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What is meant by pro-poor growth? What is the evidence on whether or not growth is pro-poor?

Introduction

Pro-poor growth may have two meanings from an economic perspective: namely, absolute pro-poor growth and relative pro-poor growth: and from a non-economic dimension: human development. Each type of pro-poor growth is determined by different evidence as to whether or not growth is pro-poor. In this paper, I will clarify those definitions and evidence first, and then analyse the case of the growth of Bangladesh in the 1990s by using three dimensions of pro-poor growth in order to confirm which definitions of pro-poor growth were achieved. By this analysis, I will conclude that the country did not accomplish relative pro-poor growth due to an increase in inequality. Therefore, inequality reduction may be the policy to be practised in the future. Through this case study, I would like to confirm that analysing which definitions of pro-poor growth are achieved tells us policies to be practised for the achievement of pro-poor growth.

Three Definitions of Pro-poor Growth

There are three definitions of pro-poor growth to be considered, and different dimensions within each definition of pro-poor growth. The first two types of pro-poor growth are defined by economic perspectives and the last definition is derived from non-economic perspectives.

The first definition of pro-poor growth is 'the absolute definition of pro-poor growth' (DFID 2004, p.2), which focuses on the growth of the absolute income of the poor but not on changes in income distribution (Ravallion and Chen 2003, p.94). This type of pro-poor growth may be affected by the degree of economic growth. In other words, rapid economic growth may accelerate absolute poverty reduction. In favour of this argument, Dollar and Kraay (2001, p.32) discovered that 1 percent growth of mean income raised the mean income of the poorest 20 percent by 1 percent. Therefore, they believe in the importance of the policies of 'good rule of law', 'fiscal discipline' and 'openness' to the international trade markets in order to achieve economic growth (2001, p.9). Moreover, discussing the correlation between economic growth and absolute pro-poor growth, Ravallion and Chen (2007, p.2) mention that

reduction in absolute poverty is identified as a measure of economic performance. Thus, I would like to define absolute pro-poor growth, one of the definitions of pro-poor growth, as growth which mainly considers the growth of the absolute income of the poor, and is donated by the degree of economic growth, especially the degree of growth of the mean income.

Next, the second definition is 'the relative definition of pro-poor growth' (DFID 2004, p.2), which deals with changing the income distribution between the poor and the non-poor: namely, greater improvement in the income of the poor than that of the non-poor enhances a fall in inequality (Kawani and Pernia 2000, p.13). Therefore, this type of pro-poor growth may be affected by income redistribution. In their critique of Dollar and Kraay, White and Anderson (2001, p.285) argue that growth does not always have a sufficient impact on poverty reduction even though growth is good for the poor; instead, the combination of a growth policy and a redistribution strategy enhances even more effective growth of the poor economy than a single growth policy. Moreover, Ravallion (2004, p.11 and p.16) adds to the argument above that the different degree of poverty reduction is generated by two sets of elements including 'initial inequality' and 'changing income distribution' although the high growth rate significantly contributes to absolute poverty reduction. In other words, higher initial inequality leads to a less positive impact from growth on the poor; hence, income redistribution from the rich to the poor may have a strong impact on absolute poverty reduction through economic growth as well as inequality reduction itself. Thus, I would like to characterise relative pro-poor growth, the second definition of pro-poor growth, as growth which supports absolute poverty reduction by reducing inequality between the poor and the non-poor through income redistribution. In other words, relative pro-poor growth may enhance the efficiency of absolute pro-poor growth.

Finally, the last definition of pro-poor growth is non-economic pro-poor growth related to human development. In the context of a poor society, the relationship between economic growth and human development may be a trade-off. As McKay (2008, p.26) believes, the focus on the non-income dimension is essential particularly at a relatively poor income group level.

Moreover, the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (2001, p.9) reports that economic growth is needed for more rapid human development because it promotes an increase in public service, income of the poor and empowerment of women. Furthermore, emphasising the correlation between non-income pro-poor growth and pro-poor economic growth, Sen et al (2004, p.3) add that human development, which is often used to measure the quality of expenditure of a government, can contribute to boosting pro-poor economic growth. An education or health subsidy in poor rural areas is likely to provide better work opportunities for the poor to stabilise their livelihood in the future. Thus, non-economic pro-poor growth, the last definition of pro-poor growth, may be defined as growth which promotes the impact of economic pro-poor growth by developing the capacity of the poor.

In short, the definition of pro-poor growth can be divided into three dimensions: absolute pro-poor growth, relative pro-poor growth and non-economic pro-poor growth. In addition, pro-poor growth is defined as those three concepts to increase the absolute income of the poor, to assist absolute poverty reduction by reducing inequality between the poor and the non-poor, and to prompt economic growth by promoting the capacity of the poor through human development.

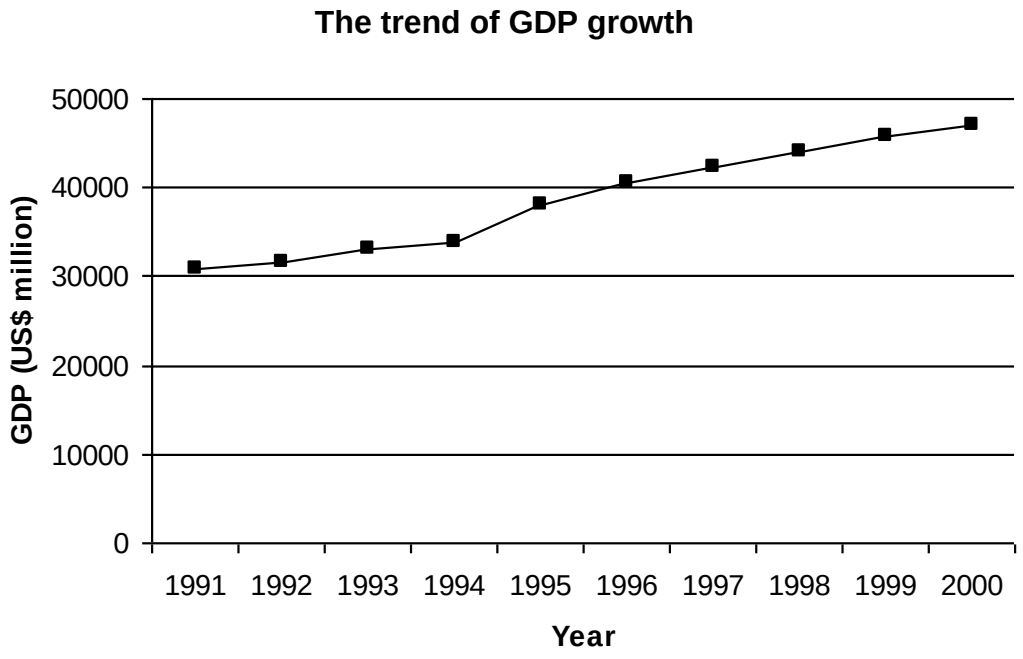
Pro-Poor Growth in Bangladesh

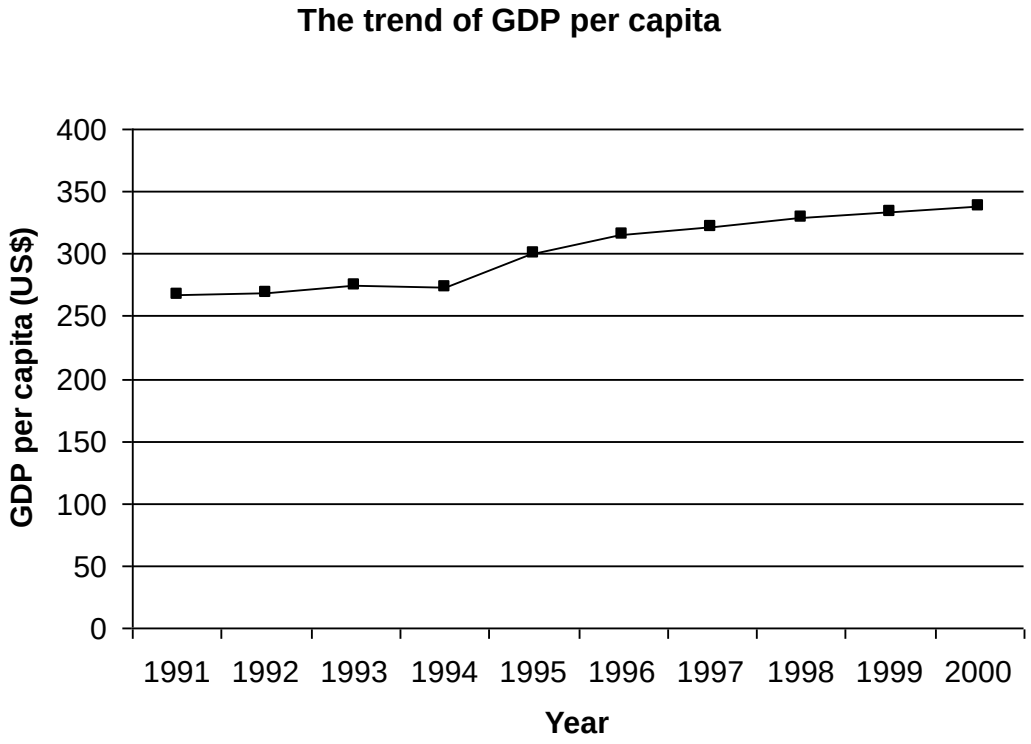
Through the analysis of a country by using three definitions above, it can be clarified at which levels the country succeeds in prompting pro-poor growth. In other words, it may be possible to analyse what the evidence there is as to whether or not growth was pro-poor. Furthermore, this analysis of the evidence, and even lack of evidence on pro-poor growth will be useful to discover issues to be improved for the achievement of pro-poor growth in the future. In this section, I would like to analyse the growth of Bangladesh in the 1990s. It is generally believed that the country experienced not only significant overall growth but also successful pro-poor growth during the decade (Sen et al 2004, p.55). However, it may be possible to argue that pro-poor growth was not perfectly achieved within the meanings of the three definitions above. In

particular, a relative term of pro-poor growth was not sufficiently accomplished. For the structure of the analysis, I would like to divide my argument into five: the country's circumstances with some relevant contributory factors for the economic growth and rural development: the impact of sectoral patterns of growth on pro-poor growth: the analysis of poverty reduction from the view of absolute pro-poor growth: relative pro-poor growth: and non-economic pro-poor growth. Then I will conclude as a policy lesson of Bangladesh, that improvement in poverty indicators and human development indicators determined the achievement of pro-poor growth while lack of success in relative pro-poor growth suggested a policy to decrease inequality in the future.

Firstly, despite the unstable circumstances responsible for the economic growth, Bangladesh accomplished success in this field and in rural development (Sen et al. 2004, p.1). The War of Independence in 1971 and the severe initial conditions, such as 'high population density', 'low resource base', 'high incidence of natural disasters' and political instability represented obstacles to progress in the country's economic development. Nevertheless, the fact that the country managed to double the average per capita GDP growth from 1.6 percent per year in the 1980s to 3 per cent per year in the 1990s may attract us to the policies practised for that remarkable improvement. Among some of the important factors there were: an inward-oriented policy by controlling imports, starting a green revolution, and establishing a population growth control in the reconstruction period of the 1970s; a macro-economic stability implementation in the 1980s leading to the positive outcome in the following decade; and an economic reforming policy of trade liberalisation and a human development policy in the early 1990s (Sen et al 2004, p. 8-9). As a result, the country harvested the fruits of these measures a dramatic economic growth in the 1990s. The overall GDP growth rate was 4.6 per cent per annum and the per capita GDP growth rate was 2.4 per cent (Figure 1). Moreover, macro-economic stability was achieved by controlling the inflation rate to a lower level during the decade (Figure 2). According to the research of Ahmed and Mortaza about the relationship and economic growth in Bangladesh (2005, p.15), it is

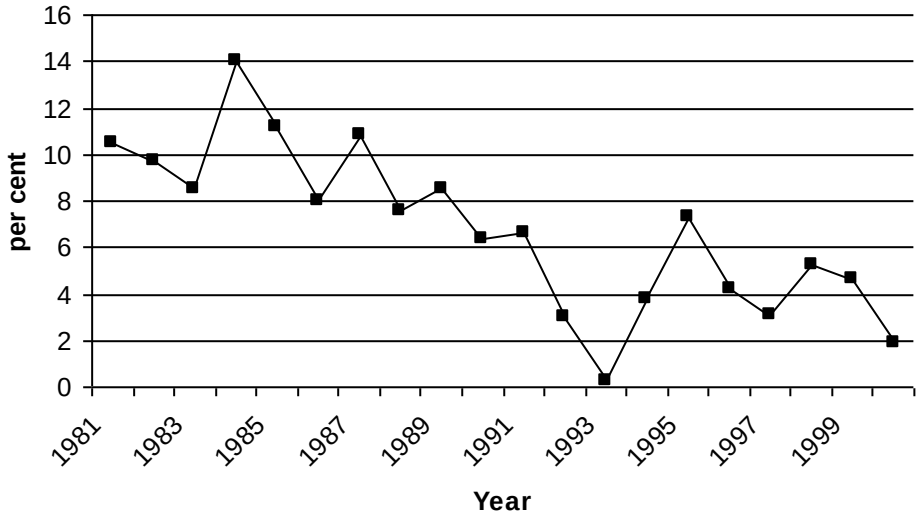
Figure 1: The trend of economic growth in the 1990s





Source: The World Bank (2007)

Figure 2: The trend of inflation rate in the 1990s



Source: The World Bank (2007)

estimated that an inflation rate above 6 per cent generates a negative impact on economic growth. Considering this threshold level of inflation, the country successfully held the inflation rate at 4 per cent on average during the 1990s. In terms of rural development, there were also significant outcomes of the earlier policies. The agricultural development brought crop diversification and high productivity to the rural areas in which 75 per cent of people live (World Bank 2006), and the trade liberalisation contributed to the growth of the private sector in the 1990s. Thus, the series of economic policies succeeded in increasing both the national and the rural economy.

Secondly, it is crucial to mention the relationship between the sectoral pattern of growth and pro-poor growth. McKay (2008, p.23) believes that analysing the sectoral growth pattern can allow us to understand which sectors lead growth and are related to the source of the employment of the majority of poor people. In fact, because the industrial and service sectors' contribution to economic growth is generally greater than that of the agricultural sector, which makes up a smaller proportion of GDP (McKay 2008, p.23), the governments that aim to increase the overall economy tend to focus more on industrialisation. This policy might enhance the poor economy by reflecting on the growth of per

capita income, as Dollar and Kraay (2000) believe. However, considering the tendency of a higher poor population existing in the agricultural sector in rural areas, it is also understood that agricultural growth tends to be more pro-poor than other sectoral growth (Eastwood and Lipton 2002, p.52). Applying this idea of the role of sectoral growth pattern in poverty reduction to the case of Bangladesh, the pattern was mainly led by the combination of the agricultural sector and the industrial sector, and it contributed simultaneously to both the rapid economic growth and poverty reduction. First of all, the impact of agricultural growth contributed to poverty reduction. The introduction of Boro rice crops, a new seedling rice crop, which is suitable for winter-season, played an active role in reducing the risk of losing the yield of the rural poor by flood (Sen et al. 2004, p.11). Also, the considerable increase in real agricultural wage rates benefited the landless poor in the rural regions (2004, p.13). Considering these facts, improvement in productivity of the agricultural sector seemed to benefit many of the poor in the rural areas. On the other hand, the impact of the industrial sector also showed a contribution to pro-poor growth. Thanks to trade liberalisation, private sectors became more active and new industries emerged in the urban areas, such as the garment industry for export (Stern 2002, p.12). Because the industrial sector is usually labour-intensive, which is suitable for such populous and dense countries like Bangladesh, many people migrated from rural to urban regions in order to acquire the desired work opportunities with high wages. Reflecting this change, between 1990 and 2004 the rural population decreased from 80 per cent to 75 per cent while the urban population doubled (World Bank 2006). As Kam et al (2005, p.566) believe, providing more work opportunities could assist pro-poor growth. From this point of view, the impact of the industrial sector contributed not only to the economic growth but also to poverty reduction. Thus, the sectoral pattern of growth in Bangladesh seemed to be in favour of the poor.

Thirdly, I would like to analyse whether the growth pattern as a consequence of the factors above was absolute pro-poor growth, by using poverty indicators. The poverty trend of the country shows the positive status (Table 1). For a start, I will use the three indicators of headcount rate, poverty

Table 1: Trends in CBN Poverty Measures

	Upper Poverty Line			Lower Poverty Line		
	1991-92	**1995-96**	**2000**	**1991-92**	**1995-96**	**2000**
HEADCOUNT RATE:						
National	**58.8**	**51**	**49.8**	**42.7**	**34.4**	**33.7**
Urban	44.9	29.4	36.6	23.3	13.7	19.1
Rural	61.2	55.2	53	46	38.5	37.4
POVERTY GAP:						
National	**17.2**	**13.3**	**12.9**	**10.7**	**7.6**	**7.3**
Urban	12	7.2	9.5	4.9	2.6	3.8
Rural	18.1	14.5	13.8	11.7	8.6	8.2
SQUARED POVERTY GAP:						
National	**6.8**	**4.8**	**4.6**	**3.9**	**2.5**	**2.3**
Urban	4.4	2.5	3.4	1.5	0.7	1.2
Rural	7.2	5.3	4.9	4.3	2.8	2.6

Source: The World Bank (2002)

gap and squared poverty gap for the poverty measurement. Also, for these measurements of poverty, I will use the cost-of-basic-needs (CBN) method, which identifies households with real per capita expenditure below a decided poverty line by the standard of the basic-needs, as 'the poor people' (World Bank 2002, p.4). Firstly, during the 1990s, the country enjoyed a dramatic decrease in the headcount rate, the proportion of people below the poverty line, although the absolute number of the poor shows little change at 69 million, due to the population growth (Table 2). In 1991-92, 59 per cent of people lived in poverty, below the upper poverty line, as opposed to 50 per cent in 2000. Likewise, there was a fall in the extreme poverty rate, below the lower poverty line, from 43 per cent in 1991-92 to 34 per cent in 2000. Although the headcount rate fluctuated slightly in the urban areas, the trend was still downwards at both levels of the poverty line by about one per cent per annum. Secondly, both the poverty gap, which estimates the distance of the average expenditure of the poor to the poverty line, and the squared poverty gap, which considers not only the depth of poverty but also the disparity amongst the poor below the poverty line, demonstrates the positive impacts on poverty reduction.

Table 2: Population below the Poverty Line

	1991-92	1995-96	2000
Population:	118311512	128920800	139434376
	Upper Poverty Line		
HEADCOUNT RATE:	**58.8**	**51**	**49.8**
Poverty incidence:	69567169	65749608	69438319
	Lower Poverty Line		
HEADCOUNT RATE:	**42.7**	**34.4**	**33.7**
Poverty incidence:	50519016	44348755	46989385

Source: Own calculations using the World Bank (2002) for Headcount rate and the World Bank (2007) for Population

Note: Each population datum is in 1992, 1996 and 2000.

More poor people are close to the poverty line in 2000 compared to those in 1991-92, and the inequality also became smaller among the poor over the period. Next, the growth incidence curve (GIC) shows the remarkable growth of the extreme poor, up to about 30 per cent of income percentile from the bottom: 4.6 per cent for the poorest 10 per cent, 5.6 per cent for the 20 per cent and 4.2 per cent (Table 3 and Figure 3). Moreover, the poor income in mean accounts for 4.4 per cent per annum. Thus, using three indicators and the GIC, I have identified the unambiguously positive impact on poverty reduction: namely, the growth of the absolute income of the poor and the improvement in poverty indicators. Hence, absolute pro-poor growth was achieved.

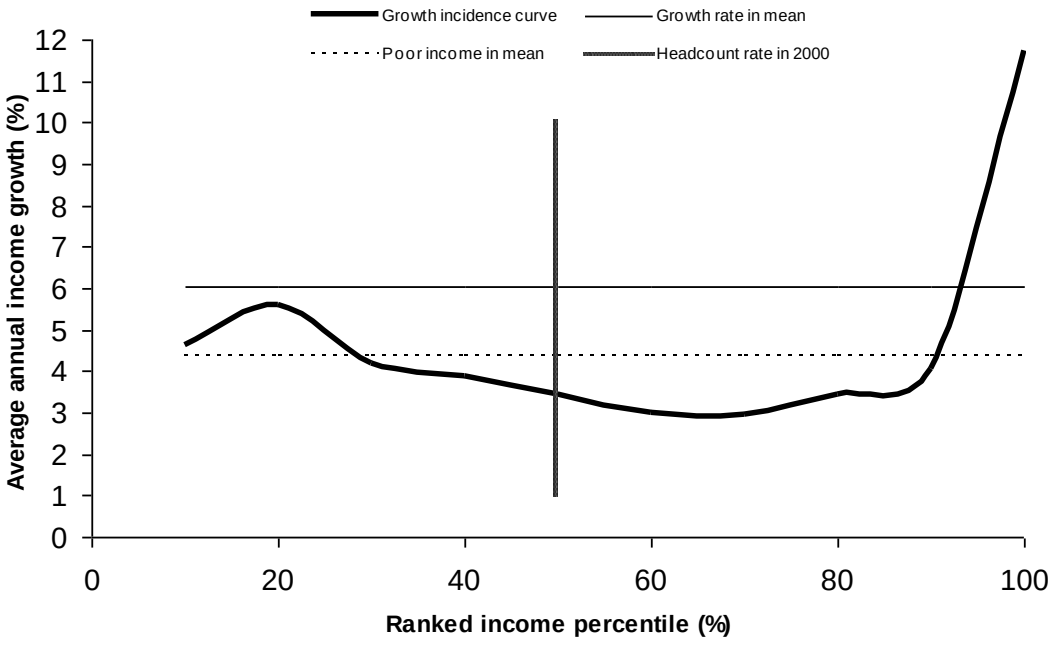
Fourthly, I am going to analyse whether the growth pattern was relative pro-poor growth by using inequality indicators measurements including the Gini coefficient, distributional changes, the Lorenz curves and the GIC. Inequality increased across the country (Figure 4). The Gini coefficient in urban areas rose from 32 per cent in 1991-92 to 38 per cent in 2000, while that rate for rural areas accounted for 30 per cent in 2000 compared to 26 per cent in 1991-92 (Sen et al. 2004, p.14). Then, the Gini of the national levelled off at 33 per cent in the late 1990s. Looking at Table 3 and Figure 5 for the details of the distributional changes, the change in rural inequality is even smaller than that in urban areas, and in particular, the share of income of the rural poor slightly improved during the decade. The bottom 30 per cent of the rural population in 2000 had slightly more shares of income by 0.1 or 0.2 points compared to those

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Income Accruing to Households in Groups

Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1991-92										
National	**2.6**	**3.9**	**5**	**5.9**	**7.1**	**8.5**	**10.1**	**12.1**	**15.6**	**29.2**
Urban	2.6	4.1	5	5.9	6.8	8.1	9.7	11.8	15.6	30.4
Rural	2.7	4.1	5.1	6.1	7.2	8.6	10.3	12.3	15.7	28
2000										
National	**2.4**	**3.8**	**4.5**	**5.2**	**6.1**	**7.1**	**8.4**	**10.4**	**13.9**	**38.1**
Urban	2	3.1	3.8	4.7	5.6	6.7	8.2	10.4	13.9	41.6
Rural	2.8	4.3	5.2	6	6.8	7.9	9.1	10.9	14.1	33
Growth per annum										
National	**4.6**	**5.6**	**4.2**	**3.9**	**3.5**	**3**	**2.9**	**3.5**	**4**	**11.7**

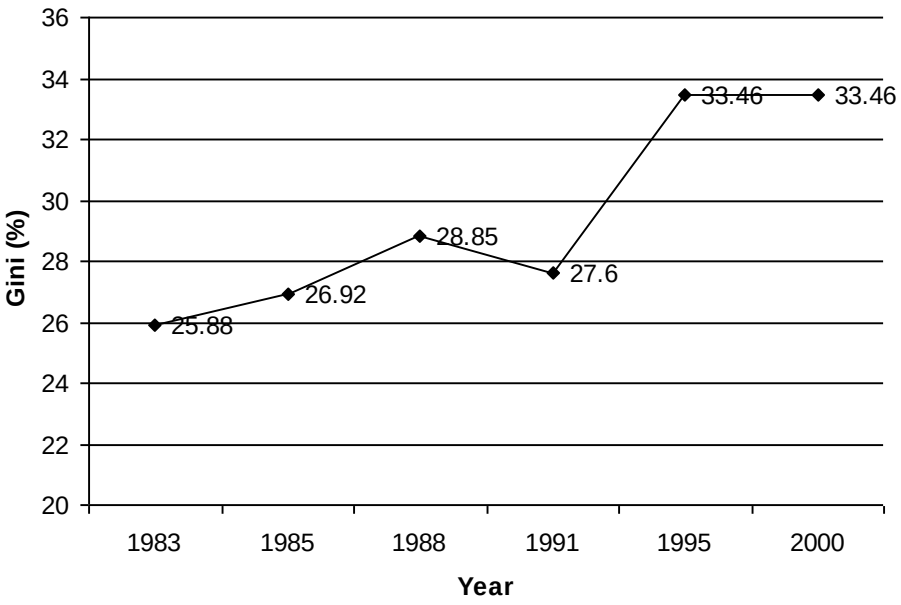
Source: Own calculations using the World Bank (2005) for the percentage distributions of income and the World Bank (2007) for GDP
Note: The growth per annum is the GDP growth rate in each quintile. The average growth rate between decile 1 and 5 is 4.4 per cent: 6 and 8 is 3.1 per cent: 6 and 9 is 3.3 per cent: 9 and 10 is 7.9 per cent.

Figure 3: Growth Incidence Curve for Bangladesh, 1992-2000



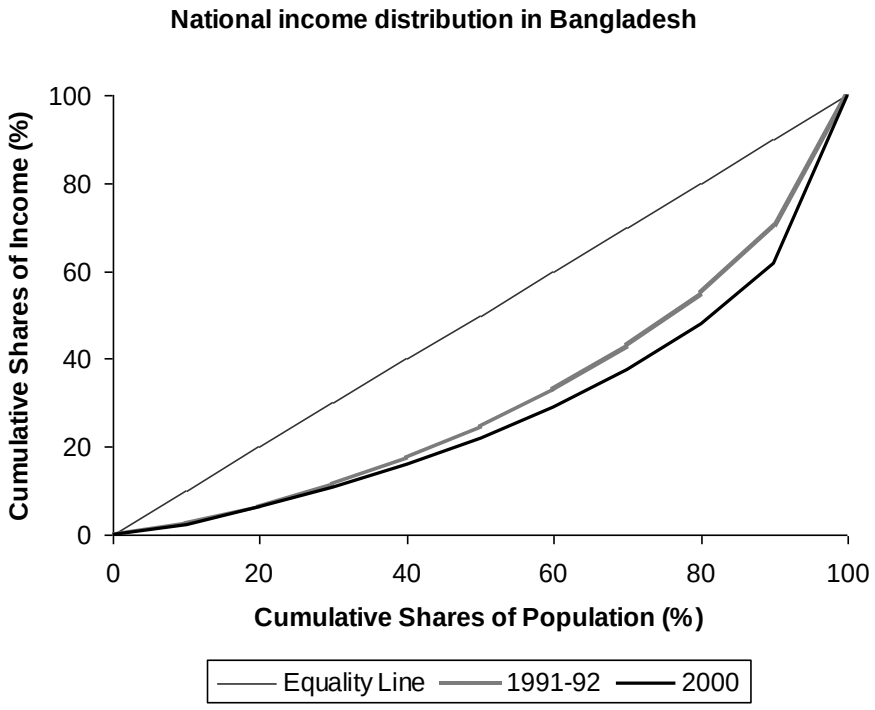
Note: According to own calculations in table 3, the growth incidence curve (GIC) shows growth rate of each income percentile between 1992 and 2000. The growth rate in mean is 6 per cent. The poor income in mean accounts for 4.4 per cent. For the headcount rate, 49.8 per cent in 2000 is used.

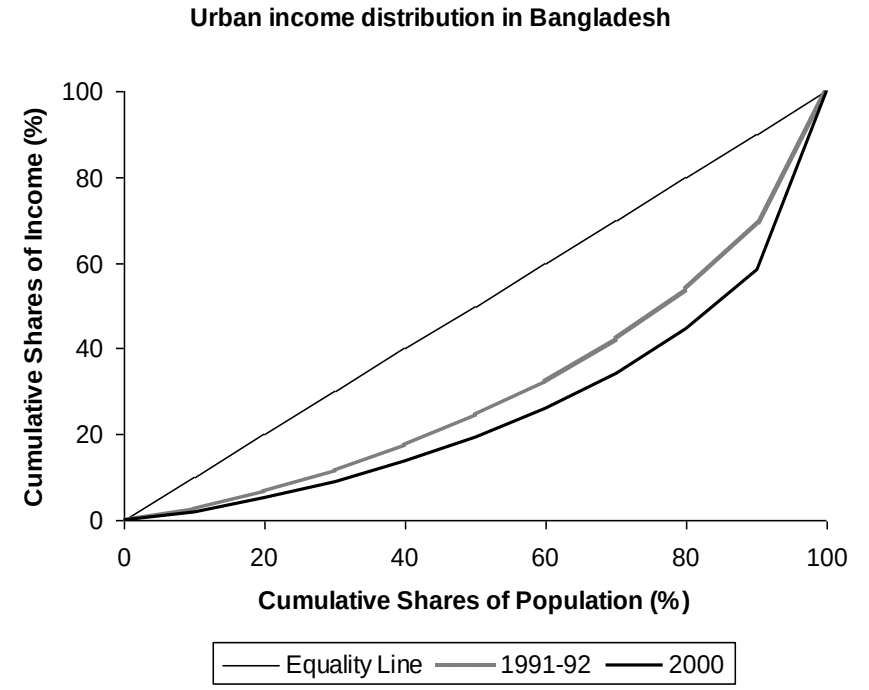
Figure 4: The trend of Gini coefficient

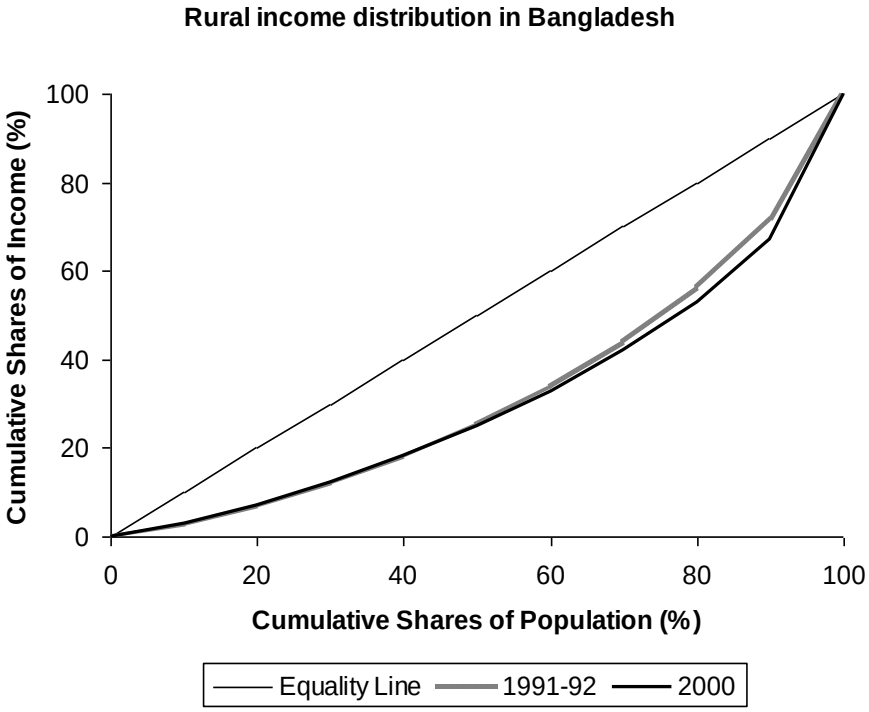


Source: PovcalNet (2009)

Figure 5: Lorenz curves







Note: The Lorenz curve assists visual understanding of the degree of inequality in a region (Ray 1998, p.184-85). Each cumulative share of income and population refers to table 3.

in 1991-92 whilst most people experienced a great decrease in their share of income, because of the trend of distributional changes such that only the income of the top 10 per cent of population rose dramatically between 1991 and 2000. Under the circumstances where half of the population is below the poverty line and 75 per cent of total population lives in the rural areas, the outcome that there was a decrease in inequality in the rural regions might imply the successful relative pro-poor growth. Furthermore, looking at the change in the income growth rate, that of the poorest 30 per cent is larger than the other percentiles of people except for that of the top 10 per cent (Table 3 and Figure 3). Therefore, it might be possible to describe the growth pattern as relatively pro-poor, since there was a higher growth rate of the poor than that of most of the non-poor. However, it is important to emphasise that the income disparity between the poor and the richest 10 per cent increased even though the poor experienced a relatively higher growth rate than the others except for the top 10 per cent. In fact, the poor income growth rate on average, 4.4 per cent, was less than the per capita GDP per annum, 6 per cent, and their income proportion by the richest 10 per cent decreased by 6 per cent between 1992 and 2000, although the income of the poorest 20 per cent increased dramatically. In this sense, the growth pattern was not relatively pro-poor, due to a rise in inequality. Thus, relative pro-poor growth was not perfectly achieved.

Finally, I will clarify whether the growth pattern was non-economic pro-poor growth by using human development indicators. For a start, the achievement of human development is relatively high as the Human Development Index shows. In Table 4, I selected the countries from the range of plus and minus US$ 500 from Bangladesh, so that one can compare the cost of health and education policies between countries with a similar income. As Figure 6 shows, although there may be more possibilities to improve both rates, especially in education, the performance on these disciplines is relatively acceptable compared to the country's GDP. Besides, by comparison with the other South Asian countries in human development of fertility rate, literacy rate, life expectancy, infant mortality rate and under-five mortality rate, the country showed great improvement in each category (Table 5). The decrease in the

birth rate supported the dense country's economy by reducing the import cost of food, and improvement in another index promoted the capacity of the poor through human development. Thus, these successes in non-economic development such as human development determined the non-economic pro-poor growth.

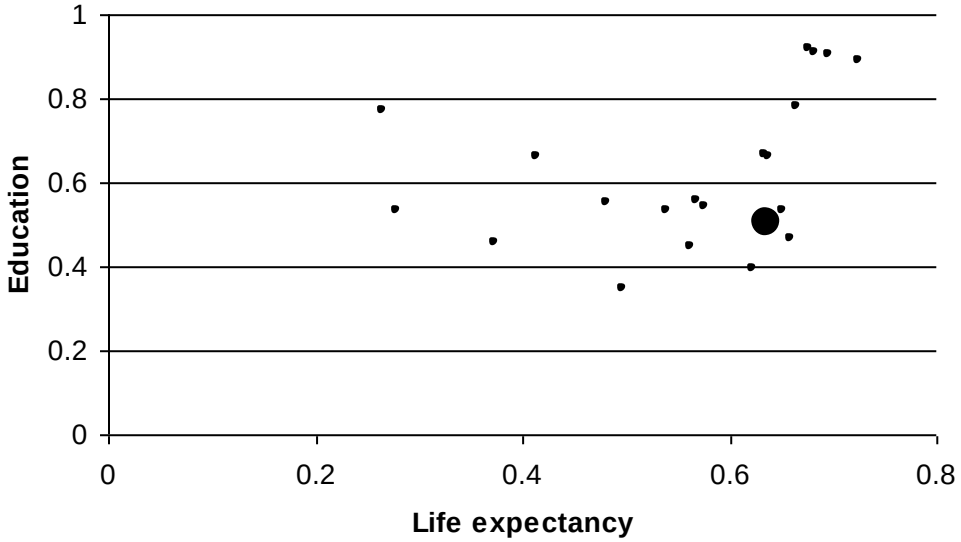
Table 4: Cross-country comparison by Similar Income to Bangladesh

County	GDP per capita (PPP US$)	Life expectancy	Education	GDP
Ghana	2,480	0.568	0.555	0.536
Pakistan	2,370	0.659	0.466	0.528
Angola	2,335	0.279	0.535	0.526
Guinea	2,316	0.497	0.347	0.524
Cameroon	2,299	0.414	0.66	0.523
Mauritania	2,234	0.637	0.493	0.519
Sao Tome and Principe	2,178	0.665	0.783	0.514
Djibouti	2,178	0.482	0.553	0.514
Mongolia	2,107	0.682	0.91	0.509
Moldova	2,100	0.724	0.892	0.508
Sudan	2,083	0.54	0.531	0.507
Uzbekistan	2,063	0.696	0.906	0.505
Bangladesh	2,053	0.635	0.503	0.504
Lao People's Democratic Republic	2,039	0.637	0.663	0.503
Zimbabwe	2,038	0.265	0.77	0.503
Solomon Islands	2,031	0.633	0.669	0.503
Comoros	1,993	0.651	0.533	0.499
Kyrgyzstan	1,927	0.676	0.917	0.494
Gambia	1,921	0.563	0.45	0.493
Senegal	1,792	0.622	0.394	0.482
Haiti	1,663	0.575	0.542	0.469
Cote d'Ivoire	1,648	0.373	0.457	0.468

Source: Based on the United Nations Development Programme (2007)

Note: The countries are selected from the range of plus and minus US$ 500 from Bangladesh.
Each indicator shows the range from the minimum 0 to the maximum 1.

Figure 6: Cross-country comparison: Quality of expenditure



Note: A larger dot shows Bangladesh and the other dots are the other countries.

Table 5: Cross-country comparison in Human development, South Asia

	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	India	Pakistan	Nepal
Total fertility rate (births per woman)					
1970-75	6.2	4.1	5.3	6.6	5.8
2000-05	3.2	2	3.1	4	3.7
% change per year	-1.4	-1.5	-1.2	-1.1	-1
Adult literacy rate (% aged 15 and older)					
1985-95	35.3	..	48.2	..	33
1995-05	47.5	90.7	61	49.9	48.6
% change per year	1.7	..	1.3	..	2.4
Life expectancy at birth					
1970-75	45.3	65	50.7	51.9	44
2000-05	62	70.8	62.9	63.6	61.3
% change per year	1.1	0.3	0.7	0.6	1.1
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 livebirths)					
1970	145	65	127	120	165
2005	54	12	56	79	56
% change per year	-1.8	-2.3	-1.6	-1	-1.9
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 livebirths)					
1970	239	100	202	181	250
2005	73	14	74	99	74
% change per year	-2	-2.5	-1.8	-1.3	-2

Source: Based on the United Nations Development Programme (2007)

To sum up, improvement in poverty indicators and human development indicators determined the achievement of pro-poor growth but the achievement of relative pro-poor growth was limited, which suggested a policy to decrease inequality in the future.

Conclusion

I have discussed three definitions of pro-poor: namely, absolute pro-poor growth, relative pro-poor growth and non-economic pro-poor growth. Each type of pro-poor growth is determined by increasing the absolute income of the poor, reducing inequality between the poor and the non-poor, and promoting the capacity of the poor through human development. Moreover, through the analysis of Bangladesh, I argued that the country did not accomplish relative pro-poor growth, due to an increase in inequality, although the country is generally believed to have accomplished pro-poor growth. Therefore, inequality reduction may be the policy to be practised in the future. Through this case study, it may have been proved that analysing which definitions of pro-poor growth are achieved tells us policies to be practised for promoting more pro-poor growth.

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