

Executive Summary of the Review Report on

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Anchor

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)

Co-Anchors

Brotee Samaj Kallyan Sangstha

Nagorik Uddyog

Associate Organisations

Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF)

ActionAid Bangladesh

Bandhu Social Welfare Society

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)

British Council

HEKS/EPER

JAAGO Foundation

Naripokkho

World Vision Bangladesh

Introduction

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has adopted a multi-pronged approach for achieving the globally-adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and necessary exercises have been conducted, that include mapping of relevant bodies and gaps in data, preparing monitoring mechanisms and tracking tools, and needs assessment of funds and possible sources. For achieving the Goal 16, the government has adopted an approach of promoting integrity and good governance among the public administration. However, the government is yet to develop a specific strategy and plan of action for achieving Goal 16.

This paper makes an attempt to assess the progress of Goal 16 in Bangladesh, capture the lessons learnt, and assess the way forward for more effective delivery of the SDG—identifying the concrete steps the government should take, and the partners need to pursue. This paper is based on secondary data collected from reliable sources, existing publications of civil society organisations (CSOs), and documentation of different sectoral reports of Bangladesh Government.

From the review of the progress, it is observed that despite different initiatives, the government planning lacks adequate emphasis on SDG 16, as there is significant gaps in the baseline data. Official information in light of target indicators are not available, particularly for, corruption and bribery (Target 16.5), public satisfaction on public services and institutions (Target 16.7), and extrajudicial killings (Target 16.10); while partial information are available on some issues, such as violence and related death rates (Target 16.1), and abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence against and torture of children (Target 16.2). Among the 23 indicators of the 12 targets under this Goal, government data is available only on eight indicators of six targets.

Despite adequate preparedness in terms of having laws, policies and institutional arrangements required for implementing the targets under Goal 16, there are some gaps in implementation of the laws. In spite of various initiatives undertaken by the government, corruption and bribery, money laundering, violation of fundamental freedoms and human rights are continuing in Bangladesh. The National Integrity System (NIS) institutions are not effective up to the expected level. There is no framework to hold them accountable to the people in most of the institutions, and internal accountability system of these institutions are also weak. There have been an increasing trend of politicisation, thus leading towards the erosion of effectiveness of key institutions of accountability. Proactive disclosure of information of some institutions are not sufficient. According to the SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017, Bangladesh fall under the *red category* in achieving the Goal 16, scoring 54 out of 100.

CSO Contributions

CSOs have been engaged, along with the government functionaries, in implementing different programmes for achieving different targets of the Goal 16. These CSOs are providing support to the government through advocating for institutional, policy and legal reforms, intended for NIS institutions, such as different constitutional and statutory bodies and different public institutions. Different policy reforms have been carried out for sectors, such as gold import, education, health, NIS institutions, anti-corruption and climate finance. Legal reforms on issues such as anti-corruption, rights to information, anti-discrimination, and acid-related laws have been advocated. Reforms in private sector, such as in the readymade garments (RMG), has also been promoted through CSO activities.

Information dissemination through research and advocacy campaign on different issues covered under Goal 16 is another contribution from CSOs. They are also engaged in raising awareness through social mobilisation, engagement and advocacy at community level on governance and anti-corruption. Legal support has been provided for ensuring access to justice, especially for the poor, women victims of acid/domestic violence, marginalised, ethnic/adibashi, dalit communities. Capacity building activities are being operated for community people, especially the youth, on different issues including rights to information, legal and human rights, labour rights, social accountability tools, among others. Some of the CSOs are promoting community participation in monitoring and decision-making of public representatives, public service delivery organisations (health, education, land, etc.) through formation of committees/groups at the grassroots.

Challenges

Some of the challenges of the CSOs include reluctance from the government to work with CSOs on some issues under Goal 16, particularly that are sensitive in nature, such as corruption and governance. There is a dearth of official data. Government's reluctance in corruption data generated by CSOs is also another challenge. Sometimes partisan political influence jeopardises partnership activities between the government and CSOs.

Way Forward

Legal reforms recommended by CSOs with regard to limitations existing in different laws pertaining to ensuring human rights, protection of freedom of speech and expression, rights to information, right to life and livelihood, and strengthening NIS institutions should be sincerely considered by the government. The institutional and financial capacity of NIS institutions should be increased for better performance. The government should conduct a nationwide survey to determine the baseline on the state of corruption and bribery, people's satisfaction and trust on NIS institutions.

The participation of youth volunteers and social workers should be increased from both the government and CSOs. Their capacity should be strengthened to promote good governance, transparency and accountability of different institutions, to act as a driving force against corruption, human rights violation, violence against women and children, and to promote peace and justice in the social sphere.

Coordination among different public and civil society organisations should be increased to give special attention to gender-based violence. Legal aid and service-providers, including state and non-state actors who are working across the country, should work together to create a central database which identifies and measures the reach and operations of legal aid and services.

To ensure sustainable development of dalits and adibashis, who are lagging behind for various reasons, institutional mechanisms, such as a separate ministry (like the Chittagong Hill Tracts) and/or a commission is needed.

