

# Executive Summary of the Review Report on **Goal 10: Reduced Inequality**

## **Anchor**

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## **Associate Organisations**

Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF)	Dhrubatarra Youth Development Foundation (DYDF)
Avijan	Indigenous Peoples Development Society (IPDS)
Bandhu Social Welfare Society	JAAGO Foundation
Bangladesh Mahila Parishad	Nagorik Uddyog
CARE Bangladesh	Naripokkho
Dhaka Ahsania Mission	Steps Towards Development (Steps)



## Introduction

The following summary captures the contributions of the non-government organisations (NGOs) in Bangladesh towards achieving the Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 10 calls for reducing inequality within and among countries by reducing income inequality (10.1), promoting social, political and economic inclusion (10.2), addressing discrimination and inequalities of opportunity and outcomes, and ensuring equal opportunities and ending discrimination (10.3). SDG 10 requires adopting fiscal and social policies that promote equality (10.4), calls for improved regulation of global financial markets and institutions (10.5), enhanced representation for developing countries in financial institutions (10.6), and pursuance of responsible and well-managed migration policies (10.7). As means of implementation, SDG 10 urges upon developed countries to offer special and differential treatment for developing countries (10.A), and to encourage development assistance and investment in the least developed countries (LDCs) (10.B), and asks that steps be taken to reduce transaction costs for migrant remittances (10.C). The underlying aspiration is to attain SDG 10 by *leaving no one behind*.

This report has been prepared by the Goal Group for SDG 10, composed of Platform members working in various areas associated with the Goal 10. The summary report sets out the background of the report, captures the contribution of Bangladesh's NGOs in attaining Goal 10, highlights the lessons learnt in this connection, and offers recommendations to address the attendant challenges in attaining the targets of Goal 10 by 2030.

## Background

Removing social and economic inequality through equitable wealth distribution among citizens, and ensuring equal opportunity and participation of all, including women, in all spheres of national life, is a constitutional obligation of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB).<sup>1</sup> SDG 10 is of heightened relevance and importance to Bangladesh in the current context, particularly in view of the rising income and wealth inequality within Bangladesh and the slow progress in reducing divergence among areas, countries, globally. Along with poverty alleviation, addressing issues of rising inequalities has emerged as a key policy concern in Bangladesh. The government had articulated its objective to reduce income inequality, as estimated by Gini coefficient, at 0.45 or below during the Seventh Five Year Plan (7FYP) period (2016-2020).<sup>2</sup> Between 2010-2016 period, in spite of the rise in average income and significant fall in number of people below the poverty and hardcore poverty line, one observes growing disparity between rich and poor in Bangladesh, both in urban and rural areas.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, income inequality in Bangladesh has posted a rise from 0.45 to 0.48

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<sup>1</sup>[http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print\\_sections.php?id=367&vol=&sections\\_id=24567](http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections.php?id=367&vol=&sections_id=24567) [Accessed: 17 March 2019].

<sup>2</sup>[http://plancomm.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/plancomm.portal.gov.bd/files/aee61c03\\_3c11\\_4e89\\_9f30\\_d79639595c67/7th\\_FYP\\_18\\_02\\_2016.pdf](http://plancomm.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/plancomm.portal.gov.bd/files/aee61c03_3c11_4e89_9f30_d79639595c67/7th_FYP_18_02_2016.pdf) [Accessed: 17 March 2019].

<sup>3</sup><https://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/IRBD-FY2018-First-Reading-Presentation-final-13012017.pdf> [Accessed: 17 March 2019].

between 2010 and 2016.<sup>4</sup> The growing disparity in income levels between the top 5 per cent and bottom 5 per cent is a disquieting trend, which is manifested in the rise of the multiple of relative income share from 32 to 121 times between 2010 and 2016.<sup>5</sup> This scenario also got reflected in a report of the Development Finance International (DFI) and Oxfam<sup>6</sup>, which placed Bangladesh in the rank of 148th among 157 countries in the Global Index 2018 on Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI). Yet another emerging concern is the wealth inequality situation in Bangladesh with the Gini coefficient standing at about 0.74.<sup>7</sup> No doubt, given the emergent scenario, Goal 10 demands special attention in the Bangladesh context.

## **NGO Interventions and Contributions**

Bangladesh's NGOs are engaged in wide-ranging activities in the areas of reducing inequality, increasing access to various resources and services, mitigating vulnerabilities and enhancing capacities of the most marginalised sections of the society. These activities involve direct interventions, advocacy, research and policy influencing, through which non-state actors and NGOs are addressing many of the issues that are relevant to attaining SDG 10. Since NGOs in Bangladesh have a comparative advantage in reaching the marginalised groups, their contribution to attaining the SDG aspiration of 'leave no one behind' demands special mention.

As regards Target 10.1, NGOs are making important contributions by implementing various programmes that aim at raising the quality of human development and reducing the access gap for the poor. Platform Partner NGOs have, in their portfolio, several capacity development programmes including imparting vocational training towards better income opportunities and interventions towards improved livelihood. The target groups here are mostly the marginalised communities. The NGOs are also engaged in promoting the cause of social inclusion geared towards reducing income inequality and the creation of asset base.

Among the different targets of SDG 10, NGOs in Bangladesh are proactively engaged in the context of Target 10.2. A large number of NGOs are involved in a host of activities that aim at empowering people and promoting social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity and origin, religious, economic or other status. Many NGOs have specific programmes for the disadvantaged groups, such as adivasis, dalits, fisher-folks, transgender people, MSMs (men who have sex with men) and HIV patients. They go into hard-to-reach areas to work with hard-to-reach communities. NGOs also have specific

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<sup>4</sup>[http://www.bd.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/docs/Publications/Pub-2019/SDGs-Bangladesh\\_Progress\\_Report%202018%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.bd.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/docs/Publications/Pub-2019/SDGs-Bangladesh_Progress_Report%202018%20(1).pdf) [Accessed: 17 March 2019].

<sup>5</sup><https://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/IRBD-Paper-State-of-Bangladesh-Economy-and-Upcoming-National-Elections.pdf> [Accessed: 18 April 2019].

<sup>6</sup><https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620553/rr-commitment-reducing-inequality-index-2018-091018-en.pdf> [Accessed: 4 April 2019].

<sup>7</sup><https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/economics/why-bangladeshs-inequality-likely-rise-1575079> [Accessed: 8 April 2019].

programmes for persons with disabilities; some carry out advocacy programmes to promote disability-friendly education, production practices and transportation, communication. Majority of NGOs have women empowerment programmes to help vulnerable and excluded women, imparting knowledge and skills with a view to enhancing income and employment opportunities.

As regards Target 10.3, NGOs in Bangladesh have been actively advocating for equal opportunities for all, and the elimination of all discriminatory laws. For example, they have been pressing for enactment of Anti-Discrimination Act, which at present is with the Ministry of Law, waiting to be tabled as a Bill.

In connection with Target 10.4, a number of advocacy NGOs in Bangladesh have been promoting the cause of fiscal justice and progressive fiscal policies, and for better and universal social protection. Non-state actors such as civil society think tanks have been forcefully arguing in favour of distributive justice and social protection through evidence-based research.

As regards Targets 10.5 and 10.6, a number of NGOs and other non-state actors such as think tanks have been actively engaged in various global fora, demanding greater voice and representation of the countries from the South in various global rules-setting institutions that deal with trade, finance, technology transfer, etc. Some think tanks are strongly arguing for more effective contribution by developed countries in making the three means of implementation work for attainment of the SDG 10. A few NGOs are working in areas that concern SDG 10.7 that fosters facilitation of safe migration. They are advocating for responsible migration and reduction of migration costs.

### **Learnings**

When NGOs and other non-state actors work in tandem and collaborate, the likelihood of success in Goal 10 areas is found to increase manifold. Concerted campaigns by NGOs, civil society, media and social support groups can play a catalytic role in protecting the rights of various marginalised communities. The organs of government are then compelled to take note and act. Many examples can be cited in this connection.

Education, health and livelihood supports, such as skills training, asset transfers and creation of income opportunities are critical to raising the level of income of the vulnerable communities and enhancing their risk-mitigating capacities. This contributes to reducing the income gap. Social safety net programmes can reduce vulnerabilities; however, for sustainable improvement of income levels and reduction of income inequality, more investment is needed in these areas. Effective GO-NGO (government and non-government organisational) collaborations can generate important synergies in this context. It is also seen that, such interventions are more successful, when those are well-coordinated and well-sequenced.

## Challenges

There is a dearth of community-specific and disaggregated data on dalit, harijan, transgender, bede and other marginalised groups. This undermines the cause of designing concrete programmes to address exclusion and reduce inequality. Effective GO-NGO collaboration could help attain SDG 10 in many areas, and can produce faster results. However, it needs to be noted that, the efficient service delivery capacity of the NGOs are not fully made use of by the government. A change in mindset is needed in this respect. Inclusion of indigenous peoples from the decision-making process is a formidable challenge, but remains important in addressing inequality. The state of overall representation and governance is important in this context. Job creation and enhancing labour productivity are domains where the government will need to play a more proactive role. Expansion of microcredit and loans for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), effective women empowerment initiatives, and programmes for environment-affected and displaced people are important areas of emerging challenges, where NGOs will need to be involved more in the future.

## Recommendations

More effective coordination and better sequencing of activities will be needed as regards various NGO activities and interventions towards attaining SDG 10 targets. In this context, strengthened local government institutions could play an important role in coordinating various activities at local levels—aimed at addressing the issues of inequality. Education, skills, credit support and job creation activities have strong interlinkages, and can produce better results, if these are better coordinated.

NGOs should make more effective use of social media to build a strong case in support of attaining Goal 10. Issues of rising inequality must be at the centre of this advocacy to mobilise social opinions, create social pressure and compel policymakers to act fast.

Non-state actors should join hands to pursue the cause of democratisation of global institutions. The government must finalise the draft Anti-Discrimination Act, to ensure that legal measures are in place for addressing inequality. Also, full implementation of the government's action plan, based on the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), needs to be fast-tracked to make growth more inclusive for the poor and the vulnerable.

The government must pursue fiscal policies that help reduce inequality and lead to better distributive justice. The government should take advantage of the role of non-state actors to strengthen its efforts towards attaining Goal 10. Government can facilitate participation of the civil society organisations (CSOs) (NGOs), by creating a platform for consultation prior to preparing budget and getting feedback after the finalisation of the budget, to better reflect the demands of the citizen as regards disparity and inequality. Non-state actors should be engaged in monitoring, reporting and holding relevant government agencies

accountable for SDG implementation, so that the issues of disparity and inequality are properly addressed by concerned authorities.

The government should take urgent steps to establish a database that capture essential information as regards all marginalised communities. A separate table showing annual allocation in the national budget under the 'leave no one behind' theme of the SDGs, should also be included. The government should also accelerate the implementation of programmes that promote job creation, enhance labour productivity and raise income. The government should put in place microcredit programmes and loans to SMEs, particularly for women entrepreneurs.

### **Conclusion**

The growing inequality in terms of income, wealth, access to resources and justice afflicting the disadvantaged and marginalised population pose a serious threat to the attainment of SDG targets, not only with respect to SDG 10, but the Agenda 2030 itself. The SDG 10 is a cross-cutting area—failure here will undermine the cause of achievement in other SDG areas. While the political commitment of the government to reduce inequality is laudable, implementation of various government programmes through transparent and accountable governance is also of equal importance. Creating an enabling environment to exercise constitutional rights to have all voices heard could play a conducive role in reducing inequality and emerging as a more inclusive society. On its part, NGOs will also need to raise the efficacy of their interventions in support of the marginalised groups through better coordination and sequencing of their activities. Women's empowerment and enactment and enforcement of laws to safeguard women's interests must be seen as a precondition to attain the SDG 10 in Bangladesh.

