

How to Reflect the Concerns of the Disadvantaged Groups in the Upcoming National Budget during the IMF Programme Period?

আইএমএফ'এর সময়কালে অসুবিধাগ্রস্থ মানুষের কথা জাতীয় বাজেটে কীভাবে প্রতিফলিত হতে পারে?

Presentation

by

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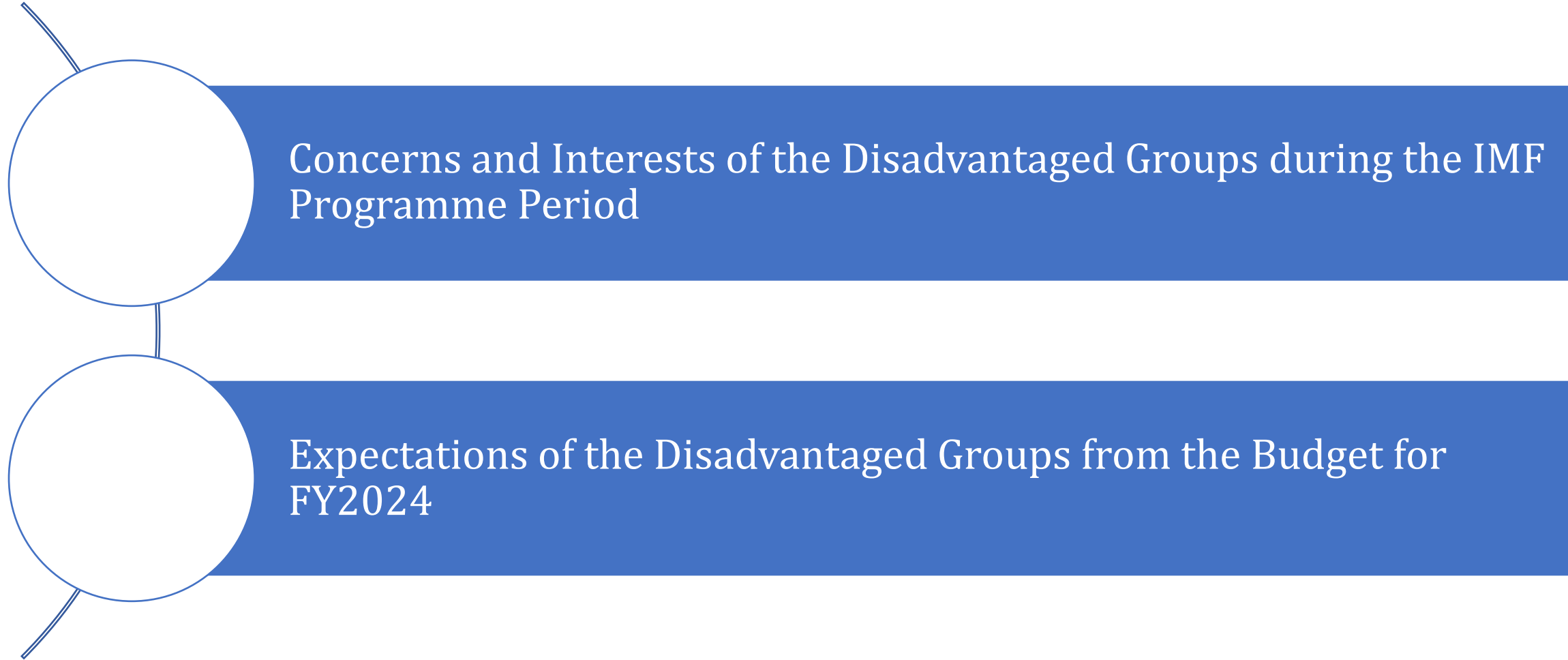
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BDERM Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
বাংলাদেশ দলিত ও বঞ্চিত জনগোষ্ঠী অধিকার আন্দোলন



Two Main Foci of the Presentation



1. Bangladesh Increasingly becoming a very Unequal Country

Lower Poverty....

Area	HIES 2022 Head Count Rate (HCR) Upper Poverty Line (UPL)	HIES 2022 Head Count Rate (HCR) Lower Poverty Line (LPL)
Rural	20.5%	6.5%
Urban	14.7%	3.8%
National	18.7%	5.6%

Source: HIES 2022 (Key Findings Report)

- Poverty rate has **declined sequentially and across the board over the last decade**, as shown by HIES 2010, HIES 2016 and HIES 2022 reports.
 - We have refrained from incorporating prior poverty estimates in light of their incomparability with the recent HIES 2022 findings.

1. Bangladesh Increasingly becoming a very Unequal Country (Contd.)

....Higher Inequality

Year	HIES 2010	HIES 2016	Change from 2010 to 2016	HIES 2022	Change from 2016 to 2022
Income Gini					
Rural	0.431	0.454	5.34%	0.446	-1.76%
Urban	0.452	0.498	10.18%	0.539	8.23%
Overall	0.458	0.482	5.24%	0.499	3.53%

Source: HIES 2022 (Key Findings Report)

- Overall, income inequality in Bangladesh has witnessed a **modest upward trend**.
- In rural areas, inequality increased from 2010 to 2016 but showed a **slight decline** from 2016 to 2022.
- Conversely, urban inequality experienced a **significant increase** in both periods.

1. Bangladesh Increasingly becoming a very Unequal Country (Contd.)

Even Consumption Inequality is Increasing

Year	HIES 2010	HIES 2016	Increase from 2010 to 2016	HIES 2022	Increase from 2016 to 2022
Consumption Gini					
Rural	0.275	0.300	9.09%	0.291	-3.00%
Urban	0.338	0.330	-2.37%	0.356	7.88%
Overall	0.321	0.324	0.93%	0.334	3.09%

Source: HIES 2022 (Key Findings Report)

- Overall, consumption inequality in Bangladesh has seen a **modest increase**.
- Rural inequality witnessed a **significant increase** from 2010 to 2016, followed by a **slight decrease** from 2016 to 2022.
- Urban inequality experienced a **modest decrease** between 2010 and 2016 but showed a **significant increase** from 2016 to 2022.
- In rural areas, both income and consumption inequality declined, thanks to the positive impact of **non-farm activities, agricultural output, and social safety net programs**.
- Conversely, urban inequality has been fueled by **rural-urban migration**, leading to an increase in disparities.

1. Bangladesh Increasingly becoming a very Unequal Country (Contd.)

- Most of the reform measures built into the IMF are long outstanding. The government should have done those before on its own.
- However, numerous studies including those from the IMF have consistently demonstrated **that inequality tends to increase during IMF programmes or as a result of IMF conditionalities.** (Smith and Vreeland, 2006; IMF, 2007; Chwieroth, 2007; Caraway et al., 2012; Kentikelenis et al., 2015; de Haan and Sturm, 2017; Lang, 2021)

2. Seven Specific Current Concerns of the Disadvantaged Population Groups

1. Low-income and limited-earning families have experienced **significant erosion of purchasing power** amid high and rising prices of essential commodities
2. The medium-term **development priorities have been undermined** (including those related to the attainment of SDGs) as the government focuses on restoring macroeconomic discipline
3. The **post-COVID recovery agenda** (including those related to the economic, education and health sectors) may **get off focus**
4. The government may **continue to rely on indirect taxes amid limited success in terms of implementing reforms** and gaining institutional efficacy in the area of tax collection
5. The **austerity measures** (both in terms of restrained import and public expenditure) may **negatively affect the economic activities of the disadvantaged populations**
6. The government is likely to have **limited capacity to extend the needed fiscal policy support** (in terms of public expenditure and tax incentives) for the disadvantaged population groups
7. The **inadequate institutional capacity** of the government to deliver the budget in an efficient and timely manner **underserves** the development objectives concerning the **disadvantaged population groups**

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities

The GDP growth rate was set at **7.2%** for FY2023. The provisional estimates of BBS could be about 6.03%. The moderated growth should not affect the consumption demand of disadvantaged groups.

Inter-Sectoral Balance of ADP Allocation

- In FY2024, about **22% of the ADP** has been allocated to different physical infrastructure sectors. This depicts the marginalisation of human development and social security-related safety.
- The highest allocation is received by the Local Government Division with Taka 405 billion (15.4% of ADP) in FY2024.
- The government has identified three worst-performing ministries in FY2023 - **Health Services Division (with 4.64% allocation in FY2024), Ministry of Primary and mass education (with 4.57% allocation in FY2024) and Ministry of Shipping (with 3.60% allocation in FY2024).**

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities

Public Expenditure

- It is imperative to provide adequate subsidies in the agricultural sector, specifically for fertilizers and pesticides.
- Additionally, rationalising subsidies in the power sector by reducing the burden of capacity charge provided to IPPs and QRRs.
- Aligning with the recommendations of the IMF, there should be an expansion of social protection coverage.
- Ensuring good governance in Family Card, Open Market Sales (OMS), and food support programs is essential. Furthermore, strict measures should be taken to prevent inclusion errors and minimize exclusion errors in these programs.

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Additional Tax Collection

- The Budget for FY2023 proposed to collect a revenue of Tk 370,000 crore. The additional collection should have looked for more potential sources of tax collection, such as property tax and inheritance tax.
- The NBR has set out plans to meet IMF conditions on increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio by 0.5% in FY2024 (Budget) and continue at the same pace over the next three years.
- In Bangladesh, of the total revenue, about two-thirds comes from indirect taxes and the rest from direct taxes. The Government of Bangladesh is suggested to increase the direct tax by IMF to reduce the burden of indirect tax.
- A shortfall is eminent against the annual target.
- The number of registered TIN holders is 83 lakh, of which only about 30 lakh submit income tax returns. The eligible number of income-tax payers could be as high as 1.16 crore, according to a news source citing an NBR official.
- *Can Bangladesh achieve the target of meeting IMF conditions within the timeframe? Or will it simply repeat the past trend of collecting incremental revenue?*

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Tax Exemption Rationalisation

- IMF has highlighted a high prevalence of tax exemption in Bangladesh compared to other countries. The IMF's loan conditionality calls for a reduction in tax exemption in Bangladesh's income tax, value added tax (VAT), and customs sectors.
- VAT exemptions in Bangladesh were already cancelled or reduced at the manufacturing stage in the last financial year, and this trend will continue.
- Tax exemption rationalization should be done through an open and transparent process and consultations with stakeholders, as necessary.
- In FY2020, the Tax to GDP ratio was 9.9%; according to NBR estimates, the ratio would be as high as 17.81% if the exemptions were not in place.
- Enhance the minimum income tax-free threshold for all, including the specialised population groups (e.g., women, persons with disabilities and senior citizens).

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Consideration for Local Industries, especially SMEs

- While implementing reductions in tax exemption, it is essential to take into account the impact on local industries, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- Tax exemptions play a crucial role in supporting and promoting the growth of SMEs and emerging industries, which in turn benefit the disadvantaged population (LNOBs).
- Thus, exemptions in sectors that contribute to the development of SMEs should be carefully evaluated, and reductions or changes should be avoided.
- Balancing the reduction of tax exemption with the need to support and promote SMEs and emerging industries is crucial for sustainable economic growth and social welfare.

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Interest Rate Liberalisation

- Efforts should be directed towards reducing non-performing loans (NPL) and ensuring good governance in the banking sector, thus preventing small and medium borrowers from bearing the burden of NPL.
- IMF has recommended flexible interest rate targeting for monetary policy modernisation.
- Bangladesh Bank agreed to adopt the framework by 2026 as part of the \$4.7 billion IMF programme. The programme stipulates a transition to an interest rate corridor system with standing lending and deposit facilities by end-July 2023 as the first step.

Potential downsides of Interest Rate Corridor

- *Limited Access to Affordable Credit*

Disadvantaged communities may face challenges in accessing affordable credit under the IRC system, hindering economic opportunities for these communities.

- *Disproportionate Impact on Local Industries*

Small and medium-sized industries may struggle with higher borrowing costs, hindering their growth, competitiveness and job creation.

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Addressing the Downsides: Targeted Interest Rates

- Implement lower interest rates for disadvantaged communities and local industries.
 - Stimulate investment and economic growth.
 - Encourage expansion, job creation, and overall development.
 - Support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by reducing their borrowing costs.
- Increase interest rates on consumer loans or mortgages.
 - Prevent excessive borrowing and address inflation concerns.
- Provide lower interest rates to commercial banks supporting agriculture and rural development.
 - Promote inclusive growth and address regional disparities.
 - Support key industries for rural development and economic stability.
- Continue specialised and subsidised credit schemes for disadvantaged population groups including agriculture, MCSMEs, women, youth, short-ups etc.

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Wages

- Ensuring adjustment of workers' wages in specific export-oriented industries to share the benefits from exchange rate depreciation.
- The Wage Boards should consider revision of other sectoral wages.

Inflation

Duties and taxes on daily essential commodities should be exempted.

- Institutional steps need to be strengthened to ensure good governance.
- Strengthen social protection measures targeting low-income and limited-earning families.

Exchange Rate

The central Bank should prioritise ensuring flexibility in the exchange rate, but the government agencies must follow up with institutional measures so that undue burdens are not put on general consumers.

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

Food Friendly Programme Distribution App

The Initiative

'Food Friendly Programme (FFP)' or 'Khaddo Bandhob Karmasuchi' has been aiming to provide nutritional support to poor rural households during the pre-harvest seasons by offering rice at a subsidised price. In April 2023, the Ministry of Food, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh started an initiative to conduct pilot activities in 16 unions of 8 upazilas of 8 districts through 'Food Friendly Programme Distribution App'.

Location

The activities are being conducted by selected dealers of

- Khulna Fultola upazila (Fultola and Atra Gilatola union)
- Naogaon Sadar (Baktarpur and Dubalhati union)
- Dinajpur Sadar (Chehelgazi and Sheikhpur union)
- Kishoreganj Sadar (Jospholdol and Bolai union)
- Sherpur Nakala upazila (Gonopaddi and Baneshwardi union)
- Sylhet Bishwanath upazila (Bishwanath and Rampasha union)
- Patuakhali Sadar (Auliapur and Morichbunia union)
- Brahmanbaria Sarail upazila (Sarail Sadar and Kalikoccho union)

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities *(Contd.)*

The Survey

A survey has been conducted on these unions through our partner organisation Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO). ESDO immensely supported us by providing primary data from Sheikhpura and Chehelgazi unions of Dinajpur. Interviews with general people and representatives of the area were conducted under this initiative.

Current situation

The total number of beneficiaries of the food-friendly programme in Sheikhpura union Parishad is **2265**. The total number of beneficiaries in Chehelgazi union is **2323**. Beneficiaries get 30 kg rice at Tk 15/kg through the designated dealers.

Issues Acknowledged

- ✓ Demand is much higher than the number of cards allocated.
- ✓ Distribution activities are somewhat disrupted due to internet network problems.
- ✓ The other complains include: low quality of rice, receiving unsealed rice sacks and lower amount of rice in some instances.
- ✓ If a beneficiary is unwell on the day of distribution, the deliveries are delayed.
- ✓ Lack of knowledge about the programme among the citizens prior selection of the beneficiaries in the locality.
- ✓ Corruption and lack of transparency and accountability in selecting beneficiaries.

3. Priority Concerns in view of IMF Conditionalities (Contd.)

Responses from the beneficiaries from Sheikhpura and Chehelgazi Union

- ✓ I have a card which is 4-5 years old. I receive 30 kgs rice, sometimes in stitched sacks and sometimes in open bags. It is very helpful for our family because there is scarcity of work in the village. **But, everyone is not enlisted for this facility due to lack of cards. Furthermore, weak internet network sometimes delays the distribution process.**
- ✓ No one in this village is not aware of this programme. **We have not received any news or update regarding this from any authority.**
- ✓ The chairman or members know this. **They promise to give the cards before elections. But then there are no results.**
- ✓ **Sometimes we get open sacks of coarse rice, hence the weight varies.**
- ✓ **I have heard from you about the food friendly programme for the first time.** When we contact the chairman or members. We need to bribe to get a card. But we people in the village do not know about this card.

Responses from a dealer from Sheikhpura

I have distributed rice sacks to 570 members through the app. The beneficiaries sometimes get one month's designated rice in the next month due to mobile network problems. However, if the main card holder is sick, the other members of the family can receive rice upon submission of letter from the Chairman. Overall, concerned departments should be sincere. The more people know about the programmes adopted by the government, the more reputation of the government will spread.

4. Sectoral Aspirations

Agriculture

- Allocate funds to support research and development for biodiversity-based agriculture and indigenous seed development to reduce agricultural dependency on chemicals.
- Provide incentives, interest-free loans, and government assistance to farmers, with a focus on small farmers, women, and NEET youths, and ensure fair prices for produced crops.
- Establish public foodgrain procurement centres at major bazaars and union levels to provide a market for agricultural products and ensure farmers receive the right price for their produce.
- Provide disaster insurance for farmers and agricultural products to mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture.
- Incentivise storage and processing facilities for non-crop food items and perishable agricultural products to reduce food waste and improve access to markets.
- Provide training and on-the-ground learning facilities to women and small farmers to improve their skills and productivity and revise existing policies to consider emerging environmental challenges and public health concerns.

4. Sectoral Aspirations *(contd.)*

Climate and Environment

- Prioritise the climate budget and invest in climate change adaptation, mitigation, loss, and damage, in accordance with global standards.
- Gradually shift incremental budget allocation from fossil fuels to renewable energy to promote a just energy transition.
- Allocate funds specifically for the protection of the Sundarbans and combating drought in vulnerable areas.
- Revise the budget for salinity-prone areas to include realistic interventions that address the unique challenges faced by these communities.

4. Sectoral Aspirations *(contd.)*

Education, Skill Development, and Entrepreneurship

- Invest in designing new interventions and capacity-building courses using advanced technologies and globally marketable technical skill-based education, apprenticeship, green entrepreneurship, and start-ups.
- Provide stipends or financial support for students, especially women, to reduce dropouts and offer market demand-oriented vocational and technical skills development for sustainable blue economy to enhance their participation and access to this new industry.
- Increase the monthly stipend of mainstream students in primary, secondary, higher secondary, technical and vocational education, including pre-primary.
- Introduce special stipends for girls whose education is at risk due to child marriage during COVID.
- Lay out a plan to enhance budgetary allocations for the education sector, including the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the Ministry of Education. Increase budget management ability to ensure the relevant government agencies' proper utilisation, transparency, and accountability.

4. Sectoral Aspirations *(contd.)*

Education, Skill Development, and Entrepreneurship *(contd.)*

- Coordinate inter-ministerial and inter-institutions, provide high-speed internet connections to all schools, and allocate the necessary budget for ICT development in the education sector.
- Increase the capacity of educational institutions, renovate physical infrastructure, provide an uninterrupted supply of learning materials, keep schools clean, and ensure safe drinking water and healthy wash facilities. Restructure the salary structure of teachers and introduce a separate pay structure.
- Develop and implement a roadmap and a 10-year perspective plan to upgrade basic education up to class XII in line with the global declaration for the implementation of the SDGs.
- Allocate funds for the promotion of preschool care/daycare and education to cater to the needs of working women.
- Allocate the necessary budget for introducing free school meal programmes in all mainstream primary schools in line with the government's "National School Meal Policy (2019)" to ensure food and nutrition security for students from marginalised communities under the social security programme.

4. Sectoral Aspirations *(contd.)*

Mental Health

- Increase budget allocation for mental health to provide adequate resources for mental health services and support at the sub-national level.
- Ensure free medical care for mental health at healthcare centres and allocate a sufficient budget to cover the costs.
- Organise regular mental health camps in each union and allocate adequate budget for providing mental health services and free medicines to those in need.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations

Children

- Allocate adequate budget for stipends, incentives, and mid-day meals to prevent student dropout, child labour, and child marriage.
- Include poor and floating children in social safety net programs.
- Eliminate taxes and duties on low-cost digital devices to promote digitalisation in the education system and reduce the digital divide.
- Re-establish the Child Budget exercise and allocate specific resources for child-focused programs in the social safety net programme (SSNP) budget, such as programs targeting child marriage, child labor, severe acute malnutrition (SAM), street children rehabilitation, children with disabilities, climate issues, learning gaps, and violence against children.
- Ensure adequate allocation for large child-focused programmes, including the Primary Education Development Programme, National Newborn Health Programme, and child protection programmes. Allocate resources to all sections of marginalised children, including remote area children, ethnic children's groups, and vulnerable urban children's groups.
- Allocate funds to develop a credible databank for children and establish a centralised mechanism to connect all EMIS systems concerning children, linking the poverty database to create a general profile for every child.
- Establish a Child Benefit Contingency Fund in addition to the existing Child Welfare Trust Fund to continue important child-focused projects in case of unavailability of funds or emergency.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Climate Vulnerable People

- The allocation of at least 60 kgs of rice per month per Jele card should be provided to fishers with Jele cards who are banned from fishing during the lean season.
- Allocate adequate budget to ensure safe drinking water as well as safe water for the people of coastal areas.
- Invest more in the Agroecology sector, including for saline resilient agro-practice in salinity-prone areas.
- Climate-affected overseas migrants may need to be treated specially.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Dalit

- Increase the housing budget for Dalits to ensure housing for all dalits in municipalities and city corporations across the country. Regardless of whether they have jobs or not, every member of the Dalit community should be provided housing facilities within their colony since they have no guarantee of employment and face untouchability and low income. Such housing projects should be initiated in all districts and upazilas.
- Provide salary increments and allocate funds in the budget for health insurance, risk allowance, and festival allowances for dalit-concentrated professions.
- Enhance allocation for social security programmes concerning dalits and tea garden workers.
- Adequate budget allocation for vocational training should support skill development and income-generating activities for working dalits.
- Implement formal instructions from the policymaking level of the government and develop a monitoring system to ensure that genuine dalits receive the budgetary benefits allocated for them.
- Establishment of separate cultural academies to promote the culture of the dalits and indigenous people on the plainland.
- Introduction of scholarships for all students from all strata of dalit communities.
- The budget document should reflect the housing project to be taken for the Harijans and their cleaning job opportunity at the city corporations and municipalities.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Domestic Workers

- It is necessary to recognise that domestic work is a profession and include this profession in Labor Laws.
- Allocate budget for domestic workers regarding their education, skills training, health insurance, and social protection schemes.
- Allocate budget for campaigning to sensitise and awareness raising among mass for creating a positive attitude towards the profession of domestic workers.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Indigenous and Ethnic Population Groups

- Establishment of a Land Rights Commission with sufficient resources to address the unjust purchase, sale, and acquisition of land, especially for the small ethnic groups in the plains.
- Quota system for small ethnic groups in admission at educational institutions.
- Providing loans at low interest and without collateral to financially empower the community.
- Reserved post equivalent to the member in the Union Parishad and a seat reserved in Parliament to ensure their rights at the national level.
- Allocation of a separate, special economic incentive of Tk 5,000 crore for marginalised people in the informal sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Indigenous and Ethnic Population Groups *(contd.)*

- Specific allocations with reference to the indigenous community in the budget of all ministries/departments.
- Increasing allocation for indigenous culture development, including research in indigenous or small ethnic group cultural academies.
- Involving indigenous peoples and organisations in the SDG implementation process.
- Recruitment of tribal teachers in all educational institutions having at least 20-30 tribal students within the primary school catchment area.
- Allocation of dedicated budget provision to create awareness among students/trainees from Indigenous communities and sensitise them to take part in education and training.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

MCSMEs

- Announce policies to expand the investment sector for small entrepreneurs, providing them with access to resources and financial support.
- Increase the VAT exemption limit for women entrepreneurs conducting small-scale businesses, and introduce a separate slab for marginalised groups as well.
- Ensure that the policies and slabs are implemented effectively, with transparent and accessible procedures for all entrepreneurs to benefit from.
- Incorporate provision for partial exporters in relevant policies, including the BWH Licensing Policy 2008, Entitlement Policy 2008, and 100% export-oriented Industries importation rule 1993.
- Allow bank guarantee for partial exporters to avail UD or UP: A provision needs to be added to the law to allow bank guarantees to be used by partial exporters to avail UD (Utilization Declaration) or UP (Utilization Permission).

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Persons with Disability

- Provide quality assistive devices based on the type and needs of disabled individuals, with duty-free facility on imports for private and commercial use.
- Expand education stipends for disabled students and ensure physical and informational accessibility in educational institutions.
- Implement quotas for disabled individuals in government jobs and encourage private employers to provide tax concessions for employing persons with disabilities.
- Allocate budget for infrastructural and informational accessibility to make websites, government e-services, and union information centres suitable for persons with disabilities.
- Incentivise import and manufacturing of buses with power or manual ramps suitable for persons with disabilities.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Persons with Disability *(contd.)*

- Create ministry-wise budget allocations for inclusive development of persons with disabilities, including budget allocation for caregiver programmes, and allocate budget to OPDs for awareness programs at the grassroots level.
- Increase provisions for disability allowance and create inclusive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in both formal and informal sectors.
- The number of persons living with disabilities against whom a budget will be allocated should be at least 50 lacs in the next fiscal budget.
- The allowance against each Subarna Card should go up to at least BDT. 1200/- per month.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Returnee Overseas Migrants

- Providing skills development training to prepare them for income-generating activities and/or wage employment.
- The returnee who would prefer to start their own business should be able to get loans at low interest rates.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Senior Citizens

- The budget should increase the amount and scope of old-age allowance to Tk 1,000 per month.
- Initiate projects of district-based social welfare and NGOs for the rehabilitation and old homes for income-poor senior citizens.
- Allocate budget for the establishment of 'Senior Citizen Social Centres' at the union level.
- Announce policy support in the budget to get benefits such as reserved seats, low fares, senior citizens' health cards, bank accounts, and digital financial services for senior citizens of neighbouring countries in Bangladesh as well.
- Allocate the necessary budget for research activities to gather accurate data on the elderly population in Bangladesh.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Transgender

- Provide skill development training for income generation and wage employment opportunities for transgender persons.
- Offer low-interest loans for transgender persons who want to start their own businesses.
- Increase the allowance for transgender persons to encourage their participation in mainstream education.
- The provision for income tax concessions for firms employing transgender should be continued.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Urdu-speaking community

- Improve the infrastructure of the camps will enhance the skills of the residents, ensure a healthy environment, and improve education and sanitation. It will also address the issue of long-term accommodation.
- To provide social security, the inclusion of the Urdu-speaking community in old age allowance, disability allowance, pregnancy allowance, widow's allowance, and other government allowances is necessary.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Women

- Gender budgets should be regularly prepared and implemented to ensure gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's human rights.
- A task force should be formed with gender experts, economists, researchers, and women's movement leaders to monitor the gender sensitivity of the national budget and assess the effectiveness of the money allocated for women.
- Budget allocation should be made to reform laws and raise awareness to prevent violence against women and child marriage.
- Budget allocation should be made to build shelter homes for women and disabled women who are victims of violence.
- Provision should be made in the budget to provide easy bank loans to women entrepreneurs.
- Allocation of safety nets for poor matriarchal families should be increased.
- Budget allocation should be made for training women entrepreneurs and marketing their products, as well as encouraging the production of processed food.
- Special strategy and budget are required for climate victim women and adolescent girls.
- An accountability mechanism should be in place from all ministries and departments regarding the expenditure of the gender budget at the Upazila and Union levels.

5. Disadvantaged Group Specific Aspirations *(contd.)*

Youth

- Allocate a specific budget for youth from disaster-prone and hard-to-reach areas to address climate-induced vulnerabilities, such as internal migration, climate change-induced disasters, resilience, livelihood, health, education, mental health, social peace and cohesion, sexual and reproductive health, etc. This budget should clearly outline in the national budget and should be based on the specific needs of each region.
- Establish a Youth Bank as per the National Youth Policy and allocate sufficient resources for its functioning. The Youth Bank should have a clear mandate and guidelines for providing loans, grants, and other forms of financial support to youth-led businesses and social enterprises.
- Allocate a specific budget for the development and promotion of AI in Bangladesh. Additionally, provide special allocation to support youth E-commerce entrepreneurs to help them compete on the global stage.
- Develop a specific budget and strategy for NEET youths (youths not in employment, education, or training) to help them acquire the necessary skills and opportunities to participate in the job market.
- Allocate a specific budget to increase the opportunities for youth access to finance through green entrepreneurship and startup programs. This budget should be aimed at supporting youth-led businesses that promote sustainable development and the green economy.
- Ensure budget allocation for programme and infrastructure development to effectively implement the Youth Policy, National Action Plan of Youth, and Youth Council.

6. Concluding Takeaways

- Ensure incremental resource allocation in a targeted fashion taking cognisance of the priorities of the disadvantaged population groups.
- Ensure disaggregated data (for the disadvantaged groups) to make the budget allocations and delivery visible for transparency and accountability.
- Implement IMF programme-stipulated reforms and policy steps by taking the inequality concerns into cognisance and in consultation with disadvantaged populations.
- Introduce participatory result-based management by involving the intended beneficiaries.

Thank You



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