

Forced eviction in Bangladesh: A human rights issue

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M. Rezaul Islam

University of Malaya, Malaysia, and University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Ndungu wa Mungai

Charles Sturt University, Australia

Abstract

The objective of this article is to explore the situation of forced eviction from homes in Bangladesh and its implications in undermining poverty eradication. We argue that it should be considered as a human rights violation. Little is available in literature on forced eviction, and this article focuses on Bangladesh to illustrate a global problem. The main research question was how forced eviction from homes is related to poverty and violation of human rights. To answer this, the article focuses on the nature and causes of forced eviction and its impacts on the livelihoods of the evictees. We conclude that forced eviction arises from poverty, but is also a cause of poverty and human rights violations. We believe that while the study focuses on Bangladesh, the implications are international in scope. We outline a number of social work interventions which could address forced eviction and the struggle for respect of human rights. Our findings are relevant to policy makers, human rights practitioners, government and non-government organizations (GOs–NGOs), and social workers.

Keywords

Bangladesh, forced eviction, human rights, slums, social work

Introduction

Forced eviction is the uprooting of people and communities from their homes against their will. It has become a recurring phenomenon globally (Home, 2012, United Nations (UN)-Habitat, 2011). There is now a critical and timely understanding of the structural inequities that contribute to the prevalence of this phenomenon (Home, 2012; Kothari, 1995; UN-Habitat, 2011). This is critical for the people who are struggling with their daily survival issues. The most recent global survey on forced evictions counted some 5.5 million between 2003 and 2006 (McGinn, 2013). UN-Habitat (2011) estimated that there were about 42 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. It is also

Corresponding author:

Ndungu wa Mungai, Charles Sturt University, Booroma road, Wagga wagga, NSW 2678, Australia.

Email: nmungai@csu.edu.au

reported that every year over 2 million people are displaced by forced evictions worldwide (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), 2006). Many issues such as poverty, legal identity, political manipulation, urbanization, industrialization, expansion of physical infrastructure, slumization and other local contexts are involved with this forced eviction.

Poverty is one of the prime causes and also the outcome of forced eviction as it is the poor that are often evicted, making them destitute. Impoverization as a human rights violation is well recognized in the UN human rights conventions (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2011; UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2005; World Bank, 2012). Human rights are commonly understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because s/he is a human being. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (2001) defines poverty as the negation of all human rights, including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights. However, poverty is not in and of itself recognized as a violation. Rather, the violation occurs when a certain action (or inaction) breaches human rights obligations in a way that creates, exacerbates or perpetuates poverty (Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), 2008).

Forced eviction in international human rights law is permanent or temporary removal against the will of individuals, families or communities from their homes and/or land which they occupy without provision of appropriate legal or other protection (Agbola and Jinadu, 1997; UN-Habitat, 2011). Housing and living conditions for many people in Bangladesh, both in rural and urban areas, are of very low standards. The critical issues affecting the urban and rural poor across the country include: acute shortage of appropriate and affordable housing, inadequate access to basic services, the absence of legal security of tenure over housing and land, and displacement through natural and social causes. A UNDP (2013) report on poverty in Bangladesh indicates that 57.8 percent of the population in the country live in multidimensional poverty, that is, poverty caused by multiple and complex causes, while an additional 21.2 percent are vulnerable to multiple deprivations.

There is considerable variation in terms of the nature and pattern of forced evictions between Asian and Western countries. UN Human Rights set six basic principles that need to be met for forced eviction to comply with international standards:

1. Consultation and participation of affected people and communities;
2. Adequate notification;
3. Effective administrative and legal recourse;
4. Prohibition of actions resulting in homelessness;
5. Prohibition of actions resulting in deterioration of housing and living conditions; and
6. Provision of adequate relocation and/or adequate compensation before evictions are carried out (UN Human Rights, 2011: 2).

UN-Habitat (2005) shows a number of cases in the world which make clear the differences in the patterns and nature of forced eviction between Western and Asian countries within these principles. In American and European cases, the evictees were given prior notice, alternative rehabilitation, and compensation for the forced evictions which were absent in the Asian and African cases. This means that the human rights perspective among American and European countries had more weight than in Asian and African countries where forced eviction occurred. The widespread experiences of forced evictions by the Roma ('Gypsies') in many European countries, however, shows that human rights are violated in Western countries as well (Petrova, 2003). By reviewing a number of studies and reports such as the COHRE (1998, 2002, 2010), Plessis (2005) and Habitat International Coalition (2007), it is clear that non-government organizations (NGOs) took more

responsibility than the government in the rehabilitation process after forced evictions in Asian and African countries.

Forced eviction in Bangladesh

There are few studies available on forced eviction in Bangladesh or elsewhere. Most of the key literature (academic, news media, and NGO/UN agency reports) to date has focused on political, legal, and urban planning perspectives. By contrast, systematic investigation into the social impact of the evictions on those who have experienced them is relatively undeveloped (McGinn, 2013). McGinn notes that most of the current literature on forced evictions is instead grounded in analysis of the nature and challenges posed by the worldwide 'urban explosion' (p. 16). Also we have contradictory opinions in the literature on whether forced eviction is a cause or an outcome of human rights.

The World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna (1993) states that forced evictions might not initially be viewed necessarily as an issue of human rights, but rather as a simple side effect of development. On the other hand, the COHRE (2002, 2010) identifies forced eviction as a human rights violation. The evidence shows that most forced evictions in Bangladesh take place in urban areas, mainly in the slums in Dhaka and other major cities, where the low-income people live. According to unofficial data, the largest number of slums, 4966, is located in Dhaka city, followed by 1814 slums in Chittagong, 756 in Sylhet, 520 in Khulna and 641 in Rajshahi. However, there are no available data on how many slums have been evicted in the last decade (Islam, 2012). On the other hand, Islam and Nazem (1996) reported that in Dhaka city the poor (or low-income groups) constitute about 70 percent of the population but have access to only 20 percent of the city's residential land, while 80 percent of the land is occupied by the remaining 30 percent of the population. Between 300,000 and 400,000 new migrants arrive each year in search of a better life, placing additional strain on already stretched services. People made landless by poverty, natural disasters and the effects of climate change build shelters where they can. Ain-o-Salish Kendra (ASK, 2006), analysing secondary data, argues for a greater focus on the need to prevent slum evictions in cases where there are no prior rehabilitation and resettlement plans. Rashid (2009) notes that the struggle of the urban poor to establish and defend their slum settlements on illegal spaces is an enduring feature of the urban history of Bangladesh. Natural calamities such as flooding threaten the survival of slum dwellers and underline their vulnerability. Flooding in particular is a good illustration of the relationship between poverty and vulnerability. Flood disaster risks are concentrated in areas that are unsuitable for settlement where people on low incomes live in poor quality houses (Ajibade et al., 2013; Tas et al., 2013).

Research questions and methodology

The main objective of this article is to explore the issue of forced eviction from homes and its prevalence, causes and consequences in terms of human rights, and to argue for social work concern and interventions. This article addresses four specific questions:

1. What is the nature of forced eviction and what are the prime causes?
2. What are the legislative bases for forced eviction?
3. What are the lived experiences of forced eviction and how is it related to poverty?
4. What appropriate social work and human rights interventions can be introduced against forced eviction?

The article is based on content analysis using existing available literature. We followed the type of papers similar to those of Joffres et al. (2008) and Islam and Hossain (2014). Content analysis is the

systematic description of behaviour, asking ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ questions within formulated systematic rules to limit the effects of analyst bias. The search for relevant literature was completed in two stages. First, we examined peer-reviewed articles found in electronic databases (Academic Search Premier, Academic Common, Aseline, Informit, Ingenconnect, ScienceDirect, Scopus, Social Science Citation Index and Social Science Research Network (SSRN), and PsycARTICLES) using keyword searches including ‘nature and causes of forced eviction’, ‘legislative concern related forced eviction’, ‘afflictions of forced eviction’, ‘forced eviction as human rights issue’ and ‘social work interventions for forced eviction’. We included two case studies of forced eviction in two slums in Dhaka city, and one individual case of an evicted woman. All of these cases were taken from the literature. The main reason for including them was to give some case exemplars of causes and impacts of forced eviction as a human rights concern. Second, we used the ‘snowball’ method by searching for journal articles and reports, as well as articles presented in peer-reviewed conferences, cited in some of the articles that we had read. Altogether, by 28 April 2013, we had read 120 articles and discarded 99, the latter being opinion papers, conceptual articles, non-empirical descriptions of programme implementations, and literature reviews. Finally, we considered 21 articles and 10 reports which we found more relevant for this article. We also reviewed relevant published and unpublished national and international reports and documents including reports published by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, Habitat International, the UNDP and the UN, as well as research reports. Some of the significant articles and reports are listed in the reference section. Rather than simply summarizing findings of previous research, we critically analysed the selected articles and documents.

The nature and prime causes of forced eviction

It has not been possible to find exact numbers of forced evictions or the numbers of evictees in Bangladesh. The documents available give a confusing account regarding these data. COHRE and the Asia Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) (2000) reported that during the struggle for liberation in 1971, the Pakistani army began demolishing slums by burning them; this was the first instance of large-scale forced evictions in Dhaka. About 200,000 low-income people were evicted. Only 75,000 people were relocated to three distant sites in Mirpur. No amenities were provided. However, many NGOs assisted the people. Between 1989 and 1998, there were 20 demolitions carried out in a number of places in Dhaka city. During this period, over 100,000 people were made homeless by the government. The squatters filed petitions in the court and were given Stay Orders. However, after returning to their places and rebuilding their houses, the authorities evicted them again. In some cases, after a year or two, some settlers were evicted twice or thrice. In 1990, the government went on a squatter clearance drive and evicted people from their homes in Kamalapur, Mohammedpur and Moghbazaar in Dhaka city. Over 20,000 homes were destroyed, leaving nearly 100,000 people homeless. ASK and the Coalition for the Urban Poor (an NGO working in squatter settlements) carefully documented these forced evictions. By 2005, the figure had reached about 3.4 million people living in 4966 slum settlements (Shiree, 2011: 5).

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) (2008) documented a number of cases of forced evictions in Bangladesh. Slum evictions intensified during the Caretaker Government period (2006–2008) when 27 slums were evicted in Dhaka. Altogether, 60,000 people became homeless from 115 evictions in Dhaka, Chittagong and Dinajpur (Islam, 2012). One of the most debatable forced evictions in Bangladesh is the excavation of an immense open pit coal mine, known as the Phulbari Coal Project. According to the Resettlement Plan, it intends to displace nearly 50,000 people. More alarmingly, an Expert Committee commissioned by the Government of Bangladesh concluded that the project would immediately affect nearly 130,000 people and

ultimately displace as many as 220,000 people, as mining operations drain their wells and irrigation canals. Bangladesh's National Indigenous Union estimates that the mine would evict and/or impoverish 50,000 indigenous people belonging to 23 different tribal groups (Hoshour, 2012).

The causes of forced evictions are very diverse. The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights has determined that the most common reasons in Bangladesh are public works, utilities and road construction activities carried out by the government and private developers (COHRE, 1998). Other development projects such as dams, infrastructural development and industrial and urban expansion are also contributing reasons. Some other causes are energy projects other than dams, land acquisition or expropriation, land reclamation, prestigious international events, unrestrained land or housing speculation, housing renovation, city beautification initiatives, and mass relocation or resettlement programmes. According to UN-Habitat Report (2011), the five most prevalent causes of forced evictions globally are urban development, large-scale development projects, natural disasters and climate change, mega-events, and economic-related global financial crisis. The rapid growth of cities, globalizing economic forces, measures of structural adjustment, withdrawal of state interventions for securing the rights of disadvantaged groups, as well as ongoing and often systematic discrimination also contribute to the prevalence of forced evictions. The following two case studies will demonstrate the nature of forced eviction and how it occurs in Bangladesh.

Forced eviction in Dhaka: Two case exemplars

Forced Evictions of Balmat Basti, Railway Barrack and TT Para

Forced eviction of Balmat Basti, Railway Barrack and TT Para happened in 1999. About 1750 families or approximately 9000 people lived there. The people worked as motor and cycle rickshaw drivers, construction and garment factory workers, vendors and other daily wage earners. The average family income was about 80–120 Taka (US\$1–1.5) per day. On the evening of Sunday 8 August 1999, the people in the settlements were instructed to clear the area by removing their house and belongings as the following day bulldozers were coming to clear the land. The following morning at around 7:00 the police arrived and asked the people to get out of their houses. The people pleaded with the police and while they were doing this, bulldozers moved in and started destroying people's houses. There were over 1000 police and a demolition crew totalling approximately 300 people. Most people lost their houses. In the absence of any alternatives or compensation, they have rebuilt their shacks in nearby places, some have rented in nearby low-income settlements, and some have moved in with their relatives nearby. (Source: Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and Asia Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), 2000.)

Moving backwards: Korail Slum Eviction

This eviction in Korail slum in Dhaka on 4 April 2012 came after a High Court Order [W.P. No. 9763/2008, 2008] which declared a stay on this particular eviction. On 4 April 2012, bulldozers were brought in to demolish settlements deemed illegal and destroyed the homes, livelihoods and social networks of around 2000 families [W.P. No. 3813/2012, 2012]. The impact on the people who inhabited the Korail slums has been severe and has had long-lasting consequences. Families who lost possessions and assets were left in a state of destitution with no shelter and extremely restricted access to essential services. In the aftermath, families were divided and both children's education and people's livelihoods were curtailed or disrupted. There has not been any attempt to rehabilitate the families affected and no compensation was given for the assets and homes destroyed. Over 700 Shiree (an NGO) beneficiary households were directly affected. Thus, the progress made in the economic empowerment of the extreme poor, a government-sponsored programme, suffered a significant setback. (Source: Shiree, 2011.)

Forced eviction as a legislative assertion

As a result of a forced eviction, people are often left homeless and destitute, without means of earning a livelihood, and with no effective access to legal or other remedies. Eviction is often associated with physical and psychological injuries to those affected, with specific impacts on women, children, persons already living in extreme poverty, indigenous peoples, minorities and other marginalized groups (Housing and Land Rights Network, 2014). The UN argues that forced evictions encompass a range of insidious phenomena that result from the ravages of insensitive and misguided development policies, and have a deleterious effect on the skills, identity and survival of people and communities (Kothari, 1995). The scope of the human right to adequate housing, as guaranteed by Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), was elaborated by the UN CESCR (2001). The resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights (1993) on forced eviction of minority people and communities from their homes termed the practice 'a gross violation of human rights' that leads to increased levels of homelessness and deterioration of housing and general living conditions. The resolution urged governments to undertake immediate measures to eliminate the practice of forced eviction.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (Article 15 (a) – see Table 1) unambiguously identifies economic development and improvement of the well-being of the people as a national objective. Forced eviction goes against these lofty ideals. It is against what the Constitution clearly states regarding human rights, that 'the Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed' (Article 11 (Democracy and Human Rights)). There is no indication that the people were treated with dignity or respect. They were, for example, not deemed worthy to receive written legal notice, nor were they given a proper explanation (COHRE and ACHR, 2000). The Ministry of the Interior, the police and other public servants ignored and violated Article 21 (2) of the Constitution which states that, 'Every person in the service of the Republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people'.

Forced eviction is recognized as a problem in the South Asia region, and not just Bangladesh. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)¹ 1997 Declaration of the 9th SAARC Summit in the Maldives recognized forced eviction as one of the problems in SAARC countries. The People's SAARC's New Delhi Declaration in 2010 stated that the right to mobility with dignity is a human right. It called for migrants to be assured of dignity and the right to work as well as physical protection, basic amenities and adequate wages. Peaceful and just resolution of all conflicts in the region through political negotiations, including with the people of disputed territories, were regarded as imperative.

In May 1997, the UN CESCR adopted a General Comment on Forced Evictions (General Comment No. 7) on the right to adequate housing (Article 11.1). The comment calls upon member states to observe human rights, especially forced evictions that constitute violation of a series of human rights.

A number of other international covenants and conventions are concerned with forced evictions as gross violations, and include: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1966; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979. The Government of Bangladesh has ratified all of these treaties. The legally binding obligations arising from the treaties are clearly defined in UN instruments as well as the guidelines on displacement issued by the UN Commission on Human Rights through its Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing (Kothari, 2007). Forced evictions are contrary to the principles articulated in the Habitat Agenda as well as the UN Millennium Development Goals, in

Table 1. Legislative statutes and rights breached in forced eviction.

| Item name | Type | Contents |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Article 15 (a) | Bangladesh Constitution | It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the State to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people, with a view to securing to its citizens (a) the provision of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care. |
| The Bengal Vagrancy Act 1943 | National law | To promote the social rehabilitation of vagrant beggars and handicapped persons under government care through training and other means. |
| People's SAARC: New Delhi Declaration 2010 | SAARC | The rights of individuals and communities subject to forced displacement, disasters and forced eviction should be protected. |
| The Male Declaration 1990 | SAARC | Advocated a concerted effort by member nations in providing people shelter that suits their individual socio-political and economic context. |
| Universal Declaration on Human Rights of Article 25 (1) | International | Everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care. |
| The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in Article 11 (1) | International | ... recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. |
| The UN Commission on Human Rights unanimously adopted in March 1993 resolution 1993/77 | International | The practice of forced evictions constitutes a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing. |
| ICESCR (1966), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). | International | Right to adequate housing and protection from forced evictions is implied in these covenants and conventions. |
| The Habitat Agenda as well as the UN Millennium Development Goals, in particular, Goal 7, Target 11 | International | To improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. |

Sources: Developed by authors from different sources.

SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation; UN: United Nations.

particular, Goal 7, Target 11: to improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 (UN-Habitat, 2011).

Forced eviction as cause of poverty

Forced eviction is a social violence

Forced eviction is one of the most significant incidents for urban social violence in Bangladesh. It disrupts overall livelihoods, splits families, violates the law and creates social unrest. It also perpetuates a cycle of homelessness and poverty, sustains a culture of impunity, causes arbitrary displacement, leads to mass expulsions, condones ‘ethnic cleansing’, and brings coerced and involuntary displacement of people from their lands and communities, creating social conflict and segregation.

Forced eviction heightens homelessness

The single most deliberate violation of housing rights is the unacceptable and often violent practice of forced evictions. Population transfer and internal displacement are two negative outcomes of forced eviction, which result in homelessness. Every year around the world, millions of people are forcibly evicted from their dwellings, leaving them homeless and, in the process, entrenching patterns of poverty. This homelessness intensifies social conflict and inequality. It invariably affects the poorest, most socially, economically, environmentally and politically disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors of society.

Forced eviction impacts vulnerable groups

The people most affected by forced eviction tend to be those who are poor and without formal title or legal recognition of the land on which they reside. These individuals are often members of already disadvantaged groups such as indigenous people, women, female-headed households, persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses, elderly people and children/youth (UN-Habitat, 2011). Forced evictions disproportionately affect women for a number of gender and cultural reasons (COHRE, 2010). The story of a woman, Ayesha, who was forcibly evicted from Karwan Bastee in Dhaka city, is a case exemplar of how forced eviction can brutally and suddenly destroy the livelihoods of vulnerable people.

The Story of Ayesha

‘I was born over thirty years ago in Karwan Bastee. So, my parents were also living in this settlement. We got a notice in the evening and the next day police and bulldozers came. We did not know what was happening. We went to the police to plead with them to allow us to stay, but all they said was that they had their orders to evict us. We asked them what was the reason, and they said we were living there illegally. We have lived here for over thirty years and now we are illegal. We told them we had nowhere to go. But they said they had their orders to clear the land and if we did not get our belongings out, the bulldozer would destroy them. While we were still discussing this, someone threw stones at the police. The next thing I knew the police was beating me with sticks. Tear gas shells were thrown. I fell unconscious. My friends carried me to one side and when they revived me I saw the bulldozers destroy our whole settlement. I was so shocked and felt like dying. I then remembered my children and somebody told me they were safe. I was so worried about my little baby who was only one and a half years old. We had taken years to build our house. Our belongings were all destroyed – the beds – utensils, everything. All the women were crying and even some of the men. We felt so devastated. We are living with our relatives. We have to start from scratch. We have no hope in the Government.’ (Source: Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) and Asia Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) (2000).)

Forced eviction break downs social structure, social orders, and social networks

Social loss by forced eviction is incalculable. It disrupts child education, disrupts leadership and ownership, and causes breakdown of social orders and means of livelihood. Socially and culturally, it creates a high risk of impoverishment that typically occurs along one or several of the dimensions such as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, morbidity and social disarticulation (Cernea, 1990). Evicted people lose their homes, neighbourhoods and personal possessions.

Evictions have a huge social impact on the people directly affected, as well as on their friends and relatives who have to accommodate them, and have far-reaching impacts on the urban poor in general. They are impoverished and continue to live in fear and insecurity (COHRE and ACHR, 2000). The evictees lose the complex reciprocal relationships which provide a safety net or survival network of protection against the costs of ill health, income decline or the loss of a job, and which allow many tasks to be shared. These networks and relationships are carefully interwoven into the fabric of the life of squatters and assist greatly in their survival and development. They are non-quantifiable, but so important to poor people's economic survival and development. Forced evictions destroy these crucial networks (COHRE and ACHR, 2000; Fernandes, 1992).

Forced eviction causes financial and economic loss and social costs

Forced eviction means demolition, destruction of homes and properties. It also results in collapse of Government Organizations' (GOs) and NGOs' works and affects proximity to the places of work for the evictees. Microcredit NGOs provide credit to low-income families to run their small businesses in the slums. Forced evictions destroy the homes for some of these families and their income-generating activities. It also makes it difficult for the NGOs to follow up on the loans they have provided for these families.

Some of the other human and social costs of forced evictions are loss of a sense of security for the future, deterioration in living conditions, disrupted schooling and higher transport costs (Fernandes, 1992). As an example, Shiree (2011) estimated the immediate loss due to eviction in Sattola slum in 2010 to be more than 5000 slum dwellers made homeless, approximately 2000 houses, 16 small shops, three non-formal primary schools, one mosque and one maternity clinic (a BRAC² health service). Homes, businesses and entire health and education services were destroyed. Shiree estimated that families lost between Taka 4000 and 500,000 (US\$52 and US\$6418) each because of the eviction, while the total loss approaches 200 to 300 million Taka (US\$2,567,400 to US\$3,851,100).

Amnesty International suggests forced eviction causes psychological stress

Amnesty International (2012) found that the evictees suffer psychological trauma and their coping mechanisms are put under severe stress. They live in informal settlements characterized by uncertainty even before eviction. Women's health after forced eviction is reported to be significantly worse than that of the general population because of inadequate living conditions, substandard housing, poverty and the disadvantaged position of women within their domestic setting. Evicted women became dependent on anti-depressants and other psychotropic medications. There is greater psychological stress caused by repeated evictions, carried out with no adequate notice, genuine consultations or provision of adequate alternative housing. The threat of forced eviction increases psychological trauma, mental disorder, increases of suicide ideation and attempt rates, and maladjustment among the evictees. Coomaraswamy (2000) adds that psychological stress on learning

about the pending eviction can destabilize the family atmosphere and cause emotional trauma. Sometimes, rape is used by the evictors to create fear and break resistance. During the eviction, violence in the form of verbal abuse and beatings, rape and even murder is common. Coping with injuries, the death of family members, inadequate housing or even homelessness, poverty, and lack of community support when relocated away from the home town are all possible burdens for the evictees. Women are particularly vulnerable in these situations.

The World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna (1993), mentioned that forced eviction creates a big concern for evictees' rehabilitation. In those cases where provision is made for resettlement, it is usually at a distant site where people are expected to build homes again, but on land with little or no provision for infrastructure and services. As a long-term outcome, it increases financial burden at individual and family levels, and increases the population of homeless or 'street people', social unrest and violence, and oppression.

Social work interventions against forced eviction and human rights violations

As already shown, forced evictions intensify inequality, social conflict, segregation, and invariably affect the poorest, most socially and economically vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society. Addressing the legal and structural problems is one way to prevent the recurrence of forced evictions (UN Human Rights, 2011). It is, therefore, clear that a preventive approach is more efficient than trying to resolve cases once the process is in motion. According to international law and guidelines, all persons affected by forced evictions have the right to timely and appropriate remedies, such as access to legal counsel, free legal aid, compensation, restitution, return, resettlement and rehabilitation. The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement identifies several remedies in favour of evictees, including fair compensation (paragraphs 60–63), restitution and return (paragraphs 64–67), and resettlement and rehabilitation (paragraph 68) (UN Human Rights, 2005).

The application of social work interventions varies between Western and Asian countries because of the contextual variations and differences. The literature gives an overview explanation about social work interventions for forced evictees. Shelter (2009) suggests the application of social work intervention in the United Kingdom for affected children and families at three levels: precautionary activity/early intervention, pre-crisis intervention and crisis point intervention. Precautionary activity/early intervention includes early sustained contact, identification of vulnerable families, intensive practical and emotional support, streamlining housing benefit, and change in the attitude and approach of social landlords towards rent recovery. Pre-crisis intervention includes information sharing between local authorities and external advice agencies; adequate advice, information and guidance for tenants to navigate the claiming process for benefits, housing support and social work support. Crisis point intervention includes encouraging tenants to access last-minute housing advice and legal representation. Lack of similar welfare and legal services in Bangladesh means that this approach is not directly transferable.

McGinn (2013) used the Stress and Coping Theory developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) to examine forced evictions' impact on the psychosocial health of displaced women and how they managed the exigencies of displacement in Cambodia. He found that Stress and Coping Theory underpins current analysis of risk and resilience and is particularly suited to identifying strengths and protective factors that enable individuals to effectively manage adversity. There is a consensus that social support is a critical factor in stress responses. Vingerhoets (2004) suggests that the availability of an adequate social network offers informational, instrumental and emotional support that is an important buffer against the exposure to stress. Nou (2006) provides a summary of the

literature on stress in general, including theory, evidence, and components of social support. Resilience is an important concept in understanding how people cope in these difficult circumstances. It is defined as the 'capacity of an individual, household or community to adjust to threats, to avoid or mitigate harm, as well as to recover from risky events or shocks' (UN-Habitat, 2008: 4). Vingerhoets (2004) summarizes the literature identifying key resilience factors that include personality characteristics or 'hardiness', a sense of coherence (ability to find meaning in adversity), optimism, ability to verbalize and otherwise express emotions, and ability to maintain a healthy overall lifestyle and adequate social supports. Social workers provide support help to engender resilience.

Based on human rights standards, the UN Guidelines (paragraphs 37–58) outlined a number of operational procedures before, during and after forced eviction which can be considered important guidelines for social workers. Before forced eviction, comprehensive and holistic 'eviction impact assessments' are necessary to assess the potential costs and losses (material and non-material) of the proposed eviction. Impact assessments must take into account the differential impacts of forced evictions on women, children, older persons and marginalized sections of society. They should be based on the collection of disaggregated data. During eviction, steps must be taken to ensure that women are not subjected to gender-based discrimination and violence, and that rights of children are protected. After eviction, there must be immediate provision of essential food, potable water and sanitation; basic shelter and housing; appropriate clothing; essential medical services; livelihood sources; fodder for livestock and access to common property resources; and education for children and childcare facilities. The human rights of women, children, indigenous people and other vulnerable groups must be equally protected, including their right to property ownership and access to resources available to all evicted persons or groups.

Literature about the application of social work interventions for the forced evictees in Bangladesh is lacking. Considering the overall socio-economic and cultural conditions in Bangladesh, we think that any single social work intervention discussed earlier would not be adequate; rather, we would suggest integrating a number of interventions, that is, the Stress and Coping Theory examined by McGinn (2013) in Cambodia, resilience as suggested by UN-Habitat (2008), the social networks examined by Vingerhoets (2004), and UN Guidelines (paragraphs 37–58). The important thing is to consider the material needs of the evictees, their socio-economical status and security, their material and financial losses and vulnerability, the need for emergency shelter, the needs of vulnerable children and women, as well as education and jobs.

Social workers cannot solve the problems of forced eviction on their own. Attempting to work in isolation would make them as vulnerable as the evictees. They need to identify allies in other areas including legal and business sectors, NGOs and GOs. Researching the issue, especially the human rights and structural aspects of the causes and solutions, and doing it with affected people would assist in finding durable solutions.

Conclusion

We have shown in this article that there are considerable variations in forced evictions between Western and Asian countries. We would agree that there are many gaps and limitations that we face due to the variations of the findings reported by different sources. However, the methodological limitations are also acknowledged here as the article is based on content analysis. Within these limitations, this article has discussed the nature, causes and impacts of forced evictions in Bangladesh from a human rights perspective. The article outlines some social work interventions from the existing literature. The analysis highlights the compelling need for new legislation, guidelines and enforcement mechanisms geared towards forced eviction prevention. A concerted search

is needed for viable, people-based alternatives to forced eviction, given the vulnerability of those evicted. Any serious attempt by governments to review legislation with a view to achieving consistency between national laws and international legal obligations must include an analysis of the relationship between existing law and forced evictions. Purely state-based or lawyer-based initiatives, however, are likely to reinforce often inappropriate views of housing rights and evictions. Social work interventions based on human rights and social justice for forced evictees are not well documented. We feel that further research is needed on the application of social work interventions to ameliorate the psychological trauma as well as the social impacts of forced eviction. Full and active participation during all stages of these intervention processes by all sectors of society need to accompany any legal developments in these areas.

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Notes

1. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) member countries are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
2. BRAC is a development organization which began in 1972 in Bangladesh and is dedicated to alleviating poverty by empowering the poor. Apart from Bangladesh, it operates in 10 other developing countries in Asia and Africa. <http://www.brac.net/>

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Author biographies

M. Rezaul Islam (PhD) is a Professor in Social Work at the Institute of Social Welfare & Research, University of Dhaka and Visiting Senior Lecturer at the Department of Social Administration & Justice, University of Malaya. He is actively involved in social work education and professional development of Social Work in Bangladesh. His research focuses on migrant labour force, human rights and poverty, NGOs and community development, child welfare, and social development, which is embedded by a human rights approach and inspired by people who are vulnerable and affected by structural causes of poverty, unemployment and inequalities.

Ndungu wa Mungai (PhD) is lecturer in Social work at Charles Sturt University, Australia. He has worked in a variety of social work settings in Australia including research and counseling. His main teaching subjects are social work and human rights, ethics in social work and social work research methods. Ndungu has published several book chapters and journal articles.