



# DÉJÀ VU: THE UNTENABLE REALITY OF PAVEMENT DWELLERS OF DHAKA- EVIDENCE FROM THREE DECADES



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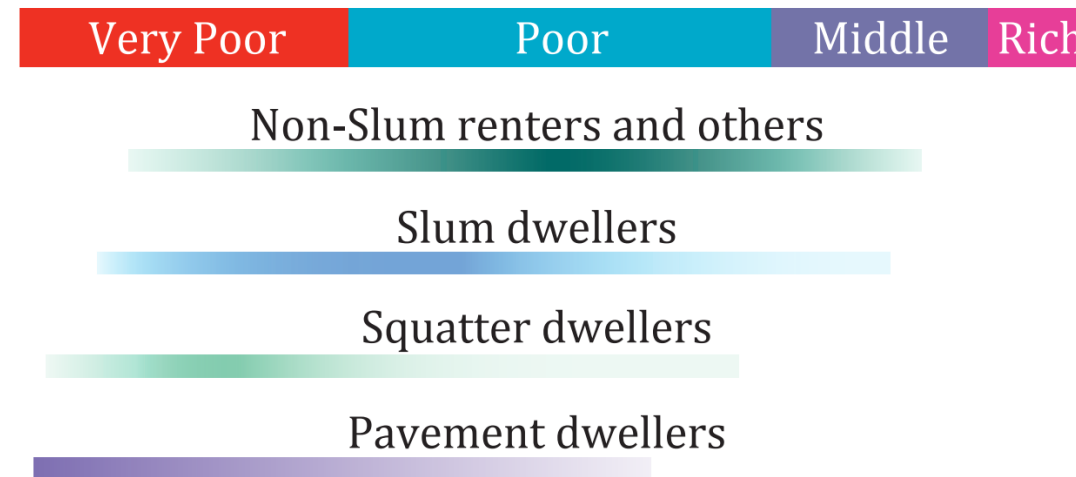
# INTRODUCTION

- **Pavement dwellers, street dwellers**, floaters, homeless, rough sleepers, rootless, vagrants- many names but **one identity- marginalized**; occupying streets, footpaths, pavements, railway stations, bus/truck stands, launch/ferry terminals, parks, over bridges, open stairways of public and private buildings, open spaces of markets/bazaars, religious places and **open public spaces**.
- As Bangladesh's capital city, the **average annual growth rate** of the **population** of **Dhaka city** during 1991-2021 was 3.38 percent, of which **1.01 percentage points** can be attributed to **migration**.
- Most of the city-ward **migrations** occur due to economic push (**insufficient income**, lack of employment, landlessness, etc.) and pull factors (**stable income**, better job opportunities, better wage rate, etc.) followed by social, political, physical and climatic reasons (Lee, 1966; Begum, 1999).

# INTRODUCTION (CONTD.)

- Pavement dwellers belong to the **lowest end of the urban poverty spectrum**, often with **minimal access to shelter, safe food, healthcare, education, water, sanitation** and other basic amenities.

## Urban Extreme Poor on the Poverty Continuum



Source: ILUEP project

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Author	Period	Issues addressed
Lee E.S.	1966	Migrations occur primarily due to push and pull factors.
Jagannathan and Halder	1988	Studied metropolitan Calcutta: Pds rarely experience upward mobility.
Busch-Geertsema et al.	2016	Although data on homelessness is available for a large part of the Global North, few countries in the Global South have such data.
Qiu & Zufferey, Nicholas and Gray	2018	Different countries define homelessness in different ways, e.g., China has no official definition of homelessness; Philippines considers pavement dwellers, homeless.
Majumder et al.;	1996	Slum Dweller's socioeconomic condition was studied, esp. Agargaon slum. Pd and slum dwellers-assessed: Poor are heterogenous, policies must be customized; Significant research done on slum dwellers.
Begum, A.;	1999	
Mohit, M.A.;	2012	
Hossain, S.;	2007	
Uddin et al.	2018	

# LITERATURE REVIEW (CONTD.)

Author	Period	Issues addressed
<b>Begum A.</b>	1991	<p>Approx. 43 % of the migrants (out of 2761 surveyed) migrated due to “economic push” followed by social, political, physical, psychological and climatic reasons; Migrants are not selected by age, sex or education. The majority are illiterate. Context must be viewed in terms of structural constraints and individual needs.</p> <p>Theoretical Framework of Migration was established; Structural-Functionalist and Methodological-individualist Approaches combined-</p> <p>To improve Pd’s situation, greater effort is required - focused policy formulation for extremely destitute and shelterless people.</p> <p>The well-being of Pds is considerably lower than that of slum dwellers. Pds do not own the roof over their heads. Rights are not ensured.</p> <p>Pds are more vulnerable now.</p> <p>Pds are unable to access education and decide to forgo it for their children, once in the city.</p>
	1997	
	1999	
	2022	
<b>BBS</b>	1997	<p>Poor migrants find shelter in slums, shanties, squatters and streets.</p>
	2014	
	2022	
<b>Ahmed et al., Huda, N.</b>	2011	<p>The extremely vulnerable find refuge on the streets. Lead perilous lives, suffer insecurity, mental, physical and sexual harassment; lack food.</p>
	2014	
<b>Koehlmoos et al.; Shil et al.; Chaudhuri, S.</b>	2009	<p>Pds are invisible in policy discourse. Female Pds subjected to Gender based violence. Total inattention towards Pds; Fewer studies on Pds, compared to slums.</p>
	2013	

# LITERATURE REVIEW (CONTD.)

Author	Period	Issues addressed
UN	1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights-Individuals have the right to level of living sufficient to ensure their overall welfare, including food, clothing, housing and healthcare.
Ghosh; Goel and Chowdhury	2019 2018	Although rights are articulated, nevertheless, the world's major cities show that homelessness is a long-standing issue, precluding human rights (unable to overcome) poverty, unemployment, infeasible relocation, and affordable housing.
Busch- Geertsema, Culhane and Fitzpatrick	2016	A comprehensive Global Framework for homelessness: Individuals without shelter; Individuals in temporary accommodation; individuals in inadequate/insecure accommodation-First two demand attention while the third may be addressed in local and national settings.
Zufferey and Yu	2018	The above 3 categories are interconnected: however, as pavement dwelling is most visible, many use it interchangeably with homelessness. All migrants do not become homeless.
ILUEP	2020	Pds are the most vulnerable and marginalized, among the poor.
Devereux and Shahan	2019	<b>Amrao Manush</b> , multi-dimensional support needed for women and children: overnight shelter, safe water, sanitation, cooking facility, health & day care.
Rahman and Hasan	2022	Twelve Pavement Dweller Center (PDC) in Dhaka and Chittagong.

# STUDY OBJECTIVE

- In the last 25 years, Bangladesh has witnessed a real per capita growth of **237 percent** (WDI, 2022). During the same period, the floating population of greater Dhaka almost halved from 15 to 7.5 thousand (BBS, 1999; BBS, 2015; BBS, 2022).
- In the face of such exceptional growth, one can positively assume that half of the pavement dwellers might have graduated from the pavement life to slum or/and returned to their origin, which now has better opportunities than earlier. However, the prevailing existence of the other half raises a question in our mind: **Why do they persist in the face of such remarkable growth?**
- To seek an answer to this query, we look at the persisting other half from different dimensions. We find them more vulnerable than in the 1990s (Begum, 1997; Begum, 1999), demanding a **refocused policy to mitigate.**



# METHODOLOGY

- We examine the prevalent demographic and socioeconomic status, living conditions, social security effectiveness, migration stories and expectation-reality anomalies of the pavement dwellers of Dhaka city using a mixed-methods approach.
- We compare recent findings with earlier studies to capture changes in shelter-less populations' livelihood trajectories, where possible.
- Tools of descriptive analysis: mean, frequency distribution, multiple bar plots were used to analyze quantitative data from close-ended questions.
- Content analysis was used to categorize qualitative data from open-ended questions, thematically.
- Inferential analysis was run using the Chi-square independence test to examine several variables' categorical associations.

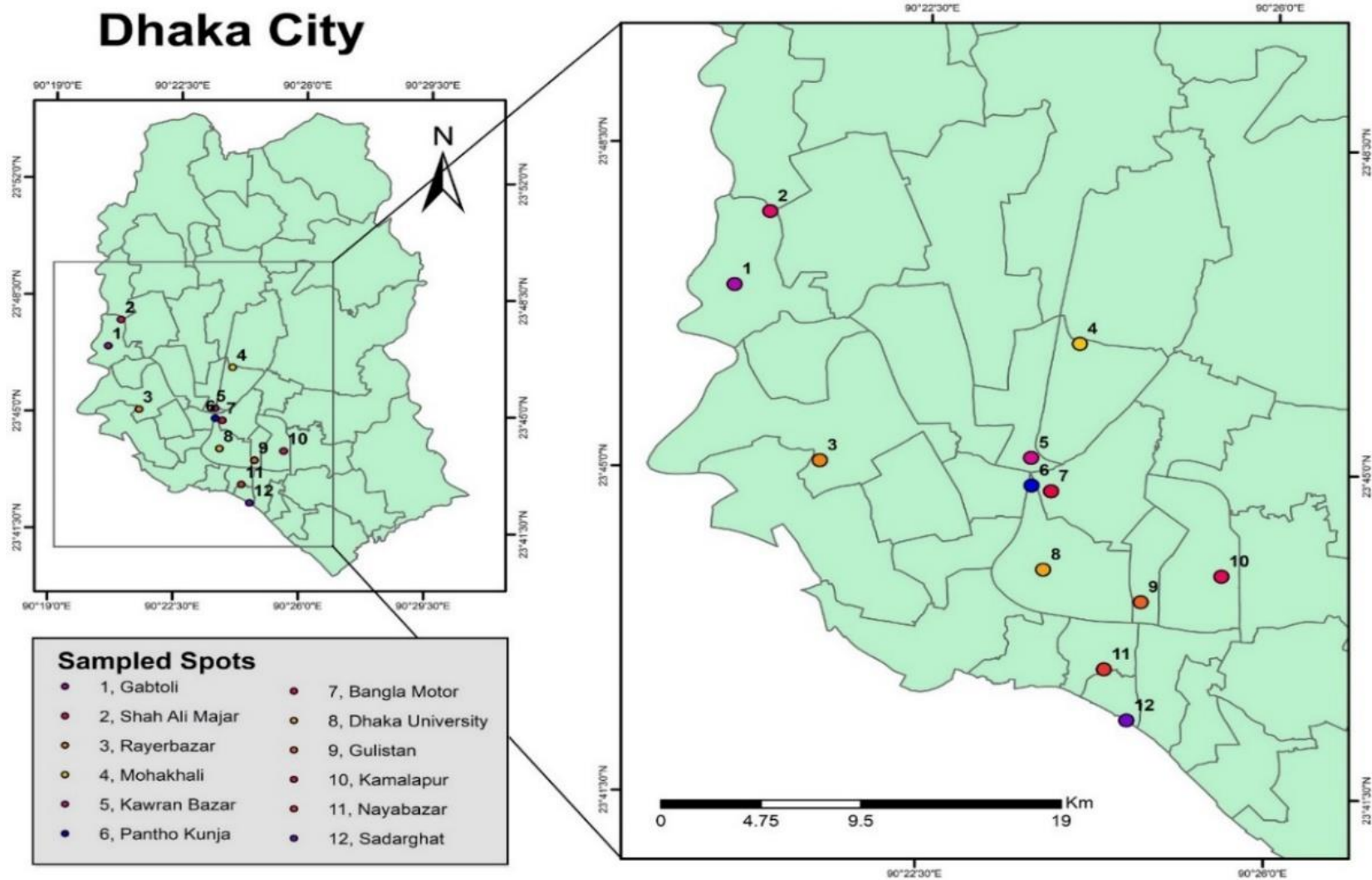
# SAMPLING

- For the sample survey, **12 hotspots** were chosen, where the proportions of pavement dwellers were **highest** during the **Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 2014** (BBS, 2015).
- **Half** of these hotspots were in **Dhaka North**, and the other half were in **Dhaka South** City Corporation.
- A total of 704 adult pavement dwellers (sampling frame) were found at the 12 spots in the last week of January 2022.
- Then, a **sample survey of 64 pavement dwellers** was implemented to **capture quantitative and qualitative information** on adult pavement dwellers' **demographics, socioeconomics, living conditions, migration stories, expectations and reality anomalies, policy responses, etc.**

## SAMPLING (CONTD.)

- This study used the **sample size suggested by Onwuegbuzie & Collins (2007)** for a mixed-method causal-comparative research design which has been recommended to find a two-tailed statistically significant relationship/difference with 0.80 statistical power at a 5% significance level.
- The spots were considered as strata, and the total sample size was then **proportionally** allocated to these strata. Then, pavement dwellers were randomly selected from each stratum using systematic sampling.

# SAMPLING (CONTD.)



# KEY FINDINGS

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- The sample has a mean age of 47 yrs. 47 percent of males and 60 percent of females were aged 36 to 59 yrs, indicating a middle-aged sample.
- Female respondents were found to be more illiterate than males (60 & 40 percent, respectively).
- Eighty-nine (89) percent of the interviewees lived alone on the pavement compared to only 11 percent living with their families.
- Half of the females found on pavements were chronically ill, whereas the same was true for only one-quarter of the males.
- Half of the males were currently married, while two-thirds of the females were widowed/divorced/separated.

## DEMOGRAPHICS (CONTD.)

- Life on the **street is highly risky** and for **females**, this **vulnerability increases manifold** due to fewer work opportunities and less security; hence, **fewer females are found on the streets**. It can be **better** understood from the following statement. A **middle-aged man** who lives at the **Gabtolli bus** terminal area with his wife and two daughters said:
- *“I need to change our sleeping place every week to avoid harassment towards my wife and young daughters. I always choose places that are populated, even during late night. I am constantly worried about their security. I intend to get my daughters married off, quickly.”*
- *“I am a 65 year old housewife from Cumilla. I have heard about many government programs but I have never received any. I took several loans from NGOs but I could not repay, so I escaped; I sleep near Kamalapur Station. I would like to go back, but I have a disabled son for whom I must send money. I brave severe physical hardship, accommodation and food problems here, for my son. I expect Old Age Allowance from the government.”*

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC FINDINGS

- Overall, **39 percent of pavement dwellers were beggars**, comprising the majority (2022). In 1991, beggars comprised **22 percent** (Begum, 1997).
- Altogether, **90 percent of pavement dwellers had daily work opportunities**, albeit informal, **similar to 1991** (Begum, 1997; 1999).
- Average **daily income for males and females** was around **BDT 250** and **200**, respectively.
- **Among pavement dwellers living alone, males earned 1.4 times more than females. The same was 1.5 times in 2011** (Ahmed et al., 2011).
- This disparity might be because females cannot take up labor-intensive jobs as readily as their male counterparts.
- Those living with their families, earned more.

## SOCIOECONOMICS (CONTD.)

- To understand how pavement dwellers' income has evolved over the last 30 years in nominal and real terms, Table below presents average daily nominal and real income for 1991 (Begum, 1997), 2011 (Ahmed et al., 2011) and 2022 (current study). Real income has been derived by adjusting nominal income for inflation using a GDP deflator (WDI, 2022).

**Table:** Nominal and real daily income of pavement dwellers

Year	Daily income	
	Current BDT	Constant BDT 1991
1991	43	43
2011	121	41
2022	254	42



# MIGRATION REALITY

- On average, each pavement dweller had **two reasons for migration, similar to 1993** (Begum, 1999).

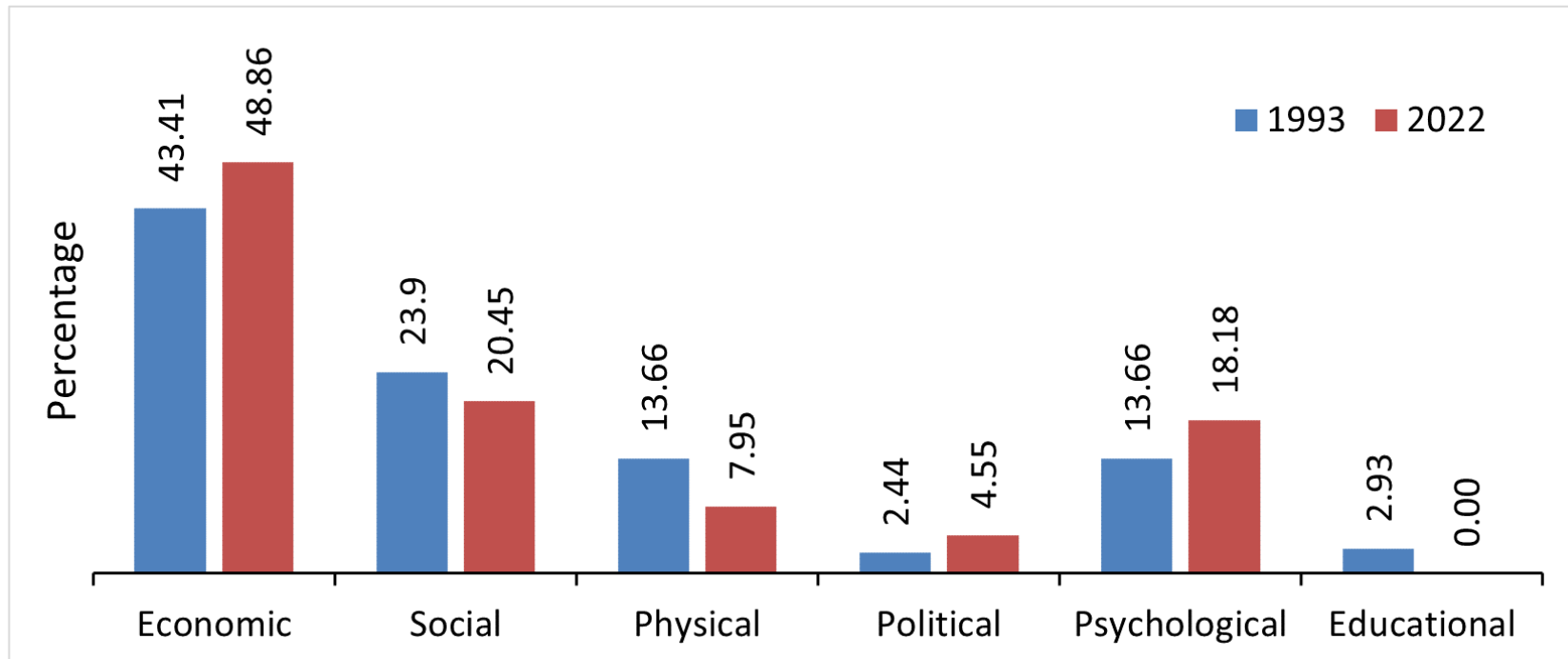


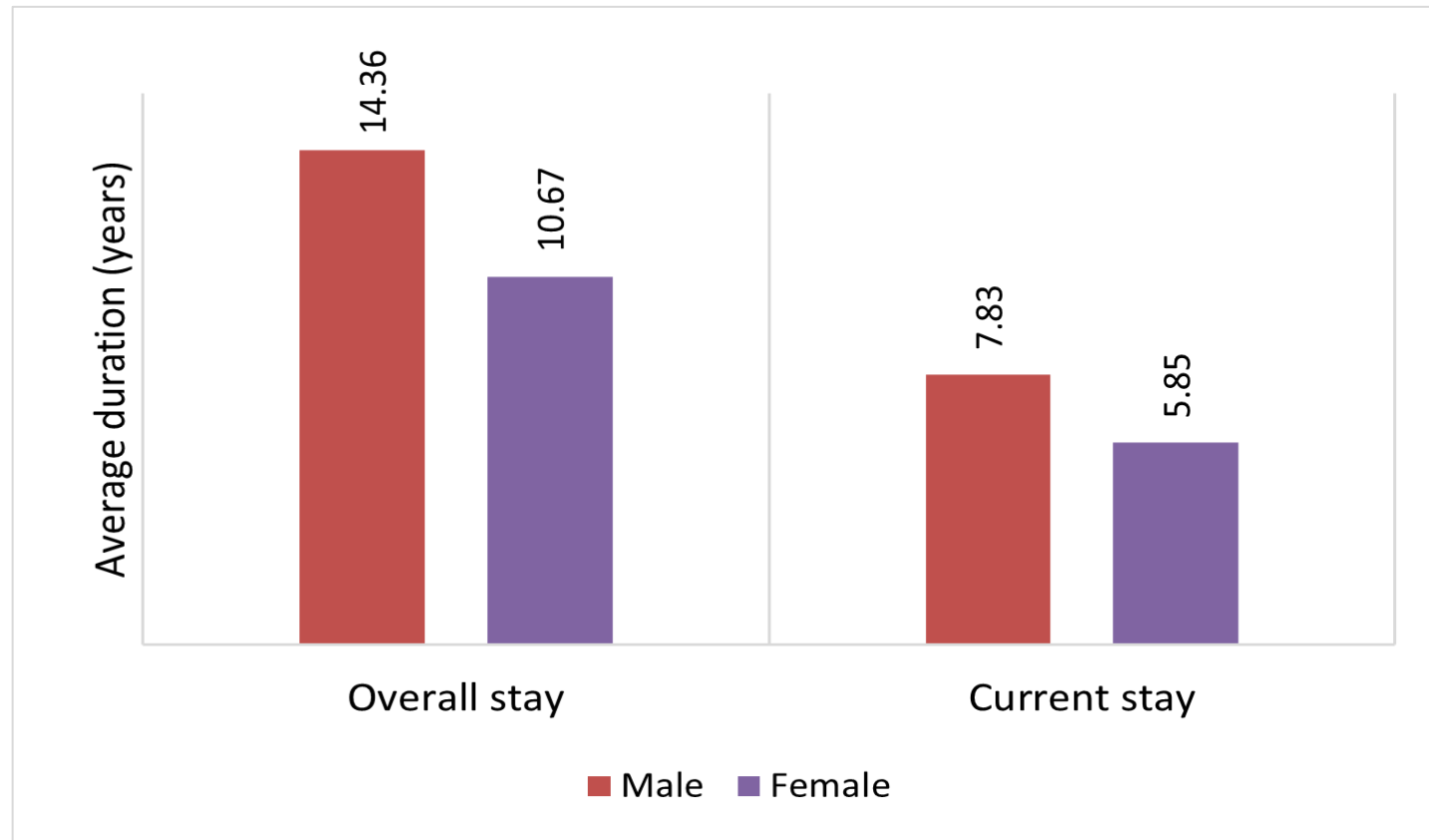
Figure: Pavement dwellers' reasons for migration in 1993 and 2022 (% of responses)

## MIGRATION REALITY (CONTD.)

- Seventy-two (72 percent) of the pavement dwellers migrated within 30 days of taking the decision.
- More than half of the pavement dwellers thought they had enough information, mainly from neighbors (51 percent) and family (14 percent) about Dhaka before migration.
- However, more than 90 percent of their post-migration realization was that they were ill-prepared for the migration, and that information plays a crucial role in reality for better livelihood after migration.
- About half of the pavement dwellers reported that the initial benefit of migration was that they earned something to carry on with their lives.
- Nevertheless, the initial challenge was accommodation (48 percent), followed by food problems (31 percent), unemployment (22 percent), and lack of security (19 percent).

# LIVING CONDITIONS

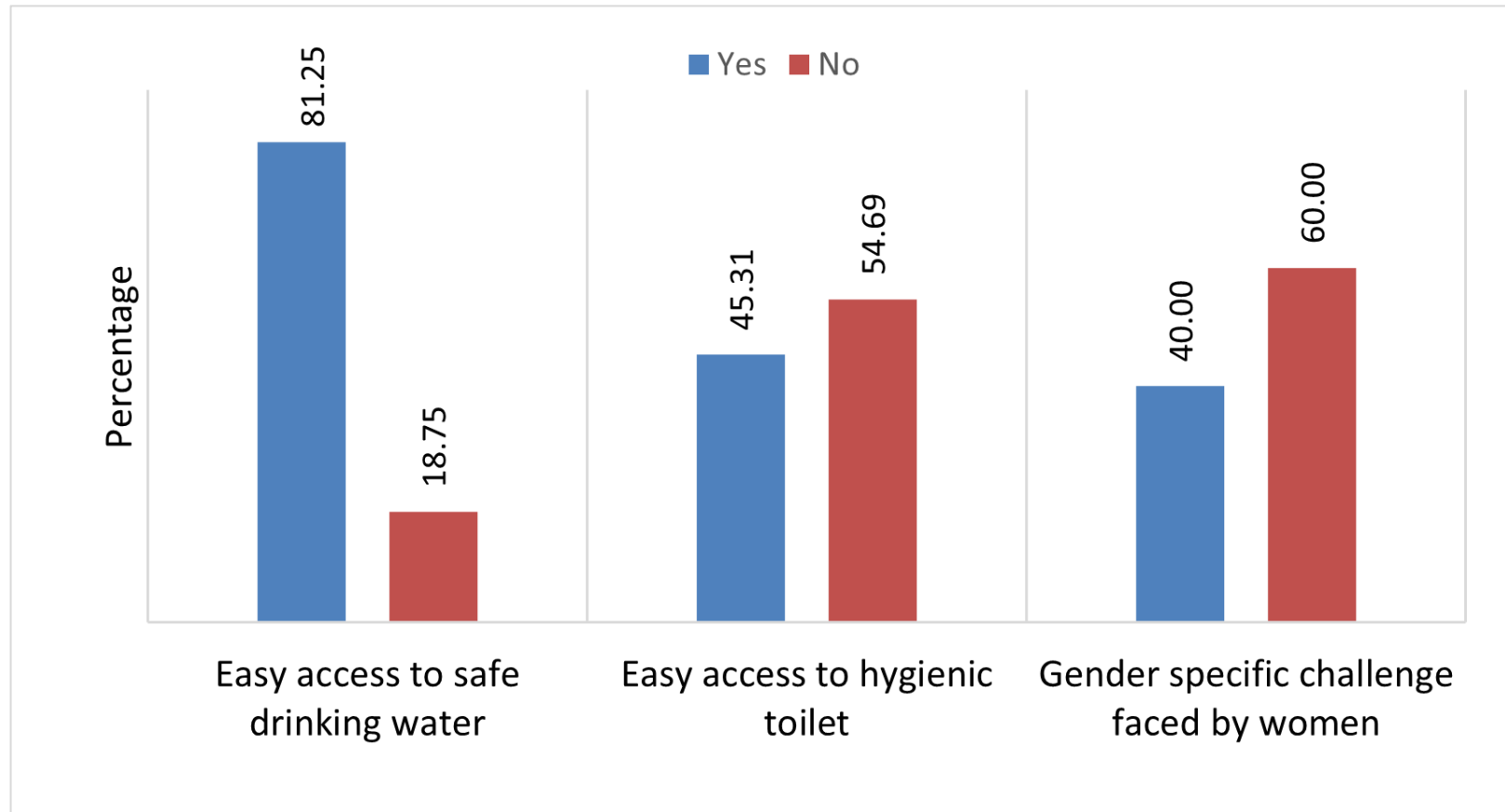
## Duration of stay on pavements



## LIVING CONDITIONS (CONTD.)

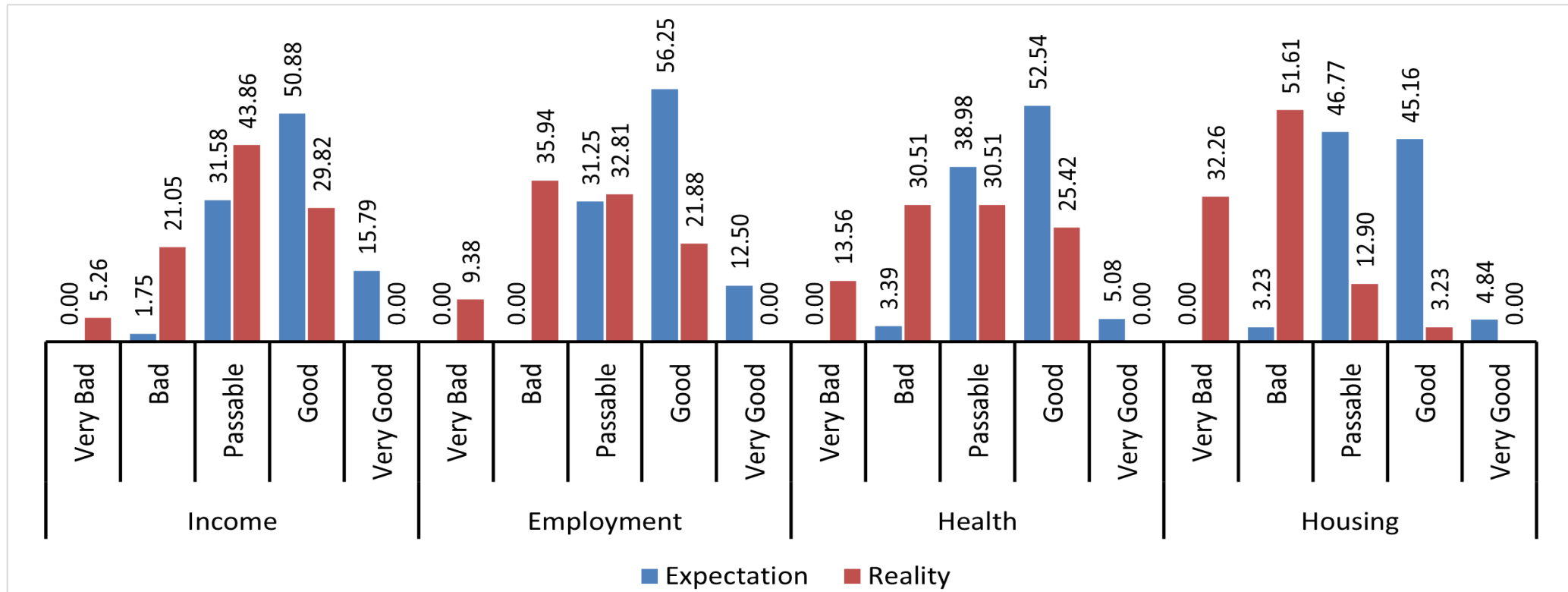
- Overall (whole pavement life) and current (present spot) **average duration of stay of males was higher than that of females.**
- More than **half of the pavement dwellers never changed their spot, conforming to the fact that if not forced, they infrequently change their locations** (Begum, 1997; 1999; Shil et al., 2013).
- Pavement dwellers **identified adverse weather and eviction by guards as major problems, followed by a lack of security (hooligans stealing money, physical abuse, etc.), and their inimical surrounding environment.**
- **Almost three-fourths of the pavement dwellers identified financial problems as the critical reason for not moving to a slum.**
- Though 81 percent have safe drinking water, **55 percent do not have free/easy access to a hygienic toilet.**
- Moreover, 40 percent of the females faced gender-specific challenges, e.g., fewer work opportunities, physical abuse, sexual harassment, etc.

# LIVING CONDITIONS (CONTD.)

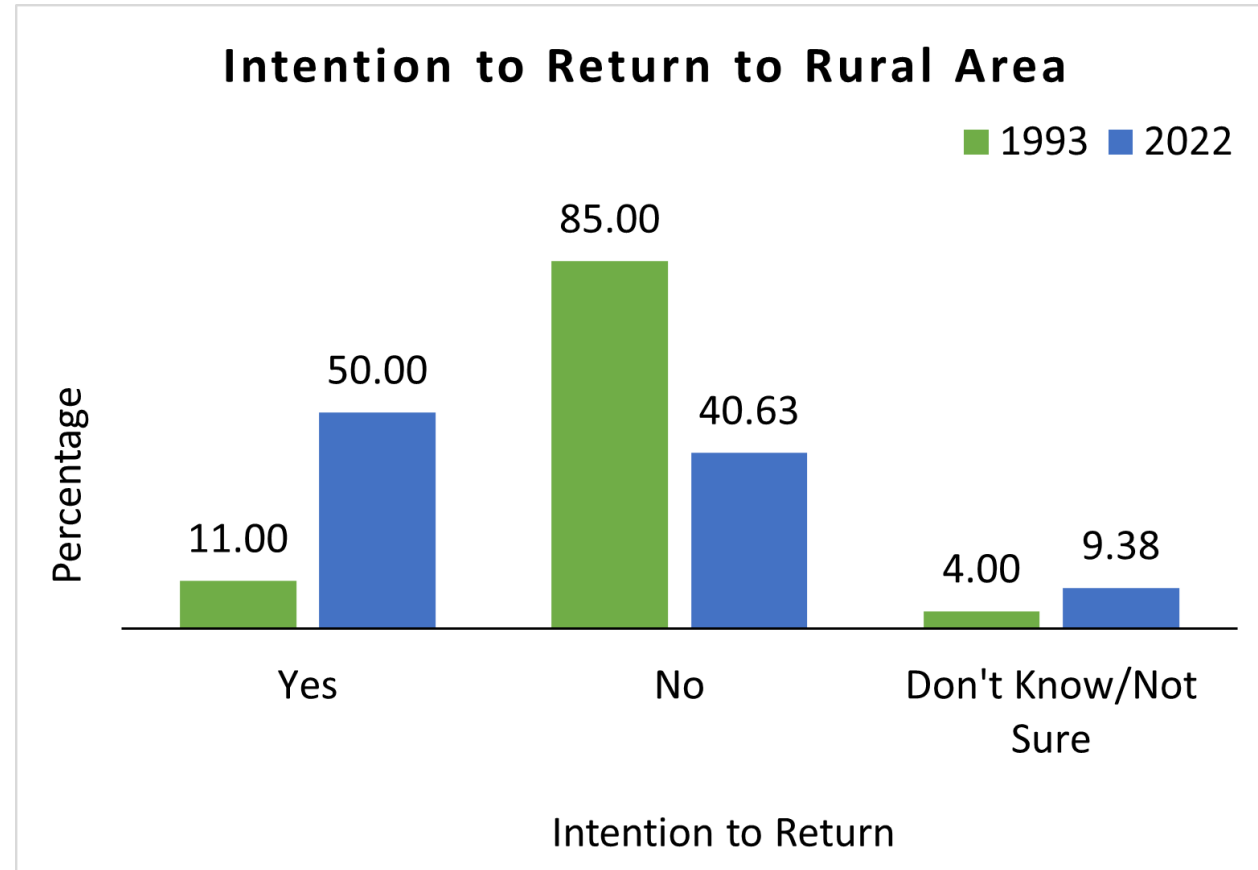


# EXPECTATION VS. REALITY

## Thematic View on Unfulfilled Expectations



# EXPECTATION VS. REALITY (CONTD.)



## EXPECTATION VS. REALITY (CONTD.)

- Despite the painful reality, half of the pavement dwellers envision their future in the city, whereas 41 percent (compared to 1991's 10 percent) wished to return to their origin at some point- most of whom wanted to live with their family (42 percent).
- Expectation-reality gaps for employment, health and housing resemble findings of the 1993 study.
- To sustain themselves in the city, pavement dwellers largely expect housing and employment support from the government.
- Although each pavement dweller knew about 4.5 programs on average, only 18 percent of them ever received any benefit from SSNPs when they were home.
- They indicated a desire for SSNPs, which will at least ensure shelter and employment/financial support if they are to return to their origin.



## EXPECTATION VS. REALITY (CONTD.)

- Commitment to city life is significantly associated with health status, the time gap between decision and migration, and fulfillment of overall expectations.
- In contrast, fulfillment of overall expectations is significantly associated with age group, the behavior of remitting money to the origin and the reason for migration.
- Handicapped/chronically ill pavement dwellers were 1.5 times more committed to urban life than physically fit ones.
- Those who migrated in less than one month after taking the decision, were three times more committed to city life.
- Moreover, those who are optimistic about the fulfilment of their expectations also tend to be more (1.5 times) committed to city life.

## EXPECTATION VS. REALITY (CONTD.)

- Middle-aged (36-59) pavement dwellers were three times more dissatisfied with the fulfillment of their expectations than older ones.
- Those who migrated for economic reasons were almost twice satisfied with the fulfillment of their expectation than non-economic reasons.
- Those who remitted money to their home felt more fulfilled about their expectation.
- Pavement dwellers' lack of address excludes them from recognition and rights. Therefore, they suffer from the elements as well as very low standards of urban living. Rough living on the streets tends to deprive human beings of basic self-respect.
- Insufficiency of existing policies in effectively eradicating the issue of Pd.

# CONCLUSION

- The survey of 2022 reveals that, compared to 1993, more economic reasons have propelled rural poor to the city, but their commitment to return shows an appreciable increase – though all other indicators did not change considerably. It has underscored the need for renewed efforts to scale up, govern, monitor, and deliver benefits, especially to the extremely poor and marginalized.
- Need to expand the share of income-earning opportunities for potential poor migrants originating from- Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chittagong and Rajshahi. Information is key to motivating pavement dwellers to remain in their rural areas - utilize traditional means of information dissemination.
- Access to cash and stable income in the city; appear to be very important for Pds. Their aspirations remain pivoted upon realizing their expectations from the government, especially support concerning housing and employment.

## CONCLUSION (CONTD.)

- This study has been designed to give helpful insight into Dhaka's current pavement-dwelling phenomenon, to the relevant stakeholders, policymakers, planners, NGOs.
- Pds are extremely **vulnerable, health-wise**: their living conditions and duration, quality and quantity of food intake, occupation and hygiene practices compromise their existence.
- **Policies that encompass all poor people often fail to reach these pavement dwellers**; A target-oriented, **customized package of health services with minimum or no cost** can improve the health situation for the (urban) poorest (Tune et al., 2020). Best practices can be learned from India's Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana— now, [Ayushman Bharat Yojana](#).
- Policies for the poor, must take into consideration, the heterogeneity of the underprivileged, **particularly female Pd**, as existing policies proved inadequate; Need to **target women first**.

## CONCLUSION (CONTD.)

- Social mobility in terms of income and employment is missing for women-rough living and sexual harassment, mental insecurity; adverse weather, financial problems, lack of toilet, fewer work opportunities and gender-specific challenges (VAW) prevail. Many are widowed, divorced, or separated, and staying in the same place for 6 to 7 years.
- Challenges of unemployment and security for women could be taken care of by documenting them and giving them special ID cards. These ID cards would enable them to access shelter homes, health and food.
- Essential services are not forthcoming for Pds; it impinges on their capacity to function as human beings, earn a livelihood and retain rights as citizens. Tackle, with Public-private linkage; CSR; ILUEP etc.
- Implement focused plans that effectively target the unique constraints encountered by this marginalized population, including inadequate access to housing, limited job prospects, and insufficient social assistance.

## CONCLUSION (CONTD.)

- An **inclusive solution would be to utilize an approach**, which not only puts the responsibility on the government but also **involves other relevant stakeholders to address the issue**.
- This paper highlights the essentiality of recalibrating policies in the face of the **rising share of urban poverty** and **emphasizes the need** to implement **comprehensive development measures to safeguard the well-being and rights of the urban poor**.



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***THANK YOU***