

# MONITORING AND REVIEW OF SDG 16+ BANGLADESH (2015-2020)

*CSOs perspective*



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## MONITORING AND REVIEW OF SDG 16+ BANGLADESH (2015-2020)

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# ACRONYMS

APAs	Annual Performance Appraisal
ASK	Ain-O-Salish Kendra (NGO)
APA	Annual Performance Agreement
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DSA	Digital Security Act
ERD	Economic Relation Division
ERD	Economic Relations Division
GED	General Economics Division
GFI	Global Financial Integrity
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IFF	Illicit Flow of Finance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MLPA	Money Laundering Prevention Act
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OKUP	Ovibasi Karmi Unnayan Program
SIR	SDG Implementation Review
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TI	Transparency International

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## Chapter I

# SDG 16+: BANGLADESH CONTEXT

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In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world's leaders expressed their determination to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. SDG 16+ incorporates building peaceful societies, building just societies and building inclusive societies. To build Peaceful Societies it is important to significantly reduce all forms of violence everywhere. Efforts to sustain peace require a positive vision of prevention that is nationally owned, people-centered, and that provides a voice for marginalized people and groups. To build more just societies, urgent action is needed to tackle corruption. For Building Inclusive Societies Democratic and transparent institutions are the best foundations for peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Open government initiatives help strengthen state-citizen relationships and contribute to the legitimacy of public institutions.

The Government of Bangladesh has taken a number of steps to develop an SDG implementation at the national level. The Government has adopted “Whole of Society” approach to ensure wider participation of NGOs, development partners, private sector, media and CSOs in the process of formulation of the Action Plan and implementation of the SDGs. To spearhead the process, the ‘SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Committee’ has been formed at the Prime Minister’s Office to facilitate and implementation of SDGs Action

Plan.<sup>1</sup> The General Economics Division of Planning Commission under the Ministry of Planning is the SDG Focal Point in charge of the implementation of the national SDG implementation process. Besides, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister is the Convener of the ‘SDG Implementation and Monitoring Committee’ and the General Economics Division (GED) is the Secretariat. A number of measures have been undertaken for the implementation of SDGs in Bangladesh up to 2030.

### 1.1 Measures taken for the implementation of SDGs

- *Mapping of Ministries:* The responsibilities of the ministries and agencies to achieve the SDGs have been identified by the government.
- *Data gap analysis:* Bangladesh Planning Commission conducted a review of various means of data generation in the country, through which it has analysed the data availability and status of data generation in Bangladesh regarding the indicators to measure achievement of SDGs.
- *National Monitoring & Evaluation Framework:* A Monitoring & Evaluation Framework for SDGs implementation is in the process of finalizing. This framework will have a macro level web based data repository system to facilitate data

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<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14854bangladesh.pdf> (30 May 2017)

collection, analysis, progress tracking and reporting.

- *Action Plan to achieve SDGs:* The Government is preparing an action plan for implementation of the SDGs in alignment with the 7th FYP.
- *Assimilation of SDGs targets in Performance Agreement:* Bangladesh has introduced Annual Performance Agreement (APA), a results-based performance management system, across the whole public sector assessing individual and ministries'/ agencies' performance.
- *Civil Society Initiatives:* A national level "Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh" has been set up on 18 June 2016 focusing on the implementation process of the SDGs in Bangladesh.<sup>13</sup> The objective of the national platform is to contribute to the delivery of the SDGs and enhance accountability in the process.

## 1.2 Gaps and Challenges in SDG Implementation

Despite various efforts by both the government and non-government stakeholders, a number of gaps and challenges may be identified, particularly with regard to achieving SDG 16 and 16 plus.

**1. Absence of adequate data:** Among all the 244 indicators of SDGs, 241 have been identified as applicable for Bangladesh. The data gap analysis reveals that Bangladesh has data for 70 indicators and partially available data for 108 indicators but need to devise new mechanism for data mining for the remaining 63 indicators.

**2. Lack of data on corruption and bribery:** The data gap analysis also reveals that there is no government data on corruption and bribery

(under Target 14.5), institutional effectiveness and accountability (under Target 14.6), and fundamental freedom and access to information (under Target 14.10). The government has only partial information on illicit financial flow and recovery of stolen assets. Therefore, the government needs to put a lot of emphasis on generating data on these indicators.

**3. Government's approach to non-state/ international data on corruption:** The elected governments have so far been suffering from a 'denial syndrome' when it comes to admitting the existence of corruption in different public sectors and institutions, revealed by non-government and international organizations through their surveys and research reports. Instead of taking measures against corrupt practices, a segment of the government always tends to deny such reports, terming the findings as 'false', 'ill-motivated', 'politically biased' and/ or 'part of a conspiracy'.

**4. Reliability of government data:** The reliability and credibility of official data may be open to question for two reasons. First, the BBS may simply be overwhelmed by the task of producing data for 169 targets. Second, politically sensitive targets, such as those related to corruption and governance, require that governments assess their own efficiency. For instance, illicit financial flows (under Target 16.4) may involve government officials, corruption (under Target 16.5) may involve government elites, while governments may be restricting information, or even targeting journalists, trade unionists or civil society activists (under Target 16.10).

**5. Reluctance in engaging CSOs and NGOs:** A section of public officials are reluctant in working with different CSOs and NGOs that work on governance for generating data under SDG



16. Government's strategy in addressing corruption at present is not to identify the corrupt but rather to give motivation through encouraging good practices and improving

service quality by the public officials. According to the government, the data generated by the BBS is dependable and there is no need to engage any NGO.

## Chapter II

# UNDERSTANDING SDG 16+

### National level data and data gaps

**3.1 SDG Goal 1:** The first goal of SDG is to eradicate poverty by 2030. The related SDG 16 plus issue with this, is institute and policies for poverty eradication. According to the progress report by Transparency International Bangladesh on June 2020, Bangladesh is doing moderately good and on right track in case of eliminating poverty. Bangladesh Bureau

Statistics showed that by the end of 2018-19 fiscal years, the poverty rate declined to 20.5 percent from 21.8 per cent in the previous year. The extreme poverty rate declined. However, another report from August 2020, poverty rate rose to 29.5 per cent due to corona virus pandemic.

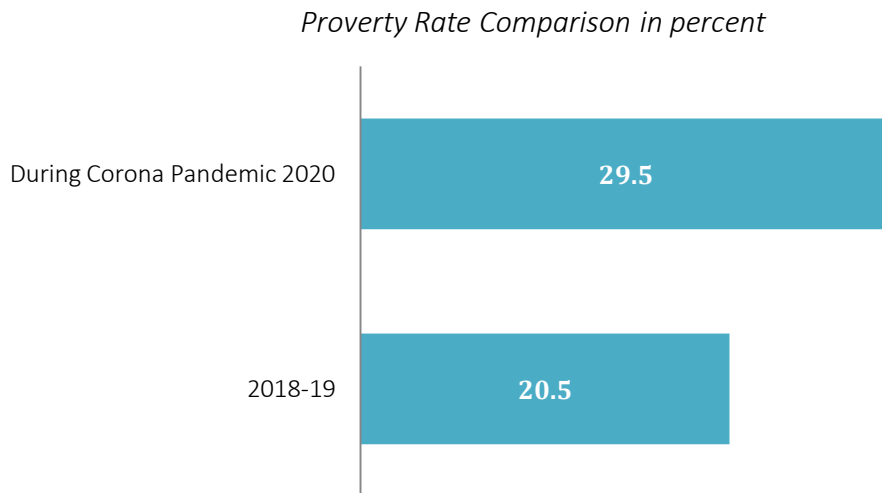


Figure 1: Poverty Rate Comparison in percent 2018-19 and 2020 (during COVID 19 pandemic)

**3.2 SDGS 4 (4.a, 4.7, and 4.5):** Realizing the motto of ensuring quality education to everyone will remain incomplete without understanding education qualities, equal access to education, and promotion of global citizenship. Though Bangladesh government has provided 41.6 million students with books in 2021, the data is not enough to understand the condition of access to education and human rights. For

instance, dropout rates are remarkable in Bangladesh. Here 50 percent of the students who enroll in primary schools appear in the secondary school certificate examination. Around five million Bangladeshi children coming from insolvent families are still excluded from the school. Also, the rate of girl students lagging behind is significant.

*Around five million Bangladeshi children coming from insolvent families are still excluded from the school*

**3.3 SDG 5 (5.2):** Ensuring gender equality without addressing Violence against women and girls and discussing Women's participation and leadership is impractical. Though Bangladesh has created an impression of women empowerment before world media for women's participation in garments and small medium enterprise, their position in decision making is still something to discuss about with the ongoing violence against women irrespective of their socio economic or regional positionality. The condition of achieving zero violence against women under SDG goal is moderately poor but improving.

**3.4 SDG 8, (8.7):** SDG 8 is about decent work and economic growth. In Bangladesh 60 million people are into workforce and 2 million join the job market every year. Though the GDP has increased, the situation of job market has not improved much. Bangladesh still has an amount of 5.1 million child labors and one of the top five countries according to Global Slavery Index to sustain modern slavery. The condition of forced and modern slavery and labor rights are poor and stagnating here.

**3.5 SDG 10, (10.7):** SDG 10 deals with reduction of inequality. Since migration has a close connection with inequality, it is prime to look into this issue to understand the condition of this goal better. According to a Non-Governmental organization Ovivashi Unnoyon Kormosuchi Program (OKUP) published a report in 2019 that said 590,000 people migrate out of Bangladesh seeking better life abroad and fall victim to human trafficking, sex slavery and falls victim to mental and physical abuse. However, the data generated by them or any other organization is not enough, therefore knowing the actual state of this goal has not been possible.

**3.6 SDG 11 (11.1, 11.2, 11.3, and 11.7):** Ensuring sustainable cities and communities cannot be understood without reckoning issues of safe and inclusive urbanization. The condition of achieving safe public spaces and housing in Bangladesh is poor and has not been progressing.

**3.7 SDG 16, and SDG 16 plus:** All forms of violence, violence against children, flow of arms, Rule of Law and access to justice, Illicit financial flows, stolen assets, organized crimes, corruption and bribery, public access to information all of these are pivotal tools to establish sustainable Peace justice and strong institutions. Transparency International Bangladesh published a report on June 2020, where it said that the intentional homicide rate has reduced in 2019. Violence against women and children has risen. 88.8 percent of the children starting from 1-14 were reported to experience physical or psychological aggression.

In Global bribery risk index 2019, Bangladesh was ranked 178. In fact, a survey, Citizen perception Household Survey 2018 revealed that 31.32 per cent of the total population had at least once were approached for a bribe or been given a bribe. In the year 2015, Illicit Flow of Finance (IFF) from Bangladesh was 36 percent of its total tax revenue. Overall, the condition of bringing peace justice and strong institutions is poor and stagnating.

## Chapter III

# GOAL 16+ PROGRESS

### *Role of various stakeholders*

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The purpose of introducing the concept of sustainable development goals (SDG) was to create a world exempt of inequality and injustice. There were 17 goals fixed to focus on to achieve the state where development becomes sustainable for everyone. The list included goals like eradicating hunger and inequality, taking action on climate change, improving access to education and health facilities and ensuring peace and justice. However, these goals are way more than it appears to be and to address the whole of it one must reckon the other issues related to it. This is where SDG 16 plus serves as a tool of realising the cores of SDGs as well as achieving them.

For example, SDG 16 plus incorporates issues like prevalence of child labour, safe migration, human trafficking and illicit flow of finance. Without recognising them the understanding of poverty remains incomplete. Now, in a country like Bangladesh with a population of 165,715,946 people, the need of multiple stakeholders to achieve the goal is only logical. Government organizations, Civil Society and Non-Government organizations agreed to work together to achieve the goal.

Mapping out a territory to work on with a detailed plan was necessary as all the SDGs are not applicable to Bangladeshi context and many of them are intertwined. For example, 56 SDGs targets from 14 SDGs are fully aligned, 37 SDGs targets from 13 SDGs are partially aligned 11 targets from 7 SDGs were perceived to be not

relevant for Bangladesh. So, Government had disseminated responsibilities and designated ministries to take care of particular sections in a five-year plan. Now, another 65 SDGs targets from 12 SDGs are not aligned with the objectives of the 7FYP. Targets from Goal 2, 3, 4 and 16 (Zero Hunger, Good Health, Quality Education, and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions are mostly not Aligned with the 7FYP. 9 of the 12 targets of Peace, Justice and Strong Institution are also not aligned.

#### **4.1 The role of Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and GOs**

The government of Bangladesh had involved ministries like Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Local Government to carry out the duties.

GoB is also in the process of integrating the SDG targets into Annual Performance Agreement (APA) system. In 2015 they established an Inter-Ministerial Committee on 'SDG Monitoring and Implementation' comprising 20 Secretaries headed by the Chief Coordinator (GED being the Secretariat).

A 'SDGs Implementation Sub-committee' was formed by the NGO Affairs Bureau. The plan was to involve Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations where NGO can help executing SDG in root level and both NGO and CSOs can

provide alternative sources of data. Also, a plan to develop GO-NGO relationship to work together to achieve the goal was taken. The GoB had also prepared a 'National Action Plan for SDGs Implementation'

#### **4.2CSO Initiatives**

On June 18, 2016 a national level "Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh" was set up on the implementation process of the SDGs in Bangladesh. In 2017 there was a conference on the role of NGOs in SDG implementation in Bangladesh where effective partnership among GO and NGO was discussed based on mutual respect and support. The objective of the platform was to contribute to achieve SDGs with special focus on Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions. They had been monitoring the overall SDG condition on regional context and keeping the track of movements to achieve the ultimate goal.

It was also intended that the platform will look into the implementation process to seek required transparency, accountability and proper flow of information. Centre for Policy Dialogue, a national level NGO, is the Secretariat of the platform. After formation of the platform a series of national, regional dialogues were held where discussions took place about the implementation and monitoring process as well as how transparency, accountability, proper flow of information and anti-corruption issues and targets will fit into the implementation of the national SDG plan and individual ministry,

division, department and statutory body's annual work plan. A report on the status of disability in Bangladesh has already been published

#### **4.3 Data generated by these stakeholders**

However, after the stakeholders working for years, there are some reports on hand produced by CSO, NGO and GO organisations. Here, a total of 5.1 million children aged between 5-17 are engaged in child labour. According an NGO, Oribasi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP) an average of 590,000 people migrate out of Bangladesh seeking better life abroad and fall victim to human trafficking, sex slavery etc. A number of five million children aged between 6-13 are getting excluded from education and girl children are lagging behind in higher education for poverty and other related reasons. Above everything, the country's tax GDP ratio is remarkably low for illicit flow of finance. In the year 2015, IFF from Bangladesh was 36 per cent of its total tax revenue.

The latest SDG progress report of Bangladesh published on June 2020 shows that though Bangladesh is doing moderately good on eradicating poverty and hunger, performance in other sectors like good health, quality education, gender equality, and access to clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth is not satisfactory. COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation worse for Bangladesh

## Chapter IV

# PROTECTING FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

### How SDG 16+ is instrumental in Bangladesh

Protecting fundamental freedom and the functioning of SDG 16 in Bangladesh is staggering and other related targets to goal 16 under other goals have varied developments, improvements and progress. However, specifically the targets under goal 16 are almost stagnant and in this chapter how 16+ is instrumental in Bangladesh is shown.

**Violence against Women:** It is a matter of concern that the alarmingly increasing trend of violence against women in Bangladesh. It's evident that, a total of 1413 female were subjected to rape in 2019. Of them, 76 were killed after rape while 10 other victims killed

themselves. The reported number of rape victims was 732 in 2018 and 818 in 2017. 907 women or girls were raped in just the first nine months of 2020. The conviction rate for rape in Bangladesh is below 1 percent. In April 2020, a total number of 4,705 women and children were the victims of domestic violence while 50 percent fell as first time victims. A total of 632 rape incidents took place between April and August 2020. On average, 04 women have been raped every day during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Comparing to 2019 the violence against women and girls during COVID-19 has increased by 70%, a drastic rise of the trend.



Dowry is a curse in our society and all over the globe mainly in South Asia. Violence against women is a heinous crime while dowry related violence against women is highly threat to women's security in their family and society. Male domination should be changed for the development and peace as well as to ensure

equal rights. Good governance, proper implementation of law against dowry and violence towards women, raising public awareness and launching program to empower women by government and NGOs would be effective to protect women from all sorts of dowry related violence.

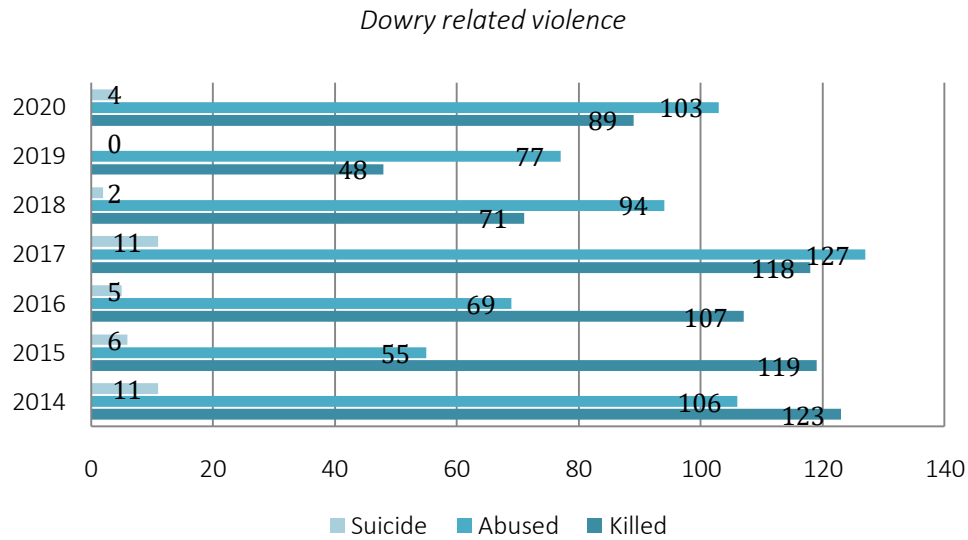
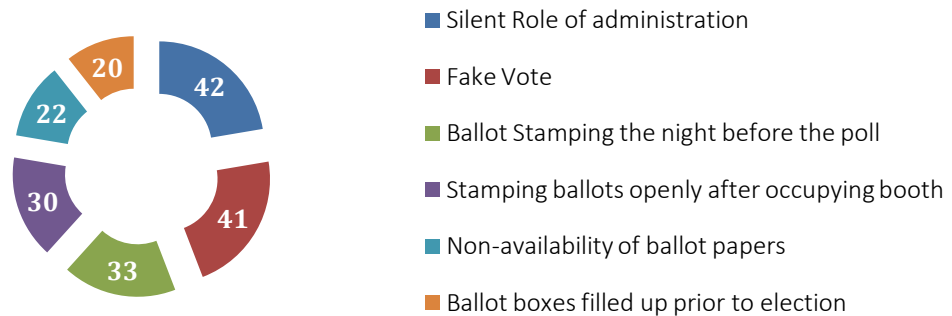


Figure 3: *Dowry related violence in Bangladesh from 2014-2020*

**Ineffective Election Process:** 2018 has produced some unexpected election results in Bangladesh. That year’s election is historic for several reasons. It is being held on 30 December, the month when millions celebrated the country’s 48th victory day. The previous national election was boycotted by the main opposition and ended in bloodshed. That time, the opposition is determined to participate in the election at any cost. The incumbent government therefore faces a difficult choice. Failure to organize a credible election will undermine the rule of law,

increase political uncertainty and put at risk the country’s development gains. On the other hand, a fair election may end authoritarian rule. Since the start of the election campaign on December 10, opposition leaders in Bangladesh have come under attack almost on a daily basis. According to local and international media, some campaigning opposition candidates have been publicly beaten by ruling party cadres or sent to jail on false accusation.

Figure 4: *Irregularities in numbers of constituencies during National Election 2018*



**Widening Social Inequality:** Although poverty and extreme poverty levels are declining, a lot of people in Bangladesh are still living below the poverty line. The high incidence of poverty and the growing wealth of the rich shows the inequality in Bangladesh is worsening over the years. Poverty rates have fallen from 31.5% to 20.5% and extreme poverty levels have fallen

from 17.6% to 10.5%. However, millions of people in the country remain in poverty. According to the World Bank’s Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018 report, Bangladesh is home to 24.1 million extremely poor people (out of more than 160 million) who earn less than US\$1.90 a day.

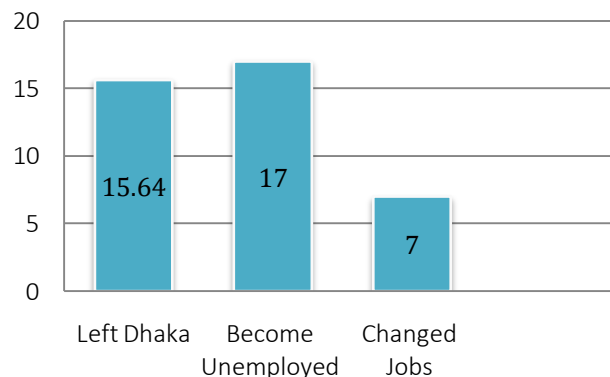
*Bangladesh is still home to 24.1 million extremely poor people (out of more than 160 million) who earn less than US\$1.90 a day*

The incidence of poverty is higher in rural areas than in the urban areas and the rate of decrease of poverty is also higher in rural areas (1.24%) than in urban areas (1.13%). The 2010 Household and Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) estimates the incidence of poverty at 31.5 percent at the national level, 35.2 percent in rural areas and 21.3 percent in urban areas. Regional disparities are also apparent. It has been found that the highest decline in poverty incidence occurred for Dhaka division, after which are Chittagong and Sylhet. Poverty in Barisal is found to have stagnated and to have increased slightly in Khulna. The income gap is also evident: the 2010 HEIS shows the clear gap between bottom 5 percent (poorest of the poor) and the top 5 percent (richest of the rich). It shows that the income accumulating to top 5 percent of households was 24.61 percent, compared to only 0.78 percent for the bottom 5 percent. Gaps are also evident in the social Indicators for the Poorest and Richest Quintiles. For example child malnutrition rate in the Poorest Quintile is 50 while it is 21 in the Richest Quintile; Primary school completion rate in the

Poorest Quintile is 65 and 97 in the richest quintile.<sup>2</sup>

The situation is only likely to be exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Until the last week of May 2020, the whole of Bangladesh was in a two months government-enforced public holiday. Due to the shut down, most businesses and institutions were closed. The mobility of people was also reduced. Even those businesses that were open (like groceries, pharmacies, and banks) had to have their operations limited. Worldwide economic activities have also lessened due to the pandemic. Due to such

*Figure 5: Percentage of low income people financially affected by COVID 19 crisis*



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.socialwatch.org/node/18086>



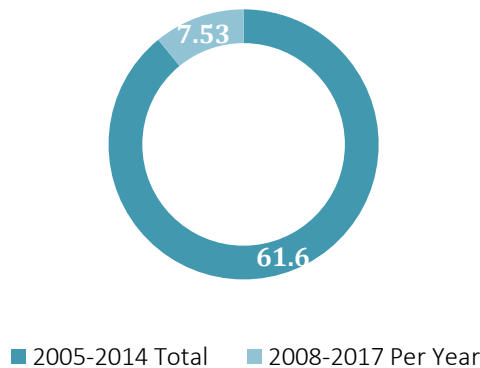
economic disruptions both in the country and globally, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted the GDP growth for Bangladesh in FY 2019-20 will fall to 2%. 15.64 percent of people have left the capital Dhaka due to the pandemic coronavirus. Besides, 17 percent of people have become unemployed and 7 percent of people have changed jobs at the time, according to

**Illicit financial trade:** A number of reports released by Global Financial Integrity (GFI) in recent times have pinpointed Bangladesh as being among the worst affected countries to the scourge of trade-based money laundering (TBML). According to GFI's President Raymond Baker, "Illicit financial flows are the most damaging economic problems faced by the world's developing and emerging economies." This means we are among the countries worst plagued by one of the biggest problems (among

survey-based on 6,738 people across the country where most of these people belong to lower economic class and were employed in informal sectors. That means, rich is becoming wealthier and poor is becoming poorer and COVID-19 has escalated the process fast and poor people are worst victims of COVID 19 financially.

all the problems) out there that developing countries have to deal with. According to GFI, USD 61.6 billion was siphoned out of Bangladesh between 2005 and 2014, which is equivalent to 25 percent of its GDP in FY 2016-17. Between 2008 and 2017, Bangladesh lost a staggering USD 7.53 billion per year on average to trade mis-invoicing, which accounted for 17.95 percent of Bangladesh's international trade with all its trading partners during the period.

Figure 6: Money Siphoned off Bangladesh in US Dollars (Billions)



In a more recent report, GFI revealed that USD 5.9 billion was siphoned out of Bangladesh through trade mis-invoicing in 2015—and that Bangladesh is one of the top 30 countries in terms of illicit financial flows. Similarly, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) reported this year that some USD 3.1 billion or

TK 26,400 core is being illegally remitted from Bangladesh every year. Though it is lower in comparison to the GFI's estimates between 2008 and 2017, even this amount would have deprived the government exchequer of about TK 120 billion as revenue each year, which is significant. Sadly, Bangladesh meets almost all

the requirements necessary to make it a perfect victim of large-scale money laundering—including the fact that its government's policies have fallen far short of disincentivising money laundering and have, in fact, facilitated it at times. That has mostly happened because, as Dr Iftekharuzzaman wrote, the perpetrators of the crime have usually been "tied to the power structure" and hence have often "determined the terms" that have allowed them to get away with it.

**Bribery:** Bangladesh has ranked 178th in the latest global bribery risk index, 2019 Trace Bribery Risk Matrix said. According to the report, Bangladesh scored 72,<sup>3</sup> surpassing other countries in South Asia. This score is a composite of the four domain scores, which are weighted and combined to produce the overall country risk score. In terms of risk score, India ranked 78th, Pakistan 153rd, Afghanistan 168th, and Myanmar ranked 157th in the index. According to this year's Trace Matrix data, Somalia, South Sudan, North Korea, Yemen and Venezuela presented the highest risk of bribe demands. Each country is given a score from 1 to 100 for each domain and for the total bribery risk. A higher score indicates a higher risk of business bribery.

Global Bribery Risk Index 2019		
Country	Rank	Risk Score
Bhutan	52	41
India	78	48
Sri Lanka	111	55
Nepal	116	56
Maldives	124	57
Pakistan	153	62

<sup>3</sup><https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/corruption/2019/11/14/report-bribery-threat-risk-high-in-bangladesh>

Myanmar	157	64
Afghanistan	168	66
Bangladesh	178	72

Figure 7: Bangladesh's position in Global Bribery Risk Index 2019

**Corruption:** From 2001 until 2005, Bangladesh was ranked the most corrupt country in the world by the Transparency International according to its Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Although the status started to improve after 2005, the country is still found at the bottom of the list. Three other indicators, the World Bank's Control of Corruption and the World Economic Forum's Assessment of Irregular Payments and Bribes and the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index (Public Service), paint a similar picture.

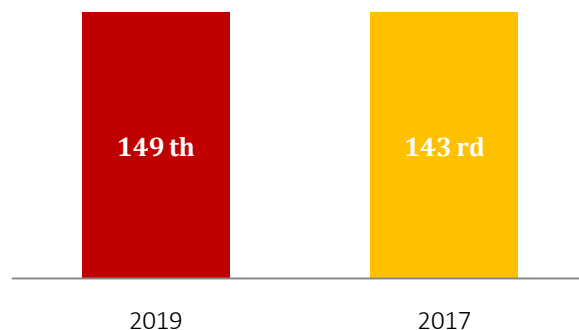
- *Corruption Perception Index (CPI):* Published by the Transparency International (TI) every year, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) measures the perceived level of corruption in the public sector. It has a scale of 0 to 100, 0 implying the most corrupt and 100 implying the least corrupt country.
- *Control of Corruption:* It is one of the six key dimensions of governance published by the World Bank every year in its Worldwide Governance Indicators. The index measures the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among business, public officials and politicians. Expressed in percentile rank (0 to 100), higher values indicate better governance ratings.
- *Irregular Payments and Bribes:* The World Economic Forum publishes the Global Competitiveness Report each year. One of the key components of the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) is irregular

payment and bribes in (i) imports and exports, (ii) public utilities, (iii) annual tax payments, (iv) awarding of public contracts and licenses and (v) obtaining favorable judicial decisions. The value of 1 indicates very common and 7 never occur.

- *Fragile States Index*: Produced by the Fund for Peace, the Fragile States Index attempts to assess the fragility of different countries using 12 composite indicators. One of the composite indicators is public service which refers to the presence of basic functions that serve the people. It has a scale of 0 to 10, 0 implying the least fragile state and 10 implying the most fragile state.<sup>4</sup>

Transparency International (TI) released its Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2018 on January 29, 2019. Bangladesh has scored 26 out of 100, two points lower than the 28 in 2017. The slide is worse in terms of ranking. Bangladesh has been ranked in the 149<sup>th</sup> position from the top among 180 countries, which are six steps lower than the 143<sup>rd</sup> in 2017. Among the eight South Asian countries Bangladesh continues to be the second worst after Afghanistan. In the Asia-Pacific region, we are the fourth lowest among 31 countries, better than only Cambodia, Afghanistan and North Korea.

Figure 8: Bangladesh's position in Global Corruption Ranking 2019 & 2017



Bangladesh was in the lowest position during 2001-2005. It has since escaped the threshold of the lowest scores and rankings though there is no scope of complacency. Given the prime minister's pledge of zero tolerance against corruption during the launch of her party's

regularly insisting upon, expectations have risen that openings to perform better may be in offing. Accountability is the key to zero tolerance against corruption—this is easier pledged than practiced, especially in a context where conventional processes and institutions of checks and balances are absent. The overall political and governance space now rests on one party.

<sup>4</sup><https://bea-bd.org/site/images/pdf/new17/2.pdf>

## Chapter V

# LACK OF PROGRESS OF GOAL 16 +

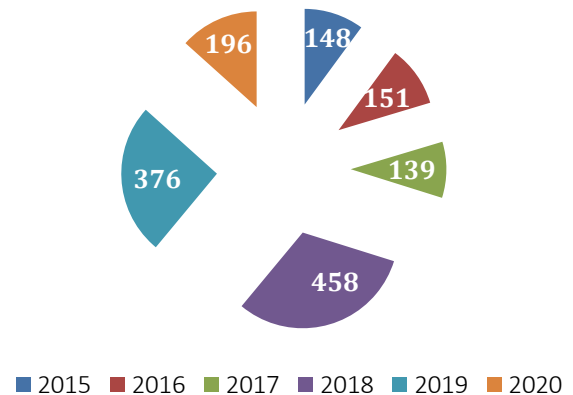
### Five examples in Bangladesh Context

There have been notable progresses in different SDG goals achieved by Bangladesh. However, regarding goal 16 there is stagnation, unwillingness and almost no progress in Bangladesh context and five such issues have been discussed below among many others.

**Crossfire:** Bangladesh has inherited many legacies by virtue of its long history as a constituent of a larger geographical entity, of which it was a part till not very long ago. Some of them make us proud, some we would rather shun. But one common trait of most people of South Asia is the propensity to hide behind abhorrent legacies of the past to hide our failings as well as our incapacity or unwillingness to change the status quo, and instead blame the past regimes for one's shortcomings. We have the most recent example of "legacy" being cited as the reason why we are witnessing instances of crossfire. The issue of crossfire killings has newly come into national focus more acutely again after the preplanned murder of Major Sinha. But extrajudicial deaths are not recent phenomena. We have been witnessing this practice for decades in Bangladesh. According to a data set of Odhikar, a human rights organization in Bangladesh, a total of 3044 people were killed in crossfire or gunfight alone in Bangladesh from 2001-2020.<sup>5</sup>In the first nine

months of 2020, 190 people were killed in Crossfire incidents. The chart below shows the breakdown of crossfire events,

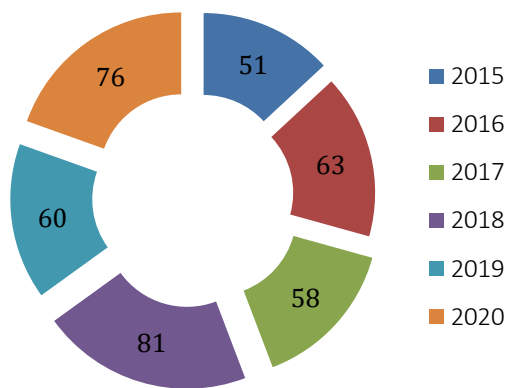
Figure 9: Crossfire Incidents 2015-2020



<sup>5</sup>[http://odhikar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/02\\_Statistics\\_Crossfire-Gunfight\\_2001-June-2020.pdf](http://odhikar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/02_Statistics_Crossfire-Gunfight_2001-June-2020.pdf)

**Custodial Death:** Although the government enacted a law to prevent torture and death in custody of different law enforcement agencies seven years ago, not many cases have been filed under the act. Experts attribute the reason to lack of comprehensive campaign to make people aware of the law and fearing of the victims or their family members that the law enforcers would harm them. There has been a horrifying and growing trend of custodial deaths in our country. In last two decades according to Odhikar, a right based organization; there have been 368 deaths by torture, 44 deaths by beaten up by Law Enforcing agencies. And in 2020, in the first nine months the total numbers of custodial deaths are 52, the breakdown is given in below chart.

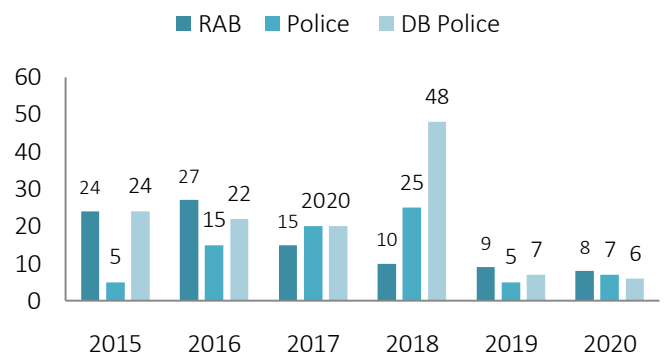
Figure 10: Custodial Death 2015-20



**Enforced Disappearance:** Bangladeshi security forces and law enforcement agencies commit enforced disappearances in a continuous basis with impunity by targeting journalists, activists, and government critics. While some were

eventually released, shown arrested, or discovered killed by security forces and law enforcement agencies in so-called “crossfire” encounters, the whereabouts of many of them remain unknown. Enforced disappearance – the deprivation of liberty by agents of the state and concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the person in custody– is strictly prohibited under international law. Despite consistent and credible evidence of their occurrence, the Bangladesh government continues to deny its unlawful practice of enforced disappearances. Access to justice is systematically denied to victims and their families. Enforced disappearance is part of the ruling party’s ongoing crackdown on freedom of speech. Disappearance, or threats of disappearance, is used to silence critics and repress the

Figure 11: Enforced Disappearances 2015-2020

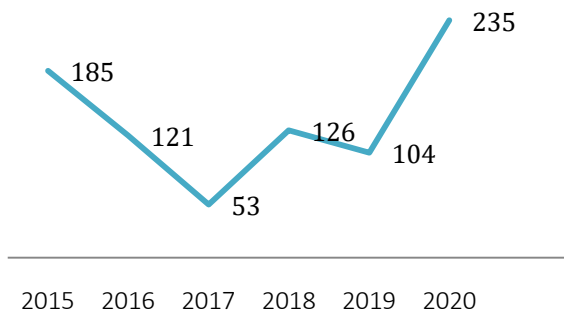


opposition.

From January 1, 2009 to July 31, 2020, at least 572 people have been reported forcibly disappeared by security forces and law enforcement agencies in Bangladesh.

**Journalist Harassment Incidents:** Journalists in the country are regular victims of legal harassment, intimidation and assaults by ruling party members, state and non-state actors. Ain-O-Salish Kendra (ASK) has recorded 247 incidents throughout the 12 months of 2020<sup>6</sup> including death threats, torture in custody, false cases, intimidation, death threats, legal harassment, attacks, violence and enforced disappearance. Journalists along with netizens do not get support from police and security agencies, as state actors are also involved in harassment and intimidation.

Figure 12: Journalist Harassment Incidents 2015-20



**Use of Digital Security Act (DSA):** Hastily in December 2018, less than a month for the upcoming 11th parliamentary elections<sup>7</sup> the draconian cyber security law was hastily passed without much opposition. The DSA was first drafted in 2016. The controversial section 57 of the ICT act has now been replaced in a new label of digital security act, 2018.<sup>8</sup> Earlier, the draconian information and communication technology act (ICT) was and still an issue since it

<sup>6</sup> [Journalist Harassment \(Jan-Dec 2020\) | Ain o Salish Kendra\(ASK\) \(askbd.org\)](https://www.ainosalishkendra.org/journalist-harassment-jan-dec-2020)

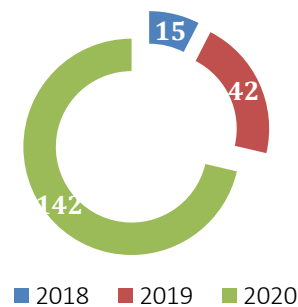
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/bangladesh-national-election-2018/results>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/bangladesh-muzzling-dissent-online/>

was adopted in 2006. This is the law which has been in discussions and debated. Especially the controversial section 57 of this act is interpreted as a hanging noose around the neck to free speech on digital platforms. Namely the online web portals, news portals, blogs, and of course, social media platforms. It was exercised to suppress freedom of speech of the citizens and that also for the simplest (and allegedly in many cases, unreasonable) reasons.

The DSA passed on 8 October 2018, is even more repressive than the ICT act that is replaced<sup>9</sup>. The new act is deeply problematic for three major reasons: ambiguous formulation of multiple sections that are vague that they may lead to criminalising of legitimate expression of opinions or thoughts; broad powers granted to authorities which are not clearly defined; and provisions which allow for removal or blocking of content and the seizure/ search of devices without sufficient safeguards. For an example is section 21 of the act, which criminalises "propaganda or campaign" against "the spirit of liberation war", and "the father of the nation, national anthem and national flag"; terms which are so vague that they may be used to restrict free speech.

Number of DSA Cases 2018-2020



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/bangladesh-muzzling-dissent-online/>

## Chapter VI

### ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AND CSOs

*Parliamentarians in national SDGs mechanism and Review process & CSOs in implementation, progress and Monitoring focusing goal 16*

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#### 7.1 Role of Parliamentarians in national SDGs mechanism and Review process

Government had disseminated responsibilities and designated ministries to take care of particular sections in a five-year plan and involved parliamentarians with the process. Ministries like Economic Relations Division (ERD), Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Local Government to carry out the duties.

#### Institutionalizing SDGs implementation

A high powered Inter-Ministerial Committee on SDGs Monitoring and Implementation has been formed with the Principal Coordinator (SDGs Affairs) in the Prime Minister's Office as the Chair to coordinate SDGs monitoring and implementation. The Committee comprises of Secretaries from 20 Ministries/ Divisions; and the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission is the secretariat of the committee which coordinates implementation at the policy level along with monitoring and reporting SDGs attainment status. The Committee has completed the task of priority setting and contextualising global goals with the national ambitions and the ministries have identified relevant goals and targets and reflected these in their respective sector plans

as well as in their annual performance appraisals (APAs).

#### SDGs mapping

Since the targets of SDGs cover multiple ministries/divisions of the government, they are jointly responsible for attaining a particular target. In order to delineate the responsibilities of different ministries/divisions to each of the targets, a mapping has been done to identify relevant ministries/divisions by goal and associated target. The mapping exercise has assigned the lead role in attaining a target to a particular ministry/division or organisation which is supported in most cases by a co lead ministry/division. All other ministries/divisions which have a stake in a particular target are grouped under associate ministries/divisions. The SDG mapping is done in the action plan format that identifies the actions during the plan period, existing policy instruments and proposed global indicators for performance measurement.

#### 7.2 Role of CSOs in implementation, progress and Monitoring focusing goal 16

Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations were involved by the government that NGO can help executing SDG in root level and both NGO and CSOs can provide alternative sources of data. A plan to develop GO-NGO relationship to work together to achieve the goal was taken.

The first initiative for SDG implementation was mainstreaming the SDGs into the context of Bangladesh. After contextualizing the goal, the GoB had taken up a 7th five-year plan to achieve SDGs and assigned ministries in particular sections in order to achieve the best results. For example, to achieve the goal of clean water and sanitation GoB involved Ministries like Local Government Division and Water Resources. In 2015 GoB formed an Inter-Ministerial Committee on “SDG monitoring and Implementation” consisting of 20 Secretaries lead by the Chief Coordinator. GoB had held a survey to assess how much funding it needs to implement SDGs and also introduced an independent development finance assessment with a title “Strengthening Finance for the 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and SDGs in Bangladesh”.

An interest was expressed among NGOs, CSOs and GO to work together to achieve SDGs. In 2018 SDG Implementation Review (SIR) was held

with GO and development partners where NGOs shared their thought on the progress of SDG implementation in Bangladesh. Under the circumstances of increased illicit flow of finance (IFF), Bangladesh became the first country in South Asia to adopt Money Laundering Prevention Act (MLPA) in 2002 and enacted a Money Laundering Prevention Ordinance in 2009 with was replaced by MLPA 2012.



## Chapter VII

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*For National Government, Regional and Global institutions*

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Bangladesh has shown notable achievements in different SDG targets and indicators. However, there are very little progress made on the targets under SDG goal 16 and relevant targets from other goals under umbrella term of goal 16 plus. Therefore, few recommendations are made below for Bangladesh government and Regional and Global Institutions.

### **For National Government**

*Reducing Inequality, gender inequality and gender based violence should be key focus-* If economic growth is not shared equally and fairly, if the resources are not distributed properly, sustainable economic growth is not possible; rather it creates other types of economic crises. Development and income inequality is pretty much evident in Bangladesh, which has been a challenge for sustainable development. So, to ensure proper and adequate implementation of SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, regional disparities issues must be addressed. Moreover, all sorts of gender inequality and gender based violence should be addressed and legal instruments should be applied focusing on SDGs goal (5.2) Violence against women and girls, (16.2) Violence against children, (5.1) Discrimination against women and girls

*Illicit finance flow loopholes should be stopped-* It is almost beyond the means of Bangladesh to ensure the necessary finance to achieve the SDGs. Internal or domestic resources can play a

vital role in this regard. The trend of illicit financial flows traps the Government in a shortfall situation in terms of domestic resource mobilization. The current money laundering laws and policies are not able to control these incidents. Because it is impossible for Bangladesh to stop illicit flows alone, global coordination and support is needed to control the situation, encourage Government to stop tax dodging by MNCs and illegal mobilizing of resources.

*Downward accountability, addressing corruption and building democratic institutions is a must to achieve SDGs-* Government has prepared a development and progress report for donors and other development partners. Bangladesh has also prepared its Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2017 on SDGs. But at the national level, Government has little interest in showing accountability to its own people. Ultimately, accountability toward local government, the media, civil society and the private sector are also important for the country to achieve the SDGs, helping resource mobilization through accelerated citizen initiatives in this regard. The spirit of the liberation war and the people's fight for freedom was democracy, socialism, secularism and nationalism. But unfortunately, Bangladesh seems to be leaving these spirits continuously. The reality of free and fair elections, free media, and an independent judiciary, rule of law, autonomous local government and independence of different

constitutional commissions is a bit far from the desired level. This situation will surely hamper accountability for development. Bangladesh has a multi-driver development society; to achieve development goals those multi drivers should get the opportunity to contribute for which democratic institutions should be more active and must be correctly in place.

*Strengthening the Judiciary for ensuring Justice for all-* It would be better increasing transparency and access to information makes the judiciary more independent, effective, and inspires confidence from and adherence by its citizens in its judgments and judicial institutions. It can also have a powerful positive effect on external perceptions of a country's judicial system.

### **Regional and Global Institutions**

Alongside National government's initiative regional institutions can strengthen the partnership with the government to collaborate for ensuring the availability of concrete protection measures for journalists, bloggers and HRDs identified as at risk of violence, tailored to the individual's specific needs. Provide training to law enforcement authorities in the safety of journalists, bloggers and HRDs, including how to ensure the protection of those at risk.

Regional level organizations can work together to foster a standard and quality education system, in terms of accessibility, quality, and career oriented skill based education. That will ensure employment and entrepreneurship skills for financial solvency, social mobility and reduced inequality. For these School-level management and teacher training should be improved, coordinated and monitored.

Regional and Global Cooperation needed for Safe Migration and to reduce child & women trafficking and sex slavery.

Moreover, a stronger commitment and urgent action are required from all to combat sexual and gender-based violence. UN and development partners should commit to work hand in hand with the government of Bangladesh to do more to stop sexual and gender-based violence.

SDG's implementation relies on domestic resource mobilization which requires action to stop loopholes and so-called tax havens for money laundering activities, which should be done through a global coordination system through the UN or through inter-state action. CSOs are demanding UN Member States take action to upgrade the UN Tax Committee into a UN Tax Commission, and to prepare Internal Bank and Tax Transparency laws and rules that reduce the practice of "Race to Bottom" by countries seeking to attract foreign capital.



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