

## Leave No One Behind: Bangladesh National Dialogue

### Report on Findings:

As part of the interventions to demystify Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in Bangladesh and identify the groups possibly being left behind in the development process, the LNB coalition of the SDG in Bangladesh, consist of ADD International, Christian Aid, DanChurchAid and HelpAge International, Bangladesh organized three divisional level and two national level (including policy dialogue) consultation dialogues. It was multi-stakeholder consultation engaging the most important key players in the development sector at the national level as well as counting the voices from grassroots on the SDG. Around 40 organizations (including NGO, INGO, government agencies, donors, marginalized groups, networks, etc.) working on different marginalized groups such as women, girls, religious and ethnic minorities, disabled, aged, youth, trade unions, LGBTQI and rural communities took part in these consultation dialogues. The consultation aimed to stimulate discussion on SDG and in light of the discussions explored the groups and communities possibly being left behind in society. A total of 272 individuals took part in the consultations which 79 (29%) women and 193 (71%) men.

Moreover, a survey was conducted through an online platform survey monkey. The purpose of the survey was to identify groups and communities most excluded their level of access to resources and services provided by governments and aid programs and their level of involvement in government decision-making which allocates resources and services. The survey link was sent out through email to the participants. A total of 82 individuals took part in the survey. Out of which 64 (78%) were men and 18 (22%) were women.

Through the consultations/dialogues it was found that considering the social context of Bangladesh, the LGBTQI community should be referred to as sexual and gender diversity population. Dalits, indigenous people, occupational minority, sex workers, urban slum dwellers, street children, Bede<sup>1</sup> community, widows, abandoned wives, etc. should be considered within the inclusion process to eliminate discrimination & exploitation because they are the most vulnerable groups and are living without and/or

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<sup>1</sup> **Bede** is a nomadic ethnic group of Bangladesh. The **Bede** traditionally live, travel, and earn their living on the river, which has given them the name of "Water Gypsy" or "River Gypsy". They travel in groups and never stay in one place for more than a couple of months. The majority of the Bedes live on snake related trading, such as snake charming(training), snake catching, snake selling, etc. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bede\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bede_people)

are being denied basic resources. Increased inequality causes the marginalization inter and intra groups. 'There are marginalized groups and sub-groups within the groups and communities' - Khushi Kabir, Coordinator of Nijera Kori said during the national consultation in Dhaka.

These marginalized groups mainly live in rural areas of Bangladesh. Bangladesh's landscape is mixed, i.e. coastal area, water logging area, drought area, which is known as hard-to-reach areas in the development arena. Apart from this, there are hilly areas and plain land areas where ethnic communities live. Communities living in urban slums are also considered as marginalized groups in terms of lack of access to the resources mainly due to the frequent natural disasters which causes force migration from there locality.

Primarily socio-economic factors that contribute to the marginalisation of people in community because of religious extremism and social superstitions, political/muscle, power game, unequal distribution of assets and resources are factors that lead to marginalization. The most important factors that lead to the marginalisation of individuals and groups in locality are fundamentalism, gender inequality, lack of social security system, violation of human rights and social practices/manners/tradition/customs.

Scarcity of authentic accessible data is always a challenge. Even though Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has copyright issues, we can still access information through a complicated request process. Disaggregated data availability is also a big challenge. To meet the need for data, development partners and the government can assist as SDG is a global development priority. Marginalized group/community wise disaggregated data is also not available and updated available data is another ongoing challenge.

Intersecting identities and double marginalization are other issue that further perpetuates poverty and marginalization. For example, in Bangladesh, around 8% of the total population belongs to the age group of 60 and above. This number is silently growing and we do not have any effective plan to look after this large population. We do not have enough data on them. We need to empower them so that they can continue their contribution to the society instead of becoming a burden. Another example is the Dalit community in Bangladesh, within their community, Dalit women face double burden and compound layers of discrimination. Likewise, ethnic communities, LGBTQI, women, youth, children, person living with disability face double burden because of their identity, age, sex and economic condition in the society.

Marginalised groups are entitled to access services, resources and opportunities that government provides at their community level as social safety net services. Primarily they receive health services, education services, from union parishad (lower administrative body), department for social services, etc. Marginalized people and community are unable to access these services and/or benefits as they often face obstacles as social superstitions, political ill will/muscle, power game for nepotism, unequal distribution of assets and resources, local fundamentalism, gender inequality, etc.

Civil society's role is very important to make people aware (for example beggars, Dalit community) of their rights, co-ordinate with service providers, relevant ministries and departments, advocacy and lobbying along with activities to attain their demands. Political will and commitment is also needed from the government. Mass awareness about the government's facilities that is focused for the said marginalized groups and/or communities should be discussed.

In order to achieve SDG we need to have political commitment and representation. Localization of SDG is very important to understand the issues and for accountability. Despite having political commitment, there is lack of institutional capacity of the government, particularly the local government. Collaboration between the government and NGOs is another very important area to focus on in order to achieve the SDG. Right to development for all needs to be ensured in order to achieve SDG. Everyone in the society has the right to be part of the development activities.

Participants of divisional consultations (majority represented by grassroots organizations/ groups and local government officials/NGO staff) emphasized on SDG goals and targets, which specifically focuses on inclusion of marginalized groups and of those left behind, e.g. women and children, persons with disabilities, old-age population, and ethnic and religious minorities (Dalit, Santal, etc.). Most of them mentioned these as included either in goals or targets or in indicators (SDG 4, 5, 8, 10,11 and 17). In general, SDG related to -poverty eradication, -quality of lives focusing health, education, environment; -gender/inequality, unemployment etc. (SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 17) also were emphasized. Some references of specific SDGs were made by organizations working on specific theme/strategies like WASH, women empowerment, disasters etc.

In regards to the SDG, at the national level consultation/policy dialogues, participants (mainly government and non-governmental high officials, media personnel) mentioned that Bangladesh will need to address many ongoing challenges. These include addressing the growing income disparity, persistent undernourishment of mothers and children, difficulties in attaining safe and unadulterated food for all, high drop-out rates

in secondary education, inadequate access to modern energy and infrastructure, and weakening rule of law and personal safety.

Apart from that, Bangladesh Planning Commission of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has mapped out the SDGs along with targets for the ministries for the implementation and achieving of SDG aligning with government's 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2016-20), with the assistance from Support to Sustainable and Inclusive Planning (SSIP) Project, UNDP Bangladesh.

The coalition consisting of ADD International, Christian Aid, DanChurchAid and HelpAge International, Bangladesh have developed and signed a MoU. Moving forward, the coalition will be called the LNB coalition of the SDG in Bangladesh. The coalition will work together to push the LNB agenda in Bangladesh. Presently, the coalition is looking for opportunities and under taking initiatives in a coordinated way with specific roles and responsibilities of the coalition members. The coalition will develop a terms of reference for future scopes and collective action for wider impact. A planning meeting is scheduled on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2017 for this. Apart from that, the coalition is also aligning this issue of inclusion within their core activities and keeping eye on the issue as what's going on at the country level especially in government sector and among CSOs, will organize inter-ministerial meeting. Continue mobilization of LNB with target audiences at the grassroots level so that they take part in SDG planning and implementation at local & national level. The coalition will also share the views/voices of grassroots with key policymakers as evidences and will take the initiative to gather desegregated data and analyse accordingly.

**Please include the following:** survey results, data charts, input from each of the marginalized groups, overall analysis, geographic analysis, and key policy asks or suggestions for decision makers as well as for other stakeholders to implement.

**Guiding questions:**

- 1) Who are the groups and communities in your country that are being left behind?
- 2) Where are people being most left behind? Is there a particular region/locality?
- 3) Why are they being left behind?
- 4) What are the data and evidence gaps?
- 5) What are some stories or testimonies and priorities from those furthest behind?

- 6) What are the main obstacles that marginalised groups are facing in accessing services, resources and opportunities?
- 7) What can be done to remove these obstacles? What lessons exist on what works to leave no one behind in your national context? (e.g. practical, cost effective, innovative).
- 8) Which SDG goals, targets and indicators need particular focus in your country and why in order to ensure no one is left behind?
- 9) What steps, as a coalition, are you planning on taking in the next few years to ensure a) the inclusion of marginalised groups in policy decisions and implementation and b) feedback on national progress towards the delivery of the SDGs and the LNB pledge?

Feel free to also use other mediums to display your information such as the online tool storymaps: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/how-to/>