

National SDG Report (VNR) 2025 Addressing the Concerns of LNOB Communities

Dalit, Ethnic Minorities and the SDGs

A Citizen's Assessment of Progress and Challenges, and the Way Forward

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Acknowledgement

Anchor Organisation

Nagorik Uddyog

Kapaeeng Foundation

Associate Organisations

Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD)

Bangladesh Legal Aid Services and Trust (BLAST)

Caritas Bangladesh

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HEKS/ EPER

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1. Why is it important to ensure SDG attainment for Dalits and Ethnic Minorities?

- Dalit and **Ethnic Minority** communities in Bangladesh face **deep-rooted discrimination**, limiting their **access to basic rights, education, healthcare, and employment**.
- Legal and institutional barriers, including the **lack of anti-discrimination laws**, further marginalise these groups and deny them justice.
- The **absence of disaggregated data** makes it difficult to develop targeted policies to address the specific needs of these communities.
- Dalits are often **trapped in traditional caste-based occupations**, while **both Dalits and Ethnic Minorities face land dispossession and exclusion** from economic resources.

1. Why is it important to ensure SDG attainment for Dalits and Ethnic Minorities? (contd.)

- Women from Dalit and Ethnic Minority communities experience **gender-based violence, early marriage, and a lack of political representation.**
- The **failure to implement state commitments**, particularly the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord, continues to **restrict the rights of Ethnic Minorities** in Bangladesh.
- **Climate change disproportionately affects Dalit and Ethnic Minority** communities, threatening their livelihoods and food security.
- Addressing these inequalities is essential for Bangladesh to truly fulfill the SDG principle of "Leaving No One Behind."

2. Methodology

1. **Secondary Data Review:** Review of Government publications, academic studies, journal articles, NGO/CSO reports
2. **Primary Data Collection:**
 - **Three Consultations:** One virtual by Nagorik Uddyog and two in-person consultations by HEKS in Rajshahi and Rangpur
 - **14 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** in Satkhira, Madhupur, Tangail, and Mymensingh, bringing together 151 participants.
 - **Two Household Surveys** conducted in Rangpur and Dinajpur, engaging 535 families and 1,992 individuals.

3. Progress in Attaining SDGs for Dalits and Ethnic Minorities in Bangladesh

- **Legal & Policy Advocacy:** NGOs and CSOs have led initiatives to push for anti-discrimination legislation, though implementation remains weak.
- **Community Empowerment:** Grassroots Dalit and Ethnic Minorities movements have improved awareness and self-advocacy.
- **Education Access:** Some affirmative action programmes have contributed to increased enrollment in schools and universities.
- **Health Initiatives:** Targeted health interventions, particularly in maternal and child healthcare, have improved outcomes in some areas.
- **Land Rights Advocacy:** Continued efforts by Indigenous rights organisations have highlighted the urgency of securing land tenure for Ethnic Minorities communities.

4. Existing Gaps in Attaining the Progress

- **Data Invisibility:** The exclusion of Dalits and Ethnic Minorities from national statistics continues to mask disparities.
- **Structural Discrimination:** Dalits remain confined to menial and hazardous jobs; Ethnic Minority communities suffer land dispossession.
- **Political Underrepresentation:** Lack of participation of Dalit and Ethnic Minority leaders in national and local governance.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** Dalit and women from Ethnic groups face extreme marginalisation, lack access to justice, and are often victims of violence.
- **Education and Employment Barriers:** Discrimination and lack of targeted vocational training limit economic mobility.

5. Challenges

- **Legal and Institutional Barriers:** The absence of specific anti-discrimination laws perpetuates social exclusion.
- **Lack of Recognition:** Dalits and Ethnic Minorities are often not recognised as distinct socio-economic groups in policy frameworks.
- **Discriminatory Social Norms:** Social ostracisation, untouchability practices, and exclusion from public spaces persist for Dalit communities.
- **Land Rights Violations:** Ethnic minority communities continue to face eviction, encroachment, and inadequate legal protection for ancestral lands.
- **Healthcare Disparities:** Dalits and Ethnic Minorities have lower access to quality healthcare, higher infant mortality rates, and inadequate sanitation.
- **Limited Educational Access:** Language barriers, geographic isolation, and caste-based discrimination hinder school completion rates.

6. Recommendations

- **Legislative Reforms:** Enact and enforce an Anti-Discrimination Act that explicitly criminalises caste- and ethnicity-based discrimination.
- **Recognition in National Data:** Institutionalise disaggregated data collection to ensure targeted policies for Dalits and Ethnic Minorities.
- **Land Rights Protection:** Strengthen legal frameworks to prevent land dispossession and implement the CHT Accord effectively.
- **Gender-Sensitive Policies:** Address gender-based violence through dedicated legal and social protection mechanisms.
- **Affirmative Action:** Introduce reserved quotas in education, public service, and decision-making bodies for Dalits and Ethnic Minorities.

6. Recommendations (Contd.)

- **Inclusive Political Representation:** Mandate representation of Dalits and Ethnic Minorities in Parliament, local government, and policy advisory bodies.
- **Healthcare Equity:** Establish community health programs tailored to the needs of Dalit and Ethnic Minority populations.
- **Education Access:** Expand scholarships, mother-tongue-based education, and vocational training programs.
- **Dedicated Budget Allocation:** Ensure direct budgetary provisions for Dalit and Ethnic Minority communities in national and local budgets.
- **Strengthening Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between government, CSOs, and international organisations to drive systemic change.

Thank You



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