



Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh

এসডিজি বাস্তবায়নে নাগরিক প্ল্যাটফর্ম, বাংলাদেশ

BANGLADESH REFORM TRACKER

YOUR COUNTRY. YOUR REFORMS. YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW



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PART A

OVERVIEW OF THE

REFORM TRACKER

INTRODUCING THE TRACKER

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Bangladesh Reform Tracker. At the top, the title "Bangladesh Reform Tracker." is displayed in white on a dark blue background. Below the title, the text "Bangladesh aspires for reform. We, the citizens, are tracking." is written in white. A search bar is positioned below the text, featuring two dropdown menus labeled "Select Reform Domain" and "Select Reform Sub-Domain", an input field for "Enter Keyword", and a blue "Search Now" button. The main content area is titled "Explore Reforms" and includes a sub-header: "Click to explore reform domains. Domains coming soon are shown in grayscale, giving you a sneak peek of what's on the way." Below this, four domain categories are presented as cards: "Anti Corruption" (red icon), "Electoral Process" (green icon), "Labour" (blue icon), and "Media" (orange icon). A blue "Glossary" button is located to the right of the "Media" card. The background of the top section features a photograph of a building with people on the roof.

<https://reformtracker.bdplatform4sdgs.net>

HOW DID WE DO IT?

STEP I

Identification

STEP III

Data
Collection

STEP V

Database
Development

Expert
Validation

Progress
Tracking

STEP II


STEP IV

WHAT ARE WE ALREADY TRACKING?

Anti
Corruption

An icon for anti-corruption featuring a red diagonal banner with the text "STOP CORRUPTION" and a hand with the index finger pointing to the right.

STOP
CORRUPTION

An icon for the electoral process showing a person in a red chair holding a sign that says "VOTE!".

VOTE!

Electoral
Process

Labour

An icon for labour showing three people: a man in a yellow hard hat and work clothes, a man in a white shirt and tie, and a woman in a blue dress holding a yellow folder.

Labour

An icon for media featuring a computer monitor, a smartphone, a television, and a radio, all connected by a network of lines and a Wi-Fi symbol.

Media

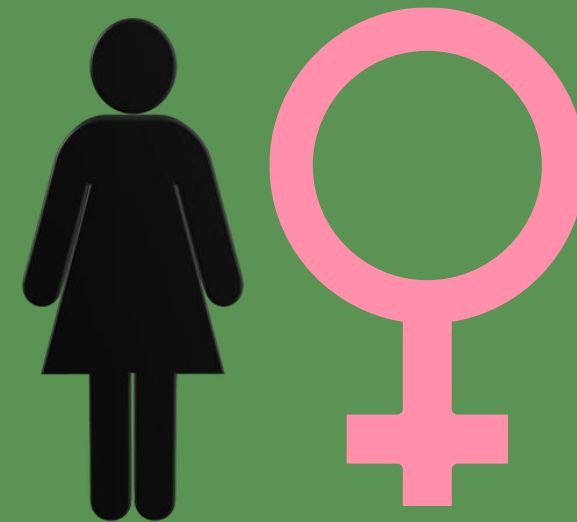
WHAT ARE WE TRACKING NEXT?

Judiciary



LDC
Graduation

Women



Data



MORE TO COME....

POLICE

**LOCAL
GOVERNMENT**

ADMINISTRATION

HUMAN RIGHTS

**POWER &
ENERGY**

EDUCATION

HEALTH

BANKING

**PUBLIC
FINANCE**

THE 5 STAGES OF TRACKING

1

REFORM PROPOSED

2

REFORM INITIATED

3

LEGAL & POLICY FORMULATION

4

OPERATIONALISATION

5

ACTION IMPLEMENTATION

THE 5 STAGES OF TRACKING

STAGE 1: REFORM PROPOSED

THE FRAMING OF A REFORM PROPOSAL ACROSS KEY DOCUMENTS—SUCH AS THE REFORM COMMISSION REPORTS, AND OTHER OFFICIAL SOURCES—CULMINATING IN A STANDARD ARTICULATION OF THE PROPOSED REFORM.

STAGE 2: REFORM INITIATED

AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT AGENCY FORMALLY DECLARING THE ACCEPTANCE AND INITIATION OF A REFORM PROPOSAL.

THE 5 STAGES OF TRACKING

STAGE 3 : LEGAL & POLICY FORMULATION

A FORMAL DECISION REGARDING HOW A REFORM PROPOSAL WILL BE OPERATIONALISED, FOLLOWED BY THE ISSUANCE OF AN OFFICIAL NOTICE OR LEGAL INSTRUMENT.

STAGE 4: OPERATIONALISATION

SPECIFIC STEPS TAKEN BY THE RELEVANT AGENCIES TO PUT A REFORM PROPOSAL INTO EFFECT, SUCH AS PROCUREMENT, IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES, OR OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL ACTIONS.

THE 5 STAGES OF TRACKING

STAGE 5 : ACTION IMPLEMENTATION

THE TIME FRAME OR STAGE AT WHICH THE ACTIONS TAKEN UNDER A REFORM PROPOSAL ARE ENFORCED AND APPLIED IN PRACTICE.

WHAT DOES THE TRACKER OFFER?

- 1. Track what matters to you** by following specific reform areas of interest
2. Explore **specific issues** within each reform area in more detail
- 3. Use keyword search** to quickly find reform proposals, updates, or development
- 4. Monitor progress over time**, tracking how reform areas, issues, and proposals move across different stages
5. Access **relevant resources linked to each reform**, including documents, policies, and references, **all in one place**
- 6. Share your opinions and views** on reforms

FEATURES OF THE TRACKER

- 7. Subscribe for updates,** so you are notified when there are changes in the reforms you follow
- 8. Inter-temporal comparison:** Compare progress across different reform areas to see what is moving forward—and what is not
- 9. Accessibility features** to ensure the platform is easier to use for people with diverse needs
- 10. Bangla language support,** making the Tracker more inclusive and accessible to a wider range of Bangladeshi citizens

PART B

STATE OF THE MEDIA REFORMS

Mass Media in BNP's Election Pledges

BNP promised to provide **protection and recognition** for the work of fearless and unbiased journalists

1. The **Digital Security Act** will be reviewed
2. Determined to ensure **uninterrupted security for all types of media**, media workers, and media offices
3. An independent, strong, and accountable **media regulatory framework** similar to the UK's Ofcom will be established
4. Effective initiatives will be taken to **ensure justice for all journalists tortured and murdered**, and **all false cases** filed for political purposes **will be withdrawn**
5. Forming a '**National Journalist Retirement Welfare Board**'
6. Ending **Political Bias in the allocation of advertisements** to newspapers

**The Report of
The Media Reform Commission**

22 March 2025

Dissecting the Media Domain

- The tracking of this domain was a collaboration with **MRDI**
- Priorities were set for **short-, medium-, and long-term** implementation
- **27 Reform Proposals** spanning **15 sub-domains** were identified for tracking
- Views were gathered through a consultative process & the final list reflects collective stakeholder input: **148 stakeholder consultations**, an **online survey included 401 media stakeholders** and **9 KIIs**
- **Five experts** helped **validate reform progress** and findings

STATE OF TRACKED REFORMS

Media

Selected Reform Proposals being tracked: 27



Media Reforms at “Operationalisation” Stage

Proposed

“The abolition of import duty on newsprint for the newspaper industry should be considered”

Status

A reduction in the import duty on newsprint has been implemented, setting the revised rate at 3 percent.

Import duty was reduced last year. This year, during the pre-budget consultation, media stakeholders have urged to abolish it.

Media Reforms at the “Legal & Policy Formulation” Stage

Proposed

The concerns raised by journalists, human rights activists, legal experts, and stakeholders regarding the provisions of the proposed Cyber Security Act must be addressed.

Status

Under the Cyber Security Ordinance 2025, some contentious provisions have been repealed. Consequently, all cases filed solely under those repealed provisions have been automatically dismissed. The ordinance has been placed before the 13th parliament.

The ordinance repeals key contentious provisions and introduces safeguards, reducing misuse risks. The ruling party has pledged to review the Act, for which consultation with relevant stakeholders may be required.

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
1	<p>The Bangladesh Media Commission can be formed by combining the currently active Bangladesh Press Council for newspapers and news agencies, and the Broadcast Commission proposed by the previous government for broadcast media and online platforms. This institution must be established as an independent body, free from government control. Media institutions may finance the expenses of this organisation by determining a fixed-rate contribution from their income.</p> <p>As a media regulatory body, the responsibilities that the Bangladesh Media Commission will perform include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Determining the qualifications and disqualifications of publishers and editors so that persons convicted of criminal offences and loan defaulters cannot become media owners/editors. Determining the minimum educational qualification for journalism. Journalists working across the country will be registered with the Media Commission, and the Commission will maintain a list of them. It will formulate a code of conduct for journalists and ensure its compliance. It will recommend the issuance of licenses for broadcast media (TV and radio) and online portals and ensure compliance with the conditions of those licenses. Providing remedies for complaints by individuals, institutions, or groups harmed by false or deliberately motivated news. If this is possible, it will achieve an important advancement in establishing institutional accountability of the media, and the media will be able to earn public trust. 	<p>According to the Draft National Media Commission Ordinance, 2026 selected sub-proposals of this reform proposal have been incorporated, while the rest of the sub-proposals remain unaddressed.</p> <p><i>The ordinance does not fully reflect the proposal, as only selected sub-proposals were incorporated.</i></p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
2	<p>The Mass Media Reforms Commission has attached a draft ordinance for a Journalism Protection Act to this report, based on a few examples of best practices worldwide. It proposes taking steps to issue it quickly. Furthermore, it deems the following steps appropriate regarding the incidents of misuse of various laws over the past 15 years:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cases filed against journalists under various applicable laws, including the Penal Code, Information and Communication Technology Act, Digital Security Act, Cyber Security Act, and Contempt of Court Act, must be identified and reviewed. Based on the information obtained after the review, the concerned government prosecutor must take appropriate steps to withdraw the cases or have the police submit the final report. b. If evidence of false cases is found upon review, legal and just action must be taken against the concerned authorities. c. Arrangements must be made to compensate affected journalists and their families. d. Affected media organisations must be provided with reasonable compensation. e. Incidents of illegal intrusion, surveillance, and eavesdropping into journalists' communications and lives must be investigated, and arrangements must be made to punish the culprits. 	<p>The Draft National Media Commission Ordinance, 2026 contains certain elements related to journalist protection and compensation but several core recommendations are absent. The draft remains under consideration, and no progress has been identified beyond drafting. On 16 March 2026, the Information Minister stated at a Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association (CRAB) event that the government is preparing a roadmap to ensure journalists' professional dignity, wage structure, and overall safety. However, whether that roadmap will include an Act was not clearly articulated.</p> <p>The ordinance partially reflects the proposal, excluding key provisions on retrospective justice and accountability.</p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
3	A system for determining acceptable and logical Television Rating Points (TRP) must be established quickly. Accountability must be ensured for those responsible for irregularities in the current TRP system. If media outlets disseminate false TRP and seek compensation, their claims must be considered.	<p>The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is exploring measures to establish a Television Rating Points (TRP) system while retaining governmental oversight.</p> <p>The proposed TRP system remains under government control, raising concerns about its effectiveness in preventing manipulation.</p>
4	The mandatory use of Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL) for uplink and downlink must be removed . This is because no channel can broadcast internationally through this BSCL.	<p>Based on the commission’s recommendation, a preliminary decision has been made to remove the mandatory use of Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited (BSCL) for uplink and downlink by television channels. A final decision will be made after discussions with BSCL.</p> <p>A preliminary decision were made during the term of Interim government, but final implementation remains pending subject to further discussions.</p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
5	<p>FM radio broadcasting appears to be facing an existential crisis due to declining listeners and a dramatic drop in advertising revenue. However, the importance of radio has not yet ended. Some unreasonable restrictions on FM radio licensing should be removed. For example, the security deposit kept by the government against the license should be refunded, and the provision for keeping a security deposit should be abolished.</p>	<p>A decision has been made in the meeting of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to reasonably reduce the security deposit for FM radio licenses.</p> <p>Only partial adjustment has been considered, while broader structural restrictions remain unaddressed.</p>
6	<p>If government announcements are to be broadcast on FM radio, they should pay a determined fee.</p>	<p>It has been decided to abolish the 2% government fee deducted from FM radio advertising revenue when paying the prescribed fee to the radio authority. However, government announcements must be broadcast free of charge.</p> <p>The current decision is partially reflective, as government announcements are to remain free despite the removal of the revenue deduction.</p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
7	<p>The commission believes that merging BSS into the news division of the new combined institution of BTV and Betar would be the optimal use of state resources, rather than keeping it as an independent institution. News generated by this central newsroom will be broadcast on BTV and Bangladesh Betar. The new unified institution combining BTV, Betar, and BSS can be named the Bangladesh Broadcasting Agency or the National Broadcasting Agency. This new institution will have three divisions: Television, Radio, and News Division. The News Division in the new broadcasting agency will continue to provide services to its current clients. There will be a Director as the head of each division, and the head of the new integrated broadcasting agency will be a Director General. The government will appoint the Director General; however, he will be accountable to the Governing Board.</p>	<p>The interim government formed a five-member committee, led by Education Adviser C.R. Abrar, to ensure the autonomy of state-owned Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Bangladesh Betar. The other members are: Legal Adviser Asif Nazrul, Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Road Transport and Bridge Adviser Muhammad Fauzul Kabir Khan, and Housing and Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan.</p> <p>The government is developing rules to allow autonomy for BTV. But no merger may take place with BSS/Betar. And, also, no decision in view of autonomy for Betar and BSS is planned.</p> <p><i>Interim government's actions prioritised autonomy over integration; the proposal's future now depends on the current government's intent and policy agility.</i></p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
8	<p>It is urgent to reform the auditing of newspaper circulation figures. There is corruption in the current system. The conditions for being listed in the media list include a minimum circulation number. For example, for newspapers published from Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet divisional cities, it is 6000, from divisional other towns it is 4000, and from other cities it is 3000. This should be the number of sold copies, not the circulation number, which will be subject to verification of paid bills. Newspapers will be media-listed if they have three thousand sold copies in a divisional city outside Dhaka and one thousand in a district city.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also announced the decision to form a task force to reform the newspaper circulation audit system.</p> <p><i>A task force was under consideration during the interim government's tenure, but its implementation remains uncertain.</i></p>
9	<p>Prompt payment of advertisement dues by the government and autonomous agencies to newspapers is necessary.</p>	<p>It is reported that the dues are partially paid.</p> <p><i>To implement this reform, a policy will need to be established for paying the outstanding government advertising payments to mass media within a stipulated timeframe.</i></p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
10	<p>Due to the emergence and growing popularity of social media and other online platforms, advertisers are increasingly shifting towards so-called new media. At the same time, in Bangladesh, the expansion of traditional or legacy media is still continuing. As a result, competition for advertisements has reached an unhealthy stage. In the competition to reduce prices, advertisers are naturally benefiting. At the same time, amid this crisis, allegations have emerged of collusion among advertising agencies in the competition. Transparency and fairness are not being maintained in the competition. In light of the opinions of stakeholders, the Commission believes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An oversight institution, the Advertising Standards Authority, needs to be established soon to ensure the standard of advertisements, transparency, and fairness in competition. This institution will be an autonomous and statutory body. This institution will create advertising policies consistent with international norms and various laws, which will be mandatory for advertisers, agencies, and the media outlets that publish and broadcast advertisements. This authority will also formulate transparent policies and codes of conduct for PR agencies and media buying, as well as ensure compliance. The representation of the organisation of advertising agencies, the Advertising Agencies Association of Bangladesh, must be ensured in the system for determining television ratings (TRP) and the inspection system for verifying newspaper circulation figures. The commission has made separate recommendations regarding this. It would also be appropriate to investigate whether any collusion and strategies contrary to fair competition are practised in the advertising industry. The Competition Commission can take the initiative in this regard. 	<p>A preliminary decision has been made to consult the Bangladesh Competition Commission to investigate for collusion or anti-competitive practices in the advertising industry.</p> <p><i>A preliminary step was taken during Interim Government's tenure, but the establishment of an autonomous regulatory body remains unaddressed.</i></p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
11	<p>No media outlet shall appoint any journalist, whether temporary, permanent, or contractual, without an appointment letter, identity card, photo, or salary.</p>	<p>There is no direct mention of requiring appointment letters, identity cards, or photographic identification for journalists in the draft National Media Commission Ordinance. However, the draft does include references to fair remuneration and salary-related rights of journalists, particularly in relation to reasonable recruitment conditions and proper remuneration.</p> <p><i>The draft ordinance includes general provisions on remuneration but does not address mandatory appointment documentation requirements.</i></p>
12	<p>It is necessary to introduce specific systems/methods for verifying misinformation/fake news in every newsroom. Responsible and trained journalists can do this work. However, technological support should also be in place. To address the shortage of adequate investment in truth verification activities due to the financial crisis in the media, the possibility of arranging a larger and collective initiative within the news industry can be considered. The right of this initiative to work independently must, of course, be ensured.</p>	<p>Very few media outlets and collaborative platforms (e.g., MRDI and Prothom Alo) have established their own fact-checking mechanisms. On 4 April 2026, the Information Minister, Zahir Uddin Swapan, stated at a meeting at the Sathia Press Club in Pabna that the government is considering mandating pre-publication fact-checking across all media outlets, with potential legal action for non-compliance.</p> <p><i>Fact-checking initiatives remain fragmented, with no sector-wide standard or regulatory framework in place.</i></p>

Media Reforms at the “Reform Initiated” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal	Reform Status
13	<p>a. Eliminating gender discrimination in recruitment, placement, and training to ensure the participation of all genders at all levels of the media;</p> <p>b. Preparing gender-sensitive codes of conduct in each media outlet and establishing systems for providing information, discussion, training, and monitoring for effective implementation of the code of conduct; ensuring infrastructure (e.g., separate toilets, childcare centres) for the smooth participation of all genders;</p> <p>c. Ensuring the utmost caution in the safety and protection of journalists of all genders, prioritising the needs of women; providing transportation arrangements for safe travel;</p> <p>d. Establishing a complaints redress cell in each media office as per the High Court directive on preventing sexual harassment (2009);</p> <p>e. Taking mental health protection measures to cope with various types of pressure in journalism;</p> <p>f. Ensuring that women receive proper maternity leave and do not face any discrimination upon returning to work after leave;</p> <p>g. Formulating clear guidelines and rules for how women will be presented; preparing policies on not publishing or broadcasting stereotypical ideas that create hatred, animosity, or negative attitudes towards women, or hinder their smooth presence in all fields;</p> <p>h. Highlighting the multifaceted roles and participation of women in society; ensuring that the voice and perspective of women are reflected in any news/feature;</p> <p>i. Preparing clear guidelines for language use to avoid direct or indirect humiliation of women through words or descriptions.</p>	<p>Selected media outlets, such as Jamuna TV and Samakal have finalised and adopted their own gender policies.</p> <p>Initiatives remain limited and voluntary, with no binding sector-wide framework to ensure standardised implementation.</p> <p>No binding sector-wide framework exists; recent initiatives remain voluntary and limited in scope.</p>

Media Reforms at “Reform Proposed” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal
1	Media organisations must make their financial accounts public every year to ensure the transparency of their income.
2	The advance tax levied on the honorariums of media columnists, contributors, artists, and guest presenters/discussants is equivalent to taxing creativity. This advance tax should be abolished.
3	All laws related to criminal defamation , such as Sections 499, 500, 501, and 502 of the Bangladesh Penal Code of 1860, and Section 29 of the Cyber Security Act of 2023, should be repealed. Along with that, a system can be introduced to entrust the regulatory body, the proposed Media Commission, with offenses related to defamation involving journalists. The power given to the government to forfeit newspapers under Sections 99A and 99B of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, is contrary to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Therefore, it should be repealed.
4	Official Secrets Act, 1923 Section 5 should be amended to emphasize only national security, and a provision for legal protection in the public interest should be added for investigative journalism.
5	Newspaper advertisement rates have not increased in the last 10 years. The rates must be increased, and the advertisement rates should be increased annually in line with market inflation. The separate classification system for determining advertisement rates must be reviewed and adjusted proportionally.

Media Reforms at “Reform Proposed” Stage

SL	Reform Proposal
6	Media organisations will provide photographers/video journalists with the necessary equipment .
7	Media organisations will ensure that safety equipment and training are provided to all journalists, where applicable. The institution's obligation to provide legal assistance in resolving any lawsuits related to professional work must be ensured.
8	Since all media are now becoming multimedia-dependent in content creation, the Reforms Commission deems it appropriate to merge the two institutions , given the future of the press. If merged, it will be transformed into an intense national media training and research institution/institute.
9	Various workshops, seminars, and sessions can be organised in classrooms to enhance media literacy knowledge and skills among secondary and college students (including equivalent madrasas). Researchers and thinkers on media literacy must be involved in these activities. These activities can be undertaken through a combined initiative of the relevant ministries, research institutions/NGOs, and academia.
10	As a long-term measure, media literacy must be included in the curriculum of different levels of education .
12	It is necessary for the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to conduct annual surveys to verify the expectations and actual experiences of listeners, viewers, and readers regarding the media.

PART C

What is next?

STATE OF TRACKED REFORMS

Anti-Corruption

Selected Reform Proposals being tracked: 47



STATE OF TRACKED REFORMS

Electoral Process

Selected Reform Proposals being tracked: 31



STATE OF TRACKED REFORMS

 **Labour**

Selected Reform Proposals being tracked: 23



Tracking Electoral Pledges

Following the 13th parliamentary elections, it is also pertinent to track the progress of the commitments made in the manifesto of the incumbent government

Citizen's Platform, along with its Bangladesh Reform Tracker, has now begun tracking the delivery of the pledges.

We have named it ...

MANIFESTO WATCH

Tracking Electoral Pledges

We have started with:

- i. Family Card**
- ii. Farmer Loan Waiver**
- iii. Farmer Card**
- iv. Mid-Day Meal**
- v. Canal Excavation**
- vi. Buses for Women**
- vii. One Teacher One Tab**
- viii. Free School Uniforms**
- ix. Free Wifi in Schools**

**What are we considering
as we track?**

- 1. Conceptualisation**
- 2. Scoping**
- 3. Phasing (and Piloting)**
- 4. Delivery Mechanism**
- 5. Requirement and Feasibility
(financial and other delivery
aspects)**
- 6. Meeting development objectives**

More to come...

WHAT'S NEXT?

- ❑ **Regular updates will continue**, ensuring reform information remains current and relevant
- ❑ Periodic monitoring reports will be published as “**State of Reforms**” **briefs** to highlight progress and gaps
- ❑ **Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders** to validate findings and strengthen accountability, particularly the **next elected government**
- ❑ **Impact assessments** to understand whether reforms are delivering the desired positive changes for the citizens

What's Next?

- **Workshops with journalists (from Dhaka and outside) in partnership with ERF**
 - ✓ **With a view to improved and continued media attention on tracking the delivery of key manifesto pledges and reforms**
 - ✓ **In this process, strengthening the transparency of the delivery and accountability of the government**
- **Public discussions on specific reform and manifesto pledge areas**
- **Engaging the private sector**
 - ✓ **Sustainability Business Forum**
- **Focus on specific priorities**
 - ✓ **Primary and Secondary Education**



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BDPlatform4SDGs



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