

# Executive Summary of the Review Report on **Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals**

## **Anchor**

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BRAC

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## Introduction

The Goal 17 of Agenda 2030 that promises to ‘*strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development*’ is one of the key goals which have been included for every single voluntary national reviews for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) till date. As a cross-cutting goal, it directs about resources and partnerships in three core areas (i.e. economy, society and biosphere), and has diverse set of targets and indicators under five different areas including finance, technology, trade, capacity building and systemic issues. The present study highlights the activities of the non-state actors of Bangladesh, i.e. civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector, in implementing the SDG 17, with a view to identify their specific engagements towards achieving different targets of the goal.

## Bangladesh's Priority Targets under SDG 17 and their Performance in the Post-2015 Period

A sample survey has been carried out to identify the priority targets under Goal 17 for Bangladesh. Out of 19 different targets, five most prioritised targets for Bangladesh are related to finance (17.1 and 17.3), technology (17.6) and systemic issues (17.17 and 17.18). In fact, domestic resource mobilisation and alternate source of financing, including foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow, remittance and debt management—have been identified as the top priority targets in achieving the Goal 17. Similarly, support for technological development and CSOs have turned out as priority issues for Bangladesh. Interestingly, no target from the areas of trade and capacity building have been identified as most-priority targets. This was perhaps because of changes in Bangladesh's needs over the years, owing to achieving double graduation in economic and social development in recent years. Among the priority indicators, Bangladesh's performance during the post-2015 period (data available for 2016 and 2017 only) is not very impressive; this includes weak state of domestic resource mobilisation under Target 17.1 (e.g. tax-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio), slow rise in alternate resource flows under Target 17.3 (e.g. FDI-GDP ratio), and decelerating trend in flow of fund for CSOs under Target 17.17. On the other hand, the performance in some indicators are on track, such as fixed broadband subscription under Target 17.6, and remittance-export ratio under Target 17.3.

## Role of CSOs in Implementing the SDG 17

The engagement of the CSOs in case of implementing different targets is largely in the form of policy activism, policy awareness and capacity building. Since the CSOs were involved in related issues even in earlier decades, it is important to review their role from intertemporal point of view—pre-2015 and post-2015, to appreciate the incremental changes in their participation in the SDG process. CSOs at the national level had been involved in areas of trade, tax and aid-related issues, following the global trend. In recent times, their engagements have been widened and deepened. On the other hand, a new set of CSOs have emerged who work on various non-traditional areas, such as technology and communication, partly in partnership with different private sector organisations. Newer forms of engagement of the CSOs have been found in addressing tax-related

irregularities, such as restrictive tax treaties and its consequences on revenue losses. National CSOs have been building partnership with global organisations, such as the Global Alliance for Tax Justice (GATJ), on various issues. CSOs have been involved in capacity-building activities through organising training workshops with a view to build a broader constituency, while enhancing capacity and strengthening networks and advocacy through raising voices on development effectiveness issues. Some of the CSOs have been working on issues related to tax, trade governance, climate finance, knowledge generation and research, capacity building of CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) on the issues and challenges pertaining to the SDGs and national Five Year Plans (NFYPs). Under different platforms, large number of CSOs and CBOs have been involved in dissemination, capacity building and GO-NGO (government-non-government organisational) collaborative activities. The engagement of the CSOs has been widened in case of promoting technological advancements and other non-traditional issues related to trade, such as promoting living wage for workers in the global value chains; fair price for the manufacturers of the exporting countries; engagement in global policy debates on Southern issues; negotiation and communications; working as community watchdog for climate finance of the government; enhancing participation of CBOs and CSOs in democratic governance in Bangladesh; strengthening their knowledge and leadership capacities at the grassroots level, in order to secure the social and economic rights of the vulnerable individuals and communities in designing and implementation of government policies and budgets related to SDGs; getting involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships to mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources; and developing programme-related database. In recent years, CSOs have been extensively working with youth population to address their concerns.

### **Role of Private Sector in Implementing the SDG 17**

Private sector has been recognised as a major player for implementing SDGs, which was absent earlier in case of Millennium Development Goal (MDG)-led initiatives. CPD has carried out a web-based data analysis of the engagement of the private sector at the global level, based on the information available in the website titled Sustainable Development Partnership Platform, which is a United Nations (UN)-led initiative. Key areas of their engagement at the global level include—activities for knowledge sharing on climate change, gender equality, community development, media services, livelihood development, e-schools, information and communication technology (ICT) capability development, training, improving organisational capacity, public-private partnerships, promotion of marketing products, green growth by reduced chemical use, and ideas for app development. Instead of engaging directly with the corporate entity, private sector has formed different entities, such as foundation, corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds and providing financial support to universities, research organisations, schools and banks to implement different activities. Such engagements are found in different forms between different organisations, such as foundation-university collaboration, foundation-CSO collaboration, university-foundation collaboration, and UN agencies-foundations-private companies' collaboration, etc.

In Bangladesh, the engagement of the private sector in addressing different concerns related to SDG 17 has been following by and large a ‘business as usual’ approach. According to the information of the business associations available in the websites, they have been working on various issues which are related to Goals 3, 5, 8, 9, 12, 14 and 17. However, very few of these could be identified as focused and targetted initiatives; and how much of those initiatives are purposefully built to address the targets of Goal 17, is not out of question either.

### Challenges and Way Forward

The study identified a number of issues and concerns, which are largely of four categories, including: a) framework-related; b) data-related; c) performance-related; and d) CSO and private sector engagements-related. Following areas need to be taken in due attention.

**National Framework does not specify the role of CSOs and private sector.** The institutional framework for SDG implementation refers CSOs and private sector ‘ornamentally’, and in some instances as ‘beneficiary’, in the SDG implementation process. It is expected, that role of CSOs and private sector will be duly recognised in the framework, by adding responsibility as ‘associate partners’.

**Gap between activities related to indicators and those of CSOs.** Given the nature of work of the private sector and CSOs, which are largely in the field and at the grassroots levels, creating direct link of their works with the Goal 17 indicators is rather difficult. A voluntary initiative at national and global levels needs to be undertaken with a view ensure proper recognition of their contribution. Such initiative should identify a set of proxy indicators to be called ‘associated indicators’, customised with the activities and initiatives of the CSOs and the private sector.

**Bangladesh could not come out from the ‘business as usual’ trend in implementing Goal 17.** There is no significant difference observed in the performance of top-priority targets in comparison to other targets of Goal 17 between pre-2015 and post-2015 periods. In other words, Bangladesh is still following a ‘business as usual’ approach in implementing the related targets under five areas of Goal 17—finance, technology, trade, capacity building and systemic issues. Private sector, as well as CSOs, have a strong role to play in key issues related to domestic resource mobilisation, FDI and technology.

**Engagement of CSOs has widened and partly shifted in the post-2015 period.** The engagement of CSOs which were concentrated on trade and aid-related activities during the pre-2015, has now been widened to various other areas, such as technology, capacity building, partnership building, etc. In this process, the nature of partnership has changed with more collaboration with the private sector, as well as at the cross-border levels. Given the huge fund requirement in implementing the SDGs, development partners should further enhance the flow of fund in Bangladesh. In view of the recent dynamics, an emerged aspect in this

regard should be the consideration that—Bangladesh’s CSOs need support for working exclusively for Bangladeshis; support for the Rohingyas by the development partners should be allocated and reported separately. At the national level, Bangladesh Government should form a ‘SDG Trust Fund’ in implementing SDGs by the CSOs.

***Bangladesh’s private sector is way behind compared to that of the engagements of the global private sector.*** Bangladesh’s private sector is yet to get prepared to set their strategies and activities in achieving SDGs, particularly for Goal 17. Globally, private sector is involved in diverse areas related to this goal through different entities and collaborative arrangements, whereas in Bangladesh, there are only few local initiatives found which actually target different SDG goals. This is particularly due to less awareness among the private sector about the SDGs, as well as limited presence of organised, formal businesses and corporate sector. Private sector could put emphasis on broader tax base, less tax burden on small and medium enterprises (SMEs); raising concern over rationale behind overconcentration of fiscal incentives to the readymade garments (RMG) sector, and demand for more balanced distribution of fiscal incentives between RMG and non-RMG sectors; strategic trade policy for sectoral development; enabling business environment for private investment including FDI; promoting bilateral free trade areas (FTAs) and other trade agreements with potential countries. Ensuring information technology (IT)-enable business environment, as well as promoting IT in businesses, needs to be catered by the private sector, as well as by the CSOs.