

Reality of Human Development

Mind the Gap

Sharmin Neelormi

Member, White Paper Committee 2024 and
Professor, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University

Symposium on
White Paper and Thereafter
Economic Management, Reforms and National Budget

Dhaka: Saturday, 18 January 2024

Core findings from the WP

Health & Nutrition- Not Thriving

- *Primary Health care* is characterized by low facility and poor supervision
- *Secondary, Tertiary and Specialized care* facilities are severely constrained by capacity, investment, lack of governance (including the diagnostics services).
- Though the *Pharmaceutical sector* is placed high on their potential of exports, the drug administration in the domestic market is characterized by lower quality, price volatility, aggressive marketing strategy through a nexus among doctors and pharmaceutical companies
- *Corruption during COVID* exposed fundamental flaws in the health sector
- *Rampant systematic corruption*- few include (not limiting to)
- Procurement and supply chain management of the public health service institutions (offices, hospitals and others), outsourcing services, career mobility of young doctors, diagnostics tests & private hospitals, promotion/transfer/leave permission of doctors/ health professional
- *Health financing*- Out of Pocket Expenditure is among the highest in the world, inadequate with poor implementation
- *No universal old age care facilities*
- On the eve of *LDC graduation*, the investment/ assistance from the development partners has been and will be shrinking.

Core findings from the WP

Education sector- A mixed bag of Promises and Frustration

- Education *deprived of quality* (with high drop out rates at school level) , *Low employability* and *Widening learning gap* among economic classes
- *Studies abroad* at undergraduate level (even below) has become a popular tool to escape from the country – Bangladesh Bank is ignorant of the extent
- *NCTP* – in a state of confusion
- *Madrasa education*- remains a mystery and marginalized
- *Construction bias in the public university spending* which developed a culture of unholy nexus among politicians contractors, university authorities, students front of the ruling party.
- *Social derogation of Teachers* to guarantee the supremacy of politicians and administration has been designed meticulously.
- *Education budget*- a fallacy of prioritization characterized by low utilities(utilization bias to non development expenditure)

Core findings from the WP

Between Rhetoric and Realities: Gender Issues

Overstated Women's Advancement-

Poor Outcome in Labor Market (HOUSEWIFE + Model)

Child Marriage- One in Four girls marry by age of 16 (27%) and 63% by age 18. Act & Rule have been enacted to legitimize the marriage age for girls at 16 years

Gender Based Violence- A culture of impunity has been established through a nexus of rich elites, businessman, and politicians.

Institutions and Laws

- CEDAW- Reservation on two articles are still there
- Ignorance of law, delay in actions, avoidance of high court directives are quite common.

Poor Health Outcomes- the Maternal Mortality Ratio is miles behind some of SA countries.

Financial Inclusion is a Far Cry

Gender Budget

The process of formulating gender budget remains subjective, though the improvements in FY 24 need assessment.

Gender Diversity Acknowledged as Other Gender

Core findings from the WP

Disability Inclusive development- a good start that Fizzled Out

- *Jatio Pratibondhi Unnayan Foundation (JPUF)*- an opportunity wasted
- Many faces of access constraints- Big Room for Improvements
- The problem of picking and promoting Favorites: A weakening Impact on the Larger Movement

Core findings from the WP

Environment and Climate Change-A Disaster in Making

- While enforcement of regulatory provisions has been severely undermined by the corrupt political processes, the relevant institutions underperformed due to constrained skills set, lack of human resources, and general corruption.
- Poor understanding/ ignorance about improved technology.
- Environment has become a 'foster child' in the backdrop of Climate Change hype
- Bangladesh successfully informed the world community regarding her vulnerability to climate change, she fell short in responding adequately to achieve resilience and LCD.
- While arranging climate financing has been far too low compared to actual needs, the processes of allocation and actual disbursement are found below global standards due to a lack of transparency, accountability, and integration of knowledge.
- The planning processes have failed to integrate climate concerns due to inadequate technical knowledge and skill. The BCCTF, severely constrained by governance issues, has failed to deliver its national mandate.
- Cost of Inaction is Increasingly salient.

An update on the policy context and actions

- In terms of policy, no significant change has been initiated.
- Government has established a Health Reform Commission to propose reforms aimed at making health services more accessible and universal.
- There have been appointments of new set of people in the UGC, PSC, University administration and in other key institution.
- Women Commission has been formed and expected report will provide direction
- National Implementation strategy (2021-2030) for National Women Development Policy 2011 has been finalized and waiting for approval
- MoEFCC has taken a number of steps to address plastic pollution, illegal Hill cutting, conservation of the ecology of Saint Martins Island. The focus is on pollution control

Recommendations for the budget and beyond.....Health

For budget

- Nutrition, primary health care. Maternal health and reproductive health must be seen as an integrated part of poverty alleviation and development initiatives
- Primary healthcare, urban health management, drug management, procurement and PPR in the health sector, cancer treatment, forensic medicine, maternal health, curriculum and career planning for sector stakeholders, preventive care, the Health Protection Act, hospital management, and workforce shortages in the sector need to be prioritized for the allocation according the Health Reform Commission

Beyond Budget

- Universal health care, especially for children, elderly and pregnant women must be in place

Recommendations for the budget and beyond.....Education

For Budget

- Ongoing development works should continue with further rationalization
- Assessment of proper functioning of educational institutions and allocation for vertical expansion (not horizontal) is required
- One Meal a Day program need to be started at the hard to reach areas
- New pay scale for the teachers and allocation, not marginalizing the primary school teachers
- Allocation for students' loan and teachers' loan for higher studies. Expansion of scholarships (own resources & beyond) for teachers for higher education

Beyond

- NCTP need to be accountable for their quality, greater social inclusion is required in this process.
- An Education Commission may be formed to independently oversee the sector, overcoming the pressure from the ruling party/ government.

Recommendations for the budget and beyond.....Gender

For Budget

- More Effective Allocation on services which can replace domestic workload (childcare, old age care facilities)
- Reproductive health needs to be prioritized
- One MEAL a Day for Hard-to Reach Schools
- Inflation adjusted stipend for female students
- Establish a cell at IMED for M&E of Gender Budget
- Tax structure in favor of women needs to be carefully designed in the fiscal space

Beyond

- Consensus building to withdraw the reservations on CEDAW
- Government machinery, judiciary and civil society must work together to address GBV
- Social inclusion towards inclusion of gender diversity based on human rights principles
- Employment generation with specific objective to employ women (safe, decent)

Recommendations for the budget and beyond.....PwDs

For Budget

- Increased allocation One Stop Service for PwDs
- Allocation for making devices for PwDs
- Expansion of CRP model at regional level (at least divisional level)
- Expansion of Social Safety Net
- Allocation for life cycle rehabilitation system at Shuborna bhaban and beyond (establishment of some model institutions for life time rehabilitation of PwDs)
- Subsidy on life saving drugs which are common for a number of PwDs

Beyond

- Integration in education , skill development and employment- a life cycle approach require active engagement with NGOs working on disability
- Parents of PwDs require income compensation

Recommendations for the budget and beyond.....Environment & CC

For Budget

- Allocation to strengthen the capacity and regulatory regime for the monitoring of ground water depletion
- Enforce compliance of the government agencies (not limiting to) to do proper EIA, an independent advisory committee to oversee and advice issues on environmental management under the Prime Minister's/CA's office
- Capacitate ERD to handle international Climate Finance with more effective way
- Allocation on the basis of priority as spelled out in NAP , NDC and other policies/ strategies/ action plans
- Inclusion of CC and Environment in the Foundation Course of government officials
- Incentivize Public Transport
- Remove incentive for any old/used EV and FCEV and impose Ban on import of 2 years of old EV and FCEV

Beyond

- Greater consensus on Climate Finance, national priorities
- Governance must be improved, general environmental awareness, capacity building among government officials and development practitioners need to be properly designed

Thank You



Scan here to download

White Paper on the State of Bangladesh Economy
Dissection of a Development Narrative