Policy Brief 2:
Post-2015 Development Agenda

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
Challenges of Inclusive Social and Economic Development in Bangladesh

Key Points

⇒ SDGs were adopted to facilitate actions at different levels for people, planet and prosperity of humanity

⇒ It seeks to transform the society towards an economically growing, social responsive and just as well as environmentally sound world

⇒ Bangladesh has adopted SDGs to promote inclusive social and economic development, environmental sustainability, ensure equity and human right

⇒ The civil society can play a key role in implementing SDGs and giving critical input for monitoring and evaluation; developing institutional mechanism and promoting good governance.

The United Nations undertook the ambitious goal to end poverty, hunger and inequality worldwide at the 70th General Assembly in September 2015 at its Head Quarter in the USA. About 200 countries, the members of the UN, agreed the sustainable development Goals (SDGs) at the General Assembly for the Post-2015 Development Agenda for the next 15 years. The 2030 global agenda for sustainable development is a plan of action for the people, planet and prosperity of the humanity. It seeks to transform the world towards an economically growing, socially just and environmentally sound new heights which are mutually inter-related and re-enforcing each other. The global leadership has recognized that eradicating poverty in all its forms

and dimensions including extreme poverty and hunger is the greatest global challenge and urgent requirement for sustainable development. The UN took the pledge that no one will be left behind. Built on the MDGs, 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets were adopted in the SDGs. At the 70th anniversary of the UN, the Heads of the State and UN high officials have adopted the decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people centered set of universal and transformative goals and targets. The 2030 development agenda was accepted by all countries and they are committed to implement the SDGs taking into account the different national realities, capabilities and level of development.

Box 1: SDGs adopted in Bangladesh

Goal 1:   Secure economic growth that is inclusive, reduces poverty and inequality, creates sufficient numbers of decent jobs and is environmentally sustainable;

Goal 2:   Ensure sustainable food security and good nutrition;

Goal 3:   Reduce social inequality, particularly among marginalized groups and improve living conditions;

Goal 4:   Achieve equality between women and men;

Goal 5:   Ensure health for all;

Goal 6:   Provide high quality basic education;

Goal 7:   Reduce social risks and vulnerabilities;

Goal 8:   Ensure inclusive environment and natural resources management that promotes sustainable eco-systems, development and green growth, livelihoods and health;

Goal 9:   Reduce risk and build resilience to disasters and climate change with a focus on adaptation;

Goal 10: Improve diversity of, and access to, clean and more efficient sources of energy;

Goal 11: Improve accountability of public institutions for equitable public service provision for all communities;

Goal 12: Ensure equal participation and effective representation of marginalized groups, thereby strengthening inclusive democratic governance;

Goal 13: Strengthen rule of law, access to justice and promotion and protection of human rights

There has been growing recognition that climate change is very crucial development challenge and one of the important issues that undermine sustainable development and poverty eradication. Hence, SDGs have rightly included goal-13 for taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. It is a good achievement of the civil society demand and global negotiation that climate change is put in the heart of SDGs framework, but global and national processes have to ensure new and additional finance for

implementation of both SDGs and climate action. The international and national actors, stakeholders and institution must work in close coordination to reach successful outcomes of UNFCCC and UN-SDGs for a more peaceful, prosperous and climate risk free world.

Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh addressed the 70th UN General Assembly and reassured that her government would be working with the United Nations in advancing peace, prosperity, security, human right and inclusive social development in the country and in the region to achieve the shared dreams and aspirations of all humanity. She has also emphasized that climate change poses formidable development challenges. We would not be able to sustain our development endeavors if climate change cannot be effectively death with. The new development agenda makes it clear that all our actions need to be underpinned by our strong commitment to protect and preserve our planet, our biodiversity and our climate. We have only a small windows of opportunity, and succeed to set the world on safer, greener and more prosperous path.

Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh is addressing the 70th UN General Assembly in New York   Source: UN Webpage

Bangladesh Government has formulated 13 SDGs for the country to ensure economic growth with equity that is inclusive, reduce poverty and inequity,

ensure food security and nutrition for all, gender equity, disaster risk reduction and building resilience to climate change, ensure better health and basic education as well as to ensure environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management. The challenges to achieve the SDGs are mobilizing the required resources, prioritizing interventions areas and channelizing the resources, and making the development process and outcomes socially inclusive and resilient to climate change. The anticipated resource requirement for attaining all the SDGs in Bangladesh is a call for generous support from development partners.

There is huge scope for the civil society to work with the government in giving critical insights into all these defined goals and transform them into actions. They can also assist the government in developing institutional mechanisms and governance process through critical monitoring. Bangladesh civil society considers that the development agenda should aim to guarantee an inclusive society, founded on rights and equal access to the resources, individual capabilities, and a decent and sustainable living environment, while making faster economic development and industrialization a positive force for the society. Bangladesh civil society strongly feels, that the SDGs of the post-2015 agenda should promote sustainable economic growth, while taking account of the specific challenges of Bangladesh and not harming the environment and society.

Equity, Sustainability and Human Rights

In Bangladesh, poverty reduction, access to quality education, health, water and sanitation and equality between women and men are still high in the agenda along with other issues. This can be done by building a framework that is based on the three fundamental principles of equity, sustainability and human rights for all, and by orienting key goals along with highly interdependent dimensions of inclusive economic and social development, environmental sustainability, and inclusive governance. Such approaches need to give the highest priority to address the situation of women, youth, children, and older people, while also reaching those groups marginalized by ethnicity, religion or other social classifications. They also need to seek the greatest potential for progress by removing social, cultural, legal, administrative and financial barriers in these groups' access to services, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, and land and other productive resources.

A macroeconomic approach is required which is aligned with broader development policies giving rise to adequate generation of productive employment and

decent work, including development of a labour-intensive manufacturing sector; poverty reduction; welfare protection; and green growth. In environmental sustainability, immediate priorities include ensuring a more stable climate, improving scientific understanding and knowledge sharing on Disaster Risk Reduction, preventing land degradation, protecting the natural resource base, and transitioning to low-carbon energy sources while promoting energy-efficient technologies. Lastly, inclusive governance is needed to focus on enabling policies in critical governance areas, including effective governance systems for social development and quality service delivery that is affordable to even the poorest groups.

Figure 1: Key Principles of the SDGs

Inclusive Social and Economic Development in Bangladesh

Securing sustained growth has a direct relationship with poverty reduction and hunger elimination. The majority of the population, and especially, the poor and women, need to have access to work and productive assets such as education and health. It is also important to consider the inter-generational equity, and hence, the sustainability of economic growth. The process of lasting structural change, from a predominantly agricultural economy to an emergent industrial one, is well underway. As the country already reaches lower middle-income status, the fundamental economic forces in this transition involves will reshape the pattern of production geographically and in different sectors. Inevitably, this too will affect the distribution of income and human development outcomes, while placing huge strains on the environment.

Aligning and integration of all the major planned or potential infrastructure projects would facilitate the distribution of development benefits to the people of different regions. For example, enhanced capacity and efficient ICT based court and case management system can save huge working hours which can be utilized for other productive purposes.

Environmental Sustainability and Good Governance

The environmental sustainability in the Post 2015 era has been envisioned through better environmental protection, NRM, disaster risk management, building climate resilience and ensure energy for all.

Economic growth alone is not delivering the expected development outcomes, as many countries, including Bangladesh, aspire to graduate into higher middle-income status. Without effective responses, growing inequality results in prosperity, benefiting the few rather than the majority.

Inclusive governance is essential to ensure effective policy development in areas vital for underpinning sustainable development, such as addressing climate change and environmental degradation, or managing population size. Inclusive governance is also critical for the development of innovative social policy responses, including sound health, nutrition and educational provision, and effective social protection. It also means that governance institutions and policies are accessible and accountable to marginalized groups, providing equal access to public services. In all, inclusive governance occurs when the rule of law is followed, access to justice is afforded, and discrimination is addressed.

Institutional mechanisms to Monitor Performance and outcomes

It is essential to track the progress of the post-2015 goals in a reliable, timely and comparable manner. Advancements in the measurement of inequalities include the Multidimensional Poverty Indices, which show deprivations that a household or a child experiences simultaneously, highlighting the depth of marginalization among the poorest populations.

To achieve the post-2015 goals, at global, regional and national and sub-national levels, assigning differentiated responsibilities including the civil society and the private sector is needed.

Recommendations:

- Attainment of SDGs will require a strong and effective institutional mechanism involving all stakeholders including public representatives (central and local), government (executive and bureaucracy), private sector, civil society, knowledge community (academic and nonacademic), and development partners.

- Institutional mechanism for implementation SDGs related development programs need to be in place with clear mandates of its activities and auditing systems.

- Bangladesh government needs to decide who should lead the process in SDGs. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister's Office an inter-ministerial body may be formed for regular national level review of achievement against planned targets.

- The national budgetary process needs to be informed by the SDGs and resources allocation need to be made judiciously across different sectors.

- Adoption of a common conceptual framework in line with international standards, integration of environment statistics within the national statistical system requires a systems-wide approach to align the statistical production process for different sectoral statistics, and reconcile institutional arrangements for the production of an integrated information sets.

Reference

1. United Nations (2015) Transforming the World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New York.

2. UNDP (2013): The post-2015 development agenda for Bangladesh, Dhaka.