

ABSTRACT

Climate change poses a significant threat to slum dwellers in megacities. Adaptation to climate change is rather unlikely due to increasing informality and slum dwellers' acute vulnerability. The mass media, in particular, creates a myth that the urban poor have a bleak future. This study critically examines this myth and extends the approach of adaptation to climate change to include slum households' socioeconomic development perspectives. In addition, it examines resilience to the well-established analysis of vulnerability and broadens the focus of the research on the ability to respond during a crisis. Using the example of extreme flooding in the megacity of Dhaka, this study scrutinizes the slum households' short term coping mechanisms in severe crisis and long term adaptation to climate change. The results of the quantitative and qualitative survey show that the slum households are likely to endure impending floods forecast to occur more frequently and with greater severity. Informal structures and social capital are deeply embedded and will allow the slum households to deal flexibly with a severe crisis. In a sense the slum households are found to be „robust“ adaptive. However, these coping measures will leave the household immersed in continual debt. In conjunction with the indirect effects of climate change this debt is likely to reduce the slum households' livelihood assets substantially. This study does not suggest the long-term development of better living standards. The lack of development perspective seems to result in an entrapment of households in slums due to climate change. National and international organizations should increase their focus on supporting the slum households' capacity to self-organize in order to prevent this entrapment.