

# অন্তর্ভুক্তিমূলক উন্নয়ন ও ন্যায্যতার লক্ষ্যে নাগরিক এজেন্ডা

## Transforming Agriculture for an Inclusive and Diversified Economy

Presentation By:

*Jinnat Ara, PhD*

Research Fellow

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)

**Date: 18 October 2023**



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ



act:onaid



CONCERN  
worldwide



The initiative is led by *Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Convenor, Citizen's Platform and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The Technical Stream and Policy Brief preparation is led by *Professor Mustafizur Rahman*, Core Group Member, Citizen's Platform and Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

## List of Expert Group Members

### Chair

*Mr Asif Ibrahim*

Core Group Member, Citizen's Platform for SDGs,  
Bangladesh

Vice-Chairman, New Age Group and Industries

### Penholder

*Dr Jinnat Ara*

Research Fellow

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies  
(BIDS)

### Members

*Mr Mohammed Nurul Amin*

Eminent Banker

*Dr M Asaduzzaman*

Former Research Director

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies  
(BIDS)

*Ms Ferdaus Ara Begum*

Chief Executive Officer

Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD)

*Mr Ahsan Khan Chowdhury*

Chairman and CEO

PRAN-RFL Group

*Md. Tanjil Hossain*

Associate Professor of Economics

Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University

Executive Director, Economic Development Research  
Organization (EDRO)

*Dr Kazi Iqbal*

Senior Research Fellow

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)

*Dr A. H. M. Saiful Islam*

Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics  
Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU)

*Dr Md Farid Uddin Khan*

Professor, Department of Economics  
University of Rajshahi

*Dr K A S Murshid*

Former Director General

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)

*Dr Mohammad A Razzaque*

Chairman, Research and Policy Integration for  
Development (RAPID)

Research Director, Policy Research Institute of  
Bangladesh

*Dr M. Masrur Reaz*

Chairman

Policy Exchange

## **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 builds on a wide range of activities undertaken over the past two years (2022-2023). These activities sought to capture the views of the country's left-behind stakeholders at the subnational level regarding Bangladesh's dominant development narrative.

The Citizen's Platform's engagements in this connection included stakeholder dialogues, citizen's consultations, focus group discussions, perception surveys and consultations with media. Further, Public Hearing was organised at the national level to create opportunities for disadvantaged people to voice their concerns and aspirations in the presence of policy elites.

It emerged from this exercise that a significantly large number of citizens and certain communities have continued to remain vulnerable to various risks, which relegated them to the "left behind" position in the revealed process of economic development.

However, the Leave No One Behind spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) requires that all citizens are ensured an equitable share in the country's development outcomes. Arguably, appropriate actions are needed to address these overarching national concerns to advance the interests of the country's vulnerable citizens and communities.

Accordingly, through a country-wide interaction with the spokespersons of the stakeholders, Citizen's Platform has identified 11 themes requiring urgent attention for immediate action.

## Policy Briefs: Origin of the Initiative & Process of Preparation

Now a series of Policy Briefs has been prepared with a set of recommendations in each of the identified areas underpinned by the context and contestation concerning the articulated theme. In each of these cases, the concerns and interests of the vulnerable groups informed the suggestions for reforms.

Each of the Policy Briefs of the series has been prepared by a dedicated team of experts of high national and international repute. Each Policy Brief Team had an eminent personality as the Chair to lead the process recognised professional as a Penholder to prepare the successive drafts. Each team got together several times, reviewed the notes of the sub-national discussions and FGDs, and consulted relevant resource materials. A 19-member Advisory Committee, which included eminent professionals and leading personalities, provided guidance to the Policy Brief initiative.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), as the Secretariat of the *Citizen's Platform*, provided all necessary support for the smooth functioning of the initiative.

The Policy Briefs will be brought out as a collected volume. To follow up on the recommendations, the *Citizen's Platform* will hold media briefings under three clusters of issues, viz Economic, Social and Governance. The recommendations will be shared continuously through various media to inject them into the electoral debates. Efforts will be made for the inclusion of the issues in the election manifestos.

The *Citizen's Platform* plans to hold dissemination meetings across the country and a National Public hearing subsequently.

# 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

## □ Background and Context

- The spirit of ‘Leave no one behind’ which informs the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stipulates that issues of concern and interest to the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society ought to be prioritised in view of attaining the global goals.
- Various literature shows that one of the most effective ways to improve the lives of the left behind and marginalised people and those living below the poverty line is to support the growth of agriculture.
- According to de Janvry & Sadoulet (2020), “current wisdom on how to use agriculture for development is that it requires asset building for smallholder farmers, productivity growth in staple foods, an agricultural transformation and a rural transformation”.
- In Bangladesh, about 90 per cent of the farmers are smallholders holding land from 0.5 to 2.5 hectares and more than 50 per cent have at most one acre of land (Agri. Census, 2022).
- In view of this, the Policy Brief focuses on issues of interest particularly to small-scale farmers and the challenges they face in accessing inputs, production and marketing, and the needs for agricultural modernisation.

## □ Objectives

- The key objectives of the Policy Brief is to identify:
  - underlying factors driving the current state of agriculture sector in Bangladesh
  - gaps in policies required for agricultural transformation and modernisation, with a view to offer suggestions and recommendations towards developing Bangladesh's agriculture sector through higher productivity, diversity, resilience, and sustainability

## ❑ Current State and Contribution of Agriculture in Bangladesh

- The agricultural sector in Bangladesh has made notable and sustainable success in areas of food production, cropping intensity, commercialization, and diversification of agriculture sector.
- Since 2000, in Bangladesh, one of the most influential drivers of poverty reduction has been the agriculture sector which contributed to reducing poverty by about 90% between 2005 and 2010 (World Bank, 2016).
- According to the Labour Force Survey 2022, about 45 per cent of the total population is involved in the agricultural sector, which still, remains the main source of job generators.
- However, labor productivity in agriculture remains low, and the backward and forward linkage of agriculture is weak.



## ❑ Existing Initiatives Towards Agricultural Transformation

- To strengthen and diversify the agricultural sector, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has taken a number of initiatives that include
  - *installing solar-powered irrigation pumps,*
  - *establishing agriculture information centres,*
  - *distributing agriculture assistance cards,*
  - *providing subsidies and imparting training,*
  - *extending loan facilities, and*
  - *improving food storage capacities and others.*
- In spite of these initiatives, backward and forward linkages between agriculture and industry has remained weak. Small, and marginal farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain their livelihoods based on prevailing cropping practices, marketing channels and value chains.

## □ Challenges

- **Lack of diversity**
  - *Migration and labour shortage*
  - *Awareness and Promotion*
  - *Land fragmentation*
  - *Absentee landowners*
- **Lack of innovative technology and knowledge**
  - *Access to resources*
  - *Climate change and environmental degradation*
  - *Security and safety issues during drought and flash flood*
- **Lack of inclusivity**
  - *Market access and information*
  - *Gender Inequality*
  - *Weak water management*

## ❑ Challenges (cont'd)

- **Lack of required skill**
  - *Skilled labour*
  - *Knowledge about harvesting and post-harvesting techniques*
  
- **Lack of appropriate government policy**
  - *Policy and institutional barriers*
  - *Limited research and development*
  - *Insecure land tenure*
  - *Inadequate rural infrastructure*
  - *Land distribution policy*

## ❑ Importance of Addressing these Challenges

- Goyal *et al.* (2017) suggest that by addressing the key agriculture sector constraints, India could potentially increase -
  - *agricultural contribution to the country's GDP by USD 175 billion and*
  - *farmers' incomes by about 85 per cent by 2025.*
- This is an indication of the potential gains that Bangladesh also could have if the attendant challenges could be appropriately addressed

## ❑ Recommendations

- In view of the challenges, a number of recommendations are made and have been grouped under three broad categories:
  1. diversification
  2. inclusiveness
  3. governance.

# 1. Recommendations: Diversification

Emphasis will need to be put on productivity-driven diversification that will call for interventions in areas of agro-practices, such as –

- Skills development
  - *Undertake skill-needs assessment and take measures for capacity development*
- Technological Adaptation
  - *Help adopt climate-smart agriculture practices:*
  - *Small-scale technological solutions*
  - *Support adoption of modern methods:*
  - *Take initiatives in support of local production of agricultural machinery*

## Recommendations: Diversification (cont'd)

- Innovation
  - *Promote agricultural innovation*
  - *Introduce diversified and multiple cropping systems*
- Ensure availability of finance and incentives by small farmers
  - *Ensure coordination in the value chain*
  - *Discourage rural-urban migration*
  - *Raise awareness about climate-related risks*

## 2. Recommendations: Inclusivity

- Ensure access to information and resources:
  - *quality agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides etc.)*
  - *government-provided information related to incentives, weather forecasts, best agricultural practices, appropriate technology, market demand, and price trends*
  - *align their production processes and cycles with market needs.*
- Ensure gender inclusivity:
  - *in extending support to farmers, keep the needs of women farmers at the centre of focus*



## Recommendations: Inclusivity (cont'd)

- Take measures to guarantee an appropriate level of income for marginal farmers:
  - *Establish minimum support prices for various agricultural commodities*
  - *Maintain buffer stocks of essential agricultural commodities to stabilise prices*
  - *Calibrate procurement targets based on production partners*
  - *Encourage the formation of Farmer/Producer Organisations and Cooperatives to empower small and marginal farmers to collectively negotiate better prices*
- Ensure market access and establish linkages:
  - *Facilitate access to markets by farmers and buyers, including agro-processing companies, exporters and retailers*
  - *Reduce dependence on intermediaries and to ensure better price for their produce.*

### 3. Recommendations: Governance and Policy

- Policy reforms:
  - *Make rental services affordable to small farmers*
  - *Foster collaboration between the government and private sector*
  - *Initiate appropriate policies and support for representatives of small farmers*
  - *Take measures in support of technological and institutional innovations*
  - *Put in place proper incentives for farmers to adopt quality-enhancing technology*
  - *Implement land reform policies to improve land tenure security, reduce land fragmentation*
  - *Promote small farmer-based contract farming policies*
- Support food safety and quality standard compliance:
  - *Assist farmers to meet food safety and quality standards*

## Recommendations: Governance and Policy (cont'd)

- Review public procurement policy: Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) policy should be implemented with due priority
- Invest in research and innovation: for the introduction of new technologies, crop varieties, and sustainable practices
- Put in place effective communication: To mitigate adverse implications of drought and flash floods, the government should
  - *inform farmers about the associated risks and educate them on how to respond to various types of natural disasters*
  - *take proactive measures including putting in place early warning systems, and sustainable land and water management practices*
  - *issue timely alerts and warnings through various channels, including emergency alerts on mobile devices, radio, television and social media*

## ❑ Concluding remarks

- To ensure the agriculture sector's continued contribution to the economy, it is crucial to address the challenges and bridge the gap
- Under three broad categories (i.e., diversification, inclusiveness, and governance), recommendations are provided to overcome these challenges and transform agriculture into an inclusive and diversified segment of the economy.
- These transformations will call for
  - *effective collaboration among all involved partners (govt., NGOs, private sectors, development partners etc.)*
  - *adequate investment*
- By implementing the recommendations, tailored to particular contexts and localities, farm productivity can be improved, sustainability enhanced, *food security ensured, employment and livelihoods opportunities expanded*, and global markets accessed

# Thank You



[www.bdplatform4sdgs.net](http://www.bdplatform4sdgs.net)



[coordinator@bdplatform4sdgs.net](mailto:coordinator@bdplatform4sdgs.net)



[BDPlatform4SDGs](https://www.facebook.com/BDPlatform4SDGs)



[bdplatform4sdgs](https://www.instagram.com/bdplatform4sdgs)



[bdplatform4sdgs](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bdplatform4sdgs)