



Review Report on Goal 10: Reduced Inequality

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National Consultation on Towards HLPF 2019 Report on SDG Goal 10 - Reduced Inequality



By MJF and Associated Organisations

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List of Acronyms

ASF	Acid Survivors Foundation
BCC	Barishal City Corporation
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDERM	Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
BSWS	Bandhu Social Welfare Society
CCC	Chattogram City Corporation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRI	Commitment to Reducing Inequality
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
DACC	District Acid Control Committee
DFI	Development Finance International
DNCC	Dhaka North City Corporation
DAE	Department of Agriculture
DAM	Dhaka Ahsania Mission
DFED	DAM's Foundation for Economic Development
EPR	Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh
FYP	Five Year Plan
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	General Economic Division
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
IDPS	Indigenous Peoples Development Society
IDI	Inclusive Development Index
IES	Income Expenditure Survey
IGA	Income Generating Activities
LGD	Local Government Division
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MP	Bangladesh Mahila Parishad
MSM	Male Sex to Male
NGO	Non-Government Organisation

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NU	Nagorik Uddyog
NACC	National Acid Control Council
NGOAB	NGO Affairs Bureau
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PWD	Persons With Disabilities
SSN	Social Safety-Net
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Steps	Steps Towards Development
TMD	Tackling Marginalisation and Discrimination
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
VGf	Vulnerable Group Feeding

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Report on SDG Goal 10 - Reduced Inequality

I. Introduction

The following report highlights Bangladesh's progress towards achieving indicators of Goal-10 under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through efforts of 14 selected Non- Government Organisations (NGOs). These NGOs are complimenting the works of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) to encompass the universality of the 2030 Agenda 'no one will be left behind'. 'Leave No One Behind' – the central theme of SDGs- urges all governments in reducing inequality and ensuring the inclusion of all regardless of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Background

Of the 17 SDGs that covers 169 targets and 232 indicators, SDG-10 is the most broad-based in terms of pledging actions on income inequality; social, political and economic exclusion; discrimination; inequalities of opportunity and outcomes; key policy determinants of inequality (such as fiscal policy); and reform of global governance. As evident from all indicators of SDGs¹, SDG-10 includes seven substantive targets – four that address inequality within country and three that address inequality among countries; and three targets that focus on the means of implementation. SDG-10 has 10 targets and 11 indicators. Among 11 indicators, 8 are quantifiable and rest three are non-quantifiable.

According to the World Bank, there are 60 targets across the SDGs that are directly or indirectly linked to reducing inequality². Out of 14 international instruments governing various aspects of human rights, the Office of the UN High Commissioners of Human Rights found linkages of SDG 10 with nine such instruments.³

According to Article 19 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, removing social and economic inequality through equitable wealth distribution among citizens and ensuring equal opportunity and participation of women in all spheres of national life is a constitutional obligation of the GoB.⁴As inequality slows economic growth, undermines the fight against poverty and increases social tension, all governments since 1972 have made efforts to reduce various types of inequalities, with varying degree of successes.

In the 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) (2016-2020), the Government renewed its commitment to reversing the pattern of long-term increase in income inequality in Bangladesh through supportive

¹<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/>. Also see Annex 1

²<https://www.worldbank.org/en/events/2018/12/17/reducing-inequalities-progress-and-prospects#3>(accessed on 17 March 2019)

³https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Session5_OHCHR_SDG_HR_Table.pdf(accessed on 17 March 2019)

⁴http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/print_sections.php?id=367&vol=§ions_id=24567 (accessed on 17 March 2019)

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policies, institutions and programmes. Bangladesh has set target to reduce or maintain income inequality at 0.45 or below during the 7th FYP period.⁵

Unfortunately, the government has not been able to achieve this target. Citing data from the latest HIES (2016), the Government acknowledged in its SDGs Progress Report 2018 that income equality increased in the last six years with a value of 0.483 in 2016.⁶ During the 2010-16 period, income inequality in Bangladesh was on the rise at national, rural and urban levels, labelled as both ‘disquieting and overwhelming’ by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).⁷

This was also reflected in a recent global report⁸ of Development Finance International (DFI) and Oxfam that placed Bangladesh at 148 out of 157 countries in Global Index 2018 of Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI), underscoring the need for accelerated and coordinated actions to reduce income equality in the country. According to the World Bank, Bangladesh is one of the 34 countries whose income was slower than average among the poorest in between 2009 to 2014.⁹ On the contrary, Bangladesh topped the list of countries in 2018 that saw the quickest growth in the number of ultra-wealthy people that rose by 17.3 percent between 2012 and 2017.¹⁰

In the World Economic Forum's Inclusive Development Index's (IDI) 2018, Bangladesh ranked 34th among 74 emerging economies, beating India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in South Asia.¹¹ The IDI measures countries economic performance based on 11 dimensions, in addition to the GDP. It has three pillars; growth and development; inclusion and; intergenerational equity. On a scale of one to seven, Bangladesh scored 3.98 in the IDI, with one being the worst and seven the best.¹² The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) published the Leave No One behind Index 2018 where Bangladesh's overall score was defined as ‘partially ready’ in terms of data, policy and finance in the adoption policies for most at risk of being left behind due to insufficient resilience to disaster and climate change.¹³

Objective

The broad objective of the status report on SDG Goal-10 is to collate different initiatives and programmes of Civil Society Organisations / NGOs, in addressing the issues of inequality with achievements, challenges and lessons learnt. SDG Goal-10 entails seven substantive targets among which the rights-based CSOs are more focused on 10.2, 10.3 and 10.7.

⁵http://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 on 17 March 2019)

⁶ Page 109: [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 on 17 March 2019)

⁷ <https://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/IRBD-FY2018-First-Reading-Presentation-final-13012017.pdf>

⁸ <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620553/rr-commitment-reducing-inequality-index-2018-091018-en.pdf>

⁹ <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgatlas/SDG-10-reduced-inequalities.html> (accessed on 17 March 2019)

¹⁰ https://www.wealthx.com/report/world-ultra-wealth-report-2018/?utm_campaign=wuwr-2018&utm_source=pardotsocial&utm_medium=social&utm_term=wuwr-2018-organic-social (accessed on 14 April 2019)

¹¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Forum_IncGrwth_2018.pdf (accessed on 5th April 2018)

¹² <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/wef-development-index-bangladesh-ahead-most-its-neighbours-1524265> (accessed on 5th April 2019)

¹³ <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12304.pdf> (accessed on 5th April 2019)

Methodology

A Goal Group for preparing status report on SDG Goal-10 was formed consisting of an anchor organisation (Manusher Jonno Foundation- MJF), a co-anchor organisation (Oxfam) and 12 NGOs as associate organisations; Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), Avijan, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (MP), Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS), CARE Bangladesh, Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), JAAGO Foundation, Nagorik Uddyog (NU), Naripokkho, Steps Towards Development (Steps), Dhruvotara Youth Development Foundation (DYDF) and Indigenous Peoples Development Society (IPDS).

A consultation workshop was held to identify processes of extracting information on implementing SDG Goal-10 related initiatives and programmes, achievements including challenges, lesson learnt and advocacy initiatives. An agreed format for reporting by NGOs was developed which included Thematic Background, Relevant Indicators, Programme Engagement, Population Covered, Achievements, Learning, Challenges, Advocacy, Case Story, Policy Gap and Recommendation. The anchor organisation MJF consulted relevant secondary GoB, CSOs and UN documents relating to SDG Goal-10 to furnish the relevant information in the report.

Reports were received from NU, BSWS, DAM, MP, ASF, Avijan and IPDS. This paper combines the work of above organisations and MJF initiatives on SDG Goal-10.

Scope

The scope of this report encompasses NGO initiatives and programmes on SDG Goal-10 and their achievements, challenges and lesson learnt in the light of the population they are working with and the geographical areas covered.

II. Priorities of Bangladesh for SDG Goal-10

Background

The GoB along with other UN Member States formally adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – widely referred as Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development – to combat poverty in all its forms, inequality and reducing climate change adverse impact on 25 September 2015 at the 70th UN General Assembly.

SDG Goal-10 is focused on reducing inequality within and among countries with the spirit of ‘Leave No One Behind’. Reducing inequality targets are set to progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average and empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in economic growth in the last few decades; however, income inequality has gone up sharply. The latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) released by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2016 found that the income share of the poorest five percent of our population was 0.23% of overall income, a sharp fall from 2010 when it was 0.78%. In contrast, the richest 5 percent's share of income grew to 27.89%, up from

24.61% in 2010. This means that the bottom five percent's share of national income has decreased, whereas the richest five percent's has increased.¹⁴ In a similar estimate the poorest 10% of the household population received 1.01% of the total national income in 2016 which was 2% in 2010. In comparison, the richest 10% of the population owned 38.16% of the national income in 2016 which was 35.84% in 2010.¹⁵

While the BBS survey mainly sheds light on growing income inequality, wealth inequality is even worse. According to estimates by the CPD, wealth inequality in terms of Gini coefficient – an economic term to gauge income or wealth inequality on a scale of 0 to 1, in which 1 represents perfect inequality and 0 signifies perfect equality – stands at a staggering 0.74, whereas the Gini coefficient for income inequality is 0.48.¹⁶ It is said that when Gini coefficient is above 0.5 a country remains in the danger zone owing to risks of social unrest.

Addressing Inequality in Bangladesh

Currently about 40 million people in Bangladesh live under the poverty line in a country of 163 million people. Since independence, overall economic inequality has become pervasive. Rising inequality has emerged not only because of differences in what people inherited and received; but, more fundamentally, due to inequalities in accessing opportunities and sharing resources. This makes economic inequalities an issue that calls for insights into the functional dynamics of accessing economic and social opportunities and the political process that shapes and perpetuates unequal privileges and neglect of poor and disadvantaged groups. Along with poverty, rising inequalities has been considered as a major policy issue in Bangladesh, which is not merely about disparities of outcomes but disparities in opportunities in terms of age, sex, physical ability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic and other status.¹⁷

A major problem in Bangladesh is the low levels of public spending on human development. Public spending on education is a mere 2.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As compared to this, Argentina and South Africa each spend 6.0% of GDP on education, while Malaysia and Indonesia spend 5.8% and 4.6% of respective GDPs. Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Norway spend even higher (6.8% and 6.5% of GDP respectively). Public spending in Bangladesh on health is similarly low (only 1.1% of GDP). Additionally, various researches have shown that there are substantial issues with the quality and equity aspects of public spending on health and education.¹⁸

On the other hand spending on social protection by Bangladesh government is also low– only 2.2% of GDP – if civil service pensions are excluded, then it comes down to a mere 1.6% of GDP. Furthermore, there are serious concerns about the quality and effectiveness of this spending. In contrast, in European countries spending is remarkably high which substantially contributes to

¹⁴Why Bangladesh's inequality is likely to rise, The Daily Star, May 12, 2018

¹⁵Income inequality hinders inclusive growth, The Daily Star, Jul 26, 2018

¹⁶Why Bangladesh's inequality is likely to rise, The Daily Star, May 12, 2018

¹⁷Rising inequalities in Bangladesh, Mustafa K Mujeri, The Financial Express, Sep 18, 2018

¹⁸Addressing the Challenge of Income Inequality in Bangladesh, Sadiq Ahmed, 2014

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better income distribution. On average, they spend 12-19% of GDP on social protection, mainly in the form of income transfers to the poor and vulnerable families.¹⁹

The government has assigned General Economic Relations Division to lead on SDG 10.1 and progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average. GED is also the lead agency for 10.4 to adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

Local Government Division (LGD) is the lead agency for 10.2 to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic by 2030. Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment is the lead for SDG 10.7 to ensure the protection of migrant workers' human and labour rights.

The Government had estimated that from beginning of 2017, Bangladesh would require an additional total of BDT 196.4 billion or US\$ 1.97 billion till 2030 in each five-year planning cycle to address issues around SDG-10.

In regard to social protection the budget of 2018-2019 has allocated 1.6% of GDP excluding pension. According to CPD, the total allocation for pension accounts for 35% of total social protection budget and the per capita allocations for pension continues to dwarf per capita allocations for all other social protection programs.²⁰ From that allocated budget, if pension schemes is excluded and considered following budget item as allocation for marginalised at BDT 64,656-22,439= BDT 42,217 crore. However, there are other allocations for marginalised communities which are BDT 5,591 crore for reducing vulnerability and BDT 4,963 crore for housing. Therefore, the total amount for the marginalised communities thus comes to BDT 52,771 crore which is 11.35% of total budget.

In addressing growing inequality and disparity, GoB has made a number of commitments in implementing policies and programmes that have already been formulated after the adoption of SDGs in 2016. In this connection the Government has been following a pro-poor development strategy which combines promotion of economic growth and reduction of poverty and inequality. The policies aiming to reduce inequality include employment generation and enhancing labour productivity and wages; development of human capital i.e. education and training, health and nutrition, with greater access to poor, development of lagging regions, increased spending on social protection and improving its effectiveness; expansion of micro-credits and loans to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs); emphasis on agriculture and rural development,; undertaking tax reforms and focusing on progressive personal income taxation.

The Government also formulated a National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) in 2015 to address the triple problems of poverty, vulnerability and marginalization.²¹ Robust implementation of this strategy is expected to help lower income inequality and contribute to higher growth by strengthening human development. The government has also taken special programmes for many

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰<https://cpd.org.bd/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CPD-Presentation-on-Analysis-of-the-National-Budget-for-FY2018-19.pdf> (accessed on 18 March 2019)

²¹[http://www.lged.gov.bd/UploadedDocument/UnitPublication/1/323/20.%20National%20Social%20Security%20Strategy%20\(NSSS\).pdf](http://www.lged.gov.bd/UploadedDocument/UnitPublication/1/323/20.%20National%20Social%20Security%20Strategy%20(NSSS).pdf) (accessed on 4th April 2019)

marginalized communities. In the current fiscal 2018-19, the government significantly increased the volume and coverage of the social safety net. The allocation for this is 2.55% of GDP.²² The Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh has recently declared that the government would arrange allowances for all Persons With Disabilities (PWD) from the next budget.²³ To generate more job opportunities, the government has taken initiatives to support the country's private sector²⁴, which has shown spectacular successes in readymade garment sector in the past and now contributes 78% in Bangladesh's development works.²⁵

In absence of relevant national data and individual NGO's goal-specific monitoring mechanism, the measurement of inequality is difficult. It may be mentioned in this connection that according to the Government, Bangladesh has national data for 10.1.1 and 10.4.1 while metadata for 10.2.1 and 10.3.1 are yet to be finalised.²⁶ For example, target 10.1 requires specific data and efficient tool to measure the progress in reducing inequality by years.

However, other targets from 10.2 to 10.7 are more subjective and generating qualitative numbers against these targets is not difficult. For example, inclusion of marginalised and excluded communities, enactment of pro-equality laws and policies, strengthening structural monitoring system, enhancing voices of the poor, etc are possible to carry out and the development partners are supporting the NGOs for doing this.

III. Engagement of CSOs Both in Terms of Programme Delivery & Advocacy

No doubt the challenges facing the government in tackling increasing inequality have implications for poverty reduction and relative deprivation in Bangladesh. Partly it is a problem of the inability on the part of the government to bring all types of income under progressive taxation and partly a problem of not being able to optimally increase the share of government expenditure on education, health, rural development, and social protection in total government expenditure. More focused policies and programmes which have larger impact on reducing inequality have been identified. These include better governance and institutions to combat transfer of income and wealth through rent seeking behaviour, corruption in public procurement and spending, illegal land grabbing, and delivery of public services.²⁷

In this context, the civil society as third force can play a crucial role to ensure that the government is held accountable for its policies and actions towards reducing inequality from where it is now, in terms of Gini coefficient of 0.48 and other social indicators. Accountability should typically be based on three elements: responsibility, answerability and enforceability. Responsibility entails that those in positions of authority have clearly defined duties and performance standards, which enable a transparent and objective assessment of their behaviour. Answerability demands that public officials and institutions present logical and articulate justifications for their actions and

²²<https://www.dhakatribune.com/business/economy/2018/06/07/budget-fy19-social-safety-net-widens-with-additional-benefits-for-freedom-fighters> (accessed on 4th April 2019)

²³<https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/no-more-negligence-autistic-persons-pm-1723777> (accessed on 4th April 2019)

²⁴<https://www.daily-sun.com/post/363081/2019/01/10/FM-assures-private-sector-of-helping-in-job-creation> (accessed on 14 April 2019)

²⁵<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/development/2017/11/08/private-sector-development-bangladesh> (accessed on 14 April 2019)

²⁶[http://plancomm.gov.bd/upload/2018/Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of SDGS Book Proof.pdf](http://plancomm.gov.bd/upload/2018/Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation%20Framework%20of%20SDGs%20Book%20Proof.pdf)

²⁷Bangladesh SDGs Progress Report 2018

decisions to those affected, such as the general citizens, voters and other institutions. Enforceability requires public institutions to implement mechanisms that measure the degree to which government officials and institutions abide by established standards, and that enforce sanctions on officials who do not comply and, when needed, ensure that the proper corrective and remedial action is carried out. The three elements of accountability are not mutually exclusive, but interlinked. It is thus paramount that the roles and responsibilities of the government are clearly defined, particularly in terms of the answerability and enforceability dimensions of SDG Goal-10.²⁸

Target 10.1: For Target 10.1, the GoB adopted six strategies to progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average. Adoption of long-term income reduction is focused on reducing the initial gap of income equality. The NGOs participating in this review are not involved in these efforts of the government. NGOs are also not involved in the government's efforts in setting up special economic zones in the lagging region.

However, NGOs are contributing to government's efforts in the implementation of human development strategy with emphasis on alleviating access gap for the poor. The participating NGOs have undertaken several capacity development programmes including vocational trainings for facilitating livelihood activities for various categories of marginalised communities and youth. Local level micro entrepreneurship have shown great success in recent years and is changing economic status of many vulnerable and excluded men and women.

The NGOs are also engaged in indirectly supporting the government's efforts to augment social inclusion through various programmes but are not involved in the government's efforts to promote manufacturing activity of lagging districts.

Target 10.2: Complementing the government's efforts, CSOs are investing in 10.2 which urged state parties to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity and origin, religious or economic or other status. Among the different targets of SDG 10, CSOs and NGOs in Bangladesh are mostly active in 10.2. Many CSOs have specific programmes for marginalized people such as Dalits, fisher-folks, *Hijras*/ Third gender, MSMs, AIDS patients and for PWDs. Some gender-focused national network are such as MP, MJF, ASF, etc. have been lobbying with government for full ratification of Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and are actively involved in programmes and advocacy initiatives for gender equality and women's empowerment across all sphere.

Most of the NGOs have programmes to reducing gender equality for vulnerable and excluded women. These are access to education, knowledge and skills in generating income, for building self-confidence and higher status in the family and society. Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), accessing justice, creating mass awareness on gender equality and advocacy for laws the protect women are some of their focus also.

²⁸ Rising inequalities in Bangladesh, Mustafa K Mujeri, The Financial Express, Sep 18, 2018

Target 10.3: One of the key interventions for all NGOs is formulation, reformulation and implementation of laws and policies to ensure that the poor and excluded have access to government resources and services, reduction of violence and discrimination, assurance of decent work leading to improvement of living standard and livelihoods. Many NGOs have been pressing for the enactment of Anti-Discrimination Act which has been lying with the Law Ministry waiting to be tabled as a Bill. ²⁹

Target 10.4: Although NGOs have no specific programmes for 10.4, however, they are calling for adopting fiscal and social protection policies to progressive reduction of inequality.

Target 10.5: As 10.5 is about cross-national issue, the NGOs are not engaged in improving global financial markets. NGOs are however generally vocal about ensuring greater voice and representation of the countries from the South in various global financial institutions, which falls under 10.6 targets.

Target 10.7: Among seven NGOs, only MJF is actively involved with target 10.7 which is on facilitating safe migration including implementation of planned migration policies, complimenting with various strategies of the government which are outlined in the 7th FYP. MJF began working on safe migration in 2006 and first supported BRAC in setting up ‘safe migration facilitation centres’. MJF is also helping PNGOs in raising awareness in communities as well helping migrant workers with various skill enhancement training.

Rest of targets under Goal 10: As SDG 10a, 10b and 10c targets are related to cross-national issues, the participating NGOs are not involved in these targets.

IV. Key Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Lessons

- Critical engagement among civil society, media and social support groups can play catalytic role in protecting the rights of PWDs, Dalits, *Adivasi*'s and sex workers. (MJF)
- Livelihood supports like skills training, asset transfer and creation of income opportunities are very essential for poor PWDs, Dalits, sex workers, and other marginalised communities such the Hijra/Third gender who cannot access Government entitlements easily.
- Remittance-led SMEs in the rural community can be promoted to address economic empowerment of women as well as alleviation of poverty in their localities. More targeted financial support and necessary skills training can facilitate SMEs development.
- Building reciprocal relationship with the local administration can considerably reduce the bottlenecks in relation to accessing government services and resources and protecting the rights of the marginalised and excluded population.
- Land commission and Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act are essential for survival of the *Adivasis* in regard to accessing their ancestral land and forest and practising their customary laws.

²⁹<http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/146679> (Accessed on 04 April 2019).

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- Participation of all indigenous peoples' organisations in national policy making and planning is imperative for ensuring 'Leave No One Behind' spirit entailing *Adivasis*.

Challenges

- Community-specific data on Dalit, Harijan, *Hijra*/Third gender, *Bede* and other caste-based minority groups are not available; therefore, their contribution to national development cannot be measured.
- Ensuring safety and security of women at home, work place including factories is a major challenge.
- The poor including women are unable to access credit easily, women from marginalised communities have even greater difficulty.
- Exclusion of indigenous peoples from decision-making process adds to their unequal status. Lack of capacity of indigenous organisations needs to be addressed.
- Inclusion of *Hijra*/Third gender in every sector is still challenging. There is lack of clarity in the definition of Third gender.
- The existing shrimp culture policy is not favourable for the landless people. Under the policy, landless people are entitled to agriculture *Khas* land that remains in the shrimp cultivation enclosure.

V. Way Forward with Policy Recommendations

The government is cognisant of the upward trend of inequality in the country and its implications for growth and poverty reduction. High and growing inequality could harm the overall growth of the country and efforts to reduce poverty.

Government pro-poor policies foster inclusive growth to simultaneously address the challenge of poverty reduction as well as reduction of inequality. More focused policies are required to have larger impact on inequality. Following are some way-forwards:

- Ensuring access of all people especially the poor and the disadvantaged to quality education and health services. This will help the poor to break the cycle of poverty by getting better jobs and increase the rate of growth as well as improve income distribution. To achieve this, the share of public expenditure on education, health and nutrition has to be raised to at least 3.5 and 2 percent of GDP respectively. A separate table showing annual allocation in national budget under 'Leave No One Behind' theme of SDG can be introduced.
- Policy support to end gender inequality has to be adopted. Gender budgeting needs to be more specific with targets, milestones and monitoring mechanism. Mass campaigns to change stereotypes against women and recognition of their contribution by including unpaid work in national GDP should be adopted.

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- Public spending on rural infrastructure like rural roads, rural electricity, irrigation, flood control and salinity control has to be increased for income opportunity creation. Cultivation of high yielding, climate change tolerant rice varieties and diversification of agriculture to high value crops. This will help increase growth rate, average labour productivity, rural wages and facilitate transfer of labour from the rural to the urban sector.
- Marginalised and excluded people, especially women, should have extensive access to credit and micro-credit for income generation and asset accumulation.
- The full implementation of the government's action plan based on the NSSS needs to be fast-tracked to make growth more inclusive for the poor and vulnerable.
- The private sector should also invest in the skills development of employees and provide on-the-job training to meet the need for higher skilled workers and wage increase.
- Migration of workers and its appropriate role in promoting pro-poor growth needs to be emphasised. In this context migration should be mainstreamed with national development process. Skills development programme should be strengthened by upgrading skills, international certification and mutual skill recognition by Country of Origins and Country of Destinations. Safe and decent work for female migrant workers should be ensured. An efficient and inclusive governance framework for labour migration should be put in place. Migration related legal frameworks should be updated and enforced for the sake of economic growth.
- A progressive tax system is extremely crucial to fight inequality both through raising sufficient revenue to invest in essential public services which benefit the poor and the less wealthy in the society and by directly reducing income and wealth inequality.
- Improved governance and better institutional functions can improve the judicious distribution of income among rich and poor.
- The participation and representation of indigenous peoples and organisations in decision-making by relevant bodies implementing the SDGs at country level should be ensured especially those that related to their lands, territories, resources, cultural, identities, practices and traditional livelihoods.
- Non-state actors should be engaged in monitoring, reporting and holding the relevant government agencies accountable for SDG implementation, so that the questions of disparity and inequality can be highlighted in the national dialogues.
- The Government can facilitate CSO (NGO) participation 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 in regard to disparity and inequality.
- The government should consider setting up of a comprehensive database for all types of marginalised communities.
- Finalise the draft 'Anti-Discrimination Act' and adopt it at the earliest possible time to ensure that policy measure is in place for addressing inequality.

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- Include Dalit people in the membership of political parties and reserve seats on the basis of where they are majority in the local and national level election, so that they can raise their voice to reduce disparity between rich and poor.

VI. Conclusion

While Bangladesh's spectacular economic success have drawn due attention of the world communities for successively attaining higher GDP over 6% for more than a decade, there are serious concerns about the growing inequality in the country. As one media commentators has rightly observed: "real inequality is likely to be worse because the richest in our society are reluctant to reveal their actual wealth and income."³⁰

More coherent policy attention should be given to disadvantaged and marginalised population. Inequality has the potential of creating political polarisation and erosion of social cohesion leading to instability, social unrest and violence.

It is time for Bangladesh to look deeper into the dynamics of not only income equality, but also other forms of inequalities across various sub-sections of populations. While political commitment is necessary, the implementation of various programmes through integrity, transparent and accountable governance will help Bangladesh to reduce inequality and become a more inclusive society.

END//

³⁰<https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/economics/why-bangladeshs-inequality-likely-rise-1575079> (accessed on 5th April 2019)

Contribution of Goal Group-10 NGOs in addressing inequality in Bangladesh

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)

MJF's Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh (EPR) Project aims to target 2.09 million marginalised people and has direct linkages with, among others, SDG Goal-10. The rest of the Goals are: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 16 and 17.

MJF through partner organisations targets the most marginalised people to assist them to access services and lead dignified lives. MJF has successfully created conditions that have empowered people, reduced discrimination and inequality and built their confidence to speak out against exploitation and abuse. They have been able to access services such as health, education, legal assistance and much more. Thousands of young girls have been saved from early marriage, discrimination and inequality has reduced at family and society level. Children from indigenous community have accessed education in their mother tongue, Dalit and disabled children have enrolled in mainstream education system. In the MJF project areas it has been possible to effectively implement accountability strategies at the local level service institutions.

MJF has an internal SDG team comprising of senior colleagues from management and programmes. This team has received orientation on the linkages between human rights and SDGs by Danish Institute of Human Rights. MJF is also a core member of SDG Citizens' Platform managed by CPD. MJF is one of the members of sub-group formed by the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB).

MJF's Tackling Marginalisation and Discrimination (TMD) is the key programme to address the issues of SDG Goal-10 which is reducing inequality by reducing poverty, income generation, access to services and resources, reducing discrimination and policy advocacy.

There are different types of marginalised populations in Bangladesh, but in terms of broad categories defined by MJF they fall within occupational status (e.g. Dalit's, Harijans, fisher-folk, sex-workers), minority situation (e.g. religion, caste, or ethnicity), geographic isolation/hard to reach areas (e.g. living in *Char's*), landless (across all landless communities) and disability condition. TMD programme takes on the following interventions:

- Institution development, capacity building and leadership promotion.
- Capacity building of CSOs/NGOs/CBOs.
- Sensitisation of service providers and policy-makers.
- Alliance, network and linkage building.

Advocacy Issues of MJF

- *Drafting and advocacy for comprehensive land-laws;*
- *Implementation of disability law/rules;*
- *Adoption of Anti-Discrimination Act;*
- *Adopting sign language in the legal framework;*
- *Land commission for plain-land Adivasi's;*
- *Amendment of fisheries laws; and*
- *Trust of Neuro Developmental under Disability Act.*

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- Community awareness and mobilisation, movement creation.
- Capacity development on women/human rights and VAWG for community and PNGOs.
- Legal aid support to victims of violence against marginalised people including VAWG.
- Skills development trainings and linkage with trade and job markets.
- Linkage with financial institutions for credit facilities.
- Monitor and strengthen service providing institutions by applying social accountability tools.
- Advocacy and lobbying for law and policy implementation.
- MJF's TMD programme covered a population of 540,500 in 44 districts.

Striking Anecdotes

“This is the first in the history of Keshobpur Upazila that Dalit students have enrolled in the higher studies at the University of Dhaka” – Arjun Das, Keshobpur, Jessore.

“A piece of land means something great to me! I can earn my own living and can feed my three sons!” – Halima, Depukhali, Debhata, Satkhira.

“Being a disabled is not a problem for me. I have got training and now I am running my own business. I am self-dependent. – Lucky, Atapara, Bogra.

*“Getting out of a brothel is like finding a way to the heaven! I feel like a free bird now!”
– Lima, Bagerhat brothel.*

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)

DAM believes that an important means of reducing inequality is to ensure access of all people, especially the poor and disadvantaged, to their rights and entitlements. DAM's Foundation for Economic Development (DFED) has been implementing different programmes and projects to address the inequality issues. These programmes and projects continue to enhance the entitlements of the poor and marginalised and at the same time, their empowerment and awareness. The interventions mainly focus on poverty reduction, increased food security, capacity enhancement of vulnerable groups, institutional development and scaling up informal economy, employment creation, etc. The core programmes and projects of DAM are microfinance, beggar rehabilitation, Enhancing Resources and Increasing Capacities of Poor Households towards Elimination of their Poverty (ENRICH), Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SIEP) and Shamerto (Sustainable Skill and Employment in Small Scale Agro-Food Processing).

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The population of these programmes and projects are people living in poverty, minorities groups, new migrants in urban areas, environmental migrants, and people with disabilities. Considering population dynamics and current socio-economic development trend, mainly ultra-poor, small traders and marginal farmers, children, youths and people with disability are included in some of its specific interventions. Presently DFED is covering a population of 109,581 at 58 Upazilas of 16 districts. In a recent impact evaluation it has been found that more than 45% of its targeted population have created access to government resources and services and generated income by becoming self-employed.

Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS)

BSWS' main focus is on the population having different sexual orientation. Violence against *Hijra*, sex-workers is often brutal and occurs in public spaces, police stations, prisons, and in their homes. They face extreme discrimination availing their fundamental rights thus compelled them to live under poverty line. No specific data related to Gender Diverse Population in workforce is available. An estimated 10,000 *Hijra*/Third gender are living below standard due to lack of gender identity and sustainable livelihood.

Beside service delivery programmes, BSWS has gathered significant level of experiences on result-based policy advocacy with government of Bangladesh and relevant stakeholders towards betterment of transgender and Male Sex to Male (MSM) community people.

The main activities of BSWS is to conduct policy advocacy, legal support, networking, education programmes with students, persuasive communication with Government, media advocacy, skills development of *Hijra*/Third gender, etc. BSWS works with 35 community based organisations of *Hijra*/ Third gender in 23 districts addressing at least 1500 people, but its work encompasses all *Hijra*/ Third gender community people through policy advocacy.

Case Study

'For the last 2 years I have eagerly waited to get admission in class eight under 'Open University'. I was refused several due to my Gender Identity! I felt discriminated due to our education system as there are options to disclose myself as different gender. After starting job with BSWS, one of my colleagues visited 'Open University' at Lalbagh with me. After a long conversation, finally, they were motivated and allowed me to get admission in class VIII under 'Open University'. Now I am very happy and feeling empowered to be a part of mainstream education mentioning my Gender Identity!'

Nagorik Uddyog (NU):

NU is one of the leading NGOs, which addresses rights of the Dalits, a caste based extremely and excluded groups in Bangladesh. NU facilitates a movement by the members of Dalit communities, which is called Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM). NU observes: Despite significant contribution in the country's socio-economic development, around 5.5 million Dalit community people remain one of the most marginalised and socially excluded groups in Bangladesh. Multiple forms of discrimination derived from caste-based practices and

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untouchability deprived them from equal access to education, livelihood and employment, health care, water and sanitation, housing and land, political and social participation, etc.

NU's programmes cover all the Dalit population of Bangladesh in terms of advocacy for their rights. However, specific project supported by donors implemented in different districts. Approximately 529,490 populations have got support to advocate for their rights, basic awareness regarding their rights and entitlements, access to basic services, income generating activities, directly and indirectly, from Moulvibazar, Bhola, Barishal, Khulna, Dhaka and Jashore Districts. The population are of different castes of Dalit communities.

NU through its BDERM platform advocated with the political parties for the first time to include Dalit issues in their election manifesto before the national election in 2008. NU-BDERM has been conducting budget advocacy since 2008. As a result, the government allocation for fiscal year 2017-18 now stands from Taka 230 million to 270 million.

In fiscal year 2018-19, coverage of tea workers as beneficiaries under Social Safety Net programme has been increased from 30,000 to 40,000; whereas coverage of Dalits as beneficiaries has been increased from 36,000-64,000. Stipend for Dalit children has been increased at primary level from BDT 300 to 700 per student, at secondary level from BDT 450 to 800, at higher secondary level from BDT 600 to 1,000 and at tertiary level from BDT 1,000 to 1,200 in 2018-19 fiscal year. In fiscal year 2016-17, BDT 147 million was allocated for the livelihood development of tea-workers.

In fiscal year 2017-18, Taka 1,773 was allocated by Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) for the construction of multi-storied building for Dalit community; while Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) allocated Taka 2,336 million to construct 14 storied building for Dalit community and Barishal City Corporation (BCC) allocated Taka 220 million to construct 3 six-storied building for Dalits.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (MP):

MP is a woman-led, women-focused organisation committed to ensuring rights and entitlements and bringing about positive change in the lives of women of different communities and segments of society. MP addresses the causes of women garments workers, Dalit and Harijan women, *Adivasi* women, women migrant workers, adolescent girls, women labourers, etc. Due to negative social outlook and structural barriers, these women cannot develop themselves as qualified workforce and decision-makers in the society.

MP conducts policy advocacy for women workers of garments factories, brickfields, rice mills, road construction, etc. They also engage Dalit and Harijan women for claiming their rights and entitlements. MP organises national and local level movements against torture, rape and killing of *Adivasi* women, Dalit women and vulnerable women. MP also conducts national dialogue on safe migration of women migrant workers, two-finger test, uniform family code, domestic violence act, sexual harassment, dowry, etc. MP works in 54 districts.

Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF):

ASF is a centre of excellence and the only specialised NGO in Bangladesh working to prevent acid and burn violence, empower survivors, especially women and children, and campaign for prevention and elimination of acid violence. ASF works with an integrated approach, using a holistic (bio-psycho-social) multi-stakeholder approach backed by research, experience and evidence. ASF is contributing directly towards SDG Goal-16 as well other goals specially SDG Goal-5, 3 and 10.

To address various issues of disparity faced by acid survivors, ASF has taken up programme like Family Assistance, Education Support, Income Generation, Advocacy, Promote Access to Safety-nets, Run Community Learning Centre, etc to ensure that acid survivors are getting services and resources for ensuring their livelihoods and reducing poverty. Moreover, ASF's multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder prevention campaign has contributed to significant reduction of the number of acid attacks over the years. Some survivors are working in different organisations (NGOs and private sectors), government offices, schools, garments factories, and doing business, etc.

Avijan:

Avijan is Dalit focused woman-headed small NGO working exclusively for upholding the rights of Dalits, especially Dalit women in Bangladesh. The organisation is engaged more in grassroots policy advocacy, local level campaign and movements, CBO building and raising voice of Dalit women for claiming their rights and dignity.

Avijan is engaged in campaign for adopting 'Anti-discrimination Act', running pre-primary schools at for Dalit children at the grassroots and Dalit colonies, organising free medical camp for Dalits, facilitating dialogues to eliminate caste system, organising training programmes for Dalit women's leadership, promoting income generating activities, running cultural centre, providing legal assistance, etc. By doing these activities Avijan has been successful in building leadership of Dalit women, changing the mind-set of people towards Dalits, creating employments for Dalits, sensitising duty-bearers regarding the need for 'Anti-discrimination Act', etc.

Indigenous Peoples Development Society (IPDS):

IPDS is exclusively a national indigenous peoples' organisation which engages local indigenous peoples' initiatives and traditional institutions to raise voice of the *Adivasis* in claiming their rights and entitlements to services, resources and culture. IPDS is also focus the policy issues that affect *Adivasis*, especially those live on the plain-lands. IPDS tries to address most of the SDG goals including Goal-10. It also involves local government authority and Union Councils.

IPDS works for awareness building, capacity enhancement, skills attainment, advocacy, lobbying, accessing ancestral land and forest, attaining indigenous rights, creating national movement, etc.

IPDS is covering a population of 20,000 indigenous people of plain-lands of Bangladesh. By carrying out its interventions IPDS has been successful in raising voice of *Adivasis* and now the

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Government, civil society, media and the development partners are sensitive about their causes and have included *Adivasi* issues in national and internal agendas. Local administration and local government are more proactive to render services to *Adivasis*. Indigenous peoples' issues are now getting currency in government policies like Education Policy, 7th FYP, Women Development Policy, Small Ethnic Community Cultural Institution Law 2010, etc.

SDG Goal-10 Targets

Goal 10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

Goal 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Goal 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

Goal 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

Goal 10.5 Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations.

Goal 10.6 Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.

Goal 10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

Goal 10.A Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organisation agreements.

Goal 10.B Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes.

Goal 10.C By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.