

Mongla Dissemination Brief

‘Liveable Regional Cities in Bangladesh’ Project

June 2020



Policy suggestions

- ❑ Local and central government need to urgently address water salinity issues
- ❑ The fresh water crisis is the major issue for Mongla which can only *partially* be managed by efficient rain water harvesting
- ❑ Need for improved and enhanced utilities such as waste management and water supply
- ❑ Incentivise skilled and quality job creation that pays good wages rather than just unskilled low wage jobs, especially by the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) and the Mongla Port Authority
- ❑ Establish communication channels with residents that are not politically motivated and support the establishment of community groups and activities
- ❑ Appropriate institutional support from government towards immediate implementation of Mongla Master Plan
- ❑ Ensure participation of all stakeholders especially women and marginal groups in decision making

The Liveable Regional Cities in Bangladesh project explores what makes regional cities more liveable from the perspective of residents and local stakeholders

The project addresses three intersecting global challenge areas: sustainable cities and communities; long-term environmental change and resilience; and also sustainable livelihoods. Mongla and Noapara in south-western Bangladesh were used as case studies for the project.

Using an interdisciplinary approach the project conducted household surveys (48 middle class and 48 informal settlement dwellers in Mongla), storytelling workshops, 20 semi-structured interviews with residents and local stakeholders. The fieldwork for the project was conducted during September and October 2019. The project will disseminate the findings through a short film, photography exhibition and town hall meetings in both target towns.

This dissemination brief shares findings from the field work in Mongla.

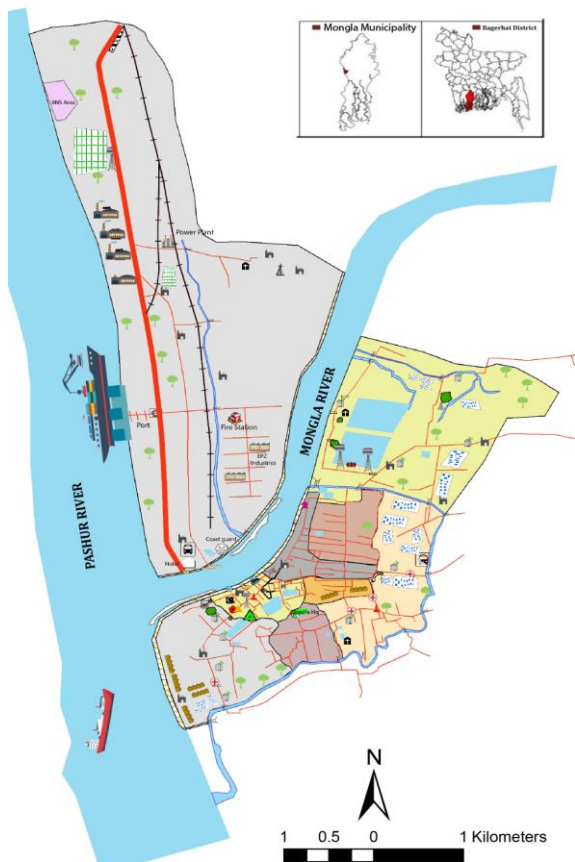


Why Study Regional Cities

Until recently, research and policy attention has focused on mega or capital cities such as Dhaka. There is little research on regional cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants which is where most residents of the global South live, including in Bangladesh. Increasingly, migrants are settling in these regional cities. It is unclear who lives in these cities, how residents earn their livelihoods, what are sources of urban resilience and how authorities can manage cities for sustainable futures. This project is essential to understanding long term resilience and sustainability of Bangladeshi regional cities.

The Mongla and Noapara municipalities were selected as the case study cities because they present different scenarios for climate change vulnerability and yet both cities are attracting individuals seeking livelihood opportunities. This research is also of relevance to ICCCAD's visions to create climate resilient, migrant friendly secondary cities of Bangladesh.

Map of Mongla Port Pourashava



Quotes from Residents

"I LIKE MONGLA"

"We drink salinized water and we become sick"

"If we had fresh water, we wouldn't have any issues to complain about."

"There is nothing to demand except for our own land"

Description of Mongla

Mongla has a population of 106,000 and is located at the southwestern part of Bangladesh, in the district of Bagerhat in the Khulna Division. It is home to the 2nd largest port in Bangladesh and adjacent to the World's largest mangrove forest - the Sundarban. Mongla is divided in two parts by the river Mongla. On the northern side, there is the large scale EPZ, the Port area, some residential and governmental buildings. On the southern side of Mongla, the buildings are generally no higher than three stories with some exceptions. People travel on three wheelers called 'vans' powered by electricity and human labour.

Mongla has the central government's attention as a national priority economic zone. The city has seen rapid population growth recently due to the high number of jobs being created at the EPZ and revival of the port activities. Mongla is perceived as being a happy place to live. The crime rate is low. Living costs are low in Mongla and there is clean, fresh air. Road quality and drainage systems in the city have improved recently.

However, accessing freshwater especially during the dry season is a major challenge. Rising salinity is not only affecting water access but also a threat to freshwater based livelihood. Other issues reported by respondents included: lack of good medical facilities, lack of higher education institutions, lack of waste management and problematic transport facilities to Dhaka and Khulna. Local transport is not an issue but a bridge over the river would be appreciated. The long-term vision for the city is created primarily by the central government. Interviewees expressed a desire to have a voice in decision making processes.

Key issues for Mongla today

- People within the municipality need more water supplied and with greater regularity. The high levels of salinity in the area make it difficult for residents to access fresh water independently
- Due to a lack of decentralization of the central government, the mayor has limited flexibility and control over local level decision making and financial resource mobilisation
- Long term holistic development is impacted by economic development of the EPZ in relation to the small city where residents live and face a significant shortage of drinking water
- The EPZ could become a “city” within itself with housing and job opportunities growing into adjacent rural municipalities while the Mongla municipality could become separate and isolated from the EPZ
- Few work opportunities in the EPZ for higher educated people in Mongla
- Lack of social support systems in place. There are very few non-political organisations
- Lack of recreational facilities
- Most residents spend over 50% of their monthly income on food. This could lead to food insecurity in the long term

Key issues for the future of Mongla

- The overarching question is “How do we live with nature”? How to reconcile long term job creation that may not pay much in the EPZ with possible environmental degradation, the increasing impact of climate change and a difficult hazard portfolio
- The EPZ and the international airport will bring tens or hundreds of thousands of low skilled jobs to greater Mongla. It is unclear if this will help or hurt Mongla city
- Rising salinity levels and accompanying lack of fresh water sources will further stress access to safe water and livelihood opportunities
- Mongla authorities need to emphasize overall sustainability and start to implement different collaborative and individual interventions in the most important sectors that benefit or harm people
- Participatory meetings and getting local people’s opinions in different decisions is needed, as in many cases the issues which need to be focused on do not get the attention they deserve
- Provisioning of better services and facilities in informal settlements can lead to pro-poor urban planning

Liveability Project Team

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All outputs (Dissemination briefs about Mongla and Noapara, films, survey results and photographs) of the Liveability Project are on the ICCCAD website and the Durham University, IHRR website.

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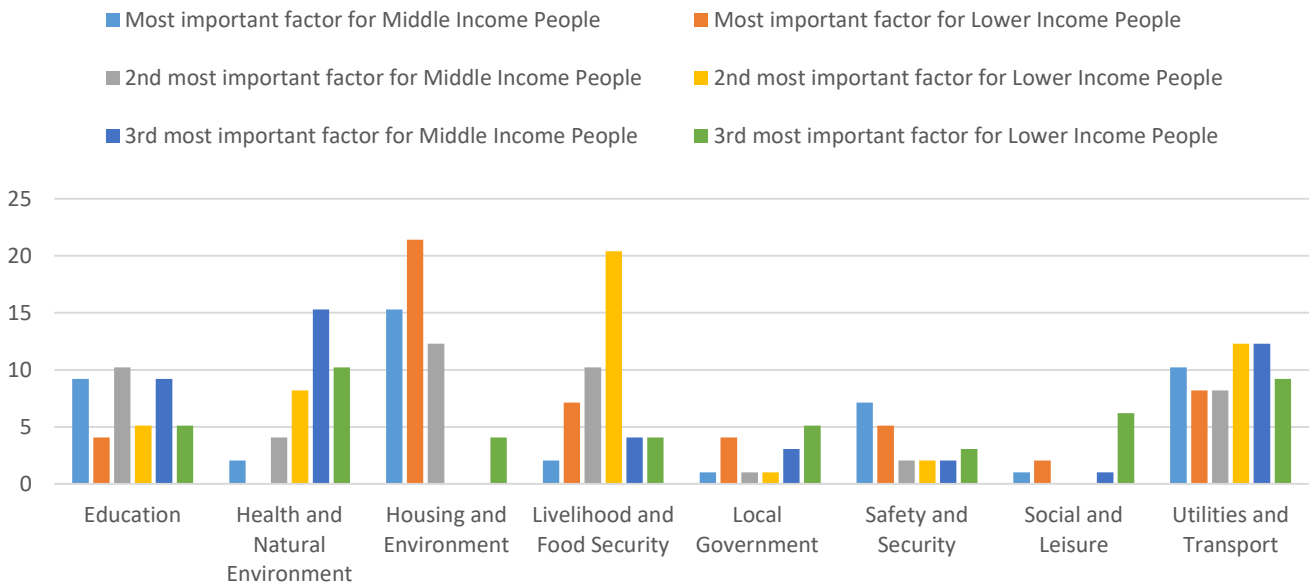
Annex

Survey highlights from Mongla

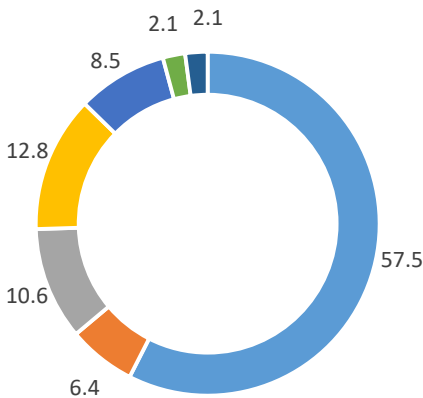
To see the full survey results please visit ICCCAD.net

All data displayed is in percentages, unless stated otherwise.

Key factors in making Mongla liveable, according to respondents

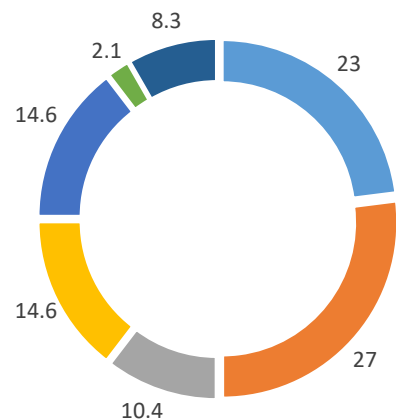


Key factor in making Mongla liveable, according to male respondents



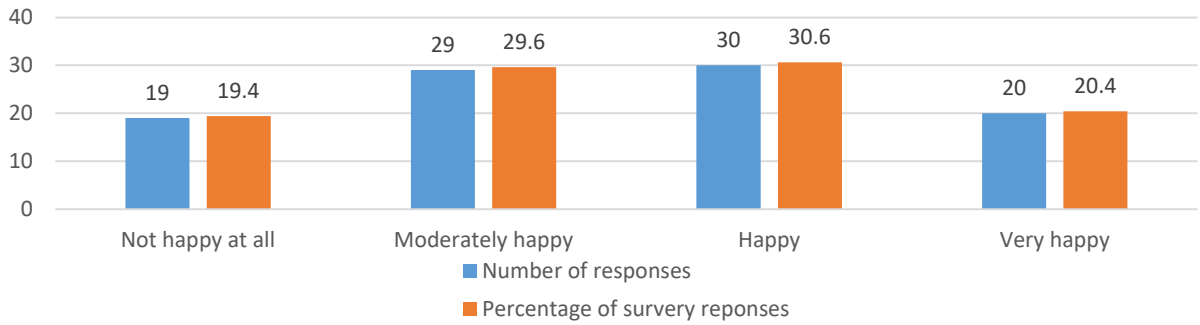
- Housing and Neighbourhood
- Utilities and Transport
- Livelihood and Food security
- Education
- Safety and Security
- Social and Leisure
- Local Government

Key factor in making Mongla liveable, according to female respondents

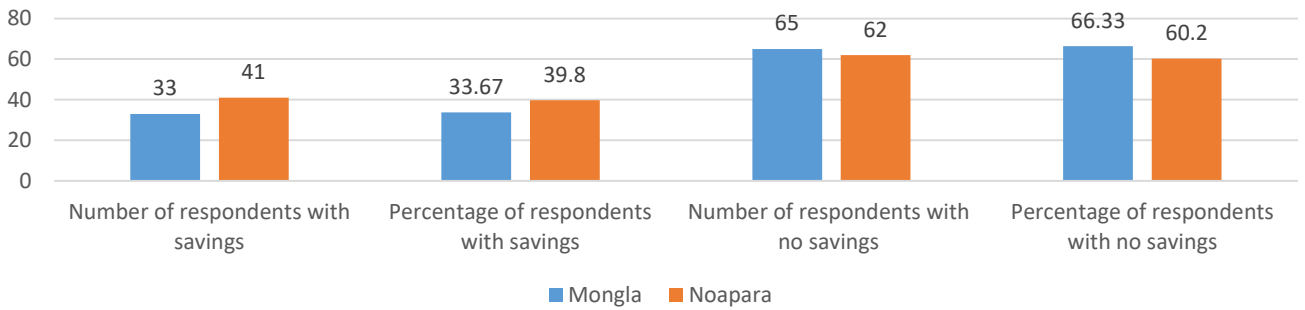


- Housing and Neighbourhood
- Utilities and Transport
- Livelihood and Food security
- Education
- Safety and Security
- Social and Leisure
- Local Government

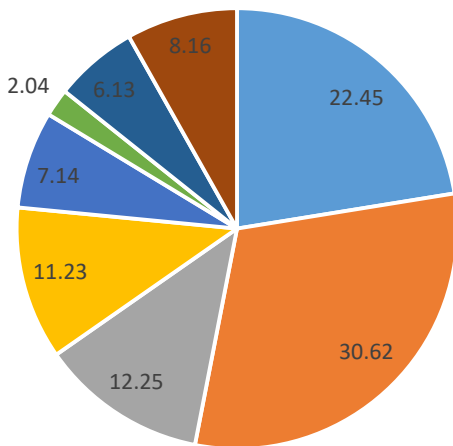
How happy do you feel in your neighbourhood?



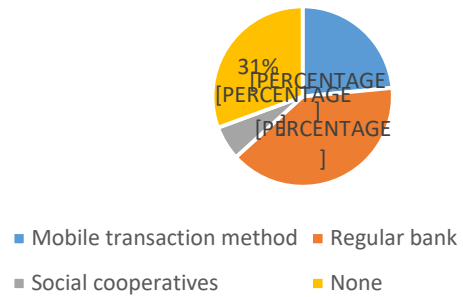
Comparing the number of respondents with and without savings in Mongla and Noapara



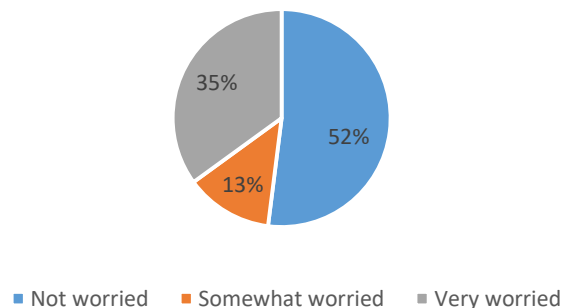
Occupation distribution in Mongla



Banking Method used By Respondents in Mongla

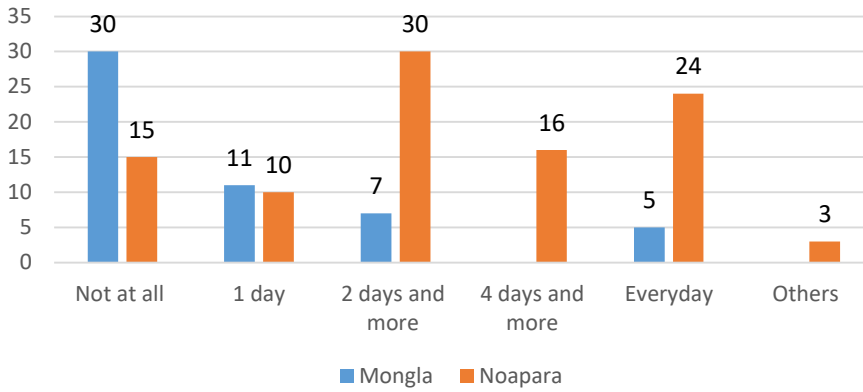


How worried are respondents about eviction in Mongla?

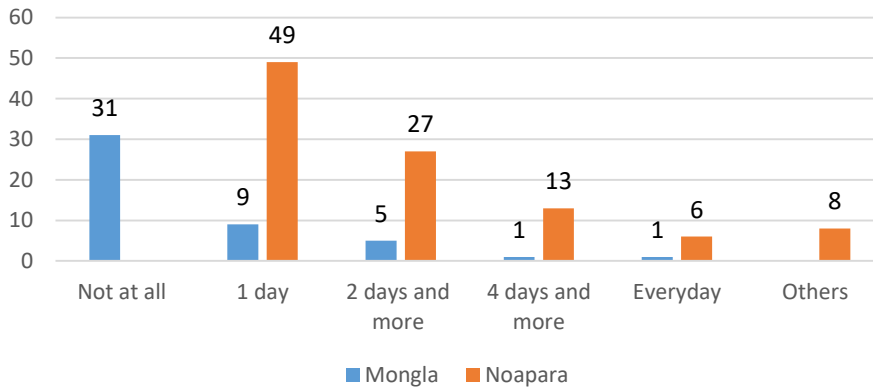


- Small business
- Day labour
- Housewife
- Government employee
- Non-Government job
- Retired from work
- Unemployed
- Other (Student, Shrimp farming, Fishing)

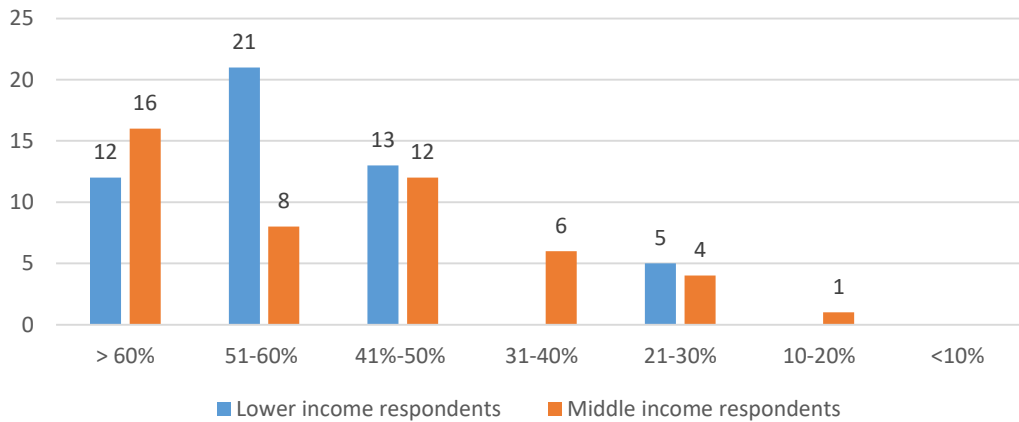
How frequently respondents eat fresh fruits and vegetables in Mongla and Noapara



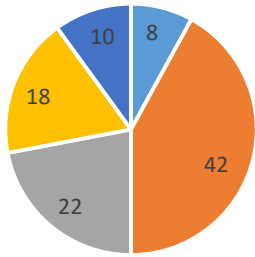
How frequently respondents eat meat in Mongla and Noapara



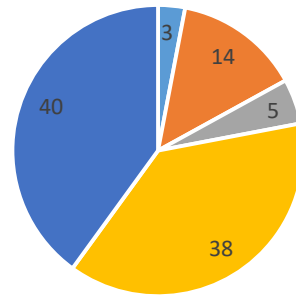
Percentage of monthly income spent on food in Mongla



Do respondents agree that schools in Mongla have the facilities required for the development of children

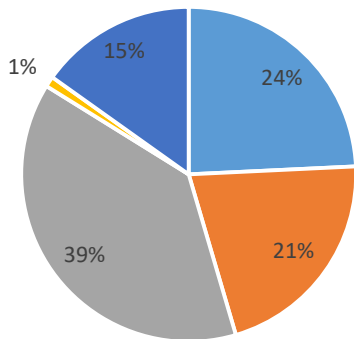


How safe do respondents feel in Mongla at Night?



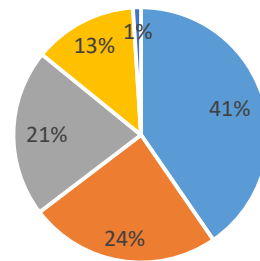
■ Totally Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Totally Disagree ■ Not safe at all ■ Unsafe ■ Neutral ■ Safe ■ Very safe

How do respondents rate the quality of service and medication in local hospitals



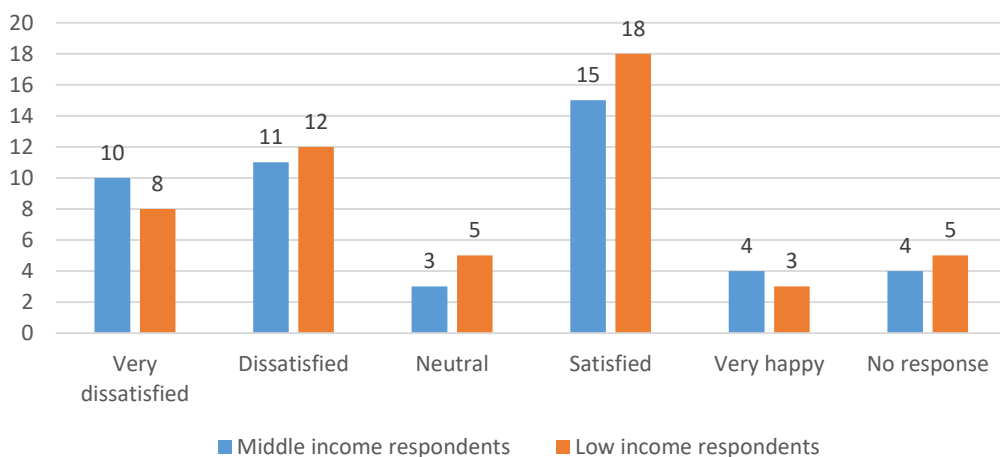
■ Average ■ Good ■ Poor ■ Very good ■ Very poor

How do respondents rate the quality of water

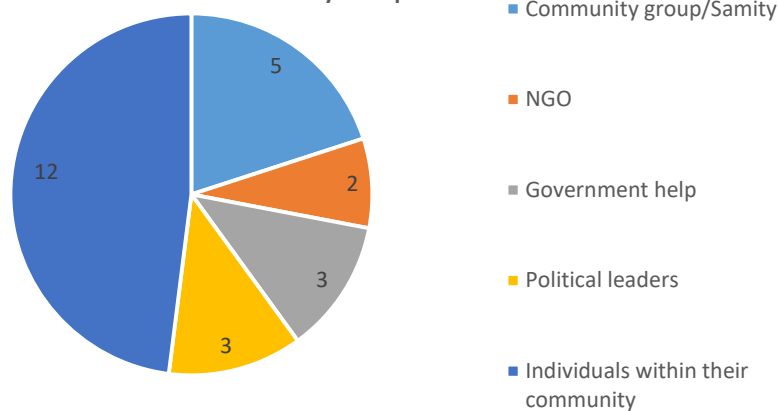


■ Dissatisfactory ■ Neutral ■ Satisfactory ■ Very dissatisfactory ■ Very satisfactory

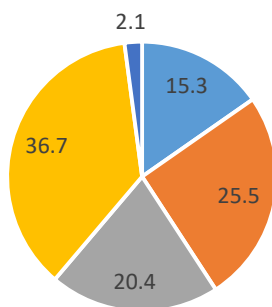
How satisfied are low and middle income respondents with the local government's engagement in their needs



How frequently different forms of social support were mentioned by respondents

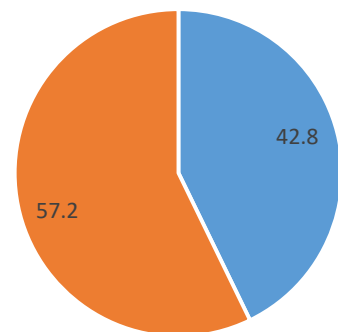


Do respondents agree that there is a good future for their children in Mongla



Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Are respondents thinking of leaving Mongla to live elsewhere in the future



Yes No

Background on Survey

In September 2019, we surveyed 96 residents (48 residents of informal settlements and 48 middle class residents*) to understand their views of eight qualitative components of a ‘liveable’ city. These components include: livelihoods and food security, utilities and transport, health and natural environment, education, housing and neighbourhood, central and local government, safety and security and lastly, social and leisure. The survey had 90 Questions and this annex shows a range of topics that were considered. For more information, please go to ICCCAD.net for the full survey results.

*The middle class residents were located by the surveyors asking random local people from different spheres of life “where do the middle income people live?”. We found that there were some specific areas where the middle class people live according to the local people. Among these middle class locals there were lower income earners as well as middle income earners. Education was reoccurringly emphasised as an important identifier of middle class. In many cases, the elders or the heads of the families might not have been educated but the second generation is currently being educated or has already completed steps to higher education.