

অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক উন্নয়ন ও ন্যায্যতার লক্ষ্যে নাগরিক এজেন্ডা

Dealing with the Manifestation of Localised Vulnerabilities of Climate Change

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Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ



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Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

The initiative of the *Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh* to prepare a set of Policy Briefs has its origin in the diverse range of activities undertaken by the Citizen's Platform over the past two years. These were geared to capture the perspectives of the country's left behind communities as regards Bangladesh's dominant development narrative. Citizen's Platform activities in this connection included stakeholder dialogues, townhall meetings, focus group discussions, perception surveys and consultations with media. These also included organisation of public hearing at national level aimed at creating opportunities for people to voice their concerns and aspirations in the presence of high-level policymakers. What emerged from this exercise is that a significantly large number of the country's citizens have continued to remain vulnerable to various risks which are manifested in their being left behind in the process of economic development. On the other hand, to recall, the leave no one behind spirit of the SDGs requires that all citizens have the right to equitable share in the development of the country and appropriate actions are needed to address the concerns and advance the interests of the country's vulnerable groups and communities.

In view of the above, Citizen's Platform has identified 11 issues (see later), from the perspective of the left behind groups, which require urgent attention and call for immediate actions. The objective of the Policy Brief exercise is to come up with a set of recommendations in each of the identified areas, by articulating the context, highlighting the issues of interest to vulnerable groups and by proposing a set of concrete actions to address their concerns.



Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

Each of the Policy Briefs was prepared by a dedicated team of experts. The scholars, numbering 12-15 members, included leading experts and academics, development practitioners and activists in the concerned area . Each Policy Brief Team had an eminent personality as Chair, and a Penholder who was entrusted with the responsibility of preparing the drafts of respective Briefs. The Team sat for several meetings, consulted background notes based on Citizen's Platform's country-wide discussions and consulted relevant resource materials. The expert groups identified a set of prioritised actions for policy uptake and consequent implementation.

A 19-member Advisory Committee which included eminent citizens, academics and leading civil society personalities provided guidance to the Policy Brief initiative.

The CPD, as the Secretariate of the Citizen's Platform provided all necessary support to the work of the Policy Brief Initiative.



Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

Citizen's Platform plans to take up a number of follow-up activities to take the Policy Brief initiative forward with a view to raising awareness as regards the recommended actions and mobilising support around those actions. These include:

- (a) Holding of media briefings to present the recommendations to the wider audience with the Policy Briefs to be clustered into three groups- Economic, Social and Governance Issues;
- (b) Presentation of the recommendations at meetings with major political parties, to inform electoral discourse and as inputs to election manifestos;
- (c) Organisation of public hearing in Dhaka on recommended actions, with participation of the disadvantaged groups, civil society activists, opinion builders and media, in the presence of high-level policymakers;
- (d) Organisation of discussion meetings in various parts of the country to mobilise civic activism in support of the action agendas put forward in the Policy Briefs.



Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

Issues for 11 Policy Briefs

Economic

- Transforming agriculture for an inclusive and diversified economy
- Providing decent employment for youth in view of domestic and overseas market
- Providing public utilities and services in the backdrop of unplanned urbanisation
- Affordable and clean energy for all

Social

- Reducing out-of-pocket expenditure to improve universal access to quality health care
- Triggers to ensuring quality primary education
- Dealing with the manifestation of localised vulnerabilities of climate change
- Promoting universal social protection system and the need for targeting disadvantaged groups

Governance

- Effective implementation of laws and judicial process for eradicating gender-based violence and discrimination
- Access and justice for ethnic and religious minorities
- Giving voice to the 'silent' and establishing democratic accountability

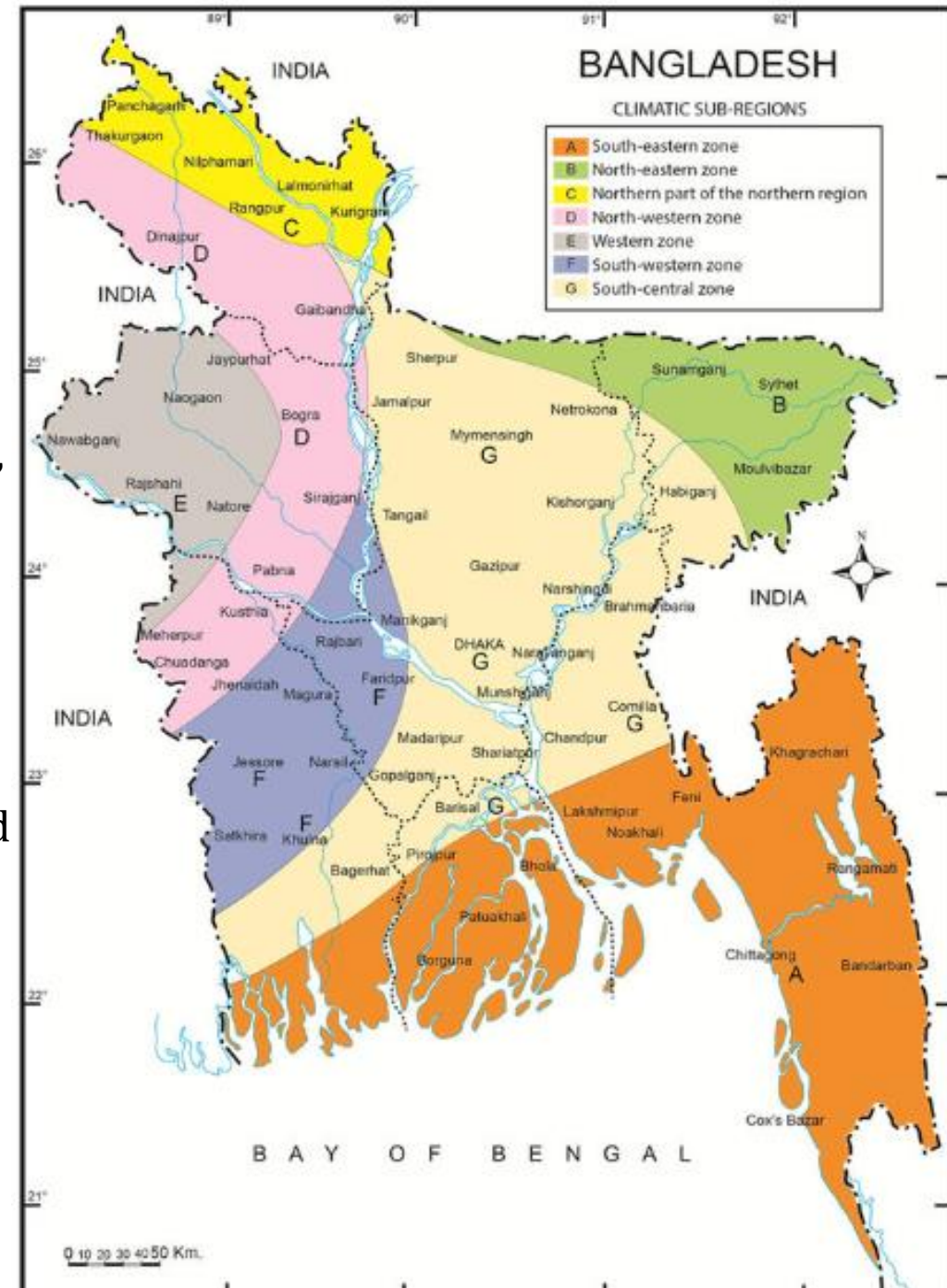


Introduction

- Geographical location of Bay of Bengal, land structure involving low-lying terrains, great rivers, and the socioeconomic dynamics of coastal, riverine, and remote communities, have all combined to make Bangladesh the 7th most climate-vulnerable country in the world.
- Both rapid-onset (flood, river bank erosion, cyclones, etc.) and slow-onset (sea level rise, salinity intrusion) climate change events are adversely affecting local communities specially the marginalised ones, forcing many to migrate from their native land, bring changes in agricultural practice and triggering urban poverty, malnutrition and chronic health issues
- Addressing climate change-induced vulnerabilities, locally-led adaptation (LLA) approach, based on eight principles, has gained traction in relevant global discourse.
- Localised climate governance, aligned with LLA, offers a new opportunity to identify and deal with the localised vulnerabilities of climate change in a collaborative and participatory manner.
- The government of Bangladesh has recognised the importance of LLA in the 'National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2023-50
- The objective of this policy brief is to put forward a set of recommendations to effectively deal with the manifestations of localised climate change vulnerabilities impacting Bangladesh, keeping the concerns of disadvantaged groups at the centre of attention.

Climate Change Events in Bangladesh

- Recent and recurrent changes in climate parameters feature relatively hotter days in summer than the historical average, an increasing number of warmer days, the shortening and late-onset of the rainy season, higher storm surge and wind pressure etc. in Bangladesh
- Such erratic variations of climatological parameters is causing more frequent and more intense natural disasters, i.e., **flash floods, regular floods and river bank erosion** in the **northern districts**; **flash floods** and **thunderstorms** in the north-eastern *Haor* districts; **drought** in the **north-western districts**; **waterlogging** in the **south-west coast**; **cyclones and storms** in the **south-east coast**; and **salinity intrusion** in the **southern belt** of Bangladesh.





Recommendations

- ❑ **Implement all interventions mentioned in the National Adaptation Plan (2023–50) and ensure that national Five Year Development Plans are aligned with those**
 - In dealing with climate change adaptation, the NAP is to serve as Bangladesh's primary planning and investment framework for the next 28 years (2023-2050).
 - NAP aims to achieve six specific goals: i) ensure **protection against** climate change variability and climate-induced natural disasters; ii) develop **climate-resilient agriculture for food, nutrition, and livelihood** security; iii) develop **climate-smart cities** for improved urban environment and well-being; iv) promote **nature-based solutions** for conservation of forestry, biodiversity, and well-being of communities; v) **impart good governance** through integration of adaptation into the planning process; and vi) ensure transformative **capacity building and innovation** for CCA.
 - The NAP has identified **113 interventions** to be implemented in **11 climate-stressed regions** across Bangladesh. About BDT 20 trillion (or equivalent to over USD 200 billion); will be required to implement these interventions; approximately 75 per cent of this amount is expected to be needed by 2040.



Recommendations

- ❑ **Identify community-led adaptation techniques, based on local knowledge, to assess whether these could potentially be scaled up to address the challenges posed by global warming**
 - Communities in northern Bangladesh frequently construct ‘Bandals’, an indigenous bamboo structure, to lower river erosion in small river basins and to reclaim agricultural fields.
 - ‘Baira’ or floating agriculture is a traditional agricultural method where floating beds are prepared with water hyacinth and other plant components. This provides opportunities for income generation and helps people in southern Bangladesh to strengthen resilience against water-logging.
 - It is important to deploy a developmental approach that takes into cognisance regional variations in climate impacts, and draws on locally driven small-scale adaptation solutions based on indigenous knowledge and home-grown techniques.



Recommendations

- ❑ **Introduce a special social safety net transfer programme in support of marginalised groups living in Haor areas**
 - The Haor ecosystem is diverse, and its nature changes significantly with seasonal variations.
 - In the dry season, people within the water retention area cultivate the land, whereas in the wet season this very land remains submerged and becomes a spawning ground for fish.
 - In majority of the haor areas of Bangladesh commercial leasing for fishing is allowed under a legal framework.
 - As a result, communities within the retention area are not able to go for fishing during certain times of the year.
 - This has severe negative consequences for their livelihoods. In view of this, the government should introduce a special social safety net transfer programme during the lean period in support of the marginalised groups living in Haor areas.



Recommendations

❑ Develop more water retention grounds/systems to ensure access to clean and safe drinking water for people living in saline and drought prone areas

- According to WHO more than 68.3 million (41% of populace) people lack access to properly-managed drinking water
- Due to climate change-induced salinity intrusion and increased shrimp aquaculture along the coast, freshwater supplies are becoming increasingly scarce.
- Additionally, in many areas, the groundwater table has gone further down, drying up shallow and deep tube wells; this leaves only rainfall and pond water as viable alternatives as sources of water.
- Local solutions such as rainwater harvesting and seawater reverse osmosis systems to filter saltwater, at the community and household levels, are examples of technologies that could address this issue.



Recommendations

❑ Encourage public private partnership (PPP) projects in renewable energy and energy transmission, housing, transport and climate-smart agriculture solutions

- To attain the national commitment of generating 40 per cent of electricity from renewable sources by 2041, about USD 19.2 to USD 37.2 billion investment will be needed only to develop the required installed capacity. Greater private sector involvement will be needed to mobilise both domestic and foreign investment. Such collaboration is also necessary to initiate and implement the required reforms, encourage innovation and promote efficiency in view of sector-specific climate-smart solutions.

❑ Declare renewable energy-based projects under SREDA as fast track projects

- The energy industry in Bangladesh is highly reliant on sources that use fossil fuels. Only 3.5 per cent of the 26 GW installed capacity originates from renewable sources. The GoB has set an optimistic goal of producing 40 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2041. This, however, comes in the backdrop of the past failure to achieve 10 per cent of electricity generation from renewable sources by 2021. To not repeat the past experience, it is critically important to categorise the ongoing solar park and wind projects under SREDA as fast-track projects. This will revitalise renewable energy-based power sector, and help address a number of climate change mitigation challenges facing the country.



Recommendations

❑ **Initiate, prepare and enact a Watershed Strategy Plan**

- An integrated use of land, vegetation and water in a geographically distinct drainage area, for the benefit of people inhabiting the area, is known as watershed management (WM). This is particularly vital for communities living in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts and coastal regions. Perhaps because the country is a predominant deltaic plain, Bangladesh doesn't have a watershed policy, strategy, or plan which is appropriate for the upland regions of the CHT. Currently, communities which rely on these watersheds for their livelihoods and access to water remain highly vulnerable as a result of continued degradation of watersheds. In this backdrop, with a view to prioritise community-based watershed management, the GoB should initiate, prepare, and enact a Watershed Strategy Plan on an urgent basis. This is critically important more specifically for the disadvantaged groups.

❑ **Maintain, review and improve data collection quality as regards hydro-meteorological variables**

- There is a growing concern in Bangladesh as regards the quality of data relating to various hydro-meteorological variables. Collecting and monitoring of surface water and groundwater quality and salinity data, on a continuing basis, have now become essential for undertaking interventions to reduce the economic and health-related vulnerabilities of local communities. In this context, the GoB should take advantage of artificial intelligence in identifying climate change solutions when and where applicable. This particularly concerns data generation, analysis, and data integration in policymaking.



Recommendations

- ❑ **Initiate an impact assessment study to understand the effectiveness and sustainability of projects led by the Climate Change Trust Fund which, going forward, should help policymakers to take evidence-based decisions in designing projects. There is a need to showcase the lessons learned in view of the experience gained**
 - Since the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) was set up in 2009, a total of Tk 3,955 crore has been allocated from this fund till December 2022. Of this, Tk. 1,447 crore was retained as a reserve, while Tk. 2,507 crore was allocated for implementing 851 projects as of December 2022.
 - Among the thematic areas, infrastructure development received the most funding, receiving 59 per cent of the total budget. This was followed by mitigation and low-carbon development (23 per cent), food security, social protection, and health (13 per cent), research, capacity building, and institutional development (6 per cent), and comprehensive disaster management (1 per cent).
 - In spite of the fund being operational for over a decade, no comprehensive assessment has been carried out which delves into such issues as efficacy of funds used, sustainability of the projects undertaken and state of accountability in fund use.
 - It is high time to make a comprehensive assessment of the projects implemented under BCCTF and their outcomes.



Recommendations

- ❑ **Initiate a comprehensive study on ‘Valuation of Forest Ecosystem’, by types of forests, to better prepare for global negotiations on carbon sequestration, as also to assess socio-economic benefits originating from the forest resources**
 - Economic valuation of forest ecosystem services can inform policymakers about the ecological and socio-economic benefits of conserving forests, and thereby incentivise appropriate policymaking to secure a sustainable future for next generations.

- ❑ **Initiate a study to determine national "loss and damage" consequent to climate change**
 - Compensation for loss and damage has attracted renewed interest and attention in recent climate negotiations. The UNFCCC eventually took the decision, in November 2022, at the 27th annual UN Climate Change Conference (COP27), to create and operationalise a new fund to support developing countries which are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The fund is geared to respond to climate change impacts and recover from climate-induced damages. The terms of payment and modality of operation of this fund are yet to be chalked out though. A 24 member transitional committee has been constituted to put forward recommendations to be placed at COP28 (30 November – 12 December, 2023, in Dubai, UAE).



Recommendations

- ❑ **Illegal sand mining must be immediately stopped. Legal permits for sand mining sites may be allowed only after conducting appropriate feasibility study and environmental assessment**
 - The issue of river erosion may, over time, become more acute in view of the ongoing illegal sand mining activities. The adverse environmental implications and negative impact on livelihoods of such practices are becoming increasingly visible. Hence, illegal sand mining should be banned without delay through appropriate legal measures. The government should issue legal permits for sand mining only after proper feasibility study and environmental assessment. The revenue that the government expects to make from such legal permits should be deployed to undertake adaptation and mitigation measures in favour of the local riverine communities.

- ❑ **Introduce 'Polluters-pay' principle for pollution management in Bangladesh**
 - Adoption of stringent measures to implement the "Polluter Pays" principle, in view the country's pollution management, has emerged as an urgency. This will help Bangladesh to protect its environment from air and water pollution. While imposing the penalty tax for pollution, it should be seen that the payment should cover the cost of environmental harm as well. Improving the quality of air and water will no doubt benefit health of all citizens, but most notably that of children, women and the elderly.



Recommendations

- ❑ **Provide highest priority to trans-boundary water sharing agreements with neighbouring countries to address complex climate change consequences**
 - The GoB should give highest priority to signing trans-boundary water sharing agreements with India. Delay in negotiations will further worsen and accentuate pre-existing vulnerabilities of communities whose livelihoods depend on these rivers. Many people will likely experience forced displacement from their lands. Their struggle against different forms of climate adversity may be further exacerbated if the issue is not given the importance it deserves.
- ❑ **Establish a specialised department within the Economic Relations Division to prepare documents, develop proposals and design project profiles in order to avail of climate change funds created under global initiatives**
 - Adoption of stringent measures to implement the "Polluter Pays" principle, in view the country's pollution management, has emerged as an urgency. This will help Bangladesh to protect its environment from air and water pollution. While imposing the penalty tax for pollution, it should be seen that the payment should cover the cost of environmental harm as well. Improving the quality of air and water will no doubt benefit health of all citizens, but most notably that of children, women and the elderly.



Recommendations

- ❑ **Allow non-state actors to effectively participate in climate change-related policymaking process to help address the needs of marginalised communities and likely climate migrants**
- Globally, non-state actors play a significant role in climate advocacy in favour of marginalised communities. The GoB should acknowledge the important role that the country's civil society, non-government organisations and other non-state actors could play in promoting and implementing an inclusive climate policy. The government must allow these actors to participate, act, and support the GOB in climate change-related policymaking and advocacy. This is particularly necessary to address the needs of the marginalised communities and potential climate migrants. By building partnerships with participation of governmental agencies, development partners and non-state actors, it is possible to advance the cause of environmental sustainability in global platforms and mobilise funds towards climate action in Bangladesh. This is important for strategising and allocating resources in a planned manner to combat the challenges of climate change in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the left behind groups.



Conclusion

- The government should support on locally-led adaptation practices and encourage private sector to invest in climate smart solutions.
- The government should create platforms where vulnerable women and young people are able to highlight local contexts, raise concerns about adverse climate impacts and challenges of and voice suggestions to tackle those.
- Local solutions will need to be found to address local challenges.
- There is a need to allocate necessary funds to undertake pre-, during and post-disaster relief and rehabilitation programmes.
- Contextualised and localised skills development programmes will be needed to address local environmental challenges and encourage climate-friendly entrepreneurship. This approach will also help meet the commitment of leaving no one behind (LNOB) in view of sustainable development of Bangladesh.
- Localised climate governance should be seen as a new window of opportunity to deal with the emerging spatial vulnerabilities originating from climate change impact.

Thank You



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