effective use of resources, progress towards a more inclusive form of social security prioritizing the most vulnerable and poorest of society, and improved delivery systems (GED 2017). It outlines the specific responsibilities and roles of the central and local government agencies as well as NGOs in implementing social protection and labor market programs in urban areas. The strategy also proposes a life-cycle approach of the project delivery. Previously, social protection programs were implemented following a sectorial approach, which created a lack of coordination in the delivery project (BIGD and BRAC University 2020a).

**Various central and local government agencies are mandated to implement social protection and labor market programs for the urban poor (Figure 9).** At the national level, the role of the Central Management Committee (CMC) is coordinating the implementation of social protection (SP) programs, the approval of new program designs and the performance review of SP programs (GED 2017). Currently six ministries and their subordinate agencies directly reporting to the CMC are responsible for the implementation of urban social protection and labor market programs:<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (Local Government Division), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Food, and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. The ministries are also responsible for project design and correct targeting (GED 2017). Local government bodies, usually municipalities

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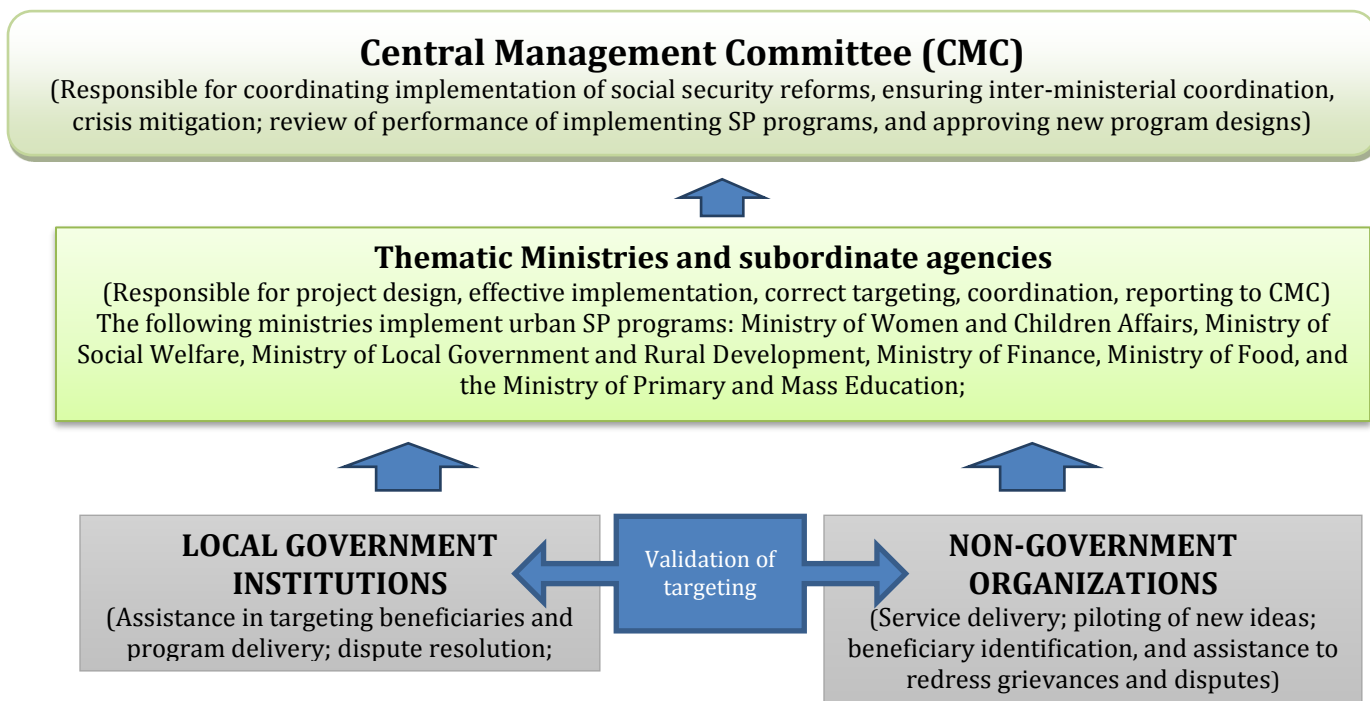
<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed overview on Bangladesh's older urban strategies, see BIGD and BRAC University (2020a).

<sup>16</sup> This list of ministries is based on the stocktaking exercise of 114 major social protection programs by the Cabinet Division and General Economic Division (2019) and budget documents of the Finance Division, presented in BIGD and BRAC University (2020a). These two documents identify 15 programs that have either been designed to specifically address issues in the urban context and/or cover rural and urban areas. For a detailed list of programs of each ministry, see table 2 in BIGD and BRAC University (2020a).

and city corporations, assist ministries and their subordinate agencies in program delivery, the identification of potential beneficiaries, assistance towards Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) programs, and dispute resolution (GED 2017). These local government entities are also involved in implementing national social protection programs, and in verifying the eligibility of the beneficiaries of NGO-implemented programs.

**NGOs are also involved in the delivery of urban social protection either as partners of government agencies or as implementers of donor-funded projects (Figure 8).** The activities of NGOs range from supporting ministries in the delivery of social protection and labor market programs, piloting of innovative ideas, identifying potential beneficiaries, and assisting in dispute resolution. NGOs also provide technical assistance and logistical support to governmental entities and validate the targets of local government bodies. NGOs to partner with governmental bodies are selected based on a competitive bidding (BIGD and BRAC University 2020a).

**Figure 8: Organizational structure of entities responsible for implementing Social Protection programs.**



Source: Adapted from BIGD and BRAC University (2020a).

Note: The list of ministries includes all ministries that implement programs that have either exclusively urban focus or both rural and urban coverage as listed in BIGD and BRAC University (2020a).

### 3.2. Existing urban social protection programs

**An assessment of 91 urban social protection programs in Chattogram and Dhaka provides some insight into how various actors in Bangladesh are addressing urban poverty.** The BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) and the BRAC University undertook a stocktaking exercise to assess programs implemented by 31 governmental and non-governmental institutions

in the two megacities (BIGD 2020). Institutions and their programs were selected based on information obtained through existing literature on social protection and labor market programs, through data of relevant agencies, desk reviews of online reports, and expert interviews. Social protection and labor market programs were defined as urban based on geographical territory or population. Besides, also programs that were specifically designed to address urban problems or whose policies or solutions exclusively target the urban context were selected.

**The assessment is based on 16 categories for a comprehensive understanding of the selected urban service delivery systems.** The categories cover basic information of the selected projects such as the implementing agency, program name, and the budget and source of funding.<sup>17</sup> Besides, the selected programs are categorized into labor market policy measures, social assistance, and social insurance based on the World Bank Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity (ASPIRE) database.<sup>18</sup> These categories are further differentiated into a variety of subcategories. Detailed information on the number of beneficiaries, including their selection process, and eligibility criteria was collected.

**Various international and domestic organizations fund and implement social protection and labor market programs in Dhaka and Chattogram.**<sup>19</sup> 33 of the selected programs operate in Dhaka, compared to 25 programs in Chattogram, and 33 programs cover both cities. The selected urban social protection and labor market programs have been implemented by 26 foreign and domestic organizations (Annex 3). Most of the implementing organizations also fund the projects (Annex 3).<sup>20</sup> 17 implementing agencies are domestic. Most of them are NGOs such as BRAC, which has implemented 16 of the selected programs, and the Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSE). The only two listed implementing governmental bodies are the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Department of Social Services in Dhaka. International implementing organizations are either international organizations such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Oxfam or national development companies such as Chemonics.

**The intended project beneficiaries range across diverse groups of vulnerable individuals in urban areas.** The intended beneficiaries include the poor, urban women and children (child domestic workers and orphans, street children etc.); marginalized groups such as gypsies, hijras, beggars, sex workers, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) positive individuals. Besides, some projects target disabled individuals and those vulnerable to climate change. The number of project beneficiaries varies greatly, ranging between less than 100 to more than a million beneficiaries (Figure 10). For instance, the *Shompriti* program implemented by It's Humanity Foundation provides six-month long leadership trainings to 75 students selected from 15 universities in Dhaka. In contrast, the Urban Development project in Dhaka and Chattogram has provided microcredit and skills training to 249,109 disadvantaged individuals.

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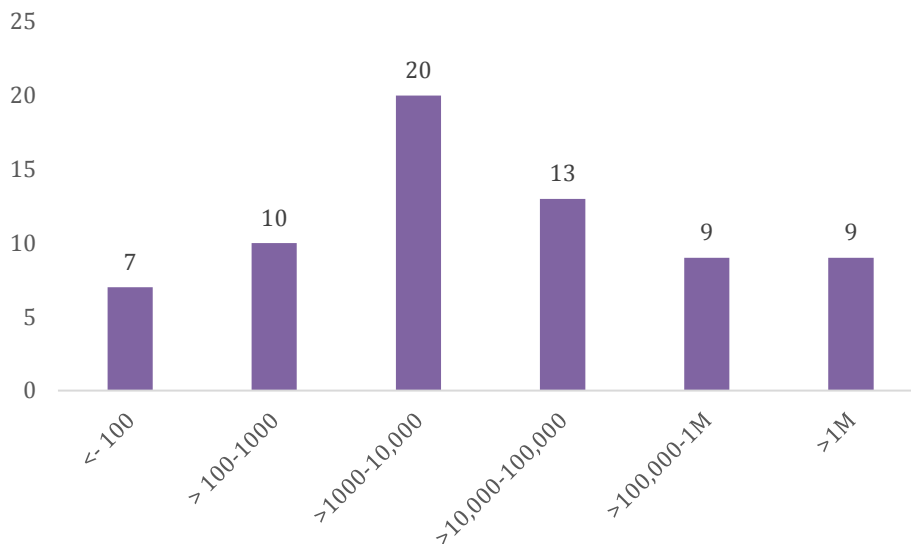
<sup>17</sup> See Annex 2 for a detailed list of the 16 categories.

<sup>18</sup> The World Bank's Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity (ASPIRE) compiles Social Protection and Labor (SPL) indicators to analyze the scope and performance of SPL programs. ASPIRE provides detailed information for over 120 countries on social assistance, labor market programs, and social insurance based on program-level administrative data and national household survey data. The four major SPL areas are social insurance, labor market, social assistance, and private transfers.

<sup>19</sup> See annex 3 for the list of implementing and funding organizations.

<sup>20</sup> Project budgets in BDT range from 50,000 BDT (about USD 600) to 405 million BDT (about USD 4.9 million). The projects that are funded in USD range from USD 1.2 million to USD 38 million. The majority of projects lasted for one to three years. A quarter of projects lasted two years.

**Figure 9: The scale of programs can vary, although most have fewer than 100,000 beneficiaries**  
**Number of programs (y-axis), number of beneficiaries (x-axis)**



Source: Results from stocktaking exercise by BIGD and BRAC University (2020b).

Note: The chart presents the total number of beneficiaries of 68 projects. Data was either not available or somewhat incomplete for all other projects.

**Selection processes vary across different programs.** People in need are identified through screening, discussions with stakeholders, as well as area, and household or door-to-door surveys. Sometimes interviews are conducted with potential beneficiaries. Depending on the project focus, climate risk, vulnerability and poverty mapping is done as well. Eligibility criteria for selection may be household income below a certain threshold, citizenship of Bangladesh by birth, and certain age requirements. For instance, to become a beneficiary for the Porticus-funded Women’s Skill Development for Freelancing Marketplaces (WSDFM) program, women must be aged 18-35, have at least secondary education, and are required to undergo a three-tier assessment consisting of a written, practical, and an in-person interview.<sup>21</sup>

**Most of projects and programs included in the review of programs in Dhaka and Chattogram are urban social assistance programs.**<sup>22</sup> 44 of the selected 91 programs are social assistance projects and 20 projects offer a combination of labor market support and social assistance to vulnerable groups in Dhaka and Chattogram (Figure 10). Thereby, among those social assistance programs, 31 percent provide social care services, 18 percent support for education (scholarships, education benefits, education waivers). The remaining 51 percent provide other social assistance, such as conditional cash transfers, disability benefits, and funeral grants.<sup>23</sup> An example for such a social assistance project is the Urban Primary Health Care Services Delivery Project that aims to

<sup>21</sup> See Annex 4 for descriptions of six labor market and social assistance programs selected for the project assessment by BIG and BRAC University (2020b). WSDFM specifically aims to increase the employability of vulnerable women through the provision of Information Technology (IT) courses.

<sup>22</sup> The analysis divides the selected programs into the three ASPIRE categories, i.e. labor market policy measure, social assistance, and social insurance to better understand the scope of the projects.

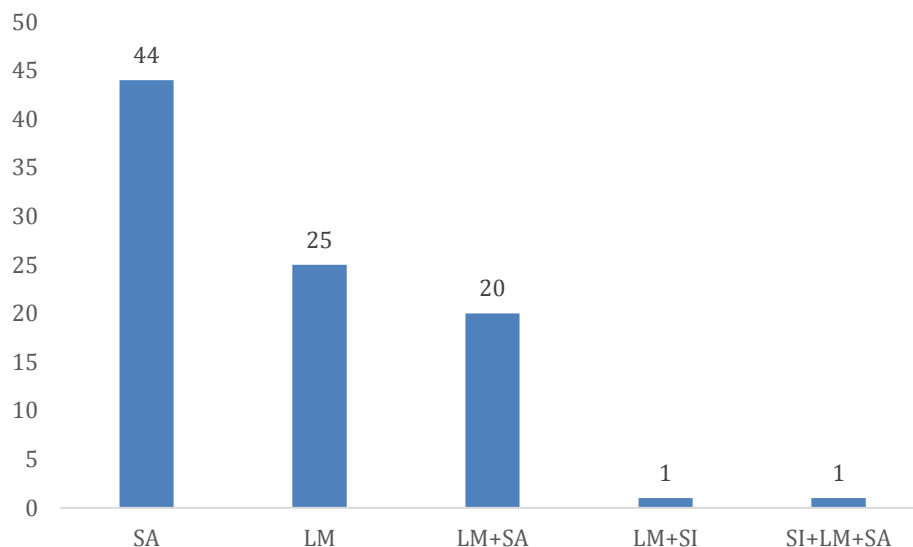
<sup>23</sup> This counts social assistance projects and projects with social assistance components.

improve the access to and quality of urban primary health care services for poor women and children. The project provides cost-free health services such as maternal health care, child health care, and awareness sessions on reproductive health through clinics and outreach activities in Dhaka and Chattogram (Annex 4).

**The 25 assessed labor market programs provide various services to the urban poor (Figure 10).** The assessment reveals that 83 percent of these labor market programs provide training (vocational, life skills), 9 percent labor market services and intermediation, six percent entrepreneurship support, and two percent employment measures for the disabled.<sup>24</sup> An example of such a labor market project is the microfinance program implemented by the *Shakti Foundation for Disadvantaged Women* offering microfinance products to poor urban women in the Dhaka and Chattogram SMAs. The program provides micro-loans to its members ranging from 5,000 to 16,000 BDT. Micro enterprise (ME) loans amounting 1,600 to 50,000 BDT are provided to promising entrepreneurs. Besides, the project offers saving schemes to promote responsible saving and loan waivers to support families upon the death of a family member (Annex 4).

**Figure 10: Selected projects predominantly provide social assistance**

Number of reviewed programs (y-axis) by type (x-axis)



Source: Results from stocktaking exercise by BIGD and BRAC University (2020b).

Note: **SA stands for social assistance, LM for labor market, and SI for social insurance.**

The absolute number of projects is displayed. One project has a labor market and a social insurance component and another project has a social insurance, labor market, and social assistance component.

**The selected labor market projects emphasize job access and quality rather than job creation.<sup>25</sup>**

A more detailed analysis of the 25 labor market projects and 12 projects with labor market

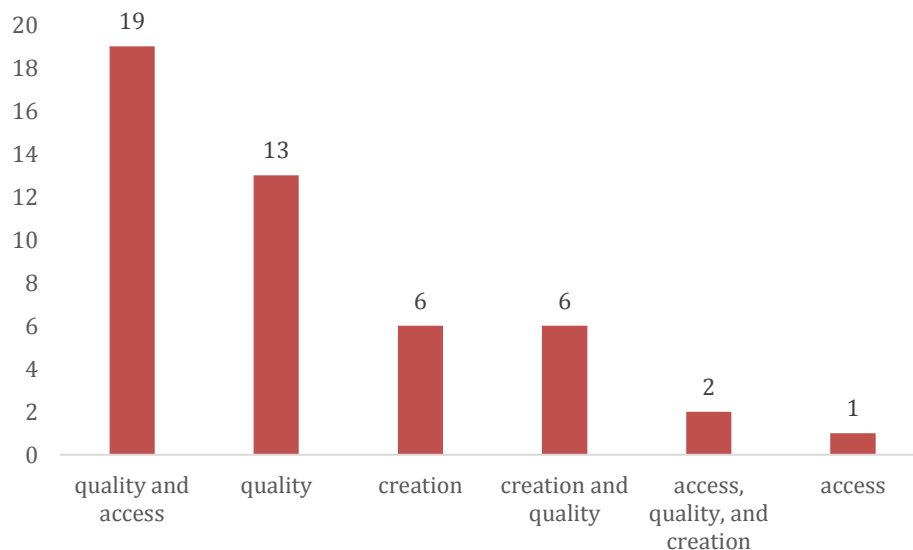
<sup>24</sup> This counts labor market projects and projects that have a labor market component.

<sup>25</sup> Jobs may be created in existing or new enterprises. Improving job quality means increasing worker productivity, improving working conditions and benefits. This also includes the improvement of livelihoods and earnings. Tokle, Karlen, and Saurav (2018) define access to jobs as ensuring that individuals have adequate professional opportunities.

components reveals that 19 projects focus on job quality and access, 13 projects on job quality, six projects on job creation and job creation and quality, respectively, two projects on job access, quality, and creation, and one project on job access (Figure 11). An example for a labor market project focusing on job creation is the Urban Community Development (UCD) project. Skills development courses in database programming, tailoring, and English communication, are offered to the selected beneficiaries. Upon completion of the training, they can access micro-credits to support the establishment of own enterprises (Annex 4). In contrast, the Women’s Skill Development for Freelancing Marketplaces (WSDFM) project focusing on job quality aims to create decent job opportunities in the freelancing sector for underprivileged women by offering courses in IT free of charge (Annex 4).

**Figure 11: Selected projects have a strong focus on job quality and access.**

Number of reviewed programs (y-axis) by jobs-focus (x-axis)



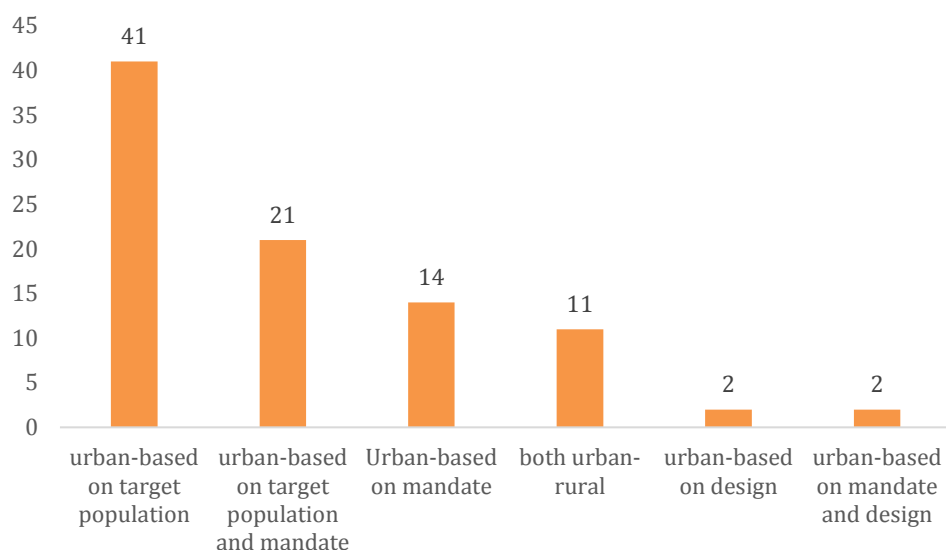
Source: Results from stocktaking exercise by BIGD and BRAC University (2020b).

Note: Absolute numbers of projects is displayed.

**Very few programs are considered urban by nature based on their mandate or design.** The occurrence of the selected social protection programs being urban natured is mostly based on the target population (Figure 12). 41 of the programs are based on the target population and another 21 programs are based on the target population and the mandate. 14 urban programs are based on mandate and two projects on design. Two projects are based on mandate and design and 11 projects have an urban-rural focus. For instance, the Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) project is urban natured as it is based on target population. It aims to specifically reach marginalized children in urban areas by providing them secondary school education in *Anando* schools, without having a clear urban mandate or design. These schools have been established across the country. In contrast, the Urban Primary Health Care Services Delivery Project is urban natured by its mandate, stating that its goal is to provide health care services to urban populations (Annex 4).

**Figure 12: Almost half of the selected programs specifically target urban populations**

Number of reviewed programs (y-axis) by urban-focus (x-axis)



Source: Results from stocktaking exercise by BIGD and BRAC University (2020b).

Note: Absolute numbers of projects included in review.

### 3.3 Programming gaps

**The assessment suggests that many of the reviewed urban social protection program lack clear urban designs and mandates thus cannot provide effective support to the urban poor.** The project assessment reveals that 41 of the projects target urban populations and another 11 projects operate in urban and rural areas. These projects usually cover not only Dhaka and Chattogram, but also other urban and rural areas in Bangladesh. A smaller number of the assessed projects were specifically designed to cover urban areas and/or have mandates that specifically state the goal to improve the standard of living of the urban poor. It has been common practice in Bangladesh to simply extend or duplicate already existing rural programs to the urban context (BIGD and BRAC University 2020b). However, such replicated projects do neglect the specific challenges that the urban poor face.

**Many labor market programs either offer skills training or micro-credit to the urban poor who, however, usually lack both education and funding to move out of poverty.** 47 of the assessed projects are labor market programs or projects with labor market components covering urban areas. Some of these projects such as the Urban Community Development project provide skills training combined with the accesses to micro-credits. Other labor market projects provide either skills training or micro-credits. For example, the Women's Skill Development for Freelancing Market place project solely provides training in the IT sector to vulnerable women. In contrast, Shakti Foundation's microfinance program stresses the provision of financial products, with training courses given much less emphasis.

## 4. Social protection coverage over the early COVID-19 outbreak

**This section reviews the GoB's immediate social protection response to the urban poor in the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Part of the response included efforts to rapidly enhance urban social protection service delivery, including an expansion of coverage to vulnerable and poor households that were previously not covered by social safety nets. The nationwide lockdown and related economic and social disruptions have had a severe negative impact on the life of everybody in Bangladesh. Many urban households that had not been reliant on social state transfers before the COVID-19 outbreak are now at risk of becoming poor.

**Simulation analysis suggests that the crisis will increase the poverty headcount, with the more heavily urbanized divisions experiencing the greatest increases.**<sup>26</sup> If the incomes of informal sector workers in services and manufacturing, and household income from international remittances were to fall by half, along with slower Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, then about 21 million people would fall below the upper national poverty line (Genoni et al. 2020). Increases in poverty headcount are the most severe in urbanized districts. Amongst the poor in Dhaka and Chattogram, 23 percent stopped actively working between March and June.<sup>27</sup> The median wages for the poor who did not lose their jobs, i.e. salaried and daily workers in the two megacities declined by about 37 percent (World Bank 2020b). These impacts have been more severe for the poor living in slum areas. The longer-term impacts will likely be more severe due to the limited coping strategies that households may have. Human capital (especially of children) will suffer if households respond by reducing food consumption or investments in health and education. Additional negative impacts could happen as productive savings and assets are depleted, and liquidity constrained microenterprises go out of business.

**The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly affected microenterprises across the country.** Findings from the COVID-19 Business Pulse Survey show that 21 percent of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Bangladesh closed temporarily, either by choice or by mandate of the GoB admit the outbreak of the virus.<sup>28</sup> 94 percent of the surveyed firms experienced substantial declines in sales. The estimated average change in sales was -52 percent 30 days before the survey relative to the same period in 2019. Estimates show that 37 percent of MSME workers lost their jobs 30 days before the survey (Kader and Pattanayak 2020). Findings of a survey conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance & Development (BIGD) show that female informal micro-entrepreneurs have been hit particularly hard by the COVID shocks.<sup>29</sup> 24 percent of surveyed online entrepreneurs shut down their businesses in June, after having tried a range of coping mechanisms since April (e.g. cancelling orders) (Rabbani, Zahan, and Matin 2020).

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<sup>26</sup> These estimates are for a representative sample of poor (slum and non-slum areas) of Dhaka and Chattogram, with data from the Poverty Global Practice's urban monitoring survey conducted between June 10-July 10, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> The group of respondents that stopped actively working is composed of people expecting to resume work, searching for a new job, or exiting the labor force (World Bank 2020b).

<sup>28</sup> The rapid survey was conducted over telephone from June 04 to 15, 2020. It involved 500 MSMEs distributed across all eight divisions of Bangladesh and across 12 distinct sectors, with fashion and clothing; agriculture, fishing, or mining; retail or wholesale being the top-three sectors (Kader and Pattanayak 2020).

<sup>29</sup> The BIGD conducted two rounds of online surveys of the same 122 female online entrepreneurs between mid-April to mid-June 2020 (Rabbani, Zahan, and Matin 2020).



**The crisis also increased food insecurity of the urban poor.** A study jointly conducted by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and the BRAC institute of Governance & Development (BIGD) shows that the COVID-19 crisis is leaving poor urban households at risk of food insecurity.<sup>30</sup> 78 percent of the surveyed poor urban households indicated that they need food support. The study finds that per capita food expenditure in a typical day dropped by 28 percent in urban slums between the beginning of the lockdown mid-March and mid-April.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the number of households in urban slums having three meals in a day dropped by 24 percent amid the crisis. 67 percent of the study respondents meet their food needs by using up their savings, 52 percent by borrowing, 47 percent by reducing food, and 24 percent by household income. Only 14 percent of the respondents relied on government support and 5 percent on assistance from NGOs between March and April. As of April 12, respondents from urban slums indicated that they estimate that they could feed their families only during the next eight days by relying on their available income, savings, and food stock (PPRC and BIGD 2020a).

**Much of the early social sector response to the pandemic was on expansion of health services for the poor.** Bangladesh's hospitals are poorly equipped and staffed. As of March 2020, hospitals had only a total of 1,169 intensive care units (ICU) beds (Abdullah 2020). The health system depends on around 100 thousand registered doctors (Anwar, Nasrullah, and Hosen 2020). There has been a shortage of tests across the country. As of June 08, there have been a total of 410,841 tests for Bangladesh's population of more than 160 million (IEDCR 2020). Due to a lack of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), many doctors and health workers were quarantined and tested positive for COVID-19 (Al Jazeera 2020). While everybody in Bangladesh is being at risk of contracting the virus, it is the urban poor being the most vulnerable. Lockdown, social distancing, and strict hand hygiene are barely feasible for Bangladesh's urban poor, especially in Dhaka and Chattogram, where slum dwellers live in extremely close quarters next to one another (Mahmud 2020).<sup>32</sup> Ramping up health facilities across the country may be not feasible due to financial and time constraints. Instead, what the GoB can and should do is providing a constant supply of PPE for healthcare workers, guaranteeing the availability of a large number of low-cost testing kits, and instructing urban slum-dwellers to stay as safe as possible given their difficult environment.<sup>33</sup>

**At the same time, there was a recognition that cash transfers to vulnerable urban households could help to cushion the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.** Bangladesh's urban poor have been severely impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Slum-dwellers have been seeing a steep decline in income amid the outbreak of the virus. The average income of slum-dwellers dropped by 75 percent over the period February-April 2020 (PPRC and BIGD 2020a). 71

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<sup>30</sup> The study is based on a telephone survey. 5,471 households completed the survey between mid-March to mid-April (PPRC and BIGD 2020a).

<sup>31</sup> There is evidence that many urban poor in Bangladesh cope with shocks by reducing their food consumption. Simulation results from the Poverty Global Practice's urban monitoring survey show that 69 percent of urban poor that reported an income shock in the past year reduced food consumption as a response (Genoni et al. 2020).

<sup>32</sup> Most Bangladeshi government offices and private sector organizations were closed from March 26 to May 30. The GoB urged citizens to stay at home as much as possible to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In this period, international commercial passenger flights from a variety of countries were not allowed to land at any international airport. Between May 31 to June 15 offices and workplaces began to reopen.

<sup>33</sup> It is estimated that Bangladesh may need about USD 250 million for testing, clinical equipment, and contract tracing, just to respond to the initial shock (IMF 2020).

percent of the urban poor have become economically inactive, compared to 55 percent of the rural poor. Surveyed individuals indicated that they would need on average 1,868 BDT per capita per month to live by (Hossain and Matin 2020).<sup>34</sup> Putting cash into people's pockets can help them to avoid going hungry or selling their livelihood assets. Cash transfers allow urban households to stay at home and not hustle for daily wages. This can contribute to preventing the further spread of COVID-19.

**The GoB took measures to provide the much-needed assistance to vulnerable groups through a wide range of initiatives.** Between March and April, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh announced plans for immediate social protection allocations of almost 80 billion BDT (about USD 0.93 billion). This is more than 10 percent of the country's original budget allocation for social protection programs for the fiscal year 2019-2020. Support is being provided in the form of food transfers through existing emergency response programs and subsidized sales of food to the rural and urban poor are being in progress (Annex 5). In terms of cash transfers, the government announced a horizontal expansion of the widow allowance and the old age allowance schemes amounting to 81.5 million BDT (about USD 0.96 million). Support of 50 billion BDT (about USD 590 million) will be provided to ensure the payment of salaries of formal workers employed in export-oriented industries. The government also allocated 7.6 billion BDT (about USD 89 million) in the form of cash transfers to informal sector workers in need. 21.3 billion BDT (about USD 250 million) has been committed to a housing scheme for the homeless.

**For an effective provision of immediate measures, delivery speed and coverage are crucial rather than targeting accuracy.** For the urban poor who were already relying on service delivery systems before the COVID-19 outbreak, shock response transfers can be based on existing beneficiary registries. These transfers should be designed and communicated as separate from the regular programs, limited in time with a clearly defined exit strategy (Bodewig et al. 2020). However, the GoB needs to expand coverage to those population groups who are not typically qualifying for cash transfers but are now pushed into poverty, especially in urban areas.<sup>35</sup> The GoB has announced plans to expand the coverage of social protection programs in the next fiscal year to support those hit hardest in the COVID-19 crisis (The Financial Express 2020). To identify those groups beneficiary registries will need to be extended by enrolling households quickly through novel ways, for example, relying on registries of mobile phone providers. The urgency of the response stresses delivery speed and coverage over targeting accuracy. In a later stage, beneficiary registries can be re-assessed and adapted (Bodewig et al. 2020).

## 5. Resilience beyond the pandemic

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<sup>34</sup> BIGD launched a rapid response telephonic survey utilizing respondent phone data from previous surveys. A total of 5,471 poor in urban and rural areas of the country were surveyed via phone over the period April 4 to April 12, 2020.

<sup>35</sup> In his speech the finance minister of Bangladesh announced a plan to expand the coverage of the country's social safety net in the next fiscal year. According to his proposal, 500,000 poor senior citizens, 350,000 widows and women deserted by their husbands, and 255,000 individuals with disabilities should be new beneficiaries supported to mitigate the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis (The Financial Express 2020).

**Bangladesh's COVID-19 emergency measures could lead to accelerated reforms of existing urban service delivery systems helping the urban poor become more resilient to future shocks.**

Urban service delivery systems tailored to the unique urban context will be essential in increasing the resilience of vulnerable groups such as workers in the RMG and informal sectors to future shocks. In the COVID-19 crisis low-skilled workers in the RMG and informal sectors are those hit hardest in urban areas. The major obstacle of these vulnerable urban groups to improve their standards of living is usually their lack of education and access to funding. Therefore, future social protection programs should offer skills training in combination with micro-credit products. Evidence from Bangladesh and developing countries around the world shows that packaged labor market interventions, usually the offering of micro-credits coupled with training courses, are the best means to enhance productivity and employability.<sup>36</sup>

**Poor urban women, whose vulnerability was laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic, will need to be provided better access to training, financial products, and childcare services to be more economically resilient in the future.**

In the ongoing health crisis, economic gender inequality has most likely become more pronounced in Bangladesh. The decline in global and domestic demand for manufactured goods, especially in the RMG sector where low-skilled urban poor women predominantly work, will likely contribute to a surge in female unemployment (Farole et al. 2017). The currently provided immediate financial support for poor urban women as part of the COVID-19 emergency response could lead to long-lasting efforts to increase female employment. To increase the employability of urban poor women permanently, the provision of programs offering skills training combined with micro-credits to establish MSMEs and community-based childcare services in urban areas will be crucial (Kotikula, Hill, and Raza 2019). As part of the country's initiative to boost economic gender equality, the GoB will need to adopt nationwide, inclusive policies and awareness campaigns to break down deep-rooted gender stereotypes holding many poor urban women back from working.

**The COVID-19 emergency measures could lead to social protection programs aimed at integrating returning labor migrants into the economy and making good use of their economic potential.**

Amid the COVID-19 outbreak, many Bangladeshi labor migrants have been stranded, often unemployed without access to health care. As countries such as Kuwait and the UAE have started repatriating thousands of Bangladeshi labor migrants in the past months and many more are expected to return in the next months (Sumon 2020; Sarker 2020). The social protection programs to re-integrate the returning labor migrants into Bangladesh's economy will need to assess the returnee's acquired skills abroad, offer further skills training, and provide assistance to match them to potential domestic employers (Moroz, Shrestha, and Testaverde 2020). These emergency programs could accelerate the development of a policy framework for sustainable re-integration of returning labor migrants during future times of crisis and beyond. In the past, Bangladesh has lacked a mechanism to help returnees assess and certify skills acquired overseas, and find professional opportunities (IOM 2018).

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<sup>36</sup> See for example the Youth Opportunities Program in Uganda (Blattman, Fiala, and Martinez 2014), and the Temporary Income Support Project in El Salvador (World Bank 2017). For an example of a packaged labor market project, see the Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Development "Nuton Jibon" Project in Bangladesh (World Bank 2016).

**Urban social protection service delivery systems must reach informal workers facing hardship, as highlighted during the COVID-19 outbreak.**<sup>37</sup> Informal workers especially in urban areas have likely been over-represented among those facing job losses during the pandemic in Bangladesh.<sup>38</sup> Social distancing has severely affected urban informal workers working in high contact-intensive urban services, like retail, transport, and food services (World Bank 2020a). However, 77 percent of this vulnerable non-poor group fell below the poverty line income during the COVID-19 pandemic (PPRC 2020). These informal workers are a diverse group, i.e. elderly, illiterate, and young individuals. In the future, urban social protection service delivery systems targeting these informal workers will need to be tailored to their diverse needs to guarantee their livelihood and to find a return to income-generating employment.

**The COVID-19 pandemic could accelerate enhancements of urban spaces in the two megacities Dhaka and Chattogram to enhance resilience.** The pandemic laid bare the high risk of urban slum-dwellers to contract infectious diseases due to high congestion and an overall lack of proper housing. Short-term support of these vulnerable urban households could translate into urban social protection projects aimed at permanently improving the quality of housing, access to water and electricity for urban slum-dwellers. In the next years, if no interventions take place, congestion and therefore vulnerability of the urban poor will most likely further increase due to climate change-related international migration. Climate change has been threatening Bangladesh's agriculture sector. For instance, by 2030 about 60 percent of the land used for rice production will be affected by seasonal drought. Bangladesh's total rice production will be decreased by about eight percent by 2050 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands 2018). Lower agricultural productivity could force many Bangladeshis to migrate to the country's urban centers, mostly to Dhaka, leading to increased pressure on urban infrastructure (Ahmed 2014).

**Reducing the spatial pressures in the two megacities would also require targeted social protection interventions to develop urban spaces of Bangladesh's secondary cities.** Post COVID-19, Bangladesh's urban resilience concept should stress the importance of boosting the attractiveness of smaller urban areas for individuals and companies. Strategic urban social protection projects in amenities, infrastructure, and economic capacity will be crucial in attracting individuals and enterprises (Farole et al. 2017). National policies, such as the implementation of special economic zones, and the access to industrial land, could complement urban social protection projects to foster economic activities in these smaller urban areas (Farole et al. 2017).

**Bangladesh's COVID-19 emergency shock response could be an opportunity to boost health-financing resilience and expand coverage to poor urban areas.** The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the shortcomings of Bangladesh's health care system, which has ever been underfunded due to limited national fiscal capacity. In 2017, total health expenditure per capita was USD 36, i.e. 2.27 percent of the country's GDP (WDI 2020). This places the country among the countries that least spend on health in the region. Some policies currently implemented as emergency measures to mitigate the COVID-19 shock such as increased task shifting and reinforced disease surveillance could contribute to more efficient health financing and increase the number of social protection

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<sup>37</sup> In the current COVID-19 crisis the livelihoods of about 50 million informal workers may be under serious threat (Mahmood 2020).

<sup>38</sup> Estimates show that earnings of informal workers may have dropped by on average 49 percent between February and June, compared by on average of 17 percent for formal occupations (factory workers, salaried jobs) between February and June 2020 (PPRC and BIGD 2020b).

programs providing health care services (Kurowski et al. 2020). A major goal of a reform would be to absorb and respond to unpredictable shocks in health spending. While universal health coverage might not be possible due to fiscal constraints, increasing the availability of health care services in Bangladesh's poor urban areas should be aimed for.

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## Annex 1: Characteristics of Poor Households (HIES 2016)

	Rural (1)	Urban (2)	Dhaka and Chattogram SMA (3)	Other urban (4)	Significance test (1 vs 2)	Significance test (3 vs 4)
<b>Demographics</b>						
Household size	4.56	4.59	4.69	4.56	***	***
Household dependency ratio	0.89	0.87	1.01	0.84	***	***
Number of younger than 12 years in household	1.65	1.67	2.06	1.58		***
Number of 13-18 years old in household	0.53	0.56	0.56	0.54		***
Number of 19-65 years old in household	2.33	2.40	2.39	2.38	**	***
Number older than 65 years in household	0.19	0.14	0.07	0.16	***	***
Household head age	43.6	42.3	38.9	42.6		***
Household head is female	0.10	0.14	0.18	0.13		**
<b>Household structure, asset ownership and services</b>						
Wall materials: Brick/Cement	0.09	0.25	0.41	0.23	***	***
Wall materials: Tin/Wood	0.60	0.56	0.45	0.59	***	***
Roof materials: Brick/Cement	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.03	***	***
Roof materials: TIN	0.92	0.91	0.96	0.90	***	***
Per capita rooms	0.43	0.37	0.25	0.40	***	***
Household owns land	0.26	0.12	0.09	0.13	***	***
Household owns a mobile phone	0.87	0.89	0.93	0.91	***	***
Tv	0.14	0.33	0.35	0.34	***	***
Refrigerator	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.05	***	***
Bicycle	0.20	0.12	0.00	0.15	***	***
Motorbike	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	***	***
Computer	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	***	***
Household has electricity	0.53	0.83	0.99	0.79	***	***
<b>Water and sanitation</b>						
Household has a piped water	0.02	0.18	0.68	0.12	***	***
Household has improved source of water	0.97	0.97	0.99	0.97	***	*
Has separate kitchen	0.74	0.71	0.56	0.72		**
Share kitchen	0.10	0.34	0.94	0.23	***	***
Improved Latrine- Sanitary or Pacca Latrine	0.34	0.61	0.99	0.54	***	***
Share a toilet	0.27	0.50	0.96	0.40	***	***
<b>Remittance and Financial Inclusion</b>						
Household received domestic remittance	0.12	0.10	0.05	0.11	***	***
Household received international remittance	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	***	***
Domestic remittance received by household annually (BDT)	66808	50265	44333	49441	***	***
International remittance received by household annually (BDT)	240450	127188	240000	122246	***	
Household has microcredit	0.34	0.30	0.11	0.33	***	***
Received social safety net	0.36	0.17	0.02	0.21	***	***
Average amount received from social safety net (hh level)	2047	2325	3451	2292		***
<b>Payment method</b>						
Bank	0.11	0.16	0.00	0.16	***	***
Hand	0.85	0.80	1.00	0.80		***
<b>Any member of Household has access</b>						
Bank account	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.03	***	***
Credit or micro-finance institution	0.17	0.14	0.04	0.15	***	***

Deposited money to informal institution	0.05	0.04	0.00	0.04	***	
Has taken loan from any source	0.34	0.30	0.11	0.33	***	***

	Rural (1)	Urban (2)	Dhaka and Chattogram SMA (3)	Other urban (4)	Significance test (1 vs 2)	Significance test (3 vs 4)
<b>Work &amp; income</b>						
Share of adults who are earners	0.29	0.30	0.36	0.30	***	***
<b>Household head sector of work (main labor income)</b>						
Agriculture	0.49	0.17	0.03	0.20	***	***
Services	0.22	0.39	0.37	0.40	***	***
Industry	0.14	0.24	0.33	0.22	***	***
Day laborer, population 18 and above	0.59	0.47	0.38	0.49	***	***
Self-employed, population 18 and above	0.25	0.20	0.07	0.23	***	***
Employee, population 18 and above	0.16	0.32	0.55	0.28	***	***
Individuals are involved in non-agriculture enterprise	0.12	0.16	0.09	0.17	***	***
Food consumption expenditure per HH	4663	5340	6260	5186	***	***
Non-food consumption expenditure per HH	3084	3871	5064	3706	***	***
Consumption expenditure per HH	7747	9211	11324	8892	***	***
<b>Education</b>						
<b>Household head</b>						
Has no schooling	0.64	0.59	0.71	0.57	***	***
Head has some primary education	0.10	0.10	0.04	0.11	***	***
Head has completed primary education	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.11	*	***
Some secondary education	0.16	0.20	0.13	0.22	***	***
<b>Individual level (age &gt;17)</b>						
Has no schooling	0.56	0.54	0.67	0.51	***	***
Some primary	0.09	0.09	0.04	0.10		***
Completed primary	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.12		
Some secondary	0.22	0.26	0.18	0.28	*	***
Average years of education	2.8	3.1	2.1	3.3	**	***
School attendance: overall (6-18 years)	0.78	0.67	0.54	0.72	***	***
School attendance: primary (6-10 years)	0.91	0.84	0.77	0.87		***
School attendance: secondary (11-15 years)	0.79	0.65	0.40	0.72	***	***
School attendance: high secondary (16-18 years)	0.36	0.28	0.09	0.33	***	*
Educational expenses (HH level)	5106	5622	4576	5894	***	***
Receive any type of stipend	0.26	0.10	--	0.12	***	***
Average amount of stipend receives (BDT)	967	955	--	951	***	***
<b>Health</b>						
Member with illness/disability	0.25	0.21	0.14	0.21		***
Sought treatment	0.89	0.91	0.98	0.91	***	***
Average cost for in-patient (BDT)	13174	13274	26300	11291	***	***
Average cost for out-patient (BDT)	678	767	690	717	*	***
<b>Migration</b>						
<b>At least one member from the household migrated to</b>						
Dhaka and Chattogram from rural	0.02	---	---	---		
Other Urban from rural	0.006	---	---	---		

# of Member migrated to abroad from Urban (average)	---	0.02	0.01	0.02	***
# of Member migrated to other abroad from Rural (average)	0.02	---	----	----	

## Annex 2: List of Categories

Name of category	Description of category values
Organization Name	Implementing agency
Program Name	Name of program/project
Program category (based on ASPIRE database)	Labor market policy measure (active LM programs)/social assistance/social insurance
Program sub-category (based on ASPIRE database)	<p><b>Labor market policy measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training (vocational, life skills, cash for training)</li> <li>• Employment incentives</li> <li>• Labor market services and intermediation through PES</li> <li>• Employment measures for disabled</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship support/startup incentives (cash and in-kind grant, microcredit)</li> <li>• Other active labor market programs</li> </ul> <p><b>Social assistance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social care services</li> <li>• Scholarships/education benefits</li> <li>• Disabled benefits/war victims noncontributory related benefits</li> <li>• Housing subsidies</li> <li>• Conditional cash transfer</li> <li>• Education fee waiver</li> <li>• Non-contributory funeral grants, burial allowances</li> <li>• Health insurance exemptions and reduced medical fees</li> <li>• Transfers for care givers</li> <li>• Nutritional programs (therapeutic, supplementary feeding and PLHIV)</li> <li>• Food and in-kind transfer (nutritional programs)</li> <li>• Social care service</li> <li>• Housing subsidies and allowances (and “privileges”)</li> <li>• Other social assistance</li> </ul> <p><b>Social insurance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old age pension (all schemes, national, civil servants, veterans, other special)</li> </ul>
Identified as	Program/Project
Area Coverage	Dhaka/Chattogram/Both

Nature of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban-based on the mandate</li> <li>• Urban-based on design</li> <li>• Urban-based on the target population</li> <li>• Urban-based on the target population and mandate</li> <li>• Both urban and rural</li> <li>• Based on the mandate and design</li> </ul>
Budget/Fund of the program	Amount of BDT or USD/source of funding
No. of beneficiaries	Figure
Program mandate	Description of main goal of project
Beneficiaries	Description of target group
Selection Process of Beneficiaries	Description of selection
Eligibility Criteria of Beneficiaries	Description of eligibility criteria
Job Component (Creation, Access, and Quality)	Access and quality/creation/creation and quality/quality/access, creation, and quality
Design	Summary of project
Duration	Date and duration

## **Annex 3: List of Implementing and Funding Organizations**

### **1. Implementing organizations**

#### **International entities:**

- Action Aid
- CARE
- Change Lives Foundation
- Chemonics
- It's Humanity Foundation
- Oxfam
- Save the Children
- UNDP
- World Vision

#### **Domestic entities:**

- Agroho
- Aporajeyo Bangladesh
- Bangladesh Institute of Theater Academy
- BRAC
- Coders Trust
- Community Development Center
- Department of Social Services (Dhaka)
- Gashful
- Jaago Foundation
- Jugantor (newspaper)
- Mamata
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation
- Phulki
- Shakti Foundation
- SUIIT
- Young Power in Social Action

### **2. Funding organizations**

#### **International entities:**

- ADB
- Dressmann (corporate donor based in Norway)
- European Union
- IKEA Foundation
- Save the Children Australia
- UK AID
- UNFPA
- UNICEF
- World Bank

**Domestic entities:**

- Action Aid Bangladesh
- Anukul Foundation
- Bangladesh Bank
- BNFE
- BRAC
- CDD
- DFIP
- CPC
- City Development Fund
- Danida
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- ENK Center
- Government of Bangladesh
- IPGC
- Manusher Jonno Foundation
- PKSF
- Sponsorship fund
- Shapla Nir
- UYU



## Annex 4: Description of Six Selected Social Protection and Labor Market Projects<sup>39</sup>

### 1. Shakti Foundation's microfinance program

Since 1992, the Shakti Foundation for Disadvantaged Women offers microfinance products to poor urban women in the Dhaka and Chattogram Divisions. The project goal is to empower ultra-poor urban woman to create own capital and enterprise. Apart from providing financial products, the program also offers training on managing loans and awareness workshops. Beneficiaries aged 15 or older are selected who are able to deposit a minimum of savings and whose families own less than half an acre of cultivable land and whose family income does not exceed the market value of one acre land. The project is urban based on the target population. The project focuses on job creation by providing microcredits to support the creation of new enterprises.

The program, which is based on the Grameen Bank model, provides tailored financial assistance to the urban poor. It consists of the following components: (1) **Micro loans** of around 5,000-16,000 BDT are offered to each member given they meet the membership criteria. The loan is repaid on a weekly basis with a 12 percent interest rate for 50 weeks. (2) **Micro enterprise (ME) loans**, ranging from 1,600-50,000 BDT, are provided to promising entrepreneurs. Repayment can be done either weekly or monthly. (3) A variety of **saving schemes** are provided. For instance, the scheme "My Savings" which is mandatory for all members is aimed at promoting responsible saving. The scheme entitles members to save fixed amount per week (100 for micro loan borrowers and 150 BDT for ME loan borrowers with no option to withdraw during the first cycle. (4) **Loan waivers** are offered upon the death of members. The registered nominee receives the deposited saving and family members are provided with burial and funeral allowances.

### 2. Women's Skill Development for Freelancing Marketplaces

The Women's Skill Development for Freelancing Marketplaces (WSDFM) project provides women the opportunity to learn Information Technology (IT) skills to increase their employability. Implemented by Coders Trust in April 2019 and planned to be completed by March 2021, the labor market project aims to provide underprivileged women and housewives in Dhaka and Chattogram the opportunity to learn and strengthen skills to increase their employability in the digital workspace at free of cost. By providing IT courses to poor women, the program addresses gender inequality especially in the IT sector in urban areas. At the moment around 200 students are trained, with the goal to increase the number to 1,000. The project has an urban focus based on its mandate and design.

The WSDFM project provides poor women with skills courses and assists them in finding jobs. Women aged 18-30, who have at least graduated from secondary school and are required to undergo a three-tier assessment consisting of a written, practical, and viva exam for selection. The project offers three four months long courses which students are allowed to enroll in only one: Web research and Support, Graphics Design, and Digital Marketing. After completion of the course, students are provided on-the-job guidance for about 6 months to one year. They are

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<sup>39</sup> Project description is based on stocktaking exercise, which was conducted by BIGD and BRAC University.

assisted in opening profiles on freelancing platforms and counseled in case of unemployment. The labor market project focuses on improving job quality for the beneficiaries.

### **3. Urban Primary Health Care Services Delivery Project**

**The Urban Primary Health Care Services Project (UPHSCDP) aims to improve access to and quality of urban primary health care services for poor women and children.** The social assistance project, implemented by the Ministry of Family Welfare of Bangladesh, has a specifically urban mandate. Its goal is to provide health services through mini or satellite clinics, domiciliary services, and other outreach activities in the urban areas of Dhaka and Chattogram. The project has reached more than 10 million vulnerable individuals, such as slum dwellers and floating populations without fixed residence. These services range from maternal health care, child health care, the control of infectious diseases, to awareness sessions on reproductive health. 38 percent of the clinical services are provided for free. To ensure quality service delivery, the project also provides training on management and supervision, human resources, financial management. Physicians, paramedics, and nurses are provided training on four sectors, newborn care, vasectomy, tubectomy, and counseling.

### **4. Urban Community Development Project**

**The Urban Community Development (UCD) provides social assistance and labor market support to low-income individuals in Dhaka and Chattogram.** The project which operates in rural and urban areas across the whole country has the goal is to improve the standard of living of vulnerable individuals through family unifications, generation of self-employment opportunities, micro-credit programs, and social development activities. As of today, has worked with 249,105 beneficiaries in total.

**Various distinct mechanisms are provided to address poor living conditions of the urban poor.** **Allowances**, such as old age and widow allowance, disability and education allowance, allowance for gypsies and the third gender, are provided. **Skills development training** in various sectors such as database programming, tailoring, and English communication is offered to interested beneficiaries. The courses last three to six months depending on the sector. Every year around 25,000 beneficiaries are provided with completion certificates by 80 centers. **Microfinance products** are provided to those beneficiaries upon the completion of the skills development training. The loan is provided in a group with the maximum amount of 50,000 BDT per group. Repayment is done in 10 installments with a 10 percent service charge. The focus of the project's labor market component is job creation.

### **5. Skills Training for Advanced Resources**

**BRAC's Skills Training for Advanced Resources (STAR) project aims to empower poor urban youths to enhance their employability.** Initiated in 2012, the six-month long apprenticeship program targets underprivileged youth aged 14 to 18 with family earnings of below 3,000 BDT monthly with no arable land, and who do not have schooling beyond eight grade and been out of school for at least a year. The covers Dhaka and Chattogram and has an explicitly urban mandate. It particularly impacts urban youth due to its mandate to create an accessible environment in the informal sector with appropriate work ethics. As of March 2019, the project successfully

graduated around 30,000 apprentices with a 95 percent employment rate, a 62 percent reduction rate of early marriages, and an income increase by eight times.

**STAR is an apprenticeship program that provides trade specific training and soft skills to the selected youth under the guidance of qualified master crafts persons (MCPs).** Before the beginning of the apprenticeships, a three month long preparatory program should ensure the participants' readiness. The preparatory program includes an orientation meeting, the selection of participants, trades and MCPs. MCPs are selected if they have a minimum of five-year experience, prior experience in training apprentices, willing to train girls and disabled individuals, have schooling of at least five years, and are not related to any participating youth. At the beginning of the apprenticeship, participants are matched with their MCPs. During the training various trade skills such as financial literacy, gender equality issues, and English language skills, are provided. Upon completion, graduates are provided with a nationally recognized certificate and are expected enter employment.

#### **6. Reaching Out-of-School Children Project**

**The Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC) project provides scholarships to underprivileged children in Chattogram to gain primary education.** Implemented by the Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA), this social assistance program targets poor urban children aged 8-14, who could not continue their studies, or who were unable to pursue their education at all. Rather than being specifically designed for urban areas or have a specific urban mandate, it targets Bangladesh's urban population. The selected children attend Anondo schools, which offer conventional education condensed from the usually five years to three years to compensate for the school years lost by the students. Students also can join clubs where they are taught music, dance, and art and offered counseling sessions. To guarantee the quality of the provided education and regular attendance of the students, monthly meetings are held with the guardians.

## Annex 5: Overview of COVID-19 Emergency Budget

Type of support	Support announced	Amount committed (BDT million)
Social assistance – food		
	Food distribution to poor households in rural and urban areas	Not available
Food subsidy		
	Sale of subsidized rice and wheat to poor households in rural and urban areas	Not available
Social assistance - cash		
	Horizontal expansion of the Old Age Allowance and Widow Allowance	81.50
	Social assistance for formal workers employed by export-oriented industries	50,000.00
	Social assistance for formal workers	7,600.00
Community development		
	Housing scheme for the homeless	21,300.00
		78,981.50

Source: Public addresses of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh during March-April 2020.