

Quest for Inclusive Transformation of Bangladesh WHO NOT TO BE LEFT BEHIND

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ

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Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), established in 1993, is a civil society initiative to advance the cause of a participatory, inclusive and accountable development process in Bangladesh. Key area of CPD's activism is to conduct policy research and organise multistakeholder dialogues to address developmental policy issues that are critical to national, regional and global interests.

CPD's research areas include – macroeconomic performance analysis, poverty and inequality, agriculture, trade, regional cooperation and global integration, infrastructure and enterprise development, climate change and environment, development governance, policies and institutions, and issues related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. CPD-led two ongoing global initiatives are: *LDC IV Monitor* and *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals*. For more details, please see: www.cpd.org.bd



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ

The Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh is a civil society initiative, taken at the national front, to contribute to the implementation of globally adopted *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. The Platform was formally launched in June 2016, at the initiative of a group of individuals; the objective has been to track the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh and enhance accountability in its implementation process. The concept of the Platform was inspired by the participatory and multi-stakeholder approach promoted as a vital element for success in the attainment of all the SDGs. The Platform currently includes more than 70 Partner Organisations working on SDG issues across the country. For more details, please see: www.bdplatform4sdgs.net

Preface

The core aspiration of the “2030 Agenda” of the United Nations is epitomised by the powerful statement “leave no one behind.” However, operationalisation of this fundamental pledge of the new global agenda within contextual realities of a particular country turned out to be quite problematic. Efforts to identify relevant social groups and communities that are “left behind” are fraught with a myriad analytical and empirical challenges. Conceptual ambiguity is pervasive and an agreed methodology is absent. Enquiries are frequently impeded by data deficits. Indeed, choices to be made in this line of investigation are often norms- and value-driven. Thus, the quest for identifying the furthest behind is crucial, but also a testing one.

The present research initiative is an inspired intellectual venture towards identifying the “left behind” people in Bangladesh. There is an underbelly of the decent growth performance of Bangladesh. The observed economic growth has been regrettably coupled with a growing number of disadvantaged and marginalised people. The vulnerabilities of these people emanate from factors such as economic status, life cycle, location, gender, physical challenges and social stigma. Taking note of these and other aspects, the research team has developed an analytical framework for identifying the vulnerable groups in a country and empirically tested in the context of Bangladesh by constructing a “vulnerability index” using disaggregated data from national survey.

The research findings also reveal that asset inequality in Bangladesh is increasing faster than income inequality. Education and health outcomes of rural people are still lower than those of urban counterparts. Notwithstanding the closing gender gap, in many areas women seriously suffer from lack of access to productive assets and human development inputs. A diverse group of socially excluded communities has very little access to basic social services. Religious and ethnic minorities face unfair treatment from the state.

The research findings provide good pointers to the policymakers to take actions for mainstreaming the vulnerable individuals and communities through promulgation of new legal and regulatory measures, by allocating necessary budgetary resources by making the safety net programmes more efficiently targeted and creating more space for participation and voice of the vulnerable people. Fuller policy delivery also demands social mobilisation in favour of these vulnerable people as well as change of norms, values and mind-set. In that sense, addressing the vulnerability of those

left behind in the traditional socio-economic growth process is a political economic task which entails change in balance of social forces.

The present piece of research is a pioneering one of its kind – not only in the context of the country, but also globally. The study, to a certain degree, benchmarks the state of those left behind in Bangladesh. The analytical framework and methodological approach deployed in this research may be adapted in the context of other developing countries.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) is proud to have undertaken this study. This is CPD's humble contribution towards taking everybody along in the journey towards inclusive transformation of Bangladesh. We are pleased to share an advance copy of the Executive Summary of the full report on the occasion of the *Citizen's Conference 2017: SDG Implementation in Bangladesh*, convened by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Dhaka
28 November 2017



Debapriya Bhattacharya, PhD
Study Team Leader
and
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The Core Group members of the Platform have provided immense support throughout the process of preparation of this report. I would also like to recall the much-appreciated counsel received from the Advisory Group members of the Platform.

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CPD as the Secretariat of the Platform played a major role in organising and managing every activity the Platform has commenced in connection with this report. I would like to particularly thank my colleagues *Dr Fahmida Khatun*, Executive Director, CPD; *Ms Anisatul Fatema Yousuf*, Director, Dialogue and Communication, CPD and Coordinator of the Citizen's Platform; and *Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem*, Research Director, CPD for their significant contributions. Special recognition is due to *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Distinguished Fellow, CPD and Core Group Member of the Citizen's Platform for his constructive and insightful guidance.

Within CPD, I would like to recognise the significant contribution of a number of members who contributed in preparing the report. Valuable research support was received from *Ms Lumbini Barua*, Programme Associate; *Ms Sushmita Islam*, former Dialogue Associate; *Mr Mahir Musleh*, former Programme Associate; and *Ms Sonia*

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Dhaka
November 2017

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Chapter I: About the Report

This report, titled *Quest for Inclusive Transformation of Bangladesh: Who Not to Be Left Behind*, was inspired by citizens' aspirations to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Bangladesh. Having made significant progress on the preceding Millennium Development Goals, Bangladesh has already demonstrated strong commitment towards attainment of the SDGs. The Government of Bangladesh recently submitted a voluntary national review of the country's progress at the High-Level Political Forum of the United Nations 2017. The present report can be deemed an independent contribution by civil society that reflects citizens' perspectives on SDG delivery.

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, the world embarked on a 15-year journey with ambitions to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, ensure equal opportunities and dignity, and tackle climate change, among other objectives. At the heart of the agenda lies a commitment to "leave no one behind" (henceforth LNOB) in the process of development, which was initially suggested by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda as one of five transformative shifts that are priorities going forward (United Nations, 2013). It is found several times in the 2030 Agenda alongside a special recommendation to prioritise the "furthest behind."

As much as the visionary LNOB pledge appears to be at the core of SDG delivery, what it really entails to have a practical delivery mechanism that favours the "furthest behind" remains ambiguous. The High-Level Panel, the 2030 Agenda, and subsequent policy statements have only loosely specified the criteria for identifying systemically marginalised groups. While criteria like income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic locations are explicitly stated, the mention of "other characteristics" allows for flexibility in national and local contexts. To date, there have been few attempts to contextualise the commitment to LNOB within Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh's voluntary national review mentions "marginalised" and "vulnerable" segments, albeit superficially and without providing a comprehensive list of criteria to define communities and groups that are most at risk of being left behind. The present report thus aspires to fill some of the gaps by taking on the difficult, yet crucial, task of unpacking the commitment to LNOB in a country context, and in this way contributes to an unbiased review of the state of SDG delivery in Bangladesh. Such a review can be considered the first of its kind.

The rest of the report comprises four standalone but interconnected chapters – the themes of which were derived from multiple expert consultation processes – that interpret the concept of and investigate the commitment to LNOB in Bangladesh. Chapter II provides a conceptual and analytical framework to contextualise LNOB in Bangladesh. Chapter III considers the availability of official

data at disaggregated levels in Bangladesh for SDG indicators in view of the identified vulnerability criteria. The chapter also empirically assesses vulnerable groups' situations through a benchmarking exercise and the construction of a vulnerability index. Taking cue from the quantitative assessment of that chapter, Chapter IV provides a qualitative assessment of the needs of various vulnerable groups by means of conducting various focus group discussions (FGDs) with vulnerable groups along with a literature review to gather insight regarding the sources and forms of their vulnerabilities as well as possible solutions. The chapter outlines commonalities and differences, which help to link the groups to the SDGs. Finally, Chapter V reviews the national policy framework to locate gaps and suggest policy options for the implementation of an inclusive, transformative agenda that leaves no one behind.

The report is not devoid of limitations. Evidently, the dearth of official data at the desired level of disaggregation undermined the assessment of many vulnerable groups (which in itself demonstrated their systemic marginalisation). Constraints related to time and resources restricted the number of FGDs that could be held. Multiple layers of vulnerabilities, as originally conceived, could not be adequately captured through the quantitative and qualitative assessments. Also, the policy review was unlikely to have been exhaustive. Many specific policies and programmes, especially implementation status of policies that are already in place, could not be analysed in great depth.

Given these limitations, this report intends to formulate guiding principles to realise the commitment to LNOB on the ground. It aspires to take the first step in bringing the visionary LNOB pledge to the core of SDG delivery in Bangladesh. It aims to steer the debate on how to include vulnerable groups and marginalised communities within the purview of policy. It expects to bring the people who are most at risk of being left behind to the forefront of mainstream political agendas. Finally, the report hopes to shape future research agendas and inspire members of civil society and academia who are engaged in policy advocacy.

Chapter II: Interpreting the Concept of Leave No One Behind

Conceptually, the LNOB pledge is broad-based, which makes contextualisation essential with respect to countries, localities and sectors. Contextualisation involves interpreting the pledge in a manner fit to put it into practice. The 2030 Agenda indicates that LNOB refers to bringing equality among and within countries and population groups (United Nations, 2015). In the literature that has followed, LNOB has been framed from goal-based and human rights perspectives, as well as from a macro perspective, be it the country, local or sectoral level. Melamed (2015, p.01) interprets the concept of LNOB to mean that “no goal should be met unless it is met for everyone,” which implies that rights and opportunities to live a fulfilling life with dignity should be equal for everyone. Stuart et al. (2016) interpret LNOB to refer to whether a person's inherent or perceived characteristics exclude him or her from the opportunities

enjoyed by others, with the broader idea being that the inclusion of groups that have been excluded or overlooked by progress is necessary. The authors also concur that the groups being left behind are different in different countries.

One novel feature of the present report is its choice to use the terms “vulnerability” and “vulnerable” when determining who is being left behind in Bangladesh.

In the existing literature, different terms have been used to refer to individuals and groups at risk of being left behind. The most widely used appears to be “marginalised”, followed by “excluded”, “poorest”, “disadvantaged” and “discriminated.” The term “vulnerable” has rarely been used – there are occasional mentions of “vulnerable groups” in the 2030 Agenda and a few other related documents. While their essence may be somewhat similar, these terms have nuanced definitions. “Marginalised” is defined as “when others treat (a person, group, or concept) as insignificant or peripheral” (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017a), while “excluded” means “to deny (someone) access to or bar (someone) from a place, group, or privilege” (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017a). “Vulnerable”, on the other hand, refers to individuals “in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect” or, more broadly, because of who they are, where they come from and what they believe (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017b). The term can embody defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risks, shocks and stress. In the literature, it has been most used in reference to poverty, urban poor communities, environmental issues and climate change, and natural disasters.

Keeping in mind the issue of identification for the purpose of the report, it was imperative to scope “vulnerability” with an operational definition.

This definition of “vulnerability” needs to, by and large, absorb the other more widely used terms. The present report, in this context, proposes the following definition *vulnerability is an individual’s or group’s susceptibility to risks in terms of exposure and adaptive capacity, while the state of vulnerability is the condition of being pressured into becoming marginalised, discriminated or excluded and eventually becoming deprived or left furthest behind* (adapted from Cardona et al. [2012], Chambers [1989] and Ahmed et al. [2011]). Considering Bangladesh’s socio-economic, political, cultural, demographic and environmental divides, the term and definition should be helpful in contextualising the commitment to LNOB within the country.

A prerequisite for the identification of vulnerable groups in any circumstance is data disaggregated at levels that facilitate actions in line with the commitment to LNOB.

While the need for disaggregated data is well-established, practical implications on the ground have been little discussed. The 2030 Agenda is revolutionary in its uptake of the human rights-based approach to systemic change. This approach involves a data disaggregation strategy that conforms to non-discrimination and equality principles. In addition, many pertinent issues need to be considered, particularly ensuring global comparability while capturing unique country-specific information,

harnessing the potential of big data, ensuring protection of individual privacy, and develop the capacities of statistical systems through statistical integration. Disaggregated data are also crucial for measuring incidence, intensity and progress as well as designing policies and actions, including follow-up and review processes.

In addition to identifying the vulnerable groups, it is also critical to make needs assessments for policy formulation.

In this context, needs refer to access issues related to basic service delivery in areas such as hunger and nutrition, health and sanitation, home and shelter, quality education and skills development, safe infrastructure, employment and living wage, social exclusion, social and cultural recognition, and civic rights. The Leave No One Behind Partnership (2017, p.03) stresses that “while basic needs and delivery of services are essential for just and equitable implementation of the SDGs, it is also crucial to push for longer-term reform to those social, cultural, legal and regulatory systems, structures and frameworks that can create and perpetuate systematic marginalisation in different countries and communities.” While any assessment of needs would have to follow a bottom-up method like that in the widely applied needs-based approach, the human rights-based approach requires tackling broader societal drivers of vulnerability. The priority should be addressing various sources and forms of vulnerabilities that affect vulnerable groups in intersecting and compounding ways. A poor minority female child with a disability who lives in a rural area may, in theory, be the most vulnerable without adequate access to education, health, infrastructure and the rule of law. Confronting these intersecting vulnerabilities and distinguishing common needs from unique ones is key to the challenge of prioritisation in SDG delivery.

Framing the policy narrative through the prism of LNOB within Bangladesh can be centred on a human rights-based approach to welfare.

According to this approach, a policy framework should be highly contextual instead of a one-size-fits-all model that overlooks national and local realities. What is critical in terms of actions is the balance between universal and targeted measures, which should be complemented by an enabling environment comprised of reformed institutions. An effective enabling environment can be realised by addressing the underlying political, economic, social and environmental impetuses behind prevalent vulnerabilities. Also, the design of policies should be nuanced based on the root causes of vulnerabilities, which include structural impediments, policy distortions and various types of shocks. Finally, a policy framework needs to catalyse a paradigm shift in political, social, cultural and legal norms in order to replace the perpetuation of inequality and social injustice with inclusive transformation.

The present report’s analytical approach was established through a combination of consultations with experts in the field, development practitioners, and in-house researchers from Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and reviewing methodologies of similar studies. One of the key results of these processes was

a set of vulnerability criteria that can help identify vulnerable groups: income, gender, geographic location, life cycle, civil identity, disability, education and skills, health, occupation, religion and ethnicity, sexual orientation and shock-induced vulnerability (Figure 1). These are the core criteria used to identify and assess vulnerable groups in succeeding chapters. The criteria may be used across countries for LNOB assessment for SDG implementation.

Figure 1: Vulnerability Criteria



Source: Authors' elaboration.

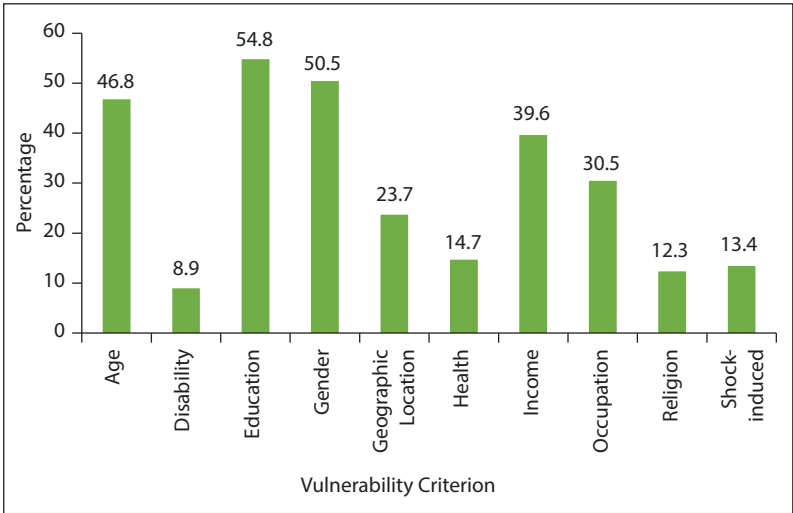
Chapter III: Identifying Vulnerable Groups and Benchmarking Exercise

The identification of vulnerable groups in Bangladesh is crucial to realising the 2030 Agenda at the national level. This chapter focuses on such identification and assesses vulnerable groups' current situations as part of a benchmarking exercise. Data for SDG indicators were collected for vulnerable groups as identified in previous chapter. Moreover, secondary data were derived from national-level surveys – the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, Sample

Vital Registration System, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, Labour Force Survey and Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey – and international sources, specifically the World Bank’s World Development Indicators and the United Nations Statistics Division. In some cases, values for indicators were estimated using unit-level data collected by national-level surveys.

Data analysis involved comparing indicators at the disaggregated level with indicators at the national level, which are considered benchmarks, and thereby identifying the groups that are furthest behind. Then, using unit-level data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010, vulnerable groups were identified (Figure 2), and a vulnerability index was constructed based on principal component analysis, so that the vulnerability criteria contributing most to vulnerability in Bangladesh could be assessed. Using such an index based on a suite of indicators, various components of overall vulnerability can be consolidated into a standardised framework that would be helpful when making comparisons. Challenges in index construction include the selection of appropriate indicators, the transformation and aggregation of indicators, and data availability and quality. As part of data analysis, bivariate analysis was applied to assess the relationship between income vulnerability and the vulnerability score, which was derived by adding up the scores for all of the vulnerability criteria except income. Finally, the impact of the vulnerability score on income vulnerability was examined using a logistic regression model.

Figure 2: Share of Population by Vulnerability Criterion



Source: Authors’ estimations using unit-level data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010.

The gender gap persists though has been decreasing in certain cases. While it is no secret that women are susceptible to vulnerability in Bangladesh, the

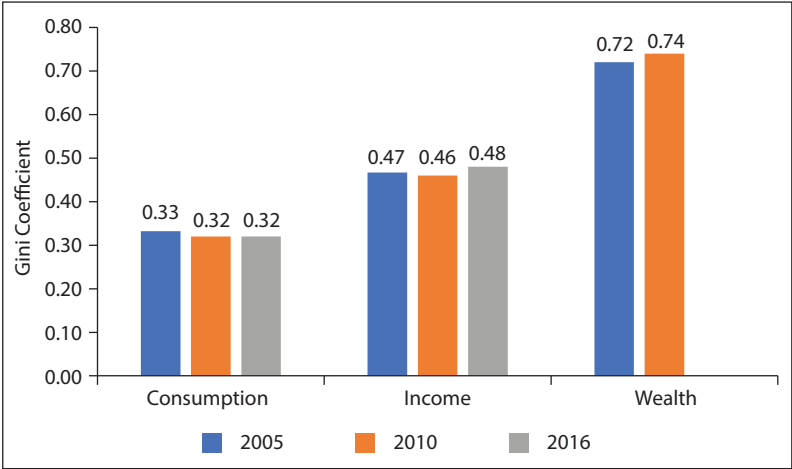
female population is doing better than the national average in some cases, such as prevalence of stunting among children under five years, hepatitis B and frequency of and time lost due to occupational injuries. Nonetheless, immense disparities between the male and female populations are observed in five SDG indicators, including average hourly earnings. The gender gap appears to be decreasing over time in some indicators such as proportion of adults with a bank account or with a mobile-money service provider while the gap seems to be increasing in six indicators.

Disparities exist between rural and urban areas, while Barisal is the worst-performing division. The rural population continues to be left behind, with major differences between rural and urban populations being seen in 13 SDG indicators such as prevalence of undernourishment and the under-five mortality rate. Disparities have increased in six indicators, including maternal mortality ratio, and decreased in five indicators. At the division level, Barisal is faring worse than the national average in 15 indicators, followed by Sylhet in 14 indicators, and then Rangpur in 13 indicators.

Regions such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts are prone to vulnerability. The average wealth of households in the Chittagong Hill Tracts is much lower compared to the rural, urban and national averages. The literacy rate of rural households in the region, though above the rural average, is lower than the national level.

Income and wealth inequalities are on the rise. In Bangladesh, income inequality is higher than consumption inequality, while wealth inequality is higher than income inequality (Figure 3). In terms of Gini coefficients, both

Figure 3: Consumption, Income and Wealth Inequalities Expressed in terms of Gini Coefficients



Source: Authors' estimations using data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey data.

income and wealth inequalities have increased in recent years. Moreover, income and wealth inequalities appear to be greater in urban areas, while consumption inequality seems to be increasing in rural areas and decreasing in urban areas. In addition, vast disparities exist between households with the lowest wealth status and those with the highest wealth status. In most cases, the gap has increased, with very few instances of gaps decreasing over time.

Individuals with no or little education find fewer opportunity for decent works. Uneducated and relatively less-educated individuals are lagging behind economically in Bangladesh, with unemployment being higher among the relatively more-educated population. Finally, based on the three indicators on occupation, individuals working in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and services are found to be being left behind.

Persons with disability perform below average in almost all cases. The wealth of households with a disabled household head is lower in all benchmarks except in rural average. Moreover, all segments of the persons with disability have lower literacy rates and poorer performance by education level compared to the rest of the population of Bangladesh.

Religious and ethnic minority groups are faring worse. The gap between Muslims and non-Muslims (who are religious minorities in Bangladesh) has slightly increased in terms of the under-five mortality rate and neonatal mortality rate. Regarding minority ethnic groups for which disaggregated data are available for two SDG indicators, the gap between minority ethnic groups and the majority Bengalis is narrow with respect to participation in formal education and training. The gap is wider for participation in non-formal education and training and the percentage of the population achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional literacy.

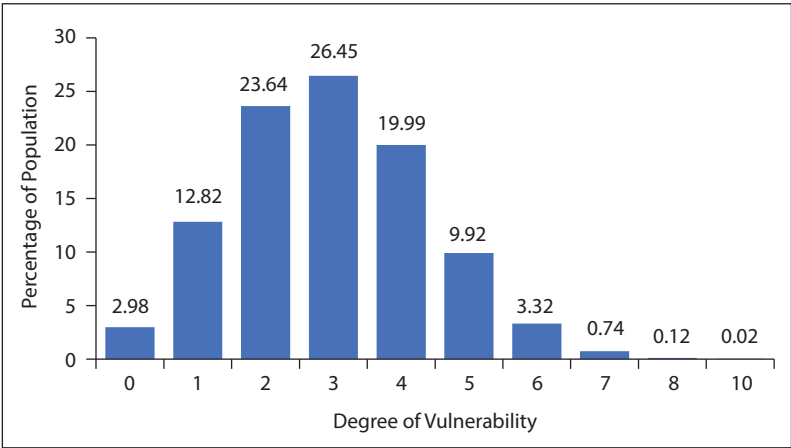
Many vulnerable groups are not being counted in official statistics. For this chapter, data for 75 SDG indicators were collected, but disaggregated data were only available for 37 indicators. Notably, disaggregated data for three vulnerability criteria – civil identity, health and sexual orientation – were unavailable. In some cases, data may not be readily available, but estimations, which are inherently less precise, are possible. The elderly, indigenous groups, ethnic and racial minorities, and transgender people face the risk of being left behind because their statuses are not reported in national household surveys, and thus not captured by official statistics.

Income poverty contributes significantly towards vulnerability. According to the vulnerability index that was constructed, income poverty, occupation, educational attainment and age are highly correlated with higher vulnerability.

People who meet more vulnerability criteria are more vulnerable in terms of income. According to the bivariate analysis that was applied to assess the

relationship between income vulnerability and the vulnerability score (see distribution in Figure 4), people who meet more vulnerability criteria are likely to be more vulnerable in terms of income. Indeed, the result of the Pearson's Chi-square test suggests that there is a significant association between income vulnerability and the vulnerability score. Moreover, according to the logistic regression model that examined the impact of the vulnerability score on income vulnerability, people are more vulnerable in terms of income given a higher vulnerability score.

Figure 4: Distribution of the Population by Vulnerability Score



Source: Authors' estimations using data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010.

Empirical evidence confirms that many vulnerable groups are being systematically left behind. Taking into consideration the findings of this chapter, it is crucial to improve the socio-economic conditions of the identified vulnerable groups in order to progress towards sustainable development that realises the commitment to LNOB. It is also crucial to ensure data availability and disaggregation to track the situations of vulnerable groups.

Chapter IV: Assessing the Needs of Vulnerable Groups in Bangladesh

This chapter explores the needs of 10 vulnerable groups in Bangladesh and related challenges and opportunities. The groups assessed are: Children; Youth; the Urdu-speaking community; the Rohingya population; People with Disabilities; Women; Char and Haor communities; Adivasi communities; the Dalit community; and the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer) community. Analysis is supported by the existing literature – national-level surveys, reports from international sources and journal articles – and inputs from FGDs held with representatives of the vulnerable groups, researchers, and partner organisations of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs,

Bangladesh. These FGDs provided an opportunity to gain first-hand insight into the needs and challenges of vulnerable groups. They were primarily guided by three questions. What are the core vulnerabilities faced by a group? What are the sources of these vulnerabilities? And which policy interventions could help overcome those?

Vulnerability is most often associated with poverty, but can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenceless in the face of risk, shock or stress. Contextualising vulnerabilities remains a challenge, especially given the pervasiveness of interlinkages that make it difficult to identify key channels when choosing policy interventions. In Bangladesh, many of the challenges and uncertainties faced by vulnerable groups have compounded over time as a result of socio-economic discrimination and institutional apathy.

Vulnerable groups differ in their exposure to risk based on factors such as their age, gender, social group, ethnicity, sexual orientation and caste. In addition, political, socio-economic, and cultural factors determine these groups' levels of vulnerability and capacities to resist, cope with and recover. Six core areas of need relating to vulnerable groups were identified. Addressing them would bode well for SDG delivery in Bangladesh, especially given the overlapping nature of many of the challenges faced by these groups.

First, the lack of access to quality education is a major barrier confronted by vulnerable groups in Bangladesh (SDG 4). Barriers in accessing education perpetuate critical vulnerabilities, such as child labour and early marriages, and often lead to enduring economic, social, and political disparities. Such barriers are particularly pertinent for the Char and Haor communities – owing to their remote and isolated locations – as well as Adivasi communities, for whom geographic disadvantages are coupled with language barriers that often contribute to high levels of illiteracy. Children from the Dalit community face socio-economic barriers stemming from traditional and cultural norms that often tie them to hazardous jobs in the informal sector, which further exacerbate their social immobility. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education can address inter-generational cycles of inequality and improve not only children's lives, but also entire communities.

“Options for mandatory religious studies in the mainstream education system have provisions for only four religions. Our children are forced to choose among those four and are at risk of confusing their ideologies that they learn at home.”

– Plainland Adivasi, 27 April 2017, CPD Dialogue Room

Furthermore, noticeable shortcomings in the quality of educational facilities, as well as gaps in information and communications technology training within the educational system, in both rural and urban areas preclude adequately

preparing students for the job market, and thus achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the country (SDG 8). Additionally, challenges lie in providing equal access to educational facilities for children and people with disabilities. Very few schools, if any, take adequate safety precautions, including installing toilets, and apply accessibility measures such as ramps. Improving the quality of educational facilities, specifically by training for teachers, making schools more accessible for students and integrating Adivasi languages into national educational curricula, can significantly boost empowerment.

Second, vulnerable groups in Bangladesh are plagued by wide infrastructure gaps (SDG 9). This challenge appears to be especially acute for Adivasi communities as well as the Char and Haor communities, which typically reside in remote and isolated areas that lack basic infrastructure including proper roads, access to transportation and healthcare facilities, and public utilities such as electricity. Many vulnerable groups residing in both rural and urban areas face such infrastructure gaps. Moreover, people with disabilities face multiple levels of infrastructural inequity. Significant changes to approaches in infrastructure and public service delivery are needed to facilitate greater inclusion of these people. Importantly, the Dalit community's low socio-economic and political status restricts them to living under precarious conditions, with limited or no access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

“If you follow the trail of light and find yourself at a crossroads between two villages – one with lights and one left in the dark, you will know that an Adivasi village is where the lights are off.”

– Plainland Adivasi, 27 April 2017, CPD Dialogue Room

The Rohingya population residing in temporary settlements also live in dire conditions, with very limited infrastructure to support them. In order to address these issues, efforts to strengthen infrastructure and technologies, investment in building climate-resilient infrastructure, and provision of livelihood support such as health services and legal education are vital.

Third, social discrimination exacerbates the challenges and risks faced by many vulnerable groups in Bangladesh (SDG 10). It encompasses discrimination against a person's age, gender, ethnic identity and socio-economic status in situations such as access to land, housing, education and healthcare. Women, minority ethnic groups, and the LGBTQ community experience social exclusion on multiple levels. Ubiquitous cases of gender-based violence and violence against members of the LGBTQ community remain acute challenges. While the Dalit community is subject to systematic discrimination tied to traditional and cultural norms, the Urdu-speaking community faces similar social exclusion and often lives in the very poor conditions of Bihari camps.

“Female children with disabilities are even more deprived of getting education, especially those who need assistance to move around. As she grows up, the matter of physically assisting her, taking her to school and using school facilities becomes more and more sensitive.”

– Person with disability, 27 April 2017, NFOWD Meeting Room

Moreover, land confiscation, eviction and attacks on Adivasi communities, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, have increased in recent years, with women and children being especially vulnerable. Enabling participation in political, civic and cultural activities can promote inclusion. Fostering an enabling environment involves removing barriers – including certain laws and policies – and changing deep-rooted discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards many vulnerable groups. Successfully addressing these challenges would entail progress in achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls (SDG 5) as well as promoting peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).

Fourth, shock-induced vulnerabilities are major problems for specific vulnerable groups in Bangladesh (SDG 13). The Char and Haor communities tend to experience more climate-induced disasters due to their geographic locations. These communities primarily rely on agriculture, fisheries and livestock for their livelihoods, so climate change, coupled with a general lack of government assistance, makes them particularly vulnerable. Adivasi communities also face large risks. Despite their stark vulnerability to natural disasters, they are often left out of government plans for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. In addition to promoting land rights for these vulnerable groups, efforts to strengthen climate-resilient infrastructure and provide livelihood support such as health services and legal education remain core needs.

Fifth, insecurity is a prime source of vulnerability for many vulnerable groups in Bangladesh (SDG 16). Various forms of insecurity hinder promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and providing access to justice for all.

“You look at Sajek Valley and see nature’s beauty, we look at Sajek Valley and see man’s cruelty – what is now one of the country’s prime tourist destinations was once home to many locals who were usurped and brought to the brink of homelessness.”

– Plainland Adivasi, 27 April 2017, CPD Dialogue Room

Adivasi communities face a marked degree of vulnerability, owing to the growing incidence of land confiscation, eviction, and attacks on their communities. Sexual and gender-based violence is rife, especially against

Adivasi women and people with disabilities. For the LGBTQ community, identifying sexual orientation can be life-threatening. The prevalence of early marriages is another form of insecurity, especially for girls, since they often lead to disadvantages, deprivations and increased risk of domestic violence. Moreover, the Rohingya population living in temporary settlements remain particularly vulnerable to high levels of violence, abuse and exploitation. The issue of religious extremism remains prominent in light of recent terrorist attacks in the country, especially among the youth demographic. The key to overcoming these forms of insecurity lies in securing vulnerable groups and ensuring their political inclusion, which necessitates a paradigm shift to tackle the pervasive discrimination that they face.

Sixth, effectively addressing the needs of vulnerable groups requires higher quality data and increased data disaggregation (SDG 17). The lack of statistics and data on vulnerable groups is a significant challenge going forward. Pervasive shortcomings make it difficult to effectively plan and implement policies and programmes and lead to discrepancies in targeted interventions.

“There is no consensus on the number of Dalit people living in the country. The official statistic is seriously understated.”

– Dalit, 24 April 2017, CPD Dialogue Room

Proper census data are essential in supporting the implementation of development initiatives and monitoring progress for specific vulnerable groups.

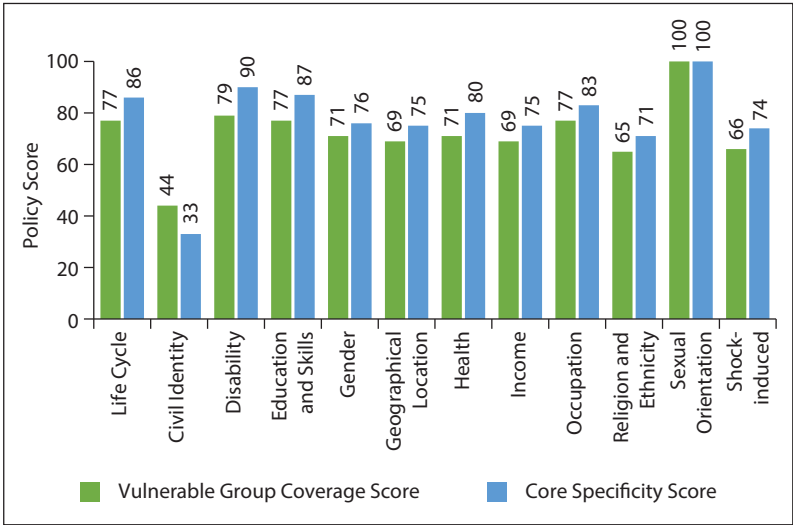
Chapter V: Assessing the National Policy Framework towards Addressing Vulnerabilities in Bangladesh

In analysing the Government of Bangladesh’s policy documents, which include strategies, plans and acts, this chapter highlights the extent to which policies mention and address the vulnerability criteria and needs identified in previous chapters. Based on the EquiFrame, an analytical framework developed by Amin et al. (2011), a data extraction matrix was developed to assess how each policy document addresses vulnerable groups. Scoring is based on the number of groups addressed by a policy document (in other words, the inclusiveness of the policy), which is measured by a vulnerable group coverage score and the extent to which these groups are addressed (in other words, whether specific needs are addressed and specific policy measures are outlined), which is measured by a core specificity score. A policy document with a high vulnerable group coverage score covers a wider vulnerable population than one with a low score. Similarly, a document with a high core specificity score includes

more specific policy measures than one with a low score. A total of 124 policy documents were assessed, of which 63 explicitly address vulnerable groups.

Gender- and life cycle-based vulnerable groups are most frequently addressed by policies. Women and children are addressed most frequently in policy documents, while vulnerable groups based on health, civil identity, and education and skills are addressed the least. Apart from transgender, vulnerable groups based on sexual orientation, are left entirely unaddressed. Policies that address senior citizens are the most specific in their approach (excluding the sexual orientation group, which had the highest score but addressed only one group – transgender – and in only one document), while the policies addressing vulnerable groups based on civil identity are the least specific and have the narrowest coverage (Figure 5).

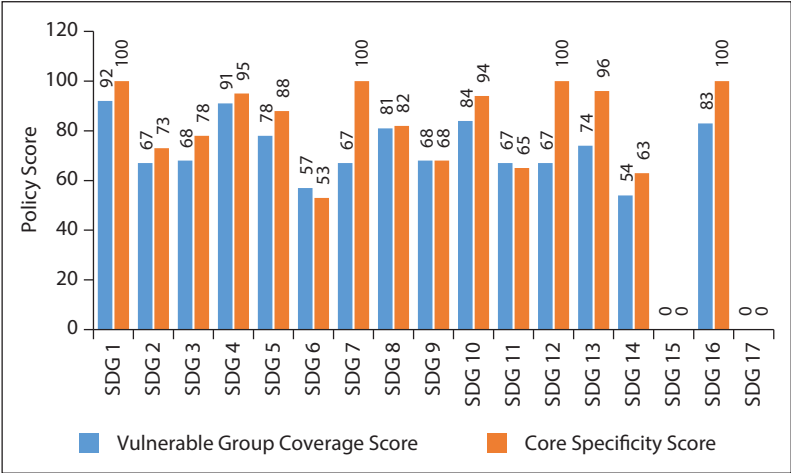
Figure 5: Policy Scores for the Vulnerable Groups



Source: Authors' estimation using vulnerable group coverage score and core specificity score.

Poverty, education and inequalities are adequately addressed by policies. SDGs 1, 4, 10 and 16 have the highest vulnerable group coverage and core specificity scores (Figure 6). The policy documents that address these SDGs widely cover diverse groups of the vulnerable population, and are the most specific in addressing their needs.

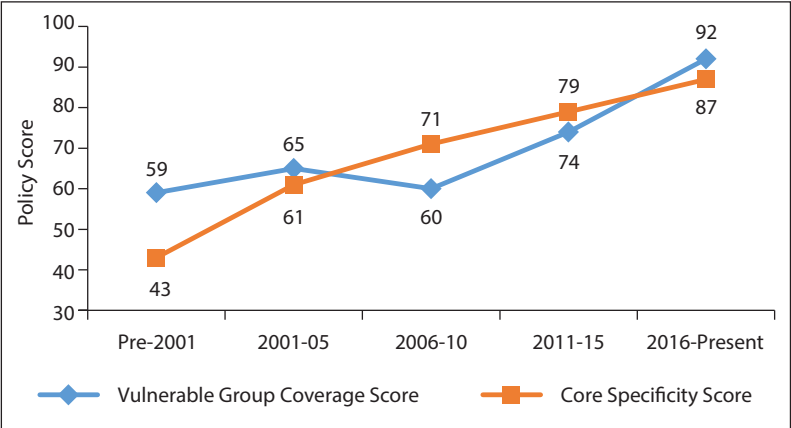
Figure 6: Policy Scores for the SDGs



Source: Authors’ estimation using vulnerable group coverage score and core specificity score.

Sanitation, infrastructure, sustainability and sustainable use of water are inadequately addressed by policies. SDGs 6, 9, 11 and 14 have the lowest vulnerable group coverage and core specificity scores, which indicate that the policy documents which address these SDGs cover the least number of vulnerable groups and do not address their needs specifically. These findings are illustrated in Figure 7, which also illustrates the scores for other SDGs.

Figure 7: Policy Scores Over Time



Source: Authors’ estimation using vulnerable group coverage score and core specificity score.

Over time, wider coverage of vulnerable groups by policies and more specific policy measures are observed. Policy documents from pre-2001 through the early 2000s focus mostly on women, children and the poor. It was not until 2008-09 that policies started to address the needs of other vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, groups based on shock-induced vulnerabilities and minority ethnic groups. Between 2001 and 2005, the policies received an average vulnerable group coverage score of 65 and an average core specificity score of 61, which increased to averages of 74 and 79, respectively, between 2011 and 2015, and then to 92 and 87, respectively, after 2015 (Figure 7).

Policies that address the needs of vulnerable groups based on climate shock-induced vulnerabilities are not proactive. Policies that address these groups are clustered in 12 documents published during the 2009-13 period, with no coverage before 2009. Interestingly, Bangladesh experienced a series of cyclones around this time – cyclones Akash, Aila and Sidr in 2007, cyclone Rashmi in 2008, cyclone Bijli in 2009 and cyclone Viyaru in 2013. These findings suggest that policy responses to climate shocks are reactive rather than proactive.

Delayed implementation of key policies is a major challenge. A large number of policies in major policy documents remain unimplemented. For instance, the National Education Policy 2010 has provisions for eight-year-long primary education, compulsory one-year-long pre-primary classes in all government primary schools, and the establishment of a permanent National Education Commission that have not yet been implemented. Similarly, the National Children Policy 2011 has unimplemented provisions for the appointment of an “Ombudsman for the Children”, the establishment of day-care centres by employers and various arrangements to eliminate child labour.

Certain vulnerable groups remain excluded from policies. While they are mentioned in some policies, vulnerable groups such as the LGBTQ community, workers engaging in hazardous jobs, the Dalit community and other minority ethnic groups, and religious minorities do not have policies that are addressed specifically to them. Existing policies do not always take into account the specific needs of these groups or they are poorly implemented. Groups that are vulnerable to natural disasters due to their geographic location, such as the Char and Haor communities, are not addressed at all by specific policies. In addition to formulating group-specific policies, reviewing and assessing the coverage and performance of existing policies are important.

The absence of need-specific policies perpetuates marginalisation. There is a demonstrable lack of policies targeting vulnerable groups based on civil identity, religion and ethnicity. A significant proportion of Bangladesh's population is made up of minority ethnic groups, specifically Adivasi communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Urdu-speaking community, and religious minorities like animists. In most cases, religion and

ethnicity are two vulnerability criteria that intersect. Group-specific policies for these groups exist, but remain largely unresponsive to their specific needs.

Mainstreaming policies with group-specific measures is needed. Vulnerable groups have ordinary needs, such as economic well-being, health and education, which can be met through mainstream policies that ensure their equal participation in typical activities. In addition to such mainstream policies, mainstreaming policies with some group-specific measures is required. For instance, people with disabilities require measures such as long-term rehabilitation, while those suffering from climate shocks require immediate rehabilitation. Mainstreaming such measures is important for the social safety net, which only covers vulnerable groups based on age, income and disability. Social services based on other factors such as ethnicity and geographic locations largely remain limited.

Access to assets for vulnerable groups needs to be prioritised. Policies need to be formulated in ways that prioritise vulnerable groups in the distribution of public assets and common properties. Uniform inheritance law remains unaddressed in Bangladesh, which hinders women's access to assets. Even though the National Women Development Policy 2008 initially asserted women's equal rights to inherited property, the updated document of 2011 mentions inheritance, but does not indicate anything about the nature of property distribution, and merely iterates women's full control over inherited property.

Coverage and enforcement of anti-discrimination rights must be improved. Even though Article 28(1) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh prohibits discrimination based on race, caste, religion, sex or place of birth, anti-discrimination rights can only be enforced against the government, which means that non-state actors are not obligated to not discriminate. Large segments of the population, particularly vulnerable groups such as the Dalit community, transgender people and people with disabilities, have for years been subjected to discrimination that existing legal remedies cannot adequately address. Therefore, there is a need to address discrimination by both the government and non-state actors by improving coverage and enforcement of anti-discrimination rights. Also, the concept of discrimination should be broadened through reform of the legal system to include disabilities, sexual orientation, age, income and health status.

There is a need for an integrated plan to generate more data and information on vulnerable groups. The availability of high-quality, timely data and information can contribute to the identification of vulnerable groups, assessment of needs, and support for interventions. Statistics also need to be produced to effectively monitor Bangladesh's progress on SDG delivery. The primary objective should be to make more disaggregated data available. If

required, specialised small-scale surveys could be conducted by national statistical agencies.

A large-scale social movement is necessary to ensure that no one is left behind. Addressing sources of vulnerabilities will require strong social commitments as part of a large-scale social movement. Such commitments are not only a prerequisite for ensuring government accountability, but also for advancing SDG delivery. The political leadership in Bangladesh needs to be an integral part of this social movement. Both the government and non-state actors need to play complementary roles and build partnerships to realise the commitment to LNOB.

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Annex: A

Workshops with CPD researchers

Two workshops with CPD researchers were held on 13 and 14 March 2017 at the CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka with an aim to conceptualise LNOB.

Workshops with representatives from Partner Organisations

Two workshops were arranged with the participation from Partner Organisations in order to identify the vulnerable groups in the context of Bangladesh.

A. Partner Organisations participating on 27 March 2017 at the CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka

- Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK)
- Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB)
- Avijan
- Bandhu Social Welfare Society (Bandhu)
- Bangladesh Adivasi Forum
- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)
- Bangladesh Mahila Parishad
- Bangladesh National Woman's Lawyers Association (BNWLA)
- Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)
- Bangladesh Protibandhi Kallyan Somity (BPKS)
- Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC)
- BRAC
- Brotee Samaj Kallyan Sangstha
- Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)
- Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)
- CARE Bangladesh
- Caritas Bangladesh

B. Partner Organisations participating on 29 March 2017 at the CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka

- Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST)
- BRAC
- Change Makers
- Coast (Coastal Association for Social Transformation) Trust
- Dnet
- Gandhi Ashram Trust
- Integrated Social Development Effort (ISDE) Bangladesh
- International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)
- JAAGO Foundation
- Manusher Jonno Foundation
- Oxfam in Bangladesh

- PRIP (Private Rural Initiative Program) Trust
- RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service) Bangladesh
- Sightsavers Bangladesh
- The Hunger Project
- Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB)
- WaterAid Bangladesh
- World Vision Bangladesh

Expert Group Meetings

Three meetings were organised with academia, researchers and experts with the purpose of consulting the conceptual and analytical framework.

- Expert group meeting on 12 April 2017 at CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka
- Expert group meeting on 23 April 2017 at Gardenia Grand Hall, Dhaka
- Expert group meeting on 25 April 2017 at BIDS Conference Room, Dhaka

FGDs with Partner Organisations

Five focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with support from the Partner Organisations with the representatives from five identified vulnerable groups to identify their sources of vulnerabilities and relevant policy recommendations.

- **Dalit Group:** Representatives from Avijan on 24 April 2017 at CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka.
- **Youth Group:** Representatives from JAAGO Foundation on 26 April 2017 at CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka.
- **Adivasi Group:** Representatives from Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF) and Kapaeeng Foundation on 27 April 2017 at CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka.
- **People with Disabilities Group:** Representatives from National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) on 27 April 2017 at NFOWD Meeting Room, Dhaka.
- **Children Group:** Representatives from World Vision on 29 April at CPD Dialogue Room, Dhaka.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, countries across the world have been striving to operationalise the spirit of the agenda – Leave No One Behind. This powerful aspirational principle demands unpacking within contextual realities by identifying who are being left behind in a particular country. This report does exactly this in the case of Bangladesh. The effort is a pioneering one – not only for the country, but also globally.

The CPD researchers have creatively developed a methodology to identify those “most left behind in Bangladesh” through the conceptual prism of “vulnerability.” CPD researchers have prepared a “vulnerability index” based on disaggregated data from nationally representative survey data. The analytical approach of the report has also taken note of the existing knowledge in the concerned areas which has been supplemented by extensive discussions with issue experts as well as different focus groups to identify the needs of the vulnerable groups and assess existing policies.

Some of the findings reinforce the obvious, while others are very startling. It emerges that vulnerability begets vulnerability; well-intended policies are often not resourced; and uncared individuals end up being left behind.



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