

**Towards Sustainable Shared Prosperity:
SDGs through the Lens of Access to Land and Natural Resources**

A Civil Society VNR Supplementary Report on Bangladesh

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PREFACE

Bangladesh, like all other UN member States, has been working to achieve 2030 goals since 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), like its predecessor MDGs, have specific targets and indicators of progress measurement. Civil Society initiatives are there to assess the performance of the country and suggest recommendations on proactive public policy and action.

This civil society report by ALRD¹ on land and natural resources provides a stocktaking on the achievements of Bangladesh against the SDGs' set indicators. In total 16 indicators are taken relevant to the access of marginalized peoples to land, water and other natural resources for the study under this report.

The study has been carried out under severe data paucity in the case of land and natural resources related indicators. This fact itself is indicative of the overall progress by Bangladesh despite the fact that the government of Bangladesh committed to the SDGs more than 5 years ago. Hence, the report recommends prudent and proactive government policy and programme support for warranted performance in the indicators.

All who are involved in the report production deserve our heart-felt gratitude. This report is designed and coordinated by Ms. Rowshan Jahan Moni, Deputy Executive Director of ALRD. Especially we thank, authors – Gazi Mohammad Suhrawardy and ALRD team: Kishor Kumar Tanchangya, Shanjida Khan, Bulbul Ahmed and Masud Hossain Khan.

We hope this report will aid particularly the government as well as other stakeholders to work effectively for attaining the SDGs. Upholding the spirit “Leave no one behind”, accessibility of marginalized peoples to land-water-other natural resources.

Shamsul Huda
Executive Director, ALRD

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¹ Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) is a national rights based advocacy and networking organization with its 220+ partners, established in January 1991. It aims to promote and strengthen land rights and agrarian reform in Bangladesh for the poor and marginalized communities. (website: www.alrd.org)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
CHAPTER 1	9
INTRODUCTION: SDGs AND BANGLADESH	9
1.1 Background and Justification of the Study	9
1.2 Objectives of the Report.....	10
1.3 Study Methodology	10
1.4 Bangladesh: The Context	13
1.4.1 Society and Demography.....	13
1.4.2 Political Economy and Development Trends	14
1.5 Access to Land and Natural Resources in Bangladesh	15
CHAPTER 2	17
ACCESS TO LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES STATUS OF THE INDICATORS ...	17
2.1 Achieving SDGs: Towards a poverty-free and prosperous Bangladesh?	17
2.2 Status of Land and Natural Resources Related Indicators	17
CHAPTER 3	34
Review of Findings, Recommendations and Concluding Remarks	34
3.1 Reviews of Findings.....	34
3.2 Recommendations	36
References	38
Annex 1: Primarily selected SDG indicators in line with land issues, LANDex and livelihood issues of the marginalized communities.....	42
Annex 2: Some Estimations & Notes.....	45
Annex 3: Civil Society Validation Report	47

ACRONYMS

ALRD	Association for Land Reform and Development
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHT	Chattogram Hill Tracts
EU	European Union
EVFTA	EU Vietnam Free Trade Agreement
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GED	General Economics Division
GNI	Gross National Income
GO	Government Organization
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GR	Green Revolution
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HYV	High Yielding Variety
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights
IP	Indigenous People
LDC	Least Developed Country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non- Government Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
RMG	Readymade garment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSC	South-South cooperation
UN	United Nation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UND	United Nations Decades of Family Farming
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNGP	United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VP	Vested Property
VPR	Vested Property Return

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bangladesh has committed itself to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprising of 17 goals to be measured by 169 indicators, This reports focus on 16 indicators under 5 goals, focusing on the following subjects: (1) Land rights and Access to Forests and Natural Resources; (2) Human rights and human security; and (3) Partnerships and cooperation, as following.

Indicators dealt under the Report (Detail mentioned in the Annex -1)

Group	Sub-groups	No	SDG Indicators
Land and Natural Resources	Land	8	1.4.2, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, 11.3.1, 11.7.1, 15.3.1
	Water body	3	6.3.2, 6.6.1, 6.a.1
	Forest	1	15.1.1
		12	
Peace and Partnership	Peace and Justice	2	16.1.3, 16.10.1
	Partnership	2	17.3.1, 17.11.1
		4	
Total		16	

This study report is undertaken to give a critical look at the progress that Bangladesh has thus far made on the SDGs beyond the rhetorical one. This takes into account the progress so far achieved but also provides a critique by drawing attention to the failures and shortcomings so that the government and stakeholders can take the necessary corrective actions. In this, the report fills a critical void on which currently there is little or no discussion as part development agenda and discourse in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh remains a predominantly agrarian economy despite the much-talked economic growth of the past decade that has allowed it to be recognized as a lower middle income country by the World Bank in 2016.

Vast majority of the population in Bangladesh enjoy poor tenurial security over land ownership. One-third (33.5%) of the total adult population having land lacks legally recognized documents. More distressing is around 90 percent of the adult population who own land, do not consider their rights to land as secure.

A large number of the population are small-scale food producers and, in general, are much below income poverty line. Similarly, the country's largest religious minority, the Hindus, continue to witness denial of their rights for decades due to the notorious Enemy/Vested Property Act despite the adoption of VP Return Act in 2001 as its truthful enforcement drags on. The indigenous people of the country also comprise of a similar group. Vast majority continue to practice some form of customary land tenure, and yet, they continuously fail to recognize it legally. Their access to forest and forest-based resources is equally continued to be denied by the state. Meanwhile, the

functioning of the CHT Land Dispute Commission and the implementation of the CHT Accord remain stalled with little prospect of progress in the near future which risk throwing the region's indigenous people in further socio-economic marginalization and income poverty.

Bangladesh has witnessed growing practice of commercial agriculture such as contract farming. There is also widespread shrimp culture in the coastal belts. All of these are based on intensive use of chemical fertilizer where locals are used as labor, often the very land owners. This growing practice will have far reaching consequences socio-economically, putting the local poor into further marginalized conditions which could potentially jeopardize also the country's food security.

Nearly 16 percent of rural land is owned by women; while one-fourth (4%) of that land is effectively owned by them. They also face continued barriers of a deeply entrenched patriarchy in the society. The existing laws are also barely gender sensitive and include provisions which are against their rights. It is no wonder that Bangladesh despite ratifying the UN CEDAW continues to maintain reservation on Article 2, the most important provisions pertaining to ownership and inheritance of land.

Bangladesh is a land of rivers and water bodies. However, these precious resources face the imminent danger of widespread pollution and depletion of ground water tables. This problem will only further exacerbate with the increasingly visible impacts of climate change.

The economic growth of the past decades has also accelerated the phenomenon of conversion of agricultural land for other purposes such as urban real estate or industrial plots. Much of this is happening in an unplanned manner which risks putting the poor into further marginalized conditions. It is imperative that the government enact and implement an Agricultural Land Protection, Land use and Zoning Act urgently.

Bangladesh has witnessed ever dwindling of its forest coverage which currently stands at about 16 percent of its territory with a slight increase in the recent years. However, much of the forest areas amount little more than denuded tracts with only shrubs and bushes. Meanwhile, the forest dwellers, most of whom belong to various indigenous communities, are denied their tenure rights and access to the forest-based resources on which they depend for their livelihood. The situation calls for urgent measures by the government: both on improving the forest coverage and also recognizing the rights of forest dwellers.

Bangladesh continues to witness erosion of civil liberty and gradually shrinking space of civic dissentation and debates. There is also an alarming number of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance as reported regularly by various human rights organizations both in Bangladesh and internationally. The exposure by women to sexual abuse and violence also continues unabated and together with the country's ethnic minority, they comprise the large number of victims from such violence.

The economic growth of the recent years has seen a growth of exports by Bangladesh, much of which comprise of ready-made garments. However, Bangladesh urgently needs to expand the basket of the export items and as well as find new export markets beyond the traditional markets

of Europe and North America. Failure in this regard might also jeopardize its ambition to further economic prosperity.

The recommendations of the report, presented below, are articulated with the aims of generating further discussions and more importantly, to offer a course of action for Bangladesh to achieve fully the objectives of the SDGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure a regime of inclusive land and natural resource rights by enforcing ownership/tenural security over land, water and other natural resources rights for the landless poor, marginalized farmers and small-scale food producers, fisher folks, indigenous peoples women, third gender etc.
2. Enact the Agricultural Land Protection, Land use and Zoning Act to protect agricultural land, to stop land grabbing and to limit commercial use of agricultural land
3. Replace the century-old colonial era Forest Act to prevent forest destruction, grabbing and to ensure forest dwellers rights.
4. Enforce/implement the High Court's directive, "River is a living entity and killing of a river will be treated as a criminal offense". Amend the National River Conservation Commission Act 2013 to empower the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) with executive power.
5. Amend the Water Body Leasing Policy 2009 to ensure the marginal fisher folk community's right in the leasing system of the water bodies.
6. Expedite the trial process for quick disposal of land conflict cases at the courts which accounts for more than 80% of the conflicts in the society.
7. Enact women and landless farmers' friendly policy/law to support and include women farmers.
8. Provide state recognition to women as 'farmer' who constitute 72.6% in agricultural labour according to BBS.
9. Revise and reduce the ownership ceiling through proper law to address the absentee land ownership.
10. Introduce parcel-based certificate of land ownership deed (CLO) to secure land ownership and to stop forgery of ownership documents.
11. Initiate immediate steps to recover all khas land illegally occupied by the land grabbers by enacting a Khas Land Recovery and Distribution Act.
12. Repeal the discriminatory clause against marginal single and widowed women that requires women to have able-bodied sons, from the existing Khas Land Management and Distribution Policy.
13. Declare time bound plan and roadmap for the full ratification of CEDAW. Undertake steps for the ratification of the Articles 8 and 9 of the Optional Protocol.
14. Implement the two particular concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee: (1). law commission's opinion in favour of withdrawal of Article 2 and Article 16. 1 (c) and (2) consult Islamic scholars for this purpose.
15. Implement truthfully the Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Damon Ain, 2000 (Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000) and Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010.

16. Establish a National IP commission to protect the land rights of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the plains and the Hills.
17. Alongside, establish a Land Commission for the indigenous peoples in the plains regions of Bangladesh.
18. Expedite the process of full scale implementation of the CHT Accord including functioning of the Land Dispute Resolution Commission.
19. Set up additional tribunals for the implementation of the VP (amendment) Act to establish the land rights of the religious minorities.
20. Take immediate measures to uphold and enforce the provisions of VGGT, UNGP, UNDRIP, CAT, UNDRIP, UPR, ICCPR, ICESCR and CEDAW, as signatory to these international human rights instruments.
21. Take immediate measures to stop arbitrary arrest and detention including enforced disappearance and torture of journalists, human rights activists and land right defenders.
22. Set up institutional mechanisms on strong GO-NGO collaborations for implementation of SDGs should be in place.
23. Undertake initiatives by the BBS to conduct surveys every five years to generate data on the progress of SDG indicators. Ensure that all data are disaggregated by gender and ethnicity.
24. Adopt policy to facilitate increased flow of FDI to sustain continued economic growth but also to ensure that all investment comply on social and environmental sustainability.
25. Participate more vigorously on south-south cooperation while seeking international cooperation on issues which require such initiatives, such as climate change.
26. Increased international cooperation and in this regard, specific appeal to the international community, for sustained support to the Global South, through development aid, technology transfer and human development
27. Adopt measures to diversify the export basket and explore new markets for Bangladeshi export items.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SDGs AND BANGLADESH

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”
- Old African Proverb

1.1 BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the sequel to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Adopted in 2015, the SDGs are a global agenda, to end poverty, protect the planet from environmental deprecations and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. SDGs aim to attain a total of 17 goals²; 169 indicators are set to assess the progress of reaching the goals by 2030.

Bangladesh showed some remarkable success in achieving a number of MDGs, in particular, on reducing: extreme poverty, child and maternal mortality and as well as rising literacy and promoting women empowerment. However, this success was compromised by shortcomings as well in other areas, especially on, among others, growing income disparity, environmental sustainability, and particularly on the access by the poor to land and natural resources on which vast majority of the population continue to depend on for their livelihood and which remains one of the primary causes of inequality in Bangladesh. Quite justifiably, in various critical discourses the achievements of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were thus questioned as ‘Minimum’ Development Goals.

SDGs is more comprehensive than MDGs with increased goals and precise benchmarks to measure the progress. Hence, the governments have to be more agile and creative for reaching the SDGs by 2030. The year 2020 is the 5th year since the SDGs adopted in 2015. The implementation of the SDGs will be assessed in a High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July, 2020; in the light of developments that have taken place since its adoption. As a part of this process, the Government has already placed a progress report on SDG implementation, titled “*Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) 2020: Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*”, where very naturally the limitations or un-fulfillments have been conservatively treated.

This study report is undertaken to give a critical look at the progress that Bangladesh has thus far made on the SDGs, beyond the rhetorical one. Undeniably, Bangladesh has made noticeable achievements on some of the key indicators of the SDGs, a process that started with the MDGs.

² The goals are (1) No poverty, (2) Zero hunger, (3) Good health and well-being, (4) Quality education, (5) Gender equality, (6) Clean water and sanitation, (7) Affordable and clean energy, (8) Decent work and economic growth, (9) Industry, innovation and infrastructure, (10) Reduced inequality, (11) Sustainable cities and communities, (12) Responsible consumption and production, (13) Climate action, (14) Life below water, (15) Life on land, (16) Peace and Justice Strong Institutions, and (17) Partnerships to achieve the goal.

However, at the same time, a well-researched critique is equally very much important in order to have a balanced picture of the overall status, which besides giving highlights on the hard-earned progress also draws attention to the failures and shortcomings so that the government and stakeholders can take the necessary corrective actions.

The report fills a critical void, so far largely absent from the development agenda and discourse of Bangladesh. For, if Bangladesh were to achieve sustainable and equitable development for its citizens, measured against the benchmarks of the SDGs, the related issues highlighted in the report will have to have far more extensive debates and discussion in the years to come. This report is prepared in an attempt to draw attention to this existing 'void' in public discourse with a wider audience in mind: international stakeholders, government of Bangladesh, civil society, media and grassroots activists on land rights, control over natural resources and above all human security by ensuring human rights and spirit of partnership and solidarity.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

The core objective of this report, and underlying study, is to depict the status of land and natural resources related to SDG indicators and put forward recommendations for reaching the targets in the stipulated time. Other specific objectives are as follows:

1. To inform the relevant stakeholders, both state and non-state, about the ground reality of progress of the SDGs on the areas related to access to land and natural resources, in particular, by the poor and marginalized communities;
2. To complement the GO-NGO efforts and activities in implementing the SDGs by providing facts, figures, and analyses; and
3. To lobby the government to implement the SDGs in line with the commitments by monitoring the status.

1.3 STUDY METHODOLOGY

This study is largely based on the collection and analysis of qualitative and secondary data and information. However, some primary data and information were also collected from the working areas of ALRD partner NGOs/CSOs through their engagement.

An early workshop was organized to select the indicators for study. A total of 25 indicators were thus preliminarily selected. Subsequently, 9 indicators were dropped due to lack of relevant data/information. The status of data source and availability on the 16 indicators included in the report is presented in Annex - 1.

In order to explore the status of the indicator, research-based data and information have been used in the report along with the official data and information. This is done for two reasons. The official data and information about the present-day economic and social development of Bangladesh displays a 'rosy' picture, far from reality, and to a large extent exaggerated on various macro-microeconomic, social and political indicators. And secondly, there is data paucity regarding the indicators under the study at government level.

A snapshot of the indicators as regard the overall progress and availability of related data sources is presented below.

Status of Indicators: At a glance

Indicator	Status	Data Availability			Remarks
		Complete	Partial	No	
1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure	(a) About 66.5 percent of the total adult population may have land with legally recognized documents. (b) A maximum of 10 percent of the total adult population may perceive their rights to land as secure.				Estimated.
2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status	\$64.77				Estimated.
2.4.1 Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture	About 50 percent				Estimated.
5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure	More than two-thirds (68.63%) of household heads having agricultural land possess legal documents of their land in 2018. A 32.04 percent of them owned land in 2018.				
5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control	Inadequate legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control				
6.3.2 Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality	A 47.8 percent of the bodies of water are there with good ambient water quality				Estimated data
6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	Spatial extent of lakes, rivers, estuaries and artificial water bodies. Change in extent compared to baseline: gain of 3%				

Towards Sustainable Shared Prosperity: SDGs through the Lens of Access to Land and Natural Resources
A Civil Society VNR Supplementary Report on Bangladesh

Indicator	Status	Data Availability			Remarks
		Complete	Partial	No	
6.a.1 Amount of water- and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan	2015 - 301.1 \$million 2015-16 - 338.1 \$million 2017-18 – 496.8 \$million				
11.3.1 Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate	Ratio is increasing				
11.7.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	Share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use is shrinking				
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	In 2016, forest area for Bangladesh was 14,264 sq. km.				
15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area	About 6.0 million hactre, or 43 percent of the total geographical area of the country is affected by various forms and degrees of degradation.				
16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months.	Prevalence of partner violence experienced by ever-married women at least once decreased from 67 percent in 2011 to 55 percent in 2015. Prevalence of partner violence experienced by currently married women at least once in the last 12 months decreased from 77 percent in 2011 to 65 percent in 2015. At least 26 cases of violence against Indigenous women were reported in 2019.				
16.10.1 12 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and	Number of kidnappings per 100,000 people has fallen from 0.79 in 2002 to 0.27 in 2018. Due to land disputes, 25 people are killed per				Official data are not available; available official data are not

Indicator	Status	Data Availability			Remarks
		Complete	Partial	No	
torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months.	100,000 populations; 921 persons detained per 100,000 populations; and 2,071 persons harassed per 100,000 populations in Bangladesh in 2017.				disaggregated and dubious in different sources.
17.3.1 Foreign direct investment, official development assistance and South-South cooperation as a proportion of gross national income.	FDI inflows as percentage of GDP have increased from 0.29 percent in 1997 to 1.74 percent in 2013. FDI inflows fell by 56 percent to USD 1.6 billion in 2019. Net official development assistance (ODA) received (% of GNI) in Bangladesh was 1.44 as of 2017.				
17.11.1 Developing countries' and least developed countries' share of global exports	During 2007 to 2017, Bangladesh share of global exports doubled from 0.09 percent to 0.18 percent				

The draft report was shared and the contents, analyses and recommendations were validated by the pertinent civil society actors and NGO activists in a web-based workshop. The feedbacks from this consultation have been incorporated into the final report (*The proceedings of the consultation is attached in the Annex 3*).

1.4 BANGLADESH: THE CONTEXT

1.4.1 Society and Demography

Bangladesh is a riverine, village-based country. The basic social unit in a village is the family (poribar or gushti), generally consisting of a complete or incomplete patrilineal extended household (khana or chula) and residing in a homestead (bari). The individual nuclear family often is submerged in the larger unit and might be known as the house (ghar). Above the *bari* level, patrilineal kin ties are linked into sequentially larger groups based on real, fictional, or assumed relationships.

Important factors that determine the rural power structure in Bangladesh are economic positions, traditional lineages, amount of landholding, and the proximity to political power or government functionaries. Patron-client relationships form the basis of rural politics. Traditional norms and values still play a dominant role in the rural social structure. Social change is slow, piety is emphasized, and internalization of modern values sometimes faces constraints. However, the increase in the literacy rate, establishment of schools, colleges and hospitals, decentralization of administration through Union Parishad and more recently Upazilla Parishad, penetration of urban

values, remittances of native people from abroad etc., are bringing considerable changes in the rural social structure.

About 35 percent of the population lives in urban areas. Urbanization grew in number and population from the 1980s as a result of an administrative decentralization program that featured the creation of upazilas but most importantly, also due to the economic growth that the country has witnessed since that period averaging 6 percent annually. The growing urbanization also led to a trend of nuclear families with fewer members and also a declining population growth. Over the past two decades, an unprecedented number of rural people have migrated to urban areas that has led to emergence of large urban conurbation. Dhaka, the capital city of the country with more than 20 million population, is the prime example. The rapid urbanization also created a thriving informal sector that now dominates much of the economy.

Table 1.1: Demography and Related Information of Bangladesh

Indicator	Value
Total population (2019)	16.56 crore
Annual growth rate of population (2020)	1.01%
Population density (2018)	1116 (per sq. km)
Life expectancy at birth (2018)	72.3 years
Dependency ratio (2018)	51
Household size (2018)	4.2
Median age of population (2020)	27.6

Source: BBS website, Worldometres

1.4.2 Political Economy and Development Trends

Bangladesh is going to celebrate its golden jubilee or fifty years' of independence in 2021. During these eventful journeys of five decades, the country has attained some outstanding achievements in both social and economic fronts. Income poverty, food poverty have been significantly reduced; both agricultural and industrial production has risen; export, remittance earning, and foreign reserve have increased; primary school enrollment has increased and as is also average life expectancy. However, the country still confronts political fissures with the opposition largely ineffective. The economy of the country also faces a growing trend of criminalization where the diving line between political power and business interests is increasingly blurred. The political economy of development trends of Bangladesh is presented in the following balance sheet (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: A Forty Years' Balance Sheet of Bangladesh:

Trend showing the expansion of politico-economic basis for criminalization of economy and politics (1975-2015)

Indicators showing upward trend	Indicators showing downward trend
Rent-seeking: black economy/black money, hidden economy, underground economy, grey economy and associated plundering, muscle power, corruption, bribe, money laundering and bad governance,	Stronger economic foundation: growing disposable income, expansion of Dhaka urban areas; industrialization, growth of formal economy; employment generation; efficacy of institutions dealing with rent-seekers and black economy

Indicators showing upward trend	Indicators showing downward trend
Growing socio-economic disparity: rising number of both millionaire and beggars/paupers	Economic opportunities: employment generation, poor peoples' ownership and access to public resources <i>such as khas land and waterbodies</i> ; agrarian-land-aquarian reform
Rural-to-urban migration: number of people living in slum; informal sector; erosion of social cohesion and fragmentation of joint family	Robust rural economy: rural employment; real income or wage;
Communication; information technology; number of students in computer and business education	General science education; technological basis; students in science, history, philosophy and literature; real intellectual pursuits
Women's employment and mobility; rising trend of violence against women and children; women and child trafficking; acid violence against women and adolescent girls	Real wage or income of female workers; protective security of women and children; efficacy of institutions responsible to ensure protective securities for women, children and older persons
Expansion of private sector: growing role in the delivery of basic services such as education and health services which only a tiny section of affluent people can avail of, Private-sector profit-making universities, colleges, coaching centers, etc. English medium schools, kinder-garten, rich-poor disparity in education and access to services	Public schools, colleges, and universities for common people; dismal quality of education in public schools; inefficacy of education system; Quality of public health service; per capita actual public health expenditure; efficacy of public health system
Condition of human security: alarming trend of suppression of dissent, extra-judicial killing, shrinking civic space, rising religious intolerance and militancy, dismal record of judiciary functioning	Evolving scenario of governance: growing adoption of IT-based solutions, regular elections at lower tier of local government, government focus on reducing income gap and strengthening rural economy

Source: Barkat (2016)

1.5 ACCESS TO LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN BANGLADESH

Historically, people who live at the margins of any society lack effective land rights and access to land and natural resources. This is also a glaring phenomenon in Bangladesh (Barkat, Suhrawardy & Rahman, 2018). A burgeoning capitalistic, rent-seeking society and economic system of the country has squeezed the land access domain of the rural poor. Besides this basic development trends on some other issues like commercial use of agricultural land (plantation, contract farming, fixed rent leasing), lack of land governance and management (encroachment of indigenous peoples' land and other poor's land through unbridled 'development' projects) etc. play key roles in rural poor's non-access to land.

Agricultural land distribution in Bangladesh is highly unequal, where small and marginal farmers lack any meaningful ownership of land. The legal system is highly inefficient, as well as complicated bearing the legacy of the colonial era which means that a very small portion of small farmers and producers have their own land rights documents. Under the existing system, scope for small and marginal farmers to enjoy land tenure security is very limited. Both socio-political and natural issues threaten small farmers and rural producers.

There are some forms of legal recognition and administrative protection of indigenous land in the case of Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in Chittagong Hill Tracts which dates back to the colonial period. However, the enforcement of these rights has always been more on paper than in reality and has a long record of gross abuse, if not violation, by the state. The condition of the Plain IPs is even worse because they lack no formal recognition and protection, which makes them more vulnerable to land grabbing and other types of violation of their access to land. Indeed, the IPs do not have any *de facto* rights over their lands.

The Hindus, the largest religious minority in Bangladesh have been long subject to denial of land rights due to the Enemy Properties Act which was renamed Vested Property Act after the independence of Bangladesh. This draconian back law has been the cause of eviction of a large number of Hindus from their ancestral properties affecting more than half of their population (Barkat 2000). Recently, the law has been repealed with an amendment by the parliament of Bangladesh but the tribunals are yet to deliver any verdicts on the related cases.

In Bangladesh, the existing laws, policies, and patriarchal mindset of people are not gender-sensitive and fail to ensure women's land rights. Although, government has taken several measures to establish their land rights, the concrete realization remains far away, all the more compounded by the weak enforcement of the existing laws. Land rights in Bangladesh is based on religious traditions which is very much against the women. As a result, rural poor and marginalized women rarely have ownership of and access to land. The situation is not also any better in the urban areas even if, in general, women in urban areas have better education, social status and often a formal job.

In general, the poor, powerless, and marginalized people of Bangladesh have very limited access to land and natural resources. They face both legal obstacles and administration inefficiencies in this regard. In case of certain groups of people, like women and indigenous people, social prejudice also plays a role in their lack of access to land.

CHAPTER 2

ACCESS TO LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES STATUS OF THE INDICATORS

“You are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)
Swiss-born French Philosopher

2.1 ACHIEVING SDGs: TOWARDS A POVERTY-FREE AND PROSPEROUS BANGLADESH?

The SDGs were adopted to reach a poverty-free and prosperous world. Bangladesh is also a signatory and hence committed itself to achieving the goals within the timeframe of 2030. This aim is also very much in line with overarching national goals: to achieve a high-income country status by 2046, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of its independence from Pakistan. Bangladesh has already been recognized as a lower-middle country in 2016, and if the impact of the ongoing Covid pandemic does not endure a longer period, it is well on the way to achieving middle-income country status in the mid-2030s.

However, this ambitious target could very well remain beyond reach despite progress in other areas, if Bangladesh cannot substantively meet the related targets on land and natural resources, their sustainable management, and promote and safeguards the space of civic dissent, partnership and collaboration. The first is evident for the country like Bangladesh whose population is overwhelmingly agrarian and where land and access to and control over natural resources is vital for their livelihood and future prosperity, and second, without the very fabric of the society sits on a corroding foundation.

2.2 STATUS OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES RELATED INDICATORS

The report focuses on a selected number of Goals and indicators which pertain to land rights and access to and control over natural resources, and human security, peace, justice and partnerships. The scope is in line with the organizational mandate of ALRD but it is also designed to provide specific focus on issues which are so vital for Bangladesh and yet there is little debate and discussion. In sum, the report covers 5 SDGs and 16 indicators, as detailed in the table below.

Table 2.1: Indicators dealt under the Report³

Group	Sub-groups	No	SDG Indicators
Land and Natural Resources	Land	8	1.4.2, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, 11.3.1, 11.7.1, 15.3.1
	Water body	3	6.3.2, 6.6.1, 6.a.1
	Forest	1	15.1.1
		12	
	Peace and Justice	2	16.1.3, 16.10.1

³ The detailed indicators are provided in Annex - 1

Peace and Partnership	Partnership	2	17.3.1, 17.11.1
		4	
Total		16	

1.4.2. Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure

Access to land or securing tenure rights to land is important for the land-dependent vulnerable communities in Bangladesh to overcome poverty. Recognizing this importance, SDG target 1.4 is set to ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance by 2030. The target has two indicators to measure the progress. Indicator 1.4.2 deals with tenure security of land. However, the government itself admits of not having available data on it (GED, 2017).

First part of indicator 1.4.2 is the proportion of the total adult population with legally recognized documentation. In the absence of any official data, an estimate is extrapolated here (please see Box 1 below) which indicates that only **about 66.5 percent of the total adult population may have some land with legally recognized documents.**

Box 1: Estimating number of households' adult members having some type of owned land; and percent of total adult population having land with legally recognized document

According to 'Preliminary Report on Agriculture Census 2019', the number of dwelling households in Bangladesh is 3,55,33,180; most of whose (87.37%) reside in rural areas. An 11.33 percent of total households (40,24,189) do not have any type of owned land; the percentage of having no own-land households in urban areas is significantly higher than that of in rural areas. 88.67 percent of total households (3,15,08,991) have some type of owned land.

Average household size in Bangladesh is 4.2. The number of members of the households having some type of owned land is (3,15,08,991X4.2) or 13,23,37,763. A 64.4 percent of total household members are adults (aged more than 17 years) in Bangladesh (BBS & UNICEF, 2019).

The number of adult members of households having some type of owned land is estimated at (132337763X0.644) or 8,52,25,520.

The number of adult members of the households of Bangladesh, having some type of owned land, is estimated more than 8.5 crore (85225520). A portion of these populations, not all, have land with legally recognized documentation. Usually a household head occupies a major portion of household owned land. An 88.67 percent of total households, having 3,15,08,991 household heads, have some type of owned land. Now, in case of agricultural land, 68.63 percent of household heads have legal documents of ownership (BBS, 2019a). Besides the household head, one or two members of the household own some land. Considering the household head and others having owned land, around 75 percent of adult populations (or 5, 66,77,101 adults), having some type of owned land, may have legally recognized documents of their

land. This percentage gets lower in case of total adult population as some adults do not have any land and some others have land without legally recognized documentation.

About 66.5 percent of the total adult population may have land with legally recognized documents.

But, very few perceive their rights to land as secure. From the above estimation of total adult population, it is found that, a 33.5 percent of total adult population either do not have any land (so no question of perceiving their rights to land as secure) or have land without any legally recognized document (arguably do not or cannot perceive their rights to land as secure). Of the small portion of the 66.5 percent of total adult population who have land with legally recognized documents, they may perceive their rights to land as secure who, in all likelihood, should belong to the social-economic-politically powerful elite. Whereas, the people in the common middle or lower-middle income groups and as well as the marginalized groups (indigenous or small ethnic communities, religious minorities, occupational minorities, poor rural women, peasants, fisher folk, char-haor-baor dwellers), although might own some land but do not perceive their rights to land as secure even if they possess legally recognized documents given the widespread land grabbing in a rent-seeking society.

Land rights of minorities and Vested Property: Dr. Abul Barkat et al in their study titled Inquiry into Causes and Consequences of Deprivation of Hindu Minorities in Bangladesh through the Vested Property Act (2000) found that the total amount of lands lost by Hindu households as a result of Vested Property Act (widely known with its former name Enemy Property Act) amounts to 1.64 million acres, which is 53 per cent of the total land owned by the Hindu community in the country. Study also found 40% of the Hindu families in the country have been affected by the Vested Property Act since it was first decreed in 1965, leading to their displacement and forced migration to the bordering country, India.

The notorious act was repealed in 2001 through Vested Property Return Act 2001 with a view to return the confiscated properties to their real owners. However the act remained ineffective for a decade until the government brought a substantive amendment of the return act in 2011 and set up tribunals for dispute resolution. However, the subsequent enforcement and the process of returning such properties to the legal owners' remains exceedingly slow.

According to the annual report of the Land Ministry (2017-18), Government of Bangladesh, 118,173 cases have been filed in Vested Property Return Tribunals. An estimated amount of 26,224.195 acres land was released out of a total 220,191.742 acres of land listed as Vested Property (in schedule: Ka) following the tribunal's verdict.

Recognition of land rights, customary land tenure and access to forest resources of the Indigenous Peoples: Indigenous peoples or *adivasi* in Bangla make a tiny percentage of the total population of Bangladesh. But they also are among the poorest and most marginalized in the country with a long history of human rights violation, dispossession of land and denial of their traditional customary land rights including access to natural and forest resources on which they continue to depend overwhelmingly for livelihood. Exact data in this regard are not available and the issue remains highly sensitive politically in Bangladesh but a survey by UNDP in 2007 found that more than half of the indigenous peoples in the CHT have witnessed land-related violence and were victims of dispossession and displacement in the preceding decades.

Implementation of the CHT Accord and making the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission functional: Violation of land rights of the IPs in the CHTs is the main root cause for the conflicts in the past decades. Yet, more than two decades after the signing of the CHT Peace Accord, the government is still to take any initiative for resolving the outstanding land disputes. The CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission is still to be functional, in fact, yet to deliver a single verdict on the outstanding cases. Meanwhile the problems are left to fester and fuel further social and communal instability. It's critical that the land disputes in the region are resolved and the Land Disputes Resolution Commission starts functioning to fulfill its mandate. The figures made above provide an indication of the dire situation on land related disputes in the region.

Empowering the excluded groups (Dalits, Slum Dwellers, Third Gender, Biharis etc.): A number of groups, as mentioned in this heading, face a long history of exclusion in Bangladesh due to their social, linguistic, professional or sexual orientation. Each of these groups have their own unique history and socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds but historically, they are among the most marginalized in the country: economically, they are among the poorest, and socially and professionally, face exclusion and discrimination.

2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status

SDG 2 aims to end hunger, achieve food security, and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. To attain the goal, a target is set, among others, by 2030, to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment (Target 2.3). To measure the achievement of the target, two indicators are set. Specifically, the indicator 2.3.2 on average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status, is relevant for this study. These small-scale food producers are usually marginalized and small farmers in the rural areas who are included in between the first and fifth decile income group in the government surveys showing annual income ranges from \$16.78 to \$86.47 (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2: Average monthly income of first five decile income groups

Decile income group	Average monthly income (Tk.)	In USD (\$1=84.86 Tk.)
First	1,417.79	16.78
Second	4,003.6	47.18
Third	5,836.23	68.77
Fourth	7,337.97	86.47
Fifth	8,881.81	104.66

Source: BBS (2019a) (Table 84)

If these five decile income groups are combined into one where most of the small-scale food producers usually belong to, **the average income would be \$64.77**. For an average household size of 4.2, more than \$150 monthly income will be required for overcoming extreme poverty. Even the fifth decile income group falls far below than the poverty line, let alone other lower-income groups.

2.4.1 Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture

Target 2.4 is set to ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding, and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality by 2030.

Agricultural land Bangladesh is decreasing day by day due to housing and other physical infrastructures building. It is estimated that, on average, every day 197 acres of agricultural land was converted for non-agriculture use during the period of 1972 to 2009 (Barkat, Suhrawardy & Ghosh, 2011). The numbers of regular headlines on the media about conversion of croplands for brick kilns and commercial fishery including shrimp culture and water bodies being filled up for making shopping malls, testifies the alarming fact. Most importantly, this strongly indicates the trend of shrinking land for productive and sustainable agriculture due to non-agricultural commercial use. By the government's own estimate, cultivable land area decreased from 9.72 million hectares in 1990-91 to 8.52 million hectares in 2010-11 (BBS, 2011). All of this raises a very legitimate question, how much of this reduced agricultural land is currently under productive and sustainable agriculture?

Agriculture of Bangladesh is productive in terms of output but this becomes questionable when one considers input against per unit output. Long term productivity decline also questions the future sustainability of agriculture. The extensive utilization of green revolution (GR) technologies like HYV seed, chemical fertilizer, and pesticide combined with mechanization of agriculture may have resulted in short term gains in productivity but it has come at the cost of long term concerns (Barkat, Suhrawardy & Osman, 2014). Excessive use of these technologies negatively affects the land of agriculture.

Due to overuse of chemical inputs in fixed rent leasing, 1.4 percent of total agricultural land of Bangladesh (222 lac acre) has become infertile, which amounts to 310,000 thousand acres over a period of ten years (Barkat & Suhrawardy, 2019). Contract farming is another agricultural production practice where excessive use of GR technologies takes place and already the practice has rendered an estimated 0.73 percent of the total agricultural land of the country infertile. This amounts to 1 lac 62 thousand acres. These two farming practices could potentially reduce 2.13 percent of the country's agricultural infertile in the next decade whereas all the while increasing since 1990 and by that estimate in the last 3 decades, this have affected more than 6 percent of agricultural areas for productive and sustainable agriculture.

Additionally, due to the practice of multiple cropping, 28.72 percent of total agricultural land will not be under productive and sustainable agriculture. At present, 146,000 thousand hectares or 360,447 acres of agricultural land of Bangladesh is under shrimp farming, which is 16.4 percent of total agricultural land (Barkat, 2016). The land under shrimp farming is affected with increased salinity rendering it useless for agricultural crops. All in all, the **proportion of agricultural land for productive and sustainable agriculture should not exceed 50 percent of the total available land.**

5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls concerns of the 5th SDG. For attaining this goal, a target, among others, is set to undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Two indicators are set to measure the progress of achievements under this target. There is no data regarding the first indicator while the second indicator has partial data.

A significant proportion of the total agricultural population do not have any ownership or tenurial rights over agricultural land (BBS, 2019b). Out of the 35,533,180 households in the country, 11.33 percent households (40,24,189) do not have any land. Also, most of the 25.60 percent of the agricultural labor households do not have any land.

More than two-thirds (68.63%) of household heads having agricultural land possess legal documents of their land (BBS, 2019a). But, 8.7 percent household heads although claim to have agricultural land, they lack the necessary legal document of their land. Alarming, more than one-fifth (22.67%) household heads do not seem to be aware of it. There also exists religion-wise variation in this respect (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Number and percentage of head of the households possessing legal document of agricultural land by religion, 2018

Religion	Legal documents of the agricultural land							
	Total	Yes	No	Not Known	Total	Yes	No	Not Known
	Number				Percentage			
Total	18052233	12388914	1571412	4091907	100.00	68.63	8.70	22.67
Muslim	16258668	11210957	1390623	3657088	100.00	68.95	8.55	22.49
Hindu & Others	1793565	1177957	180789	434819	100.00	65.68	10.08	24.24

Source: BBS (2019a)

Share of women owners of agricultural land in Bangladesh is insignificant (Moni, n.d.a-1). The strong social, cultural and religious traditions further enforce the patriarchal mindset of the people. Women have an inferior position in family as well as in society that determine their lack of ownership right, control, transfer, and admittance to land or other properties (Barkat et al., 2015b). The table below illustrates the situation and also shows the wide differences between religious groups.

Table 2.4: Number and Percentage of Female Household Members Possessing Ownership of Land by Religion, 2018.

Religion	Female household members' land ownership							
	Total	Yes	No	Not Known	Total	Yes	No	Not Known
	Number				Percentage			
Total	27436920	8790973	1828664 4	359303	100.0 0	32.0 4	66.6 5	1.31
Muslim	24742123	8477320	1594174 7	323056	100.0 0	34.2 6	64.4 3	1.31
Hindu & Others	2694797	313652	2344896	36249	100.0 0	11.6 4	87.0 2	1.35

Source: BBS (2019a)

Independent studies provide complementary data in this regard. According to Barkat et al eds., 2017, **only 15.8 percent of land at household level in rural areas is owned by women**. Another study has shown that the effective ownership of land of women is even smaller; a maximum of **4 percent rural land is 'effectively' owned⁴ by the women** (Barkat et al., 2015). Average amount of agricultural land (including water-bodies) owned by men in the rural area is 46.2 decimal, which is only 7.2 decimal among women (Barkat et al eds., 2017).

Women access to and control over Khas (public) land: State owned land in Bangladesh is commonly known as Khas land which, by policy, is usually distributed among the landless people. The policy stipulates khas land distribution with ownership registered jointly in the name of husband and wife. But in reality, discriminatory practices still continue: in case of a widow or single woman, there is a condition for having an able son to get access into Khas land.

Woman recognition as farmer: Traditionally women are considered as agriculture labour according to the National Agriculture Policy with no recognition for them as farmers. Women involved in farming without ownership of land and landlessness are not eligible to receive government support like access to credit, agricultural incentives, fertilizers, lack of access to information, training etc.

5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control

“Women’s ownership of and access to land and land-related interests” is essentially an issue of constitutional and justifiable rights (Barkat et al., 2015) which determines decisively the economic, social, and political strength of a household. In terms of land and land-related interests, women are doubly denied: first, as representatives of poor and marginalized households, and second, as women.

⁴ Effective ownership means having legal documents like deed of land, decision making ability over land use or sale and spending ability of earning from land.

In theory, women have the legal right to purchase and own land like all Bangladeshi citizens. Moreover, the land laws of the country ensure that the legal heirs own the inherited land⁵. But in practice, the scenario vastly differs from the theory and very few women own land in reality. Thus, it is crucial to recognize the significance of equitable land rights for women that reduce the power gap between men and women in the society. Recognizing women's land rights could be one of the effective ways to empower them economically and strengthen their ability to challenge gender inequalities in both social, cultural and political spheres.

The law of inheritance related issues in Bangladesh is governed by personnel law based on the religion of the concerned individual. The National Women Development Policy 2011 includes commitments to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres. The Five Year Plans of GoB also place emphasis on women's development through increasing literacy, better access to health and nutrition services, employment generation, and access to credit. However, there is yet no specific policy of women's rights and access to land, not even in the case of government's allocation of land for the underprivileged women (Barkat et al., 2015). In the rural areas, women rarely have their names on land titles, certificates, leases and contracts. Even in cases where women have the legal documents for land ownership, in practice, this exists only in name with the actual authority exercised by the spouse or male relatives.

Box 2.1: Inheritance Law and Women's Land Rights

According to the Muslim Shariah, a Muslim woman has some limited right to inherit property. Under the Muslim law, the wife (or wives have taken together) get one-eighth if there is one child, and one-fourth if there be no child from the estate of her husband though the husband gets exactly double. Mother gets from the estate of her son's one-sixth, when there is a child of her son or when there are two or more brothers or sisters or one brother or one sister of her son, and one-third when there is no child and not more than one brother or sister of her son. On the other hand, the father gets from the estate of his son one-sixth if there be a child of his son and in the absence of any child of his son, he gets the entire residue after satisfying other sharers' claim, and so on and so forth. On the other hand, whatever limited access to inherit has been provided to a Muslim woman, in practice, she rarely gets what she is legally entitled to, due mainly to patriarchal system. The practice of execution of ownership right on the land by women is also enrooted in the cultural customs of the Muslim society. The established values and norms reveal that a "good sister" should surrender her share on paternal property in favour of her brothers. This also discourages women from asserting their rights. Although women can inherit and/or own a part of her father's and husband's landed property, they seldom exercise their rights to do so.

In general, Hindu law does not have any provision for the women to inherit, except in few extraordinary and exceptional circumstances. Hindu law, culture, and patriarchal society deny Hindu women as an individual identity. In Bangladesh, existing Hindu law is yet to be modified. The women do not get any right from their customary law rather they suffer from discrimination. In Hindu law, there are two systems of inheritance namely; *Mitakshara* and *Dayabhaga system*. The *Dayabhaga* School of law governs the system of inheritance for the Hindus which only gives the women life interest in the property. In respect of *Sirdhan* (women's property), a Hindu woman can deal with her property in any way she desires and after her death, that property will pass on to her own heirs. The maximum entitlement of a Hindu woman according to the law ends only with the right to be maintained by the males during the paternal side, and husband's side after her marriage till her death.

⁵ However, here is a legal limit of private land ownership. In 1972 the ceiling was 33.3 acres and in 1984 the Land Reform Ordinance lowered that ceiling to 20 acres.

The indigenous women face discrimination, social exclusion, structural marginalization, gender identity, and systemic oppression in the patriarchal society. However, they have far greater social mobility than non-indigenous women in rural societies, in terms of inheritance, legal and political rights, decision-making powers and so forth, and their situation is little better than non-indigenous women.

Source: Barkat et al. (2015), Jinnah (2013) and Barkat et al. (2009)

The existing systems, laws and administration hardly allows women to enjoy exclusive rights over immovable property. This is despite the fact the Constitution of Bangladesh⁶ grants equal rights to women and men in all spheres of public life. Article 48 of the Constitution, in particular, recognizes the right to property and Article 13 recognizes the principle of ownership which states that the people shall own or control the instruments and means of production and distribution. These constitutions have been further supplemented by a number of legislations to safeguard women's equal rights. Further, at the international level, Bangladesh has ratified the UN CEDAW including to the optional Protocol, 2000. However, most significantly, the government kept reservations on the Article 2 and 16 pertaining to marriage, divorce, and inheritance which mean that the most important provisions of CEDAW do not apply for Bangladesh (Moni, n.d.a-2).

6.3.2 Proportion of water bodies with good ambient water quality

Water is the most vital element among the natural resources and is crucial for the survival of all living organisms. Water bodies of Bangladesh comprise private and public, usually called *khas*. Total land surface of *khas* water bodies in Bangladesh amounts to about 830,000 acres, of which most (58.36%) are open water bodies and the rest are closed water bodies (Barkat, Zaman and Raihan, 2001). Bangladesh has about 230 small and large rivers on which the vast majority of the country's 170 million people depend for a living and for transportation. In terms of quality, the surface water of the country is unprotected from untreated industrial effluents and municipal wastewater, and runoff pollution from chemical fertilizers. Population explosion, growing encroachment and land grabbing, rampant disposal of solid and domestic waste, highly toxic discharges from unplanned industrial units including tanneries mean that ambient water quality of most of the rivers are polluted or at least unusable for household uses. (Kibria & Kadir, 2015) only half of the water bodies have good ambient water quality.

Table 2.5: Area of water bodies and amount of polluted area

Water bodies	Area (acre)	Subject to pollution	
		Proportion	Amount (acre)
Jalmahal (including river, canal, haor, baor, beel, government pond etc.)	5,74,356 (actual)	33% (perception)	1,89,537.48
Privately dug pond and other water bodies	3,96,644 (estimated-Box 3 in Annex 2)	80% (perception)	3,17,315.2
Total	9,71,000	52.2%	5,06,852.68

⁶Article 27 of the Constitution states: "All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law." Article 28(1) of the Constitution states: "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth". Article 28 (2) states: "Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and of public life." Article 11, 15, 19 (1) 20(1): Protects fundamental rights, freedom respect, dignity worth of human person. Article 41 Stipulates freedom of Religion; Article 42 Right to Property.

The government has adopted the National Water Policy and Water Act. Recently the Supreme Court of Bangladesh recognized the 4 rivers (Buriganga, Shitalakhya, Balu and Turag) around Dhaka as juridical entities, concretely recognizing these rivers entitled with rights same as its citizens. The reality on the ground, however, has seen little changes and for over a decade all 4 rivers have been declared as biologically dead, meaning water from any of these rivers is unusable for any purpose whatsoever.

6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time

SDG target 6.6 seeks to halt the degradation and destruction of water-related ecosystems including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers, and lakes; and to assist the recovery of those that are already degraded. Indicator 6.6.1 tracks changes in different types of water-related ecosystems (which include five categories: vegetated wetlands, rivers and estuaries, lakes, aquifers, and artificial water bodies), enabling decision-makers to determine the extent of ecosystem change over time⁷. The Indicator tracks change over time in:

- Spatial extent of water-related ecosystems and inland open waters
- Quantity of water in ecosystems
- Quality of water in ecosystems⁸

Data on the spatial extent of water-related ecosystems include all open water bodies. For the purpose of SDG 6 monitoring, the period 2001-2005 has been defined as the baseline, from which change is measured (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Spatial extent of lakes, rivers, estuaries and artificial water bodies⁹

Baseline (2001-2005)	4,567 km ²
Latest five year period (2011-2015)	4,681 km ²
Change in extent compared to baseline	gain of 3%

While the data shows modest gains of increased ecosystem areas, it provides little information on the qualitative aspects and there is reasonable ground to assume that this has not been approved, if not even deteriorated. A simple observation around the present-day Bangladesh, whether in rural or urban areas, would attest this assumption. The various media reports only further strengthen it.

6.a.1 Amount of water-and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan

Amount of water- and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan is defined as the proportion of total water and sanitation-related Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursements that are included in the government budget (WHO, 2020) (Table 2.7) are presented in the table below:

⁷ <https://www.sdg661.app/>

⁸ <https://www.sdg6monitoring.org/indicator-661/>

⁹ <https://sdg6data.org/country-or-area/Bangladesh>

Table 2.7: Amount of water- and sanitation-related official development assistance (million \$)

Time period	Status	Target
2015	301.1000	
2015-16	338.1000	
2017-18	496.8000	
2020		350
2025		400
2030		450

Source: BBS (2020)

The annual budget of Bangladesh currently stands at US \$67 billion. Although the total budgetary allocation on water & sanitation is comparatively paltry, Bangladesh has made noticeable progress in this regard. The country has achieved universal sanitation which means that it is now “open defecation free” and is currently on the way to realize the ladder of ‘improved’ sanitation. Despite its status as “least developed country” (LDC), it is indeed a remarkable achievement particularly when one takes into account that very few countries of similar socio-economic level have achieved such progress, including by its peers in the South Asia region. However, the country is still far away from providing universal safe drinking water to its citizens which is further compounded with the presence of arsenic in the groundwater tables in large parts of the country. This will require far higher annual budgetary allocation and mobilization of the government machinery together with the civil society and other stakeholders. Otherwise, like many other lofty targets of the government, this is also very likely to remain ‘just’ a target!

11.3.1 Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate

The current population of Bangladesh is estimated at around 170 million and this makes the country as one of the most densely populated countries in the world, a somewhat unique case in the world. However, population growth rate in recent years has declined from 1.20 percent in 2010 to 1.01 percent in 2020 (Worldometre, 2020). Nevertheless, given the population density, the country faces tremendous pressure on land. The situation is expected to further exacerbate with rising population (albeit with lower rate of growth), conversion of agricultural land due to increased urbanization, industrial usage and other purposes. The country faces daunting challenges in this regard and it has to formulate urgently a Land Use and Zoning Policy which should be implemented truthfully. The point is further elaborated under the indicators below.

11.7.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Open spaces are one of the major elements of urban eco-system (Khan, 2014). These are essential for the purpose of different public functions, recreational and leisure activities of the urban dwellers, contributing to the quality of life of the citizens. As one of the most densely populated countries of the world with a developing economy, Bangladesh is naturally constrained in providing the basic services to its citizens. However, as regard this indicator, there are reasons to accept that the current abysmal condition has more to do with the ineffectual government apparatus and sheer incapacity of appropriate planning and subsequent implementation. Dhaka, a megalopolis of more than 20 million inhabitants is the prime example in this regard. The total open space for this megacity is ludicrously negligible, its essential public services such as transports,

parks, utility services are simply beyond miserable, let alone such services being tailored to the needs of specific groups of citizens such persons with disabilities. Indeed, the city itself is yet to have a proper and comprehensive urban development plan. The numerous such plans that have been prepared in the past, none saw their logical conclusion i.e. field level implementation. The other major urban centers of the country, expectedly, fare no better, if not worse.

15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area

Bangladesh has a forest area covering about 16 percent of its territory. This falls far below of the minimum 20-25 percent that a country should have as forests. However, the country has the current percentage of forest coverage is also a noteworthy progress from the recent past, most notably in the coastal belts which has seen fairly extensive afforestation initiative by the government's Forest Department. In the early 2000s, the forest areas dwindled to about 10 percent of the country's territory.

Nevertheless, the increase in the percentage of forest areas hardly provide the true picture of the affairs. Much of what is officially described as forests are essentially degraded or degenerated tracts with mostly shrubs and bushes. The various plantation programs by the government to regenerate these forests have been largely mono-plantations, often of alien species of trees which, in the process, have created more problems than improving the condition.

The destruction of forests has had a singularly negative impact on the forest dwellers many of whom belong to indigenous communities. By an estimate at least 19 million Bangladeshis are dependent on forests for their livelihoods, and forest income as a proportion of total household income is estimated at between 8.9 percent and 18.6 percent¹⁰. These peoples have a frequently contested existence with the government's Forest Department which view them as encroachers and illegal occupiers of forest lands. The disregarding of the forest dwellers rights and livelihood by the government, in the recent past had resulted in violent clashes with cases of fatalities, such as the death of Cholesh Ritchill in 2007, a forest rights activist from the Garo indigenous community.

15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area

Land degradation is a critical issue throughout the world and in Bangladesh it is one of the major threats to agricultural productivity (Islam et al., 2010). Bangladesh sits on the largest delta of the world, composed of some of the most fertile soils. Yet, it is estimated that **about 6.0 million hectares, or 43 percent of the total geographical area of the country is affected by some form degradation**. Depletion of biodiversity and forests, over extraction of groundwater, water logging, unplanned and indiscriminate land conversion, over population and over exploitation of vegetation resources are some of the key factors contributing to this outcome. The looming threat of climate change from global warming will further exacerbate this already bad situation.

¹⁰ Environment, Forestry and Biodiversity Conservation, 2015, Background paper for the Seventh Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh

16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months

The prevalence of partner violence experienced by married women at least once in the last 12 months currently stands at 65 per cent in (BBS, 2016). This is a staggeringly high number by any measure and unfortunately, these numbers are best interpreted as lower bounds or minimum values, since a large number of incidents of violence against women remain unreported. Therefore, the actual scenario may be far worse than is being portrayed by the findings of the surveys. Moreover, many Bangladeshi women also fall victim to violence from other individuals who are not their partners. Taking that into consideration would provide a better estimate of the actual violence against women (Khatun et al., 2020).

During the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak, the number and percentage of gender-based violence - physical, psychological and sexual - have increased that also have seen growing economic hardships of the households. The unemployment and consequent income fall of the household heads and other members created a down spiral in the households leading to increased number of domestic violence causing rifts within families (D.W, 2020).

A particular mention of the status of indigenous women is important here. Violence against Indigenous women has been a burning issue not only in the Chittagong Hill Tracts but also among their peers in the plain lands of the country (Chakma & Chakma, 2020). According to the Human Rights Report of Kapaeng Foundation, at least 26 cases of violence against Indigenous women were reported in 2019. Out of these cases, 14 were reported in the plains and the rest (12) in the Chattogram Hill Tracts. At least 33 Indigenous women were sexually or physically assaulted in the aforementioned 26 incidents. Out of the 33 victims, 12 were identified from CHT and the other 21 were from the plains. Among the reported incidents, at least 7 women and girls were raped, five were killed or killed after rape, and seven women suffered attempted rape. Among other incidents recorded in 2019 in connection with violence against women and girls, three were gang raped, 61 were physically attacked and nine were sexually assaulted.

Table 2.8: Types of violence committed against Indigenous Women and Girl Victims/Survivors of Violence in Bangladesh (2015-2018)

Year	Rape/ Gang rape	Killed/ Killed after rape	Physical assault	Attempted rape	Abduction /kidnap	Molestation	Traffickin g	Tota l
2015	28	3	21	17	5	9	2	85
2016	26	6	8	10	6	2	0	58
2017	16	9	4	9	8	2	0	48
2018	22	12	5	11	0	3	0	53

Source: Chowdhury, M. S. & Chakma, P. eds. (2019)

Favorable conditions and limitations for conflict prevention

Until 1947, before the partition of India and Pakistan, Hindus were about 33% of the total population of Bangladesh (then Pakistan). The figure came down subsequently in the mid-1990s to 10%. At present, around 8% (Census report, 2011). This percentage translates into a staggering figure of 5.3 million Hindus, the equivalent of 1 million households that were affected with 1.64 million acres of land confiscated by the State through VP/Enemy Property Act.

A study recorded the incidences of sexual violence perpetrated against women, included rape and murder, kidnapping, physical harassment in a wider scale. The manifestation of Vested Property Act created a permanent vicious cycle of families, where women and girls in particular increasingly became victims of cross border migration and marriage for their safety.

The general debates stimulated by ALRD's two decades long advocacy and mobilization work for establishing land rights of minorities, added value to set a culture of tolerance and pro-poor land governance, an example of land justice, communal harmony, reduction of sexual violence, democracy and peace in Bangladesh.

CSO long term advocacy through a multi stakeholder engagement approach and inclusive mobilization has been able to bring peaceful solutions to this conflict.

The final result of the process is likely the peaceful land return to the oppressed. This is a distinctive example of remedial justice to the millions of victims whose ancestral properties had been confiscated by a collusion with the state's land authorities and influential vested interest quarters.

The process shows that the victims' chances to regain their land, ending violence and conflicts, depended very much on the ruling government. While in 2001 the government made a first effort to enact the Return Act, the change of government in the same year meant inactivity of state institutions in this field until the next change of government in 2008 which finally led to the expected results.

16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months

Killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, physical and mental torture, all are prevalent in the disputes related to land-water-other natural resources. The contending parties become the prey of all these ill-treatments with the poor-powerless and marginalized becoming most exposed in such cases. Rights activists, journalists and NGO workers also are victims in an increasing number of cases.

According to officially reported data by Bangladesh Police, the number of kidnappings per 100,000 people has fallen from 0.79 in 2002 to 0.27 in 2018 (Bangladesh Police, 2019). However, these figures should be taken with certain precaution at the very least given that the majority of the cases remain unreported to the police. Not surprising, reports of human rights organizations provide a completely opposite picture (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

There are very scant disaggregated official data regarding the number of land-water-natural resources related killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture. However, an informed academic study mentions that due to land disputes, 25 people are killed; 921 persons detained; and 2,071 persons harassed per 100,000 populations in Bangladesh in 2017 (Barkat, 2019). Human rights violation cases of marginalized indigenous people are mentioned in the Human Rights Report 2018 on Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh below (Table 2.9) which gives an equally grim picture.

Table 2.9: Selected human rights violation cases against indigenous people (2017 & 18)

Human rights violation cases	2017			2018		
	CHT	Plain	Total	CHT	Plain	Total
Arrest and detention	141	-	141	115	5	120
Killing	7	3	10	7	6	13
Torture, attack and intimidation	194	9	203	64	-	64

Source: Chowdhury, M. S. & Chakma, P. eds. (2019)

Further, in 2019, 74 people were arrested, 14 persons were arbitrarily killed and 42 people abducted in Chattogram Hill Tract (CHT) (Chakma & Chakma, 2020). Although not all of these are related to land disputes, the root causes, in almost all the cases, are usually tied to violation of land rights of the region's indigenous peoples.

17.3.1 Foreign direct investment, official development assistance and South-South cooperation as a proportion of gross national income

As a low income developing country, Bangladesh needs Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to grow its economy to generate employment for its large pool of low-skilled labor. Data shows that FDI inflows as a percentage of GDP have increased from 0.29 percent in 1997 to 1.74 percent in 2013 (World Bank, n.d.a). Bangladesh's poor ranking in the global ease of doing business survey conducted by the World Bank explains why FDI has stagnated in some years and fallen in others. According to the UNCTAD's World Investment Report 2020, FDI inflows to Bangladesh fell by 56 percent to USD 1.6 billion in 2019 (compared to USD 3,6 billion in 2018).

Despite the recent decline in FDI, if the historical trend continues, FDI will increase almost continuously and reach 2.09 percent of GDP in 2030. This may be partly explained by the fact that some countries, such as China, are known to be persistent investors who often pursue their investments even in countries that have poor governance records. Since Bangladesh has joined the Belt and Road Initiative, it is anticipated that the amount of Chinese investment in the country will probably rise in the coming years (Khatun et al., 2020).

Net official development assistance (ODA)¹¹ received (% of GNI) in Bangladesh was 1.44 as of 2017. Its highest value over the past 44 years was 8.16 in 1977, while its lowest value was 1.07 in

¹¹ It consists of disbursements of loans made on concessional terms (net of repayments of principal) and grants by official agencies of the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), by multilateral institutions, and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare in countries and territories in the DAC list of ODA recipients. It includes loans with a grant element of at least 25 percent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 percent)

(<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/bangladesh/net-oda-received>).

2016. While ODA is a somewhat ‘cheap’ source for Bangladesh to tap foreign-currency denominated investment resources, it has been also criticized for promoting corruption as a major portion of ODA is misappropriated by the rent-seekers (Barkat, 2016).

The overall development assistance from the global north to global south remains somewhat steady since the last few years. However, a far larger scale of support is urgently called for in this regard that should also involve technology transfer and technical assistance for human development. This is far more urgent for Bangladesh if it were to achieve the targets of the SDGs.

South-South cooperation (SSC) is aligned with SDGs 17 which points toward strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. SSC has become essential for Bangladesh to take a more prominent role in achieving the SDG targets by 2030, creating areas of cooperation between the southern countries and implementing good initiatives from one country to another (UNDP, 2020). In this regard, Bangladesh recently received the "South-South Cooperation Visionary Award" of the United Nations for her extraordinary role for bridging digital divide and promotion of use of IT-based digital learning platforms of education through innovative initiatives.

17.11.1 Developing countries’ and least developed countries’ share of global exports

Following the South East Asian Tiger economies, Bangladesh adopted an export-oriented development strategy since '90s of the last century. The country’s industrialization is currently based on export of readymade garments (RMGs) and a few industrial commodities (Suhrawardy, 2013). In the case of RMG export, Bangladesh has witnessed remarkable achievements in the sector since '90s as it is currently 2nd largest exporter of RMGs after China. However, the success of RMG sector in export market also exposes the country to its overreliance as the export basket has become single-item centric which at present hovers around 75 to 80 percent of the total export (Bidisha & Suhrawardy, 2014).

Even with this narrow base, the share of exports of Bangladesh in the global export market has increased considerably over the past decades: between 1997 and 2007, Bangladesh's share of global exports increased from 0.07 percent to 0.09 percent (CEPII, n.d.). In the subsequent decade from 2007 to 2017, this share was doubled from 0.09 percent to 0.18 percent (CEPII, n.d.).

Bangladesh faces a huge export fall of 13.09 percent due to the corona pandemic during the first 9 months of FY 2019-20 (Kormokar, 2020). Market access has always been a critical issue for RMG exports and the Indian manufacturers have recently demanded more duty imposition on Bangladeshi RMG import (Mirdha, 2020). A Free Trade Agreement recently signed between European Union and Vietnam has been another concern for Bangladeshi RMG export (Haque, 2020) which gives Vietnam the same duty-free access to the vast EU market. Further, if Bangladesh reaches middle income country status in 2024 as is forecast, the country will no more enjoy duty free access of RMG to the EU from 2027. The government has adopted new policies in the recent years for export diversification both on account of exploring new markets for

Bangladeshi exports but also expanding the export basket. The tangible results of these new policies are yet to be seen though.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

3.1 REVIEWS OF FINDINGS

Status of peoples' tenure security in Bangladesh remains poor as the preceding chapter demonstrates. One-third (33.5%) of the total adult population with land ownership do not possess the legally recognized documents. More distressing is the fact that around 90 percent of the adult population who currently own land, do not consider their tenurial security as safe and secure.

Small-scale food producers, who are totally dependent on land, water and other natural resources for their livelihood, are also the households who currently fall below the income poverty line. Unless the condition improves with regard their access to land, water or other natural resources, they are highly likely to fall below the ladder of economic prosperity in the coming years. The continuous expansion of commercial agriculture including contract farming will further limit the scope and consequently, livelihood security of the small-holding farmers. This growing phenomenon could impact on the country's food security and sovereignty as well.

A very high proportion of the total agricultural population do not have any ownership or secure rights over their means of production. A significant 7.84 percent rural households are absolute landless¹² whereas the percentage of functional¹³ landless is much higher. About one-fourth of rural households work as agricultural labor most of whom are either absolute landless or functional landless.

Most of the women in Bangladesh are not aware of land-related laws, their right to inheritance is usually ignored, socially, they are treated as subordinate to men and their land ownership rights are mostly overlooked. Although various measures have been taken to establish women's rights to land, the goal of equal status as regard to land rights remains a distant dream.

Most of the water bodies in Bangladesh face extensive pollution. Despite absence of any official and independent research-based data, it is generally estimated that only half of the water bodies currently have good ambient water quality.

Bangladesh has realized notable achievement in universal sanitation. However, there is a need for more sustained focus by the government on ensuring safe drinking water supply to the people.

With growing urbanization and industrial activities, land use will diversify with increased conversion of agricultural land for other purposes. This will inevitably shrink the currently available amount of agricultural land. Further, given the largely unplanned urban expansion of the major cities in the country, this will also severely reduce the open urban spaces impacting on the

¹² Having no land

¹³ Having little amount of land which cannot support household livelihood

sustainability of urban environment and the overall quality of life of the citizens. It is thus very urgent that the government adopts appropriate land use and land zoning policy, and clearly articulates urban development policy, beginning with the Dhaka metropolitan area.

Despite increase of forest coverage in recent years, Bangladesh has the least amount of forest among its peers in South Asia and beyond. Forests not only provide sources of livelihood to the people; these are also the most potent weapons to combat climate change. For Bangladesh, this may be the most crucial issue given its potential exposure from the impacts of climate change. Bangladesh also has a long way to go to ensure the rights of the forest dwellers, most importantly, the indigenous communities living in the adjacent areas to forests. In this regard, particular attention is urgently required on the indigenous communities, majority of whom continue to depend on forest resources for livelihood. Instead, they have been increasingly witnessing restrictions to access of these resources by the government, if not even outright denial in many cases. Bangladesh also continues to deny recognition of customary tenure of land owned by the indigenous peoples. According to a survey (UNDP, 2007) an estimate 70 percent of the indigenous peoples in the CHT practice some form of customary land tenure whereas in the plains, percentage is assumed to be even higher. The continuous encroachment of their traditional forest land in the name of afforestation projects, establishment of eco-parks, etc. will only imperil their traditional lifestyles, pushing them into further marginalization.

Bangladesh faces an alarming trend of land degradation, due from various factors: rampant use of chemical fertilizers, depletion of groundwater tables from extensive use for irrigation during dry seasons, destruction of forests and very importantly, from climate change related impacts. The problems demand urgent attention by the government and call for al-purposeful collaboration between the government, private sector, civil society and media and as well as international stakeholders.

Bangladesh has a long history of violence against women. Despite adoption by successive governments over the recent decades of various legal and policy measures, the situation has barely improved. In fact, in many ways, the situation continues to deteriorate while most of the policy and legal measures are enforced half-heartedly or not at all. The continued exposure to violence and abuse is the most acute among the indigenous women and the government has, so far, failed to take any meaningful visible measures in this regard.

Bangladesh has been also witnessing an alarming trend of weakening of civic space of dissent and debates in the recent years. While the government continues with its denial, most independent human rights organizations from Bangladesh and abroad reports enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, and torture of journalists, media personnel, human rights advocates and also opposition political party members. A recent study found that due to land disputes, 25 people are killed per 100,000 populations; 921 persons detained per 100,000 populations; and 2,071 persons harassed per 100,000 populations in Bangladesh in 2017 (Barakat, 2019).

The steady economic growth in the recent decades is one of the outstanding achievements of Bangladesh. This has helped the country in reducing extreme poverty and also achieve notable progress on various socio-economic indicators such: delivery of basic health services, enrollment in primary education, reduction in under-five mortality rate and most visibly, increased participation of women in economic activities. The economic growth was supported by successive government policies and also significantly by foreign direct investment (FDI). However,

Bangladesh needs to attract a much higher level of FDI in future and as well as raise its share of the export market in the future to sustain its economic growth, particularly in the post-Covid 19 era. The efforts will also require diversification of the export basket in terms of items and as well as opening to new export markets. Equally important, Bangladesh needs sustained development assistance that should also involve technology transfer and technical assistance for human development. This is far more urgent for Bangladesh if it were to achieve the targets of the SDGs.

The recommendations of the report, presented below, are articulated with the aims of generating further discussions and more importantly, to offer a course of action for Bangladesh and where relevant, further support by the international community, to achieve fully the objectives of the SDGs.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure a regime of inclusive land and natural resource rights by enforcing ownership/tenural security over land, water and other natural resources rights for the landless poor, marginalized farmers and small-scale food producers, fisher folks, indigenous peoples women, third gender etc.
2. Enact the Agricultural Land Protection, Land use and Zoning Act to protect agricultural land, to stop land grabbing and to limit commercial use of agricultural land
3. Replace the century-old colonial era Forest Act to prevent forest destruction, grabbing and to ensure forest dwellers rights.
4. Enforce/implement the High Court's directive, "River is a living entity and killing of a river will be treated as a criminal offense". Amend the National River Conservation Commission Act 2013 to empower the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) with executive power.
5. Amend the Water Body Leasing Policy 2009 to ensure the marginal fisher folk community's right in the leasing system of the water bodies.
6. Expedite the trial process for quick disposal of land conflict cases at the courts which accounts for more than 80% of the conflicts in the society.
7. Enact women and landless farmers' friendly policy/law to support and include women farmers.
8. Provide state recognition to women as 'farmer' who constitute 72.6% in agricultural labour according to BBS.
9. Revise and reduce the ownership ceiling through proper law to address the absentee land ownership.
10. Introduce parcel-based certificate of land ownership deed (CLO) to secure land ownership and to stop forgery of ownership documents.
11. Initiate immediate steps to recover all khas land illegally occupied by the land grabbers by enacting a Khas Land Recovery and Distribution Act.
12. Repeal the discriminatory clause against marginal single and widowed women that requires women to have able-bodied sons, from the existing Khas Land Management and Distribution Policy.
13. Declare time bound plan and roadmap for the full ratification of CEDAW. Undertake steps for the ratification of the Articles 8 and 9 of the Optional Protocol.

14. Implement the two particular concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee: (1). law commission's opinion in favour of withdrawal of Article 2 and Article 16. 1 (c) and (2) consult Islamic scholars for this purpose.
15. Implement truthfully the Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Damon Ain, 2000 (Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000) and Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010.
16. Establish a National IP commission to protect the land rights of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the plains and the Hills.
17. Alongside, establish a Land Commission for the indigenous peoples in the plains regions of Bangladesh.
18. Expedite the process of full scale implementation of the CHT Accord including functioning of the Land Dispute Resolution Commission.
19. Set up additional tribunals for the implementation of the VP (amendment) Act to establish the land rights of the religious minorities.
20. Take immediate measures to uphold the and enforce the provisions of VGGT, UNGP, UNDRIP, CAT, UNDRIP, UPR, ICCPR, ICESCR and CEDAW, as signatory to these international human rights instruments.
21. Take immediate measures to stop arbitrary arrest and detention including enforced disappearance and torture of journalists, human rights activists and land right defenders.
22. Set up institutional mechanisms on strong GO-NGO collaborations for implementation of SDGs should be in place.
23. Undertake initiatives by the BBS to conduct surveys every five years to generate data on the progress of SDG indicators. Ensure that all data are disaggregated by gender and ethnicity.
24. Adopt policy to facilitate increased flow of FDI to sustain continued economic growth but also to ensure that all investment comply on social and environmental sustainability.
25. Participate more vigorously on south-south cooperation while seeking international cooperation on issues which require such initiatives, such as climate change.
26. Increased international cooperation and in this regard, specific appeal to the international community, for sustained support to the Global South, through development aid, technology transfer and human development
27. Adopt measures to diversify the export basket and explore new markets for Bangladeshi export items.

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ANNEX 1: PRIMARILY SELECTED SDG INDICATORS IN LINE WITH LAND ISSUES, LANDEX AND LIVELIHOOD ISSUES OF THE MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Goals	Targets	Indicators
1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere	1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance	1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.	2.3.2 Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status
	2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality	2.4.1 Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	3.9.2 Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning	4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations	4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

Towards Sustainable Shared Prosperity: SDGs through the Lens of Access to Land and Natural Resources
A Civil Society VNR Supplementary Report on Bangladesh

Goals	Targets	Indicators
opportunities for all		
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
		5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally	6.3.2 Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality
	6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes	6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time
	6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies	6.a.1 Amount of water- and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value	8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities
		8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries	11.3.1 Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate
	11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.	11.7.1 Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Towards Sustainable Shared Prosperity: SDGs through the Lens of Access to Land and Natural Resources
A Civil Society VNR Supplementary Report on Bangladesh

Goals	Targets	Indicators
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements	15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area
	15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world	15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age
		16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause
		16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months
		16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live
	16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all	16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms
		16.3.2 Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population
	16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms	16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months
16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels	16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group	
16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements	16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months	

ANNEX 2: SOME ESTIMATIONS & NOTES**Box 1: Estimating number of households' adult members having some type of owned land; and percent of total adult population having land with legally recognized document**

According to 'Preliminary Report on Agriculture Census 2019', the number of dwelling households in Bangladesh is 3,55,33,180; most of whose (87.37%) reside in rural areas. An 11.33 percent of total households (40,24,189) do not have any type of owned land; the percentage of having no own-land households in urban areas is significantly higher than that of in rural areas. 88.67 percent of total households (3,15,08,991) have some type of owned land.

Average household size in Bangladesh is 4.2. The number of members of households having some type of owned land is (3,15,08,991X4.2) or 13,23,37,763. 64.4 percent of total household members are adults (aged more than 17 years) in Bangladesh (BBS & UNICEF, 2019).

The number of adult members of households having some type of owned land is estimated at (132337763X0.644) or 8,52,25,520.

The number of adult members of the households of Bangladesh, having some type of owned land, is estimated more than 8.5 crore (85225520). A portion of these population, not all, have land with legally recognized documentation. Usually a household head occupies a major portion of household owned land. An 88.67 percent of total households, having 3,15,08,991 household heads, have some type of owned land. Now, in case of agricultural land, 68.63 percent of household heads have legal documents of ownership (BBS, 2019a). Besides the household head, one or two members of the household own some land. Considering the household head and others having owned land, around 75 percent of adult populations (or 5,66,77,101 adults), having some type of owned land, may have legally recognized documents of their land. This percentage gets lower in case of total adult population as some adults do not have any land and some others have land without legally recognized documentation.

About 66.5 percent of the total adult population may have land with legally recognized documents.

Box 2: Estimating proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture

Amount of land under double cropped land, triple cropped land, and four or more cropped land is 1,05,56,116.85 acre, 20,62,034.71 acre, and 1,34,711.31 acre respectively (BBS, 2019a). Hence, the total amount of land under multiple-cropping is 1,27,52,862.87 acre. Multiple cropping has been rapidly increasing since '90's. We can logically assume that during the last three decades, for overuse of land and disproportionate use of chemical inputs under multiple cropping, at least 50 percent of total amount of land under multiple-cropping is under the threat of losing fertility. So this 50 percent or 63,76,431.44 acre agricultural land, which is 28.72 percent of total agricultural land, will not be under productive and sustainable agriculture.

Apart from multiple cropping, the agriculture area remains out of productive and sustainable agriculture for fixed rent leasing, contract farming and shrimp farming.

	Proportion of agricultural area out of productive and sustainable agriculture
Fixed rent leasing	More than 6 percent
Contract farming	
Multiple cropping	28.72 percent
Shrimp farming	16.4 percent
	Around 50 percent

So about 50 percent of agricultural land is under productive and sustainable agriculture.

Box 3: Estimating number and area of privately dug ponds and water bodies; and Notes on proportion of polluted amount of water

Barkat, Suhrawardy and Ghosh (2011) found that the number of water bodies in 10 villages under the study increased from 42 in 1972 to 173 in 2009; 4.12 times increase in 37 years; annual increase is 0.11 times.

In 2003, the number of public and private ponds and similar water bodies was 7,53,232 and their area was 4,20,122.50 acres. Now, considering an annual increase of 0.11 times, in 2020, the number of public and private ponds and similar water bodies is estimated at 8,36,088.

Out of 7,53,232 ponds and water bodies, 94.27 percent was private. Considering this percentage, in 2020 the number of private ponds and water bodies is estimated at 7,88,180.

In 2003, the average amount of private ponds was 0.50 acre. Considering the same size, the area of 7,88,180 privately dug ponds and other water bodies is estimated at 3,96,644.29 acre.

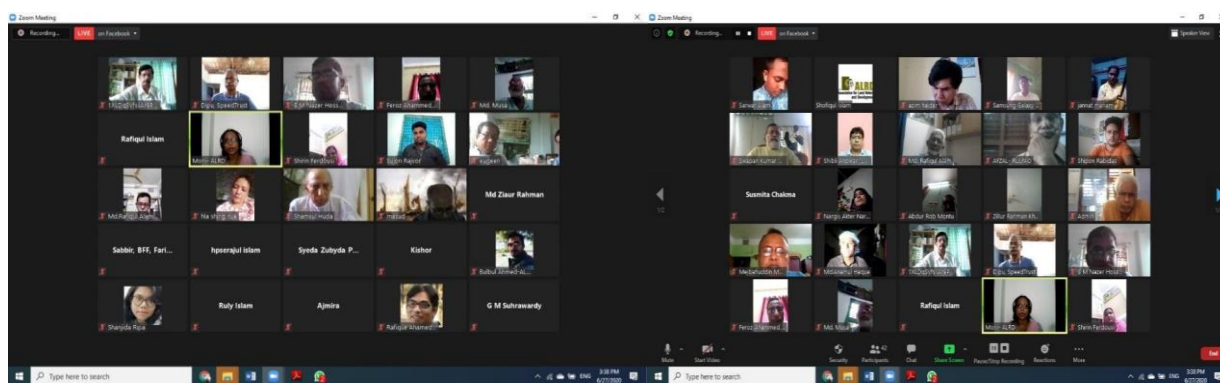
Most of the ponds and other water bodies are dug for commercial fishing. The water of those ponds get polluted due to fish feed and other fishery inputs. Beside these the water of ponds in the locality gets spoiled for animal waste, chemical inputs showered from the nearby fields, industrial waste etc.

Knowledgeable informants indicate that almost 90 percent water of privately dug ponds and other water bodies get spoiled, at least not ambient for human drinking. They also opine that over 50 percent water of river, canal, haor, baor, beel, government ponds etc. get polluted.

ANNEX 3: CIVIL SOCIETY VALIDATION REPORT

Agenda 2030: National Webinar on SDG-VNR Supplementary Report

27 June 2020,
3:30 pm-5:45 pm



Participants:

Head of partner non-government organizations and representatives of Civil Society

Organized by



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Agenda 2030: National Webinar on SDG-VNR Supplementary Report

Chair of the webinar, Shamsul Huda, Executive Director, ALRD

The Chair welcomed all the participants and said that the government submits a report to the respective political forum of the UN regarding progress of achieving the SDG goals in the country. But usually there are gaps between the reality in the ground and the reports. Considering the limitations, ALRD wants to prepare a supplementary report with real pictures on the SDGs respective to its programmes. The report is being prepared by two researchers– Gazi Mohammad Suhrawardy and Kirti Nishan Chakma – in favour of ALRD which will be shared with the partners after completion. Given a favourable environment, the report would also be printed and sent to the respective parties. After the introductory remarks, he gave the floor to Rowshan Jahan Moni, Deputy Executive Director of ALRD to describe the background and objectives of the report.

Background and objectives, Rowshan Jahan Moni, Deputy Executive Director of ALRD

Rowshan Jahan Moni said that Bangladesh submits a progress report of sustainable developments to the UN forum. It was done for the MDGs and now it is the turn of the SDGs. As regards the other human rights instruments, conventions or treaties, such as Universal Periodic Review, CEDAW, ICESCR and ICCPR, it is mandatory for the governments to submit the progress and status reports to the respective bodies every 4 years or as specified. Alternative reports for those are also submitted by different human rights organizations. ALRD also did this. But for SDGs, it is not mandatory for the governments to submit progress reports to the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) for SDGs. The member countries do it voluntarily. There is no mechanism for the civil society to submit alternative reports but they can raise their observations and concerns.

ALRD initiated to prepare this supplementary report taking advantage of this opportunity. ALRD will focus on land, river, water body, women and marginalized peoples' rights issues in the report. Citizens' platform for SDGs, a coalition of CSOs regarding implementation of SDGs, has prepared a report but the above mentioned issues are not detailed in it. So, ALRD wants to prepare a report highlighting these issues. The draft report is going to be presented here today and upon your opinions it will be finalized and presented to international forums.

Keynote paper (on Draft report) presentation, Gazi Mohammad Suhrawardy:

He mentioned the following issues and points in his presentation.

- This webinar is a validation workshop at the same time. He sought participants' deliberations on the report to finalise it maintaining expected quality.
- It's become a tradition and responsibility of the civil society to prepare and submit alternative reports.
- The government's reports provide rosy pictures on the issues, away from the reality at the grassroots.
- This report highlights the focus areas of ALRD, i.e., water and land rights issues. CPD submits a report from the Citizens' Platform but they don't say anything about water and land rights issues.

- The government's report lacks issues related to the rights of land, water and natural resources. This report will supplement the government's report. Relevant gaps will be highlighted in this report.
- This report will focus on the issues related to the marginalized communities of the country.
- 16 out of 169 targets of the SDGs have been treated in this report.
- Data and information from the government as well as reports of non-govt. research organizations have been considered in preparation of this report.
- The issues of land, water, forest and rights of the marginalized people have been given importance in the report. Lack of data will also be discussed.
- How much has been achieved in 5 years is not clear because there is no baseline. So, it is difficult to assess the achievements. How the government will figure out the achievements in absence of baseline is not clear.
- He requested everyone to freely express their opinions.

Deliberations of the discussants

1. Swapan Kumar Guha, Executive Director, Rupantor, Khulna

Mr. Guha thanked Mr. Suhrawardy for his presentation of the draft report. He said that there is a strategic paper on the part of the government regarding implementation of SDGs. But involvement of local people is at the minimum. It's like a one-sided approach of the government. He opined if SDGs are meant 'leaving none behind', local people should be given importance for development perspectives. He suggested giving importance to localization since situations of different places and communities are not the same everywhere. Land problems exist in all the 64 districts – in the plains and in the hills. SDGs cannot be achieved without giving importance to these issues considering no one being left behind.

In the recommendations of the report the land ceiling imposed in 1972 and land reform issues should be incorporated. These issues are being ignored. Khas lands are supposed to be distributed among the landless people but it is not happening. They are going to the hands of different companies in the name of agricultural farming. And there is no information on this with the government

The government has given importance to 39+1 specific targets. +1 is for the specific needs of the respective community. Which issues should be given importance at the local level should be planned. Coordination is very important in implementation of the SDGs. NGOs and the civil society are working on it. The speed of the work has been slowed down because of Covid-19 pandemic. Coordinated assessment and planning are required to overcome the situation.

2. Rafiqul Alam, Executive Director, RUN, Barishal

Mr. Alam questioned whether the government has any information about the amount of agricultural land lost and how many people lost their homesteads. How much land is being lost and who are taking those away should be accounted for and stopped immediately.

3. Afzal Hossain, Executive Director, RULFAO, Rajshahi

Mr. Afzal Hossain said that the classification of agricultural land has been changed to orchards and ponds but the government is indifferent. The mindset of policy makers should be changed along with the existing laws and policies. The state needs to be made people centred and democratic.

Agricultural stimuluous should be ensured to the peasants and agricultural labourers. Steps to be taken to ensure people's ownership and share in the state's structure. List and data of the farmers and agricultural labourers should be there.

4. Sirajul Islam, Executive Director, ERA, Sunamganj

About 30 percent of the marginalized people in the Haor region (depression areas/vast water bodies in the North East part of the country) are fishermen. Government's policy says water bodies are to be leased among the fishermen but it doesn't happen. Sub-district/Upazila Chairman and the Parliament Member are advisers of the respective committees. They favor their party men to lease the water bodies, not the fishermen. Sometimes, the lease amount of a big water body may be one crore (ten million) taka which is beyond the capacity of the fishermen.

The policy of waterbody's effectiveness should be evaluated and data about the fisher folks should be collected.

5. Mejbauddin Mannu, Journalist, Kolapara, Patuakhali

If the government doesn't have data, implementation of the SDGs is impossible. Four power plants are ongoing in Patuakhali district where 94 percent lands are three-cropped in Dhankhali union of Kolapara subdistrict. There is no data available regarding the loss incurred by the farming families as a result of the power projects in the area.

Kolapara sub-district consists of 12 unions and 2 municipalities. About 500 farmers produce vegetables in one of the unions. Their produce was damaged by Amphan and earlier they had become losers due to reduced price of their produce from the impact of coronavirus. Only 32 families were supported by the government. since they don't have data regarding the farmers and their produce. Information and data should be collected, preserved and updated otherwise marginalized people will continue to be losers.

6. Nasir Uddin Moinul, Executive Director, SDKS, Pabna

The main principle of the SDGs is not to leave behind anyone. But we see that lots of people have been left behind already. There is no plan for the agricultural labourers, day labourers, char dwellers, victims of river erosion in the plains and in the hills by the govt. There is no specific plan for the youth. Their life and livelihood need a specific work plan. There is a clear lack of preparation, plan and capacity of healthcare services. Air ambulance services for the char dwellers is a necessity.

7. ANM Fazlul Hadi Sabbir, Executive Director, BFF, Faridpur

Agriculture sector generates a big chunk of employment in the country. Agriculture subsidy is being provided to the land owners, not the lessee farmers.

Regarding ongoing virtual classes, the students from poor and marginalized communities are deprived from the classes. The issue should be addressed with due importance.

8. Sujon Rajbhor, Member, National Adibasi Parishad, Bogura

Data about the poor isn't being collected properly. He said that the Dalits of Shahjahanpur in Bogura district are being deprived from their rights. It's even cannot be expected when the poor from the mainstream population are not getting justice for their rights violation.

Farm land in the locality is being damaged in absence of a waste management system. Local government representatives are not playing their due roles to resolve even the poor from the mainstream communities.

Giving an example he said that Sunil Rabidas of his community got an allotment of a piece of khas land but he has not been able to get the possession of the land till to date. It's being possessed by a ruling party activist. Upon seeking support of the administration, he's been told that it's his responsibility to get hold of the land.

He demanded allowance, programmes and budget for the development of the Dalit community.

9. Shamsul Haque Dipu, Mission Chief, Speed Trust, Barishal

Thanking the keynote speaker, he said that the per capita income of USD 2,100 and a foreign currency reserve of 35 billion dollars don't prove that we are pursuing sustainable development. Discrimination exists everywhere. Achieving SDGs need good governance and in turn it needs transparency, accountability and democracy which we lack. In the consequence, only the people staying in the power structure are benefited from the increasing GDP.

He compared the MDGs with secondary school examinations while SDGs were compared with Master Degree. He observed that the preparation for MDGs is absent in case of SDGs and there are no collective efforts in this regard either. The deficiencies will be more exposed afterwards when one looks at the gaps between the indicators and the achievements. So, collective initiatives are needs of the hour which should be taken by the government, otherwise we will continue to lag behind.

He observed that the government is taking away 3-cropped lands for development projects. The challenges should be addressed effectively otherwise SDGs cannot be achieved and the government will be responsible for all these failures.

10. Hla Shing Nue, Executive Director, BNKS, Bandarban

Women's issues in the CHT require special attention. They don't have any rights to land and water bodies. They don't even get hereditary land. Some key facilities for life are non-existent such as in some areas in the CHT there are no schools and healthcare facilities, so there's no question of quality education and healthcare there. The women in the CHT fall behind in terms of women's rights and human rights. They need more support to exist and it should be given importance to establish their rights having been self-reliant.

Land is being taken away from the local indigenous people in the CHT for developing the tourism industry. It is being said that leasing out land is banned but we observe that influential people are creating orchards and developing resorts when the local indigenous people are deprived of their due rights to land.

The hill women don't get govt. loans and stimulus because of required documents which they don't have. During the ongoing pandemic, they are deprived of relief, ration and stimulus. Small business women have lost their capitals buying food. Farmers have eaten their seeds. Special attention should be given to these people. The IP women should be provided with stimulus. At

least for 6 months each of the families should be given Tk. 2,500 each. Many people in the CHT will lose employment. Allowance should be given to the disabled and skill development activities need to be increased.

11. Md. Ziaur Rahman, Executive Director, Sopno, Bogura

There is no statistics about the victims of river erosion. They are not supported or rehabilitated by the government. They are displaced and migrate to cities and the cities are pressed with additional population.

The government should take appropriate measures to punish river grabbers and polluters.

He suggested presenting this report to the policy makers.

12. Jannat Moriom, Executive Director, BRDS, Sunamganj

Haor region of Sunamganj is affected by floods and the women of the region suffer the most. They are provided with different skill development training but they don't know how to utilize the skills for their empowerment and employment. In the rainy season, 80 percent of women in the region become unemployed. Special support is required for their employment. They can contribute to the economy if they can be utilized in productive activities.

In haor region, fishermen become unemployed. Alternative employment opportunities need to be created for them. They should be supported with stimulus in the ongoing pandemic.

13. Shibli Anwar, Executive Director, LRC, Dhaka

We should raise our voice to remove the gaps in the policies and laws. Agricultural land protection act should be passed immediately. Business people and land grabbers are taking away farming lands. It should be stopped urgently.

The provision of land ceiling is not maintained. Business people and land grabbers are taking away thousands of acres of land. They have become parliament members and policy makers. So, the govt. is indifferent to this issue. If it cannot be stopped farmers won't have any land to cultivate.

The youth is being derailed, misusing easy access to the internet. They have become inattentive to their studies and the culture of the soil. They are being involved in criminal activities as well. It should be evaluated how much benefits digitalisation and ICT are providing to the youth and contributing to the development of the country.

14. Shipon Das Prankrishna, General Secretary, Bangladesh Robidas Forum

We know the principle of SDGs is not to leave anyone behind. But the indigenous people, dalit, eunach, disabled, tea workers and other marginalized groups of people are devoid of development. The issue of these people's development should be brought to the forefront giving due importance. Without bringing these people into the mainstream, SDGs cannot be implemented.

He requested everyone including the government, NGOs and individuals to extend supporting hands giving special attention to these people's suffering during the ongoing corona pandemic.

Gazi Mohammad Suhrawardy, keynote paper presenter

Thanking the speakers for their valuable opinions, Mr. Suhrawardy said that the deliberations of this discussion will be added to the annex of the titled report and relevant important recommendations and opinions will be incorporated in the report.

Speech of the Chair:

Mr. Shamsul Huda, Executive Director of ALRD, in his speech as the Chair of the meeting said that

Achievements of the MDGs were measured based on quantity but the SDGs will be measured qualitatively in addition to quantitative measurements. One of the major challenges to achieve the SDGs is lack of data. He commented that ours is a country of famine. It's not only about food but also about data and information. A country's development is measured based on its collection, preservation and usage of data on each of the aspects of human and resources for its development. But the government shows us development in terms of GDP growth. But in reality the fruits of this development does not reach the poor as you have learned from one speaker in this programme that out of 300 poor families in a union only 32 families received relief during the ongoing corona pandemic. Again you may find out that the receiving 32 families come from the relations of the respective Chairman of the local government or influential partymen. So these hyperboles of the government are not beneficial to the poor.

We have heard that the government has submitted the VNR report for the second time but we haven't seen it. If we look at it, we would find that they provide a rosy picture of the issues as Suhrawardy told us in his presentation.

You know that the government presented a budget of Tk. 568,000 crore for FY 2020-21. But there is a deficit of Tk. 190,000 crore. How will the government manage this amount? How much of this budget would go to the poor and marginalized people's pockets?

A big amount of stimulus package has been allocated to the garments industry. How much of the amount has been reached to the workers and how much of it has been forfeited by the owners are not accounted for. The government is indifferent.

The President of BGMEA said that 40 percent of workers would be redundant. It means they will not only lose their jobs but their provident fund and other benefits would be forfeited. There's no supervision on the part of the government in this regard. These are the results of development and status of the SDGs implementation.

In the context of poor data, we may use reports and publications of civil society organizations to assess the conditions of the marginalized communities, IPs and the women.

The absence of key data and information is a complete indifference on the part of the government. It should be challenged. We need to develop our own monitoring tools and strategy and use them to collect data to fill the data gaps.

The Chair thanked the participants and their valuable opinions on the discussed issues. He said the deliberations of the discussion will be incorporated in the supplementary VNR report. At the end of his speech, he announced the end of the discussion with a vote of thanks.

Participants of the webinar:

47 representatives from 32 partner organizations around the country.