



Putting Communities First

Expanding Voice and Choice for Bangladesh's Urban Poor



Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction
Local Government Engineering Department

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Our Goal

Poverty in Bangladesh not only has a rural face, but also an urban face. The Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) programme is driven by the recognition that a successful strategy for urban poverty reduction and pro-poor governance needs to put the urban poor at the centre of these efforts.

We aim to lift 3 million urban dwellers - especially women and girls - who live on very low incomes and in highly challenging conditions out of poverty by 2015, by enhancing their participation in articulating and addressing their needs. Overall, we work to tackle structurally entrenched causes of poverty, particularly social exclusion, thereby helping people build better lives and ensuring that the urban poor benefit from national development in Bangladesh.

Our approach is both progressive and well-grounded. We offer local insight combined with global perspective, resulting in participatory, long-term

change that is transforming the relations between the State and the urban poor. UPPR's strategies for such change acknowledge the concept of equity as critical, while effectively targeting the urban poor and the most vulnerable groups through a cost-effective, community-driven model for socioeconomic development and policy advocacy. We focus on sustainable impact on women's lives, as well as on urban community governance and development structures.

Notably, UPPR is nationally owned and demand-driven: by the Government of Bangladesh, by municipal corporations, and by the urban poor themselves, resulting in communities being able to strengthen and improve on their own. This higher level of national ownership makes UPPR very different from other urban poverty programmes, and allows poor people to advocate for themselves, rather than having others advocate on their behalf.

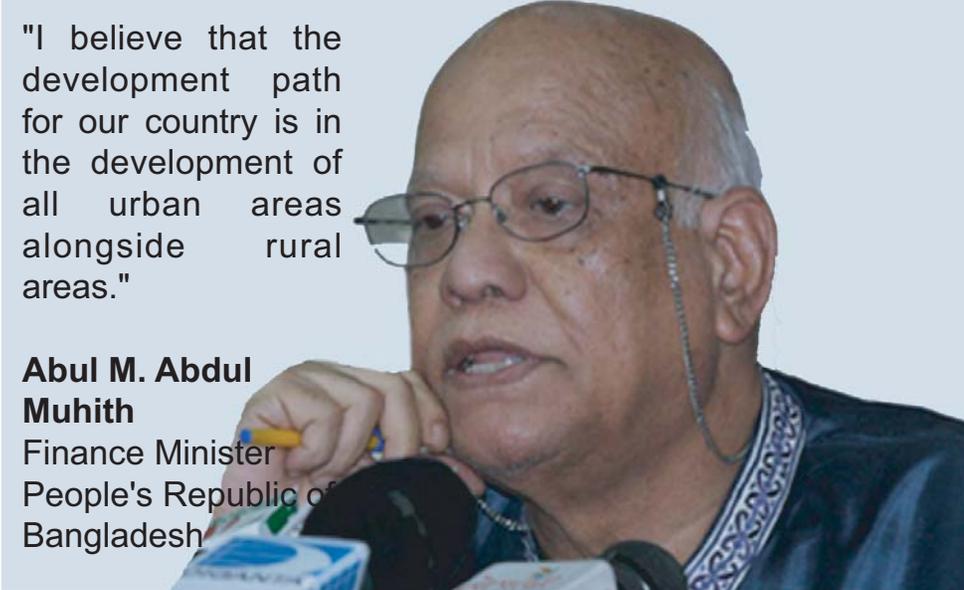
Where We Work

Bangladesh is one of the fastest-urbanizing countries on Earth, and its capital, Dhaka, has been identified as the fastest-growing city in the world, expected to encompass 20 million people by the end of the decade. In barely 40 years, what was once an agricultural country has increasingly become defined by its vibrant towns and cities, which are growing at a rate of 6 percent every year.

Offering the prospect of jobs and services, cities do provide improved lives for many. In tandem with industrialization and modernization, urbanization is critical to the development process and lies at the heart of Bangladesh's transformation. But the way cities are planned and managed in many countries, they do not include the poor in plans for essential services and low-cost housing.

City life thus can also result in very harsh conditions: intense congestion; chronic unemployment; food prices that are beyond a family's means; and sudden illnesses such as malaria or dengue fever, carried by mosquitoes breeding in vast areas of stagnant water due to poor drainage. Opportunities to access quality education and health services are limited, along with access to financial services at market rates of interest. As a result, so too are opportunities for families and individuals to escape the cycle of poverty.

Even normal life events - births, marriage and deaths - can force poor urban families into heavy debt, from which they may not recover. More than 1 in 5 of the 35 million people living in Bangladesh's urban areas remain below the official poverty line - and effectively excluded from the benefits of urban life. Many of the poor are homeless. If the poor even have jobs, they earn meagre incomes as day labourers, maids, rickshaw pullers or beggars, and they face the constant

A photograph of Abul M. Abdul Muhith, the Finance Minister of Bangladesh, speaking at a microphone. He is wearing glasses and a dark blue traditional Bangladeshi garment with a white patterned collar. He is holding a yellow pen in his right hand.

"I believe that the development path for our country is in the development of all urban areas alongside rural areas."

**Abul M. Abdul
Muhith**

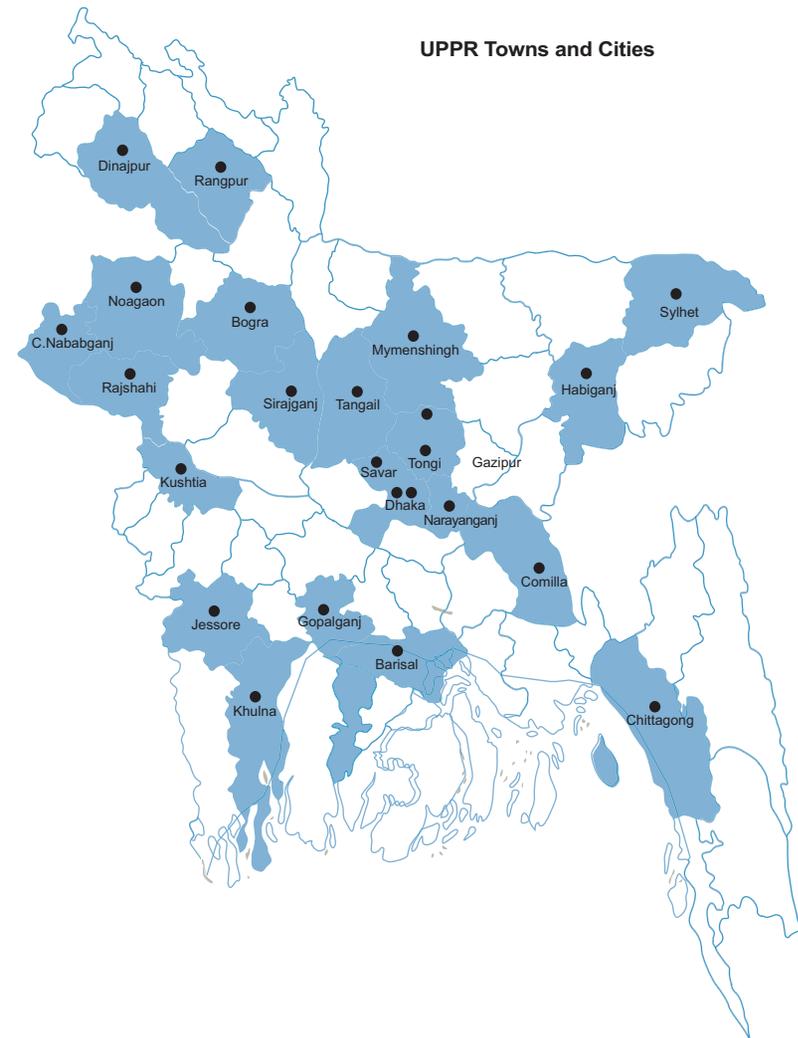
Finance Minister
People's Republic of
Bangladesh

possibility of eviction. Without access to education and capital, their children also have had little chance of bettering their conditions.

Although Dhaka has the greatest number of urban poor, the official poverty rate in the capital, at 18.8 percent, is only half of that in secondary cities such as Khulna (35.8 percent) and Barisal (39.9 percent). The situation often is worst among widowed or divorced women heading their own households. Moreover, urban poverty in Bangladesh, as in other countries, has been given insufficient attention by policymakers.

UPPR is determined to remedy this, and is working in 24 cities and towns to do so. Bangladesh needs to manage the urbanization process "so that it will be environmentally friendly, healthy, safe and balanced," as articulated by President Md. Zillur Rahman.

Cities lie at the heart of the fight for prosperity and human dignity in Bangladesh, especially within poor communities. They offer not merely spaces for settlement, production and services, but also are part of the long-term processes that make countries more prosperous, with better human development and stronger institutions. Thus, if Bangladesh is able to capitalize on urbanization as one of the most significant dynamics it faces in the 21st Century, it can capture the momentum for national change and develop a force for realizing its own vision.



What We Do

With its effective mobilization of 3 million urban poor people, there is nothing comparable to UPPR anywhere else. It is a complex and dynamic national programme that seeks to impact the lives of a significant proportion of Bangladesh's poorest citizens rapidly and measurably. UPPR has become Bangladesh's primary urban poverty initiative - and may be the largest in the world. It purposefully targets poor communities and the most vulnerable, offering an important learning platform at the grassroots for Bangladesh and its international partners as well as an innovative model that could be replicated elsewhere.

Because urban poverty is multi-dimensional, any poverty reduction approach needs to be multi-faceted. Many actors on the

development stage focus only on increasing the access of the poor to essential services. In contrast, UPPR places power and resources in the hands of the communities themselves, fostering genuine people's participation.

The programme, which has 500 staff, follows an integrated approach focused on empowering community-based organizations to analyze their priorities, to develop action plans, and then to resource and implement these plans in partnership with local authorities. In so doing, these organizations of the poor are becoming central actors in their own poverty reduction, through strengthened bargaining power and collective action.

"Before UPPR, our roads were very bad, dusty in the dry season and under a half-metre of water in the rainy season. Solid waste was dumped everywhere. Now we can move easily. And before UPPR, so many young people were unemployed: UPPR has given them apprenticeships as tailors and repairing mobile phones. Before UPPR, families were lucky to have even one earner. Now many families have multiple earners."

Jahanara Begum

UPPR community leader in Korail



UPPR tailors interventions to local needs and realities, working to ensure that urban poor and extremely poor people acquire the resources, knowledge and skills to increase their incomes and assets while also building sustainable infrastructure that provides healthy and secure living environments for poor urban communities. Critically, it further aims to encourage both municipal and national Governments to be more accountable and responsive to their low-income residents, and to enhance municipal governments in particular so that they have the capacity to successfully implement reforms. In all, UPPR is in a unique and trusted position to articulate the urban poor's voice in its interactions with communities, with governments at different levels, and with donors.

Programme funds of about US\$120 million are being provided mainly by UKAid, but also by the Government of Bangladesh, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and beneficiary communities. The programme is executed by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives.

UPPR initiatives encompass business start-up grants, apprenticeships and child education stipends as well as support to community savings and credit operations, urban food production, and the tackling of key social issues such as early marriage, dowry, domestic violence and drug abuse. Lastly, the programme is helping to strengthen pro-poor urban policies and partnerships at both national and local levels.

Our Impact

UPPR's objective is ambitious, yet impacts are being felt in a myriad of tangible ways: in sustainable community governance structures; in dramatically better incomes, increased assets, and more marketable skills; in improved living environments and better health; and in significant progress toward pro-poor urban policies and strategies.

Already, this pioneering programme has reached some 3.32 million poor and extremely poor people - more than its goal - from nearly 800,000 households. Among UPPR households, 39 percent are classified as poor and 42 percent are extremely poor.

No simple explanation can predict the impact of a community-driven approach. However,

the targeting of community needs, the meaningful involvement of women, and the development of social capital have all been factors in UPPR's success. The development of negotiating skills among leaders of local groups and the ability to build and consolidate a coalition appear to be particularly significant.

Anecdotal evidence also offers exciting glimpses of progress in reducing urban poverty. Between 2009-2010 and 2011-2012, a significant number of the extreme poor have graduated, to both poor and non-poor status. All this demonstrates that UPPR has much to offer and is making a difference.

Community Mobilization and Women's Empowerment

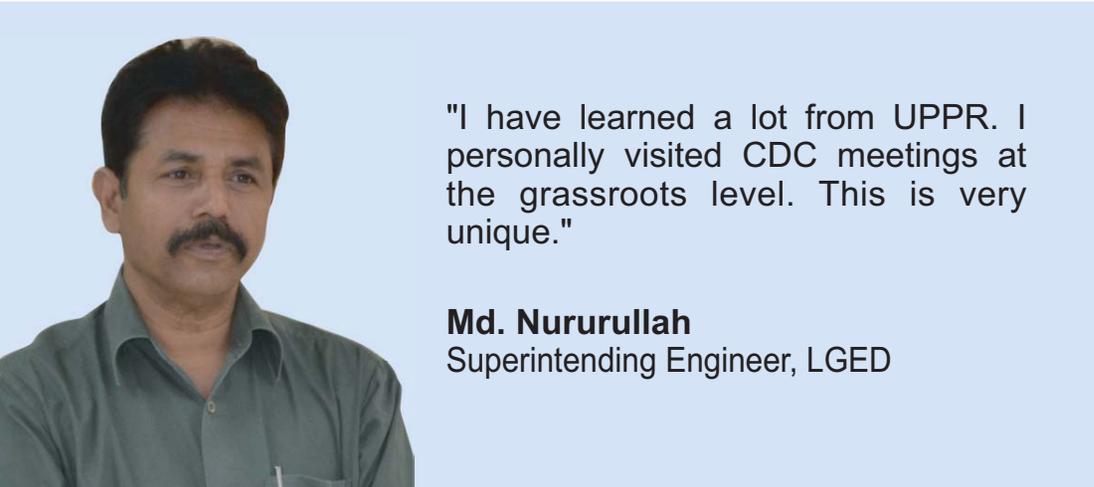
- ❑ More participatory governance and networking
- ❑ Targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable for development of their voice
- ❑ Increased decision making, mobility and family respect for women
- ❑ Building of an evidence base for policymaking

The most powerful aspect of UPPR is the empowerment that takes place, especially for women. A vibrant, democratic and inclusive community governance structure has been established by UPPR and is thriving in the cities and towns where the programme works. Based on results so far, it is clear that poor urban communities have the potential to solve their own problems through community action. Effective local social mobilization is at the core of the UPPR approach, with Community Development Committees (CDCs) established by the programme directly driving improvements in living conditions and facilitating better livelihoods.

About 3 out of 4 poor UPPR households have joined one of more than 28,000 Primary Groups, each of which represents about 20 households and forms the grassroots level of the community governance structure. Almost all members of Primary Groups (98 percent) are women. Other vulnerable social groups represented in Primary Groups include people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and scheduled castes.

In turn, the Primary Groups have coalesced into nearly 2,600 CDCs, which are supported to take the initiative to assess their community's physical, social and economic development status, prioritize their needs for poverty reduction, and use data gathered by the community to develop Community Action Plans (CAPs) to address these. Representing about 200 to 300 households each, CDCs also are supported to prepare and manage community contracts to deliver infrastructure, assets and services to meet community and household needs, including capacity development, social protection and legal empowerment.

A total of 213 CDC Cluster Committees have been formed to bring CDCs together for even greater impact and knowledge sharing, and five towns have formed town-wide CDC Federations to Federations to articulate voices and choices of the urban poor. It makes difficult for city authorities to ignore these voices. Moreover, UPPR has strengthened community governance transparency and accountability through piloting of governance improvements in three towns, with 77 CDCs and 17 CDC Clusters in Rangpur, Comilla and Tangail successfully supported to



"I have learned a lot from UPPR. I personally visited CDC meetings at the grassroots level. This is very unique."

Md. Nururullah
Superintending Engineer, LGED

establish subcommittees for social audit, procurement, gender, health, social development, education and livelihoods. In a 2011 audit of UPPR, the Foreign Aided Projects Audit Directorate praised the efficient and strict financial management of UPPR operations and found the programme in full compliance with financial rules, regulations, practices and procedures of both the Government of Bangladesh and UNDP.

At the same time, local governments' capacity is being developed through engagement in project processes, including settlement mapping, CDC formation, CAP approval, community contract preparation and approval, funds transfers to communities, and monitoring.

While UPPR tries to ensure that both women and men benefit from its initiatives, it particularly focuses on issues that affect women and girls, and works to overcome their disadvantaged social position. For example, UPPR is working to increase the presence of poor women in a range of vulnerable communities in leadership roles, empowering them politically and facilitating their ability to assert their voices.



"Our women's social status has gone up because we are organized. In the past, community leaders did not know us and thought it was not necessary even to invite us to meetings or ask our opinion. Community leaders know us very well now, and we have access to them."

Sultana Rahman Muni

CDC member in Korail, studying for a degree in social services and hoping for a social work career

Focus group discussions have revealed that before UPPR, women's morale and self-esteem were very low, and that women did not have control over household finances. After UPPR, focus group participants said, they could identify and solve community issues and plan actions that change their living conditions, as well as lobby local authorities to provide public services and solve community conflicts. They also have learned to manage their own bank accounts.

Moreover, women's leadership development through the programme is having even wider results for articulation of the role of the poor. In the 2011 municipal election, 26 women community leaders from UPPR also ran for ward councilors, a leadership position from which they can have the greatest impact. Eleven were elected. International community-to-community exchange visits,

including to Thailand and Sri Lanka, also are breaking women's isolation, further boosting overall community confidence and building networks.

The programme's significant impact is evident from CDC self-assessments of their maturity and development status. In all, UPPR's structures have provided leadership opportunities for almost 60,000 people: 50,000 Primary Group leaders, 8,000 CDC officers, 850 CDC Cluster Committee officers, and 16 CDC Federation officers. Of all these positions, 99 percent were filled, showing the keen interest among beneficiaries to lead their organizations. A total of 85% of all leaders were members of extreme poor and poor households, demonstrating that UPPR has motivated the poorest and most vulnerable and ensured against any "elite capture."



Women and Communities: CDCs Give Rise to a Powerful Combination

In Bangladesh, poor women are typically confined to a role of taking care of the family, with no outside exposure allowed. Often they are neglected even by family members, as well as society at large - particularly if they are less educated or illiterate.

CDCs established under UPPR thus provide unique and extraordinary opportunities for these women as community representatives. Shahid Nagar West-1 CDC, under Narayanganj City Corporation, well illustrates the remarkable transformation that has occurred for poor women in more than 2,500 CDCs across the 24 towns and cities where UPPR works - a transformation that has turned many of them into icons for their communities.

Before UPPR intervened in May 2008, the women of Shahid Nagar West-1 CDC almost never went out of the house. With severe financial barriers and lack of education, many could not feed their families well. Poor sanitation and hygiene resulted in numerous and chronic health issues. The women's children, especially the girls, did not even consider continuing their studies.

UPPR, with the support of the municipal corporation, organized the CDC comprising 480 households, with 82 extreme poor, 383 poor and 15 non-poor represented. Of these, 12 households include persons with disabilities, and 10 are women-headed families.

Five years later, these women are capable, enthusiastic and infused with social dignity, able to articulate their own development issues and taking initiatives to address them. They can move anywhere and have become committed to ensuring the rights of all poor women.

A total of 91 of their children (50 girls, 41 boys) have received education grants to continue their study. Nineteen women have been empowered to open small businesses through special livelihood grants, while 58 apprenticeships are expanding opportunities for them and their family members to be trained for new, higher-income employment. Five more families are improving their livelihoods and living conditions as a result of growing and selling vegetables and other foods through UPPR's Urban Food Production initiative. All community members are benefiting from UPPR settlement development initiatives that have improved the overall living environment: 17 latrines, 4 tubewells, 523 metres of footpaths and 273 metres of drainage.

Thus, the impacts of UPPR have been both tangible and intangible, not only for the poor women of Shahid Nagar West-1, but also for those in other CDCs. Key impacts include:

Stronger capacities that benefit communities

- To formulate effective Community Action Plans
- To prepare community contracts for managing UPPR-supplied infrastructure assets constructed through community mobilization
- To manage community-run savings and credit funds and their own savings accounts
- To select loan beneficiaries
- To link community members with Government, non-Government and private service providers of the city for their needs that are not addressed directly by UPPR, including health, social protection or legal aid services
- Subsequently, the women have become aware of key gender perspectives that are assisting them to mainstream gender-related issues in their communities
- In particular, supervisory and monitoring capacities of the women on behalf of their CDCs have been enhanced to ensure transparency and accountability
- In terms of influencing social values, women's empowerment also has enabled them to stop around 5 early marriages through counseling of young girls' guardians

Enhanced social dignity and respect

- For example, at household level, the women's husbands are now assisting them in various activities and prioritizing their opinions and decisions in family matters, something they rarely if ever did before
- At community level, the women are frequently asked to assist in arbitration of community issues and to give their opinions, including by the Panchayat Committee, a municipal group focused on solving community problems
- Good interaction also has been established between Municipal Corporation activities and CDC members' expectations, with the women exchanging information directly with the Mayor and ward councilors through members of the Town Level Coordination Committee
- In TLCC meetings, the Mayor provides scope to share updates on community information and recommendations, providing easy access for discussion of important development issues

Enhanced understanding of the importance of education

- Now all school-age children in these 480

households are attending school, including eight continuing their education at secondary level through UPPR education grants. With their enhanced understanding, parents have ensured their children are enrolled at school, and two parents have been appointed to posts with education-focused NGOs linked to UPPR.

Proactive employment generation

- All women who have received UPPR apprenticeships now have jobs. Moreover, even those who have not received UPPR business start-up grants are taking interest to employ themselves in different areas and ensure regular incomes.

Additional capacities on how to access quality social services, through linkages with UPPR partners

- For example, the women of Shahid Nagar West-1 have enhanced access to safe delivery for pregnant women through BRAC, and have provided assistance to persons with disabilities through the Disabled People's Organization.

Where do the Poorest Live?

In empowering poor communities, UPPR has provided substantial training so that community members, particularly women, can professionally undertake important surveys and collect key data. UPPR has developed a comprehensive framework of data collection methodologies, the most advanced of which is the Settlement and Land Mapping (SLM). All poor settlements in 29 project towns have been identified, assessed and mapped for the first time in Bangladesh. The poorest of these settlements have largely been covered by the programme.

Poor community members use GIS maps printed by UPPR to identify the extreme poor and address their needs with UPPR

resources such as direct cash transfer or community-run services and linkages. They mark the low-income settlements and plots of vacant land. Trained community members then assess the poverty level of each settlement. Using 16 indicators - such as access to water, electricity and roads - the level of deprivation can be determined as extremely poor, poor or non-poor. Details of vacant plots - size, topography and potential use - are also recorded. By linking the latest technology with the in-depth knowledge the urban poor have of their own communities, UPPR is making sure that the poorest and most vulnerable are the first to benefit from its poverty reduction efforts.

Mapping of the homeless population also has been undertaken by poor communities, again led by women. Almost 22,000 homeless were found in more than 2,500 locations. Of the total homeless population, 83 percent were able adults, 12.5 percent were children and 4.5 percent were adults with disabilities. Most adult homeless were men. The largest concentration of homeless was found at railway stations, bus stands, market areas and mosques.

The policy implications of these reports and GIS mapping are considerable. They provide a solid evidence base to inform national decision making and thus build a new commitment to urban regeneration. Equally, local decision makers can better understand the situation and service needs of the poor and recognize their rights.

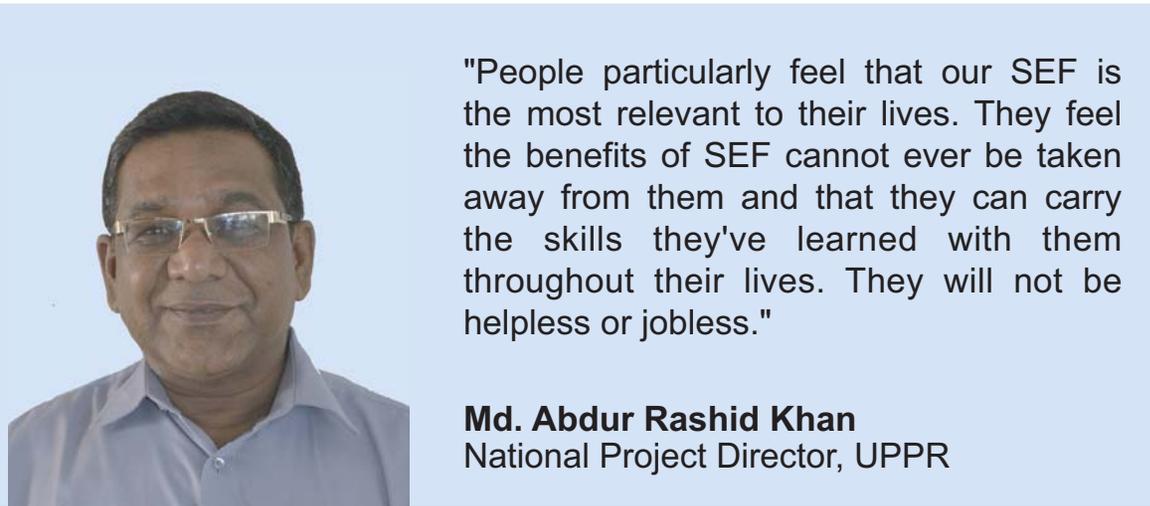
Livelihoods

- Higher incomes
- A sound education and more marketable skills
- Increased productive assets
- Escape from indebtedness
- Better nutrition
- Health and sickness coverage

UPPR's Socio-Economic Fund (SEF) supports a range of activities that improve livelihoods and expand economic opportunities for poor families and individuals. The focus of this facility is to build capacity - human, physical or financial - enabling the poor to break through the constraints that lock in deprivation through successive generations. SEF activities directly target permanent graduation from poverty: These include six-month apprenticeships that have enabled more than 41,000 extremely poor people to build up their skills; business start-up grants; education grants to keep children in school who would otherwise drop out; and grants for urban food production activities.

UPPR's business start-up grants, of 5,000 Taka (about US\$62), are specifically earmarked for extremely poor women, allowing them to markedly increase their incomes via the acquisition of assets. This money is also given alongside advice, counseling and ongoing monitoring, to ensure

graduation. After receiving these grants, about 70 percent of the women, many of whom are older than 50, are able to make a success of their businesses. A total of 80 percent of recipients report themselves satisfied or highly satisfied with businesses from start-up grants. The SEF also is used to fund activities that address social issues of importance to women, and to help establish child care and health care centres.



"People particularly feel that our SEF is the most relevant to their lives. They feel the benefits of SEF cannot ever be taken away from them and that they can carry the skills they've learned with them throughout their lives. They will not be helpless or jobless."

Md. Abdur Rashid Khan
National Project Director, UPPR

Before UPPR, many of these urban poor women had no sustained income source and very limited marketable skills. They could not contribute to their family expenses, and their husbands and parents were frustrated by their inability to generate income. Sometimes they faced verbal abuse or discrimination for being idle at home. UPPR's support has been truly transformative, allowing these households to greatly increase their incomes and enabling women to invest in their families' health, nutrition and education, as well as to save small money on a regular basis. In all, it has won them respect.

Local community savings and credit schemes, which are fundamentally bound to formation of the vast majority of Primary Groups, are a real cornerstone for the income- and asset-increasing strategy. In contrast to other microfinance practices, UPPR participants initially focus on mobilization of local financial resources, collecting savings from group members. In turn, savings and credit groups lend from their capital to provide credit to members for microenterprise activities and fulfillment of community needs. So far, local savings and credit groups have saved the equivalent of US\$4.6 million and disbursed US\$8.8 million in loans. The repayment rate of loans stands at 98 percent.

Not only does the UPPR savings scheme provide the basis for the poor to initiate the process of saving, but it also builds and empowers their status in the wider community. A share of the profits from the savings and credit scheme also goes toward supporting management costs, providing the basis for longer-term community empowerment.

Another UPPR benefit is that of education grants, with nearly 3 in 4 of these given to girls at risk of having their education interrupted. In addition to being affected by poverty, women's studies were simply assumed to stop after Class V in the past, with early marriage often considered the alternative. More than 47,300 child-years of education have been delivered

thus far, and 56 percent of focus group participants rate education grants as their most valued UPPR intervention. UPPR also is helping to sensitize more than 95,000 households in a campaign against early marriage, early pregnancy, dowry, and violence against women.

Meanwhile, many health problems are often the result of poor housing conditions such as poor environmental standards, non-potable water, unventilated cooking stoves, earthen and damp floors, and leaky roofs. Yet for poor and extremely poor people, health care costs are frequently out of reach. UPPR is empowering communities to develop linkages with existing health services. Now, almost 600,000 poor community members have improved access to such services.

UPPR urban food production offers not only an important way to supplement household income, but also aims to improve household nutrition. It likewise reduces transport costs and food spoilage from farm to city, creates incentives to compost organic waste, and increases the percentage of urban space covered by greenery. To encourage food production, UPPR provides technical assistance, forges links to Government extension service providers and has initiated a national Urban Food Production Day. More than 30,000 poor people have started producing and selling food.

UPPR Helps a Family Leave Extreme Poverty Behind

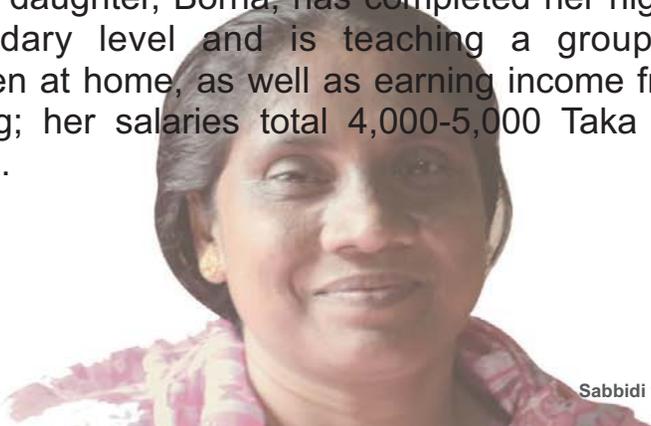
Just a few years ago, Sibbidi Costa and her family were mired in extreme poverty and could not meet even basic needs. Sibbidi, 46, and her husband, Martin Marrak, 48, were struggling to support themselves and their three daughters on their only source of income, derived from Martin's monthly salary of 1,800 Taka (about US\$22) as a peon at a nearby garment factory. Their entire family assets consisted of one bed.

Sibbidi also was disadvantaged as a Christian and a member of an ethnic minority, but she remembered her family's roots in rural Netrokona District and was committed to improving her living conditions in Godnail, a poor urban community situated in Narayanganj in central Bangladesh. Until UPPR intervened, however, she had no resources to move forward.

Even in 2009, Sibbidi's family was categorized as extreme poor in UPPR's Participatory Identification of the Poor survey (PIP), but life had already started to change: In May 2007 Sibbidi became a member of a UPPR Primary Group in her community, and subsequently a member of the Arambagh Masjid Para CDC. The programme provided her with training on savings and credit management, and she joined a UPPR savings and credit group. It was only the beginning of how UPPR would assist her family, resulting in a dramatic turnaround:



- Sibbidi has gained self-confidence and become a group leader of her CDC, often called in to help discuss or arbitrate on community social issues. She also has been instrumental in preparing numerous community contracts so that she and her neighbours can benefit from UPPR-supplied infrastructure investments.
- In addition, since 2010 Sibbidi, who completed her Class 8, has been assigned as a teacher in a preschool maintained by the UPPR Doleswari CDC Cluster. She now earns about 2,000 Taka per month. Of this, she deposits 50 Taka each month in her savings account and has a total of more than 2,800 Taka in savings.
- In January 2010, husband Martin was rewarded with a 6-month UPPR apprenticeship in driving and has become a driver for the same garment factory he worked in earlier, earning an average of 6,000 Taka a month.
- Previously Sibbidi took a loan of 5,000 Taka from her UPPR savings and credit group to further her daughters' education. Upon repayment, she took a second loan of 10,000 Taka for the same purpose. These loans have paid off well: The eldest daughter, Borna, has completed her higher secondary level and is teaching a group of children at home, as well as earning income from sewing; her salaries total 4,000-5,000 Taka per month.



- The second daughter, Tumpa, received a UPPR-sponsored education grant in 2009; Tumpa, now studying for her bachelor's degree, offers private tuition to four students and earns 1,400 Taka monthly. In February 2013, she was appointed the Community Facilitator for UPPR.
- The third daughter, Purnima, also received UPPR education grants in 2010 and 2011 and is currently a Class 8 student.
- The family now lives in a rented house, and they own a new bed, a computer, a clothes wardrobe, and a large cupboard. Safe water and sanitation facilities are ensured, so that Sibbidi does not worry about secure toilets and baths for her daughters. Beginning in 2008, the family also was able to use a common latrine and common footpaths improved by UPPR, as well as water newly provided by the municipal water authority.

Sibbidi and her family have worked hard to overcome their destitute condition - and although life still is not easy, regular incomes and improved living conditions count for a lot. The latest UPPR PIP, conducted in 2012, now identifies them as having "graduated" from extreme poverty.



Sibbidi with her Second Daughter Tumpa

Infrastructure

- ❑ Cleaner living conditions
- ❑ Demonstrably less flooding and waterlogging
- ❑ Substantially fewer cases of diarrhoea, water- and mosquito-borne diseases, and skin diseases
- ❑ Reduced odour
- ❑ Greater personal security
- ❑ Easier outside access to communities

Access to basic physical infrastructure is strongly related to the perception of the quality of life among the urban poor. UPPR's Settlement Improvement Fund (SIF) finances the construction of basic infrastructure, such as latrines, tubewells, footpaths and drains that are needed to improve sanitation, water quality, hygiene and access. This has proven particularly important, since before UPPR nearly 3 in 5 people were defecating openly or using hanging latrines. Nearly all people reported foul odours around the community before UPPR intervened, compared to 16 percent now.

Environmental improvements also have a very strong gender dimension, with infrastructure impacts being particularly

appreciated by women: Improvements in water supply clearly reduce the burden upon women, who usually collect water for their households. In addition, for reasons of privacy, women defecated only at night and were afraid of being harassed while doing so; before UPPR, 45 percent reported such harassment, which has been reduced to 8 percent.

Before UPPR, the drinking water was of poor quality, sources were frequently distant - even up to 30 minutes away - and supplies were sometimes intermittent. Poor-quality water caused diarrhoea and typhoid fever, causing residents to miss school or work due to illness and to spend their savings or take loans for medicine and health care. -



"We used to have to buy water from the water vendor, and it cost 5 Takas a pot. A family would normally use 5 pots a day for bathing, cooking, washing and everything. Most people couldn't afford the 25 Takas a day (about 30 US cents), so they were buying less and often getting sick. Now, with our improved water supply, we can get as much as we need, and spend only about 40 Takas in a whole month."

Ruxana Begum
CDC Member, Tongi

Up to 15 percent of cases of illness were attributed to water- and mosquito-borne disease in poor communities without drains. Following UPPR's interventions, drinking water is at most 5 minutes away, water is accessible around the clock, and illness-related work and school absences are reported to be substantially decreasing, with water- and mosquito-borne diseases estimated as causing only 4 percent of illnesses.

Another major impact of the infrastructure provided by the programme has been indirect, with improvements enabling and facilitating economic and social activity, particularly through effectively increasing the use of outside space as a result of paved footpaths, and "lengthening" the day as a result of streetlights, again a particular benefit for women. All investments are

commissioned locally and delivered through community contracts, which avoid the overhead costs of external contractors, develop local skills, and increase the income of poor residents through employment as skilled and unskilled labour.

As a result of community ownership of the decision-making process - managed and monitored primarily by women CDC members - the quality of construction is improved and there is a greater willingness to maintain the works. This process also strengthens relationships between communities and municipal authorities. In one town, UPPR is piloting landowner-community agreements that maintain rent at affordable levels in return for improved infrastructure provided by the programme.

A Community-Led Solution to a Community Challenge

Rishipara is a large poor community divided into four CDCs, in the northwestern part of Narayanganj municipality. Natural disasters such as flooding and riverbank erosion forced thousands of people to migrate here some 40 years ago. UPPR has helped the community by constructing latrines, tubewells, footpaths and drains. The municipality has also invested in the settlement by constructing a large drain into which the community-constructed drains run. Because of insufficient maintenance, however, sediment up to 1 metre deep had built up and severely blocked the municipal drain, resulting in acute waterlogging and flooding. Water-borne diseases spread, especially afflicting children.

UPPR's community organizers sat with CDC members to design a strategy to remedy this. The community eventually decided to clean the municipal drain themselves, with labour provided free by volunteers. At a second community meeting, decisions were taken on what was required from municipal authorities and to identify which section of the drain needed to be unblocked, as well as where the sediment was to be deposited.

A total of 139 community volunteers assembled to unblock almost 1,000 feet of the municipal drain in six days, with both the municipality and the community contributing rakes, wheelbarrows, baskets, spades and crowbars. The Mayor of Narayanganj visited the worksite and gave her thanks and encouragement to the volunteers, expressing her hope that such activities and displays of innovation will continue in other CDCs.

Sediment taken from the blocked drain was dumped in low-lying sections of land in the community to prevent those pockets from collecting water during the monsoon. The entire process, from community mobilization, to procurement of resources, to unblocking the drain, was completed in slightly over three weeks. The threat of water- and mosquito-borne diseases has been reduced significantly, and the settlement smells better too. Arguably the greatest achievement from this community-led event, however, is the evidence that if a community is united, it can be empowered to not just make decisions, but also to act upon those decisions that affect their lives.

Policy Advocacy

- ❑ Strengthened urban poverty policy and practice at national and municipal levels
- ❑ Enhanced community empowerment with regard to land tenure security
- ❑ A bold agenda for change



"The character of this project is quite different, and we've learned a lot. Everything has changed with UPPR. Recently when we were distributing business start-up grants, one of our Ministers was visiting, and he was quite surprised. Now he has reported to the Prime Minister personally. We'd like to see UPPR continue at least up to 2025. This is from my heart: This programme will never be forgotten."

Advocate Azmat Ullah Khan

Small settlements of poor people take root almost overnight in Bangladesh. Yet weak and ill-defined land tenure and property rights of the urban poor give rise to homelessness and social insecurities. Arbitrary evictions also blight the lives and weaken the opportunities open to the poor to have fulfilled and happy lives.

UPPR employs a twin-track approach to policy advocacy and institutional building. It combines initiatives that aim to promote community empowerment and influence urban policy at national level alongside

developing partnerships at local level to promote improved local policymaking and services. UPPR's policy advocacy strategy thus focuses on three key issues facing the urban poor: land tenure security, eviction, and low-cost housing.

Poor communities are being increasingly integrated into towns and town-level planning, as apprentices find work outside of their own communities, business grantees provide products and services outside as well, and CDC leaders interact with councilors, mayors and service providers. Women especially have actively participated in town-level Coordination Committees for advocacy and town-level policy influence. UPPR also is helping to orient municipal officials on their social duty to address urban poverty, resulting in ward councilors becoming familiar with CAPs and local governments giving

communities access to piped water and supporting blanket distribution to extreme poor households during cold weather.

In Gopalganj, UPPR helped to establish a working partnership between poor community leaders and the land authority, the District Commissioner, the Mayor and Members of Parliament. This offers a model that can be replicated in other towns to influence local and national authorities to allocate land for the poor. UPPR also demonstrated alternatives to forced eviction by supporting the rehabilitation of an unused site and sponsoring a weeklong workshop in which affected households planned the layout and housing design.

In turn, attention to key urban issues is growing in Bangladesh. For the first time, the Government's Five Year Plan (2011-2015) has a chapter on "meeting the urban challenge," as does its Vision 2020. The draft National Urban Policy has incorporated many inputs from UPPR stakeholders, including on the community-based approach.

UNDP's engagement with UPPR has had significant impact on the response of the United Nations System as a whole to the urbanization process in Bangladesh. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2012-2016) has a pro-poor urban development pillar, focusing on the need to secure equitable development within urban areas and to mitigate the worst effects of rapid urbanization.

Critically, UPPR was instrumental in establishing the Bangladesh Urban Forum (BUF), launched by the President of Bangladesh in December 2011. BUF is one of the most significant policy-level developments in recent times. It provides the only forum where all of the diverse urban sector stakeholders - including organizations of the poor, municipal leaders, chambers of commerce and industry, real estate developers, academics, and the country's main international development partners - can openly share their views.

Most importantly, participants in the BUF adopted Bangladesh's first Urban Declaration, asserting: "We affirm a joint vision of a prosperous but equitable, greener and fully sustainable future for urban Bangladesh, where the rights of all Bangladeshis are recognized. Moreover, we agree that all stakeholders have a role to play in bringing this about." This forum, which is to be continued annually, has drawn wide praise from senior Government officials as well as pledges of support, and represents the apex of UPPR's community-driven approach to pro-poor urban governance.

In addition to creating BUF, UPPR has provided a strong basis for UNDP to advocate and influence policy measures for the urban poor in several other policy forums, such as the Local Consultative Group (LCG), which brings together donors and key development partners; Town Level Coordination Committees; Asian Urban Forum; and World Urban Forum.

A 'Champion' and a 'Hero' for Local Urban Governance

Tongi is the only municipality in Bangladesh in a "special category," which means that it is given special tax and tariff exemptions by the Government to stimulate industry. Many of the poor in this town area work in one of its more than 600 garment factories or other small industries.

But this town of some 1,40,000 people on the northern edge of Dhaka is special in many other ways as well. It is the site of the Biswa Ijtema, the second-largest gathering of Muslims in the world after the annual Hajj in Saudi Arabia. Critically, Tongi's Mayor, Md. Azmat Ullah Khan, is both the President of the Municipal Association of Bangladesh, an important national leadership role, and a key UPPR champion. He and his ward councilors demonstrate the potential for local Government officials to learn and take on board the ideas and practices developed by UPPR.

Tongi is home to more than 1,56,000 households covered by UPPR - about 22 percent of the total population, organized into 1,555 Primary Groups and 139 CDCs. About 3 in 5 households are assessed by the community as living in extreme poverty, based on a subjective ranking. Nearly 25,000 households are members of savings and credit groups, which have saved a total of 2.1

million Taka (about US\$260,000), with 2.4 million Taka (US\$300,000) disbursed in credit.

Since 2009, Tongi has received about US\$1.1 million in UPPR contracts for apprenticeships, small business grants, education grants, social development services, and urban food production. In terms of physical infrastructure, Tongi's UPPR communities are served by 155 new water supply points and 1,921 latrines, along with 17,870 metres of footpaths and 6,640 metres of drains. Partnerships brokered by UPPR have allowed poor people to undergo cataract operations, install improved cookstoves, and develop awareness on violence against women. Almost the entire line of businesses along the largest road into the community has been started by CDC members.

Part of Tongi's success is due to the Mayor's style and his charisma, which motivates officials to help. One of those officials is Ward Councilor Nazrul Islam, a former Bangladeshi movie star, or "hero." For him, "UPPR can be a proven model for poverty reduction to make our country a 'golden Bangladesh. This project brought people together and organized them. If we could divide up the whole country and do this, it would be miraculous."

Our Partners

- ❑ Delivery of improved water and sanitation to schoolchildren
- ❑ Enhanced access to primary health care and eye care for 470,000 people
- ❑ Expansion of social protection schemes, community legal aid, livelihood opportunities and humanitarian assistance
- ❑ Development of community capacities in managing community-run services
- ❑ Deepening advocacy on women's empowerment

The roles of the key programme partners are indispensable and relationships remain very strong. In the core Government of Bangladesh-UNDP partnership, the Local Government Engineering Department, the executing agency, has strengthened its staffing in UPPR headquarters and deploys its officers regularly for field monitoring. Local government partners have taken an increasingly active role in ensuring proper delivery of the benefit packages, while UNDP develops high-value national- and local-level partnerships, supports the development of the programme's internal control framework and regularly monitors

programme performance to ensure programme delivery and sustainability of pro-poor services.

UPPR partnerships with other organizations have been highly successful and well-received. In 2011, for example, UPPR had planned to help communities establish 30 formal "partnerships," where costs covered are by UPPR or communities themselves, and 60 "linkages," where UPPR and communities incur no cost. However, the initiative was so successful that 65 partnerships and 279 linkages were established, surpassing targets by more than 100 percent and 400 percent respectively.

All these have already ensured real service benefits to our target group of the urban poor: In a leading UPPR partnership with the private sector, the Coca-Cola Company is delivering improved health for more than 28,000 children in 96 schools through improved water and sanitation facilities, and is increasing the likelihood of more corporate social responsibility interventions targeted at the urban poor. A new partnership with the Bangladesh

Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) is enabling it to disburse funds and secure funding for pilot low-income housing projects. A total of 41,000 poor people in 21 towns are

receiving improved cookstoves through technical support from the German development agency GiZ and local NGOs, while some 13,000 poor people are receiving training from CARE in enterprise development. A partnership with the Asian Centre for Community Action has connected UPPR poor communities with a regional network for the urban poor in 20 countries.

Other new partnerships are being pursued to complement the development of income and assets. Of particular note is a promising new private-sector partnership with the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), as well as the second phase of the partnership with CARE. BGMEA,

an extensive network of 5,000 factories, has the potential to train a significant number of women across 8 UPPR towns; ILO is providing technical support to bring BGMEA training in line with national standards, thereby empowering trainees through formal recognition of their training. The second phase of the partnership with CARE, meanwhile, will support income and livelihood opportunities for 10,000 poor and extreme-poor people. In addition to these two partnerships, other partners for skills development and employment include Muslim Aid in 3 towns, Unprivileged Children's Exaction Programme in 5 towns and Hathey Bunano in 1 town.

What Our Partners Say

"Without UPPR, it would definitely have taken more time to run our organization properly. The programme has been critical in helping us collect resources, influence people, and develop our organization and finances. With UPPR's help, we are quickly achieving our goals."

Chairperson, NDBUS, Dhaka

"It's been a win-win-win situation. We are able to reach thousands more people through this partnership. UPPR is seeing its clients receive quality reproductive health services. And poor people are expanding what had been very limited access to services."

A high official, Marie Stopes Bangladesh

In health, a new partnership on hygiene behavioural change, with UNICEF and Practical Action Bangladesh (PAB), started in October 2012. This intervention, with UNICEF and PAB funding, is offering related hygiene training to community leaders and field staff in all UPPR towns.

To facilitate linkages with other service providers for sustained benefits - Government, NGOs and private entities alike - 28 CDC clusters have established Community Resource Centres, which have been well-equipped and staffed by trained facilitators. UPPR engages NGOs and other civil society actors to develop community capacities, especially among women, to manage such community-run services, which also include preschools and daycare centres. Plans are under way to set up 62 more CRCs. These will prove instrumental in furthering this important area of work.

UPPR's partners include, among many others:

- ❑ NDBUS, a large, Dhaka-based organization of 1.5 million poor
- ❑ BRAC Development Institute
- ❑ Urban Primary Health Care Programme (UPHCP)
- ❑ Marie Stopes Bangladesh
- ❑ Smiling Sun Franchise Programme
- ❑ Local hospitals and private health care providers
- ❑ Concern Universal and Concern Worldwide
- ❑ Centre for Urban Studies
- ❑ Khulna University
- ❑ Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
- ❑ Department of Public Health Engineering
- ❑ Transparency International Bangladesh
- ❑ Economic Empowerment of the Poorest
- ❑ Centre for Urban Health Equity
- ❑ Police Reform Programme
- ❑ Access to Information (A2I), Programme Under PMO

Our United Nations and other international partners include:

- ❑ UN-Habitat
- ❑ UNICEF
- ❑ International Labour Organization (ILO)
- ❑ Asian Development Bank
- ❑ World Bank

With NDBUS, for example, UPPR is covering about 1,30,000 people in Dhaka and has

strengthened NDBUS' capacity to manage their project, which follows the UPPR model, while enabling partnerships with even more actors such as UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP), Swiss Connect, and World Bank.

UPPR's partners also want to work on reducing urban poverty. They are joining with us because we offer a strong platform that can be used as an effective model. Moreover, they are confident that UPPR is doing the "real thing" for the poor.

The Way Forward

As UPPR moves forward, the programme still faces a number of significant challenges, including the relentless rate of urbanization, coverage of dispersed poor urban settlements, continuing evictions of the poor, and a need for even deeper capacity development among all levels of its community governance-based organizations and municipalities. Better integration of poor communities within municipal planning, resource allocation and service delivery will remain a high priority.

At the same time, UPPR will be looking to achieve further urban poverty reduction impact. In so doing, it will need to focus on defining approaches that will provide more strategic and structural benefits at household level, while developing capacities of municipal corporations

to sustain the UPPR impacts. It also will seek to develop tailored practical solutions to key institutional and policy questions on a community-by-community basis. In particular, improving land tenure security will be critical, given that this is arguably the most important issue affecting the prospects for real and sustainable urban poverty reduction.

The challenge now is how to sustain this process and institutionalize a funding support mechanism, while effectively managing a large and highly complex programme. UPPR is taking on a huge challenge to reduce poverty in Bangladesh, but it is not looking at it as an obstacle - and in the end, people's life stories are the real proof of our impact.

For Further Information

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