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2023 ADB GENDER FORUM

2 Billion Changemakers

Women Leading on Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific

21–22 November 2023, ADB Headquarters

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Gender-Responsive Climate Adaptation





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Empowering Women in Dhaka North: *Reducing Heat Vulnerability in Informal Settlements*

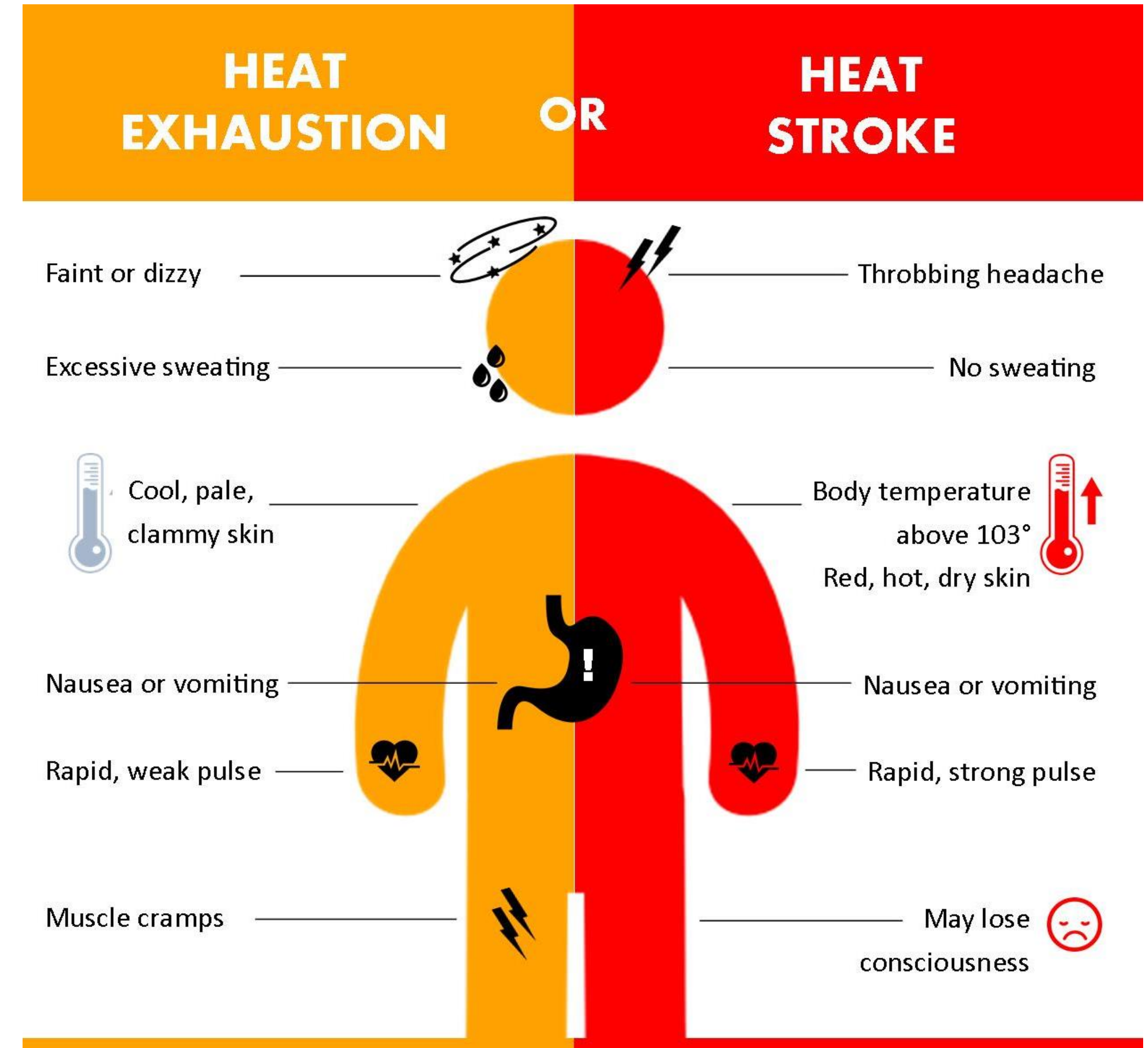
Bushra Afreen, Chief Heat Officer, Dhaka North



What happens if you can't cool down?

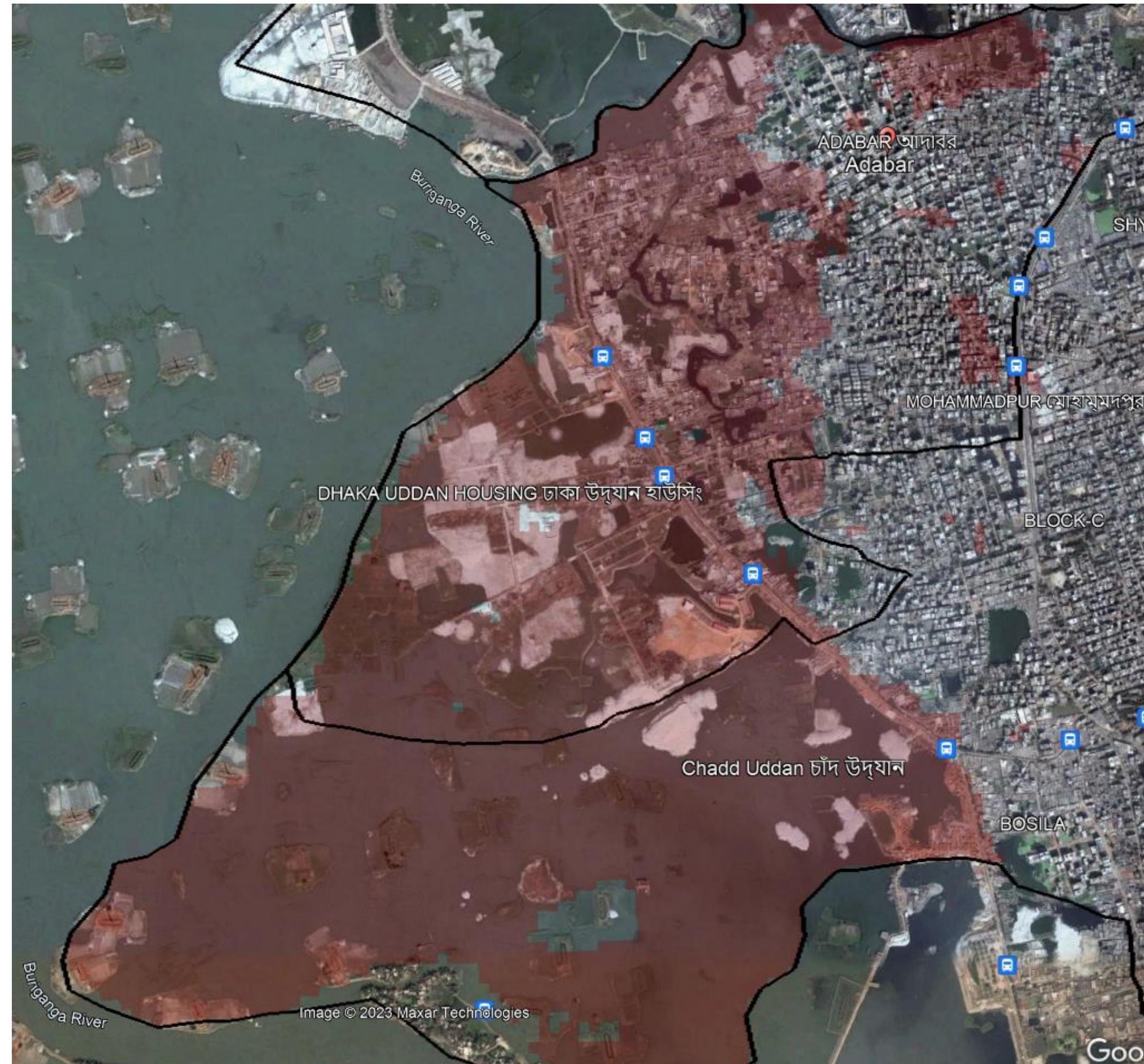
A roadmap to heatstroke on a hot day

- **98.6 + F:** Your body pulls blood **away from your vital organs to your skin** to dissipate the heat. You start sweating.
- **100-103 F:** You experience lightheadedness, your vision blurs and you feel like **you will faint**. This is the point where you **need to cool down**.
- **104-107 F:**
 - Your limbs convulse into seizures.
 - Your organs start failing.
 - Your cells literally break down and 'melt'.
 - You die as your insides disintegrate – you are hemorrhaging everywhere

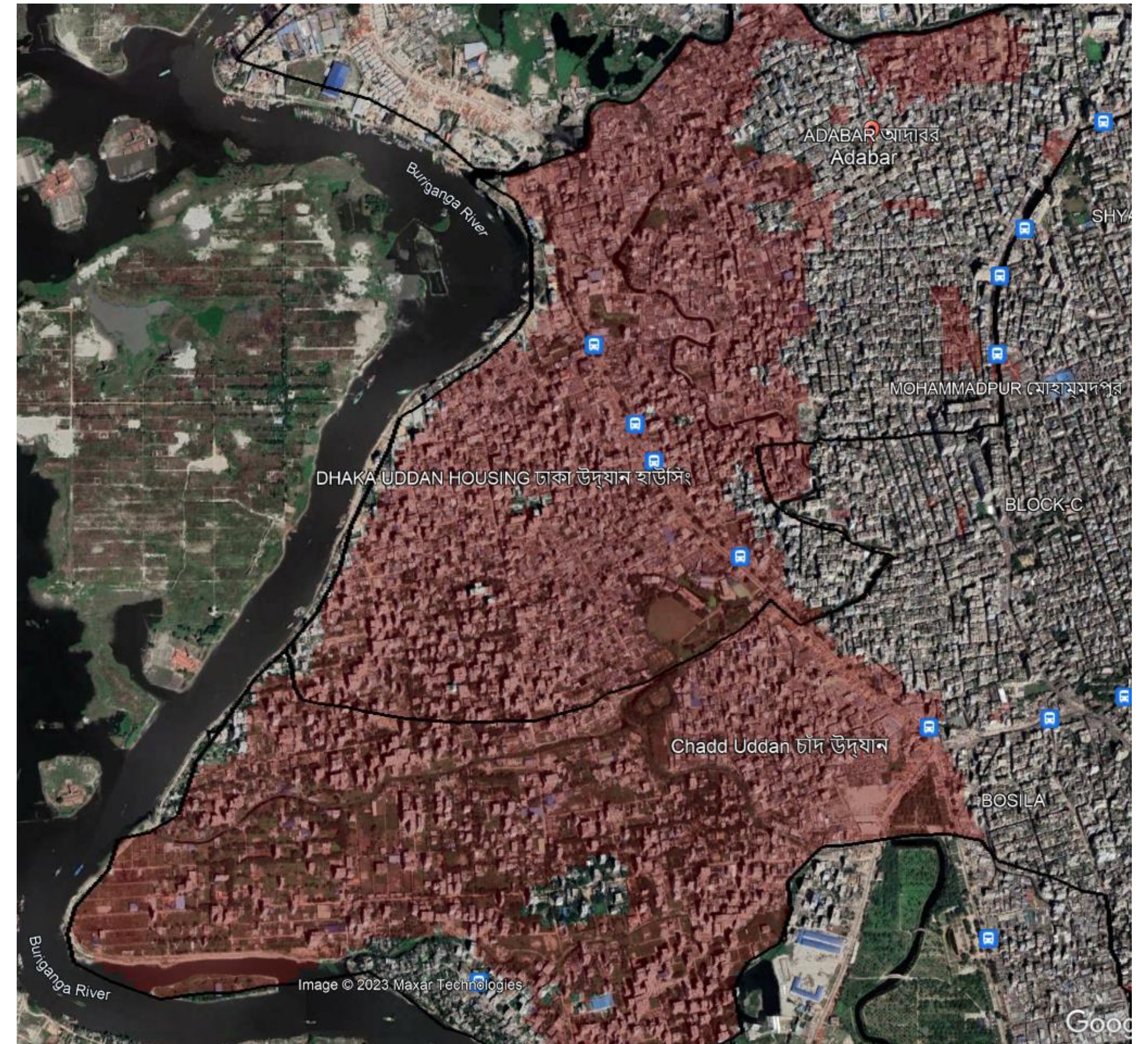


The making of an urban heat island

2001



2021



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Dhaka city – a ‘melting’ pot!



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- **Dhaka North** is home to more than 10 million people.
- Over **600,000 people live in informal settlements** within DNCC. This is a number that is rapidly increasing.
- Roughly 2,000 people migrate to Dhaka every day, looking for work. **84%** of these people are climate migrants with very little income.
- Climate migrants living in informal settlements or working in the informal sector are subject to the **‘harm-chain’** of climate change.

Hotter than ever before

- In 2023, temperatures in Dhaka hit **40.6C (105F)** – the highest in six decades. The heatwaves began in the middle of **Ramadan** in April and lasted through September.
- With widespread use of corrugated iron sheet roofing, temperatures in informal settlements can rise up to **12°C higher**.
- Road surface temperatures can reach up to **60°C**, a significant danger to informal street vendors and to anyone living or working on the streets.
- **Heat does not affect everyone equally...**

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Projected number of hot and extremely hot days in 2020 and 2050 in Dhaka

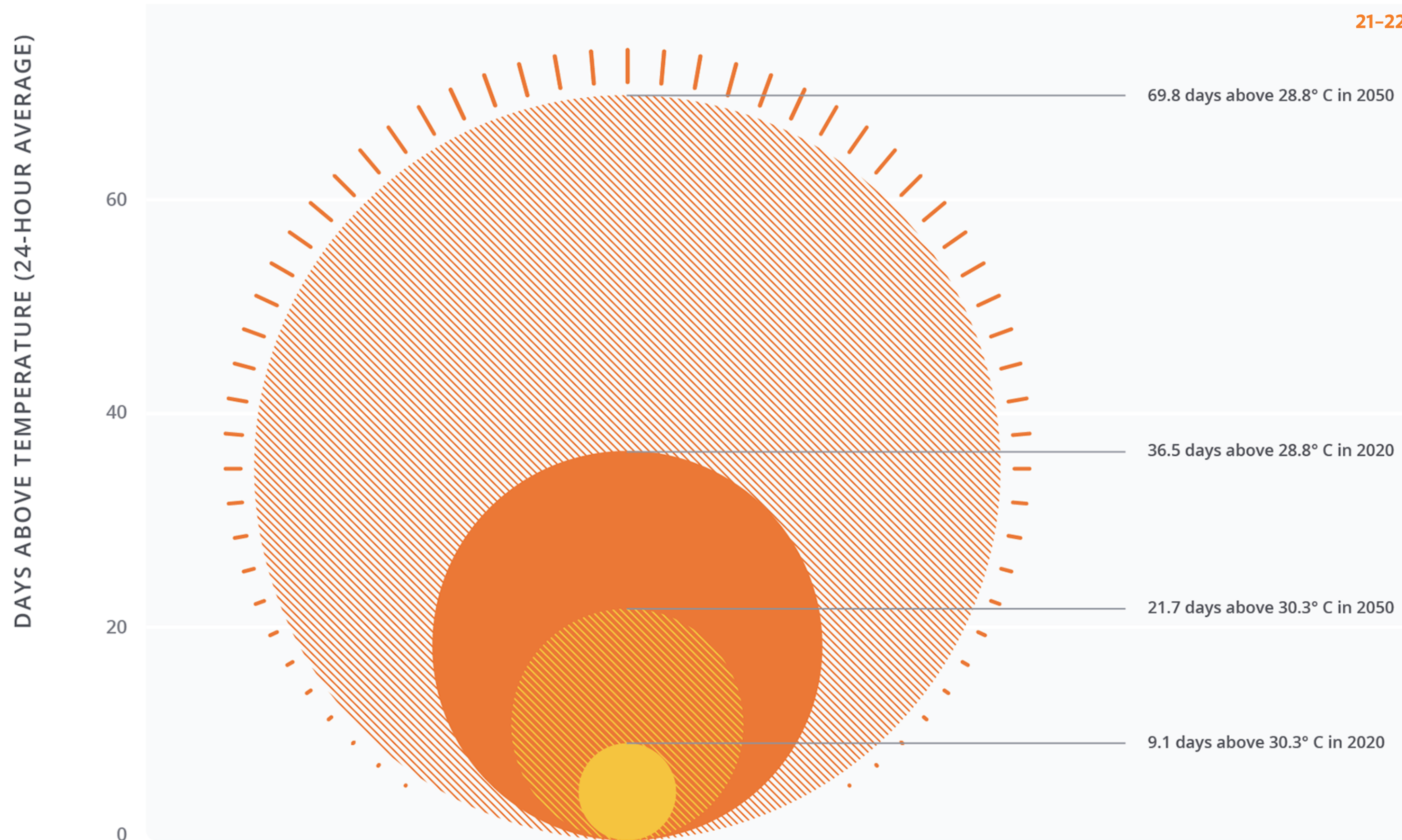
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- Women, children and elderly people are physiologically more vulnerable to heat stress. People with pre-existing health conditions are also at risk.
- People with prolonged heat exposure such as outdoor workers get little respite at night if there's limited access to cooling
- Women have a **higher core body temperature** than men as well as a higher surface area to mass ratio, which makes it harder to cool down.

A scorching gender divide: no respite from heat

- **Income:** Financially disadvantaged women are more vulnerable to economic losses when rising temperatures make it physically difficult—if not impossible—to work.
- **Culture:** Sociocultural norms across Bangladesh dictate that a woman's needs should be met *after* she resolves the needs of her family.
- **Health:** During heat waves, female slum-dwellers face severe health and well-being challenges, from dehydration and fainting to sleep loss and reproductive health issues, as well as an increase in gender-based violence.
- **Work:** Heat has a major impact on unpaid domestic labor - the burden of which falls disproportionately on women.

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Making participation possible

Working together on nature-based solutions

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Climate-vulnerable to agents of change

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- Tree canopy and other vegetation can lower surface and air temperatures by 1° to 5°C through shading and evapotranspiration.
- We are working with the Community Town Federation, a platform made up of 76,000 women living in informal settlements, to increase greenery within their communities – thereby improving tree and shade equity.
- Since August, 5,500 trees have been planted in informal settlements.

Addressing community priorities from the perspective of heat vulnerability

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- Heat can exacerbate and amplify existing problems for women living in informal settlements:
 - Open landfills are toxic hotspots for women and children.
 - Restricted or limited access to roads and transportation increase heat vulnerability for women and children trying to reach schools, healthcare facilities, etc.
- It is essential to **listen and communicate** with community members to understand their most urgent needs and act quickly.

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Thank you.





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Thank you.