

POVERTY REDUCTION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND INCLUSION

A Decade of Turning Policies into Action
2009-2018



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Poverty Reduction, Social Welfare and Inclusion



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Introduction

Bangladesh has unquestionably been riding on a mounting trajectory of rapid development. Over the last decade, the country, under the able and prudent leadership of Honorable Prime Minister (HPM) Sheikh Hasina, has been credited with a never-seen-before rise in economy, higher foreign investment, decrease in poverty and significant strides in human development.

With 160 million people and a strong GDP growth rate of 7 percent or higher for a decade, Bangladesh has made laudable progress toward poverty reduction, social welfare, equity, justice and inclusion through successful policy interventions, defying the perception of 'a test case for development'.

At the crux of such miracles lies a prudent formulation and maneuvering of a varied assortment of new policies. Envisaged and implemented by HPM Sheikh Hasina, Vision 2021, an electoral pledge placed by her party Bangladesh Awami League, encapsulates a varied assortment of schemes that is attributed to the country's upgradation to the World Bank's "lower middle income" category in 2015.

To scale up and to accelerate the process of accomplishing the vision, more than 160 public policies formulated in the last one decade under formidable leadership of HPM Sheikh Hasina. Almost all of the policies formulated by the Awami League led government in the last one decade are complemented with one or multiple action plan and guidelines for timely and successful implementation, resulting in to the happening of this miracle.

This publication is an effort to document and portray a picture of the last one decade's policy level changes devised and implemented by the government in its endeavor in poverty reduction, ensuring social welfare, safety, security and to make Bangladesh an inclusive and just society.

01

Poverty Reduction, Social Welfare and Inclusion: Through Policy Lens

Leaving No One Behind: Through Policy Lens

An array of inclusive and pro-people policies and programs, as envisaged and put in place by the Awami League led government, have largely contributed to poverty reduction and lowering inequality, resulting in a commendable economic growth and lifting up lives for millions. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's remark on development of Bangladesh stood out as a shining testament to this claim and the country also fared better than many South Asian nations in the Human Capital Index (HCI).

Such policies and action plans to reduce poverty and inequality, ensuring social welfare, safety, equity and justice to the people eventually transforming the fortunes of the countrymen and taking the country to rid of the menaces like poverty and leading to the path of an inclusive society. A number of policies are being devised with a view to ending hunger and ensuring food safety and security. Among them are Internal Procurement Policy 2010, Government Modern Flour Mill Management Policy 2015, Food Grain Distribution Policy 2016, Open Market Sell Policy 2015, Food-Friendly Program Policy

"Bangladesh's strong track record of poverty reduction and development shows that with the right policies and actions, further progress is possible."



Qimiao Fan

Country Director, World Bank for
Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal

2017, Internal Crops Collection Policy 2010, Internal Food grain Collection Policy 2017.

In a bid to give the agriculture sector a major boost, different pro-agriculture policies are formulated including Incentive for Aush Implementation Policy 2015, National Agricultural Extension Policy 2015, Integrated Small Scale Irrigation Policy 2014, Amendment of Fertilizer Dealer Appointment & Distribution Policy 2009, Crop Variety and Technology Development Policy 2010, National Agriculture Policy 2018, Draft National Seed Policy 2018, National Crop and Forest Biodiversity Policy 2012, Integrated Minor Irrigation Policy 2017.

On top of that, formulation of the Bangladesh Population Policy 2012 opened up new horizon for maintaining stability in population growth and also got the citizens' rights constitutionally endorsed. The results were evident too. Total Fertility Rate got lowered while the rate of prevalence of contraceptive users marked a sharp rise to 72% by the year 2015. Besides, ensuring availability of family planning methods, providing easy access to reproductive health services are also among the expected outcomes of the policy.

Moreover, the initiation of National Health Policy 2011, under ministry of health and family welfare, has made the primary and emergency

healthcare service accessible to the citizens, leading to a meteoric rise in average life expectancy.

On the front of women empowerment and their development, there have been success stories aplenty. HPM Sheikh Hasina has always laid her focus on the amelioration of fortunes for women as her party has a mandate to ensure their participation, their contribution and to create equal opportunity in all spectrums of lives. During her first term in power in 1996, she has overseen formulation of the first ever National Women Development Policy. Again after retaining her office in 2009, the National Women Development Policy 2011 has been came into effect aiming to make lives better for the women.

In its pursuit for an inclusive and just society, the government formulated National Ethnic Minority Policy 2012 where pledges were made to ensure the inclusion of ethnic minority in the mainstream education, employment and all other aspects of citizenship; making sure their rights are well-kept.

For overall development of the children, their mental growth and wellbeing and ensuring their rights, the government formulated National Child Policy 2011, National Psycho-social Counseling Policy 2016, Integrated Policy for Children's Initial Caring and Development 2013.



Leaving No One Behind: Walking the Talk

On a raft of human development indices, the country has been showing other South Asian nations the ways to make lives better for the countrymen. Owing to the able leadership of HPM Sheikh Hasina, the government has taken numerous initiatives to address inequality through introduction of schemes for poverty reduction, ensuring access to education, opening up employment opportunities, strengthening social security and financial inclusion. The Awami League led government adopts "whole-of-society" approach aiming to "Leaving No One Behind". The child mortality rate in Bangladesh has gone down quite substantially over the decade and life expectancy has gone up to 73 years. Per Capita Income increased by 149% in last 10 years. Such landmark achievements illustrate the tremendous progress made over the last one decade.

In last 10 years



Life expectancy has gone up to

73 years

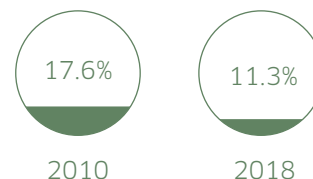


Per Capita Income increased by

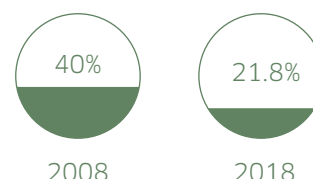
149%

On the back of the prudent monetary and fiscal policies, the government has been able to contain inflation within 5.8 percent. The scope and allocation for social safety net program is being extended every year. To infuse efficiency and effectiveness in the said schemes, Bangladesh has already formulated 'National Social Security Strategy (NSSS)' while there has been a constant follow up in the life cycle approach of social safety net.

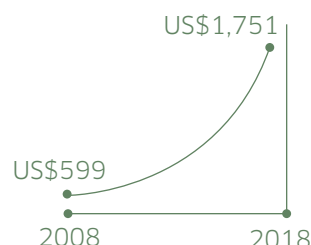
Extreme Poverty Rate



Poverty Rate



Per Capita National Income (US\$)



The poverty rate is 21.8% in 2018 which was 40% in 2008. In the 7th Five Year Plan, target had been set to bring it down 18% by 2020. At present, the enrolment rate at primary level is 97.97 percent. It is noted that girls' enrolment rate is slightly higher than boys' enrolment rate. On the other hand, the dropout rate at primary level has been decreased to 18%, whereas it was 50% in 2007.

A stellar performance has also been vindicated in gender equity front too. According to Human Capital Index (HCI), a girl has higher human capital than a boy in Bangladesh. Moreover, Bangladesh was among a few developing countries to have achieved gender parity in school enrollment. According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2018, Bangladesh has closed over 72% of its overall gender gap with global ranking of 47. These again illustrate that Bangladesh is leading the path to end poverty and to create equality of opportunity for all.

Major Policies Facilitating Poverty Reduction, Social Welfare and Inclusion



Bangladesh Population Policy 2012



About the Policy

The right of every citizen to enjoy socioeconomic development is enshrined in the constitution of the country. In respect to this right, the government has been undertaking and fostering numerous policies for the betterment of public good. In the population policy outline, population control and family planning activities were embedded as bedrock to social reform and priorities are laid out to reducing family size for ensuring sound maternal and child health, family welfare and higher standard of living. Apart from excessive population density, depletion of forests and arable land, air and water pollution,

shortage of pure drinking water, insufficient housing facilities, unemployment, malnutrition, and slow rate of progress in health and nutrition sectors are the most notable among the problems that are hindering Bangladesh's development efforts. In consideration of all those menaces, a host of steps were devised while the Bangladesh Population Policy 2012 was formulated.

Objectives and anticipated impact

The most significant objective of the policy is to lower the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) to 2.1 by increasing the rate of prevalence of contraceptive users to 72%. Moreover, the National Population Policy 2012 aims to ensure availability of family planning methods to eligible couples by providing easy access to reproductive health services including family planning methods, waging awareness campaign about family planning, counseling services. Among other targets are reducing maternal and infant mortality, ensuring gender equity and women's empowerment, strengthening activities to eliminate gender discrimination in family planning and maternal and child health care programs. On impact a number of short, medium and long-term plans came to light to turn the population into human resources with participation of concerned ministries, giving easy access to information on reproductive health including family planning at all levels.

Sustainable Impact



National Child Policy 2011

About the Policy

Branded as an exemplar, the success story of this country has been made global headlines when it comes to reducing child and maternal death rates. HPM Sheikh Hasina was honored with UN Millennium Award for the launching of policies that had brought down child and maternal death at a remarkable rate. 87% children are now covered by Expanded Program on Immunization. A particular emphasis is being given to reduce school drop-outs to retain successes achieved in education sector. Under her watch, Bangladesh signed and ratified the UN Charter, encompassing the rights of the disabled for their enjoyment and mainstreaming them. By the same token, the adoption of National Child Policy 2011 has been described as a milestone in building the present and future of the children of Bangladesh. Initiation of this policy made it mandatory on part of the government to take into account the formulation of development policies, national plan of action and mid-term budgetary framework for the children.



Objectives and anticipated impact

The best development and growth of the children shall be ensured by providing required assistances to that part of the populace, irrespective of their age, sex, religion, and occupation, social, regional and small ethnic group identities in matter of rights concerning education, health, nutrition, safety, recreation and other rights. The policy aims to extend facilities to the female children, disabled and also for those with special needs. It seeks for initiation of steps to get them interested about his/her country and make them conscious through creation of educational and child friendly environment aiming to make them honest, patriotic and responsible citizens for the future.

Sustainable Impact

Dropout Rate (Primary Level)



"We thank the government for their initiative to transition from fortified biscuits to fresh, hot meals. Nutritious meals for school children have a high return on investment, as they improve children's health and productivity throughout their life,"



Richard Ragan
WFP Country Director



13 million
primary students now receive stipend



4.5 million
secondary and higher secondary students now receive stipend



80,000
students with disabilities have been receiving stipend since 2015

School Feeding Program

Government started school feeding program reaching 56,635 primary students in 2011. By 2016 it has reached up to 2.53 million students in 72 Upazilas (sub-districts). Currently the coverage reached 3 million school children in 15,700 schools in 93 Upazilas of 29 districts. Recently, government announced US\$ 20 million investment to expanding the program to reach 400,000 children. Government will contribute US\$ 3.6 million to support World Food Programme (WFP) implemented school feeding in impoverished schools. This contribution will help WFP to reach over 172,000 school children in 2019.



National Women Development Policy 2011



About the Policy

Women empowerment and development is a pre-condition to national development. It is imperative to establish equal opportunity and rights to ensure national development. National Women Development Policy was formulated in 1997 for the first time. In 1997, the policy was formulated in wide consultation and exchange of views with the leaders of the society of women in this country reflecting long struggle to establish rights of women of this country. Awami League in its electoral manifesto of 2008 reiterated its promise to reinstate the Women Development Policy formulated by the erstwhile Awami League government in 1997 to ensure women empowerment, equal rights and opportunities. To implement electoral promise and to ensure women development and empowerment, the present government led by the honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has formulated the National Women Development Policy 2011.

Objectives and anticipated impact

The objectives of the policy is to establish equal rights for men and women in areas of state and public life with a special focus on ensuring safety for women, making sure socio-economic, political, administrative and legal empowerment. All those targets are designed for getting women streamlined in socio-economic development and to eliminate all forms of abuse and discrimination against them, promoting gender equality. Another key feature was to promote the technology in the welfare of women and also ensuring overall assistance to preserve rights of the disabled women and women belonging to the smaller ethnic groups.

Sustainable Impact

Allocation for women development



200,000 working lactating mother receiving allowance

43 ministries have allocation for gender responsive budget

Dropout Rate (Primary Level)



**WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM**

World Economic Forum ranked Bangladesh first in gender equality among South Asian nations



Bangladesh won Women in Parliament Award for regional Leadership in South and Southeast Asia for closing gender gap in politics

Ethnic Minority Policy 2012

2.4.1 About the Policy



The Ethnic Minority Policy 2012 was formulated by HPM Sheikh Hasina with a view to improving the socioeconomic condition and transforming the ethnic communities of Bangladesh (except Chittagong Hill Tracts). According to Population Census of 2011, the population size of ethnic minority except Chittagong Hill Tracts is 1.5 million and among them, 50.28% is male and 49.72% is female. The household size is 356,175. The policy was formulated aiming to provide and allocate necessary development assistance, implement those initiatives for the improvement of ethnic minority people's socioeconomic condition.

Objectives and anticipated impact

The objectives of this policy are to facilitate and boost the income generating activities through increased production among ethnic minority people of Bangladesh (except Chittagong Hill Tracts). Preserving the language and cultural heritage of ethnic minority people and help them flourish through building, Ethnic Minority Multipurpose Service Center, community center and cultural center, religious center. This policy also aims to provide them with necessary small infrastructural support, healthy sanitation system and providing pure drinking water. To facilitate the increased literacy rate of ethnic minority people, the policy focuses on providing education assistance, education material support and scholarship. Taking into merit, capacity and skills on an individual level, the policy suggests providing them with necessary skill training and helping them avail employment opportunities. Through social and homestead forestry and technical training, empowerment of their community also focused on the policy.

Sustainable Impact

Total allocation for ethnic minority (except CHT) was **9.5 million US\$**

7.1 million US\$ spent in 500 income generating projects in 280 Upazilas (Sub-districts)

Ethnic minority students received stipend worth **2.9 million US\$** in 280 Upazilas (Sub-districts)

2096 tertiary level students received one-time stipend worth **572,760 US\$**

National Skill Development Institute constructed spending **477,300 US\$** in Sirajganj district

100,000 ethnic minority people's socioeconomic conditions have been transformed



Poverty Reduction, Social Welfare and Inclusion: Glimpse of Public Policy Politicking

- National Women Development Policy 2011
- National Ethnic Minority Policy 2012
- Bangladesh Population Policy 2012
- National Agriculture Policy 2018
- National Health Policy 2011
- National Child Policy 2011
- National Labour Policy 2012
- National Senior Citizen Policy 2013
- National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010
- Integrated Policy for Children's Initial Caring and Development 2013
- National Agricultural Extension Policy 2015
- Food for Work Implementation Policy 2013
- Food Grain Distribution Policy 2016
- Open Market Sell Policy 2015
- Food-Friendly Program Policy 2017
- Insolvent Cultural Workers Allowance Policy 2009
- Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015
- Non-Government Orphanage Capitation Grant Policy 2009
- Integrated Special Education Policy 2009
- Tea Labour Livelihood Development Policy 2013
- Transgender Community Livelihood Development Policy 2013
- Dalit, Harijan, Bede Community Livelihood Development Policy 2013
- Neuro Development Disability Integrated Special Education Policy 2018
- Poor Mother Maternity Allowance Policy
- Working Lactating Mother Assistance Allowance Policy
- Vulnerability Group Development Policy



03

Brief Reflection of Policies into Action



In a bid to alleviate poverty, this government has introduced and is continuing a number of social safety net programs intending to improve socio-economic conditions of the poor. The life cycle approach of social safety net programs are ensuring the effective and timely implementation of initiatives. Interestingly in the course of time, the budget allocation has also been increased by manifold to help them overcome poverty. 'National Social Security Strategy (NSSS)' has been put in place to reform the current social security system to ensure its effectiveness and impact. According to NSSS, the programs are divided into 5 categories, they are-

- 1 Programs for children
- 2 Programs for labour force
- 3 Pension for old aged people
- 4 Programs for disabled
- 5 Small and special programs

Old Age Allowance Program

Ministry of Social Welfare is responsible for implementation of this program. In 2017, a staggering amount worth US\$ 250 million distributed among 3.5 million elderly people on a monthly basis while the amount stood at a mere US\$ 45 million in 2006.

Stipend for Disabled Students

In 2018, the government increased number of beneficiaries of educational stipend allowance for the disabled people at both primary and secondary levels. Under this scheme, US\$ 6 million was allotted, reaping the benefits among 80,000 students with special needs in 2018. Apart from this, US\$ 2.7 million has been allocated as grants for the schools of the disabled.

Honorarium Program for Freedom Fighters

This program is being implemented as a gesture of respect to the freedom fighters. In 2018, US\$ 381 million was allocated for 200,000 freedom fighters. Currently, a freedom fighter gets US\$ 120 (BDT 10,000) per month. In 2007, number of beneficiaries was 100,000. In 2007, budget allocation for this program was US\$ 7 million.

Maternity Allowance for Poor Mother

The program has been brought into effect aiming at providing financial assistance to assure solvency for mothers. Not only does the scheme give allowance facilities but also arrange different types of awareness building trainings related to health and nutrition issues. In 2018, more than 100,000 poor mothers enjoyed this allowance than the previous fiscal year. A total of US\$ 44 million was distributed among 600,000 mothers.

Working Lactating Mother Assistance Fund

Initiated in 2010, this scheme aims to provide financial assistance to urban poor working lactating mothers. Presently, the program is limited to lactating mothers in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Chattogram garments areas and other district headquarters. In addition, poor working lactating mothers who are working in the 264 Upazila (sub district) level also get allowances under this program. In 2018, US\$ 14 million was allocated for 200,000 poor lactating mothers under this program.

Livelihood Improvement of Tea Garden Labourers

The government has launched this program to improve livelihood of tea garden workers. In 2018, the government allocated US\$ 1.7 million for this program. Under this activity, a tea garden worker gets one-time payment of US\$ 60 (BDT 5,000) as substitute of food support.

Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program

An amount of US\$ 190 million has been allocated under this program. It is expected that around 367,000 metric ton food grain can be distributed among the beneficiaries utilizing this amount.

Open Market Sale (OMS)

This program is initiated to ensure the food security of the low income people. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief has been

carrying out this program for a long time. In 2018, the ministry has received an allocation of US\$ 92.9 million for operating this program. This allocation is expected to be distributed among 10.9 million poor people.

Program for Improving the Livelihood of Bede, Transgender People and Backward Community

To improve the living standards of marginalized communities such as Dalit, Harijan, Bede and Transgender people, the government has rolled out a special program. In 2013, this program was introduced in seven districts of the country on pilot basis. Allocation for this special program 2018 rose to US\$ 3.8 million.

Allowance Program for Widow, Deserted and Destitute Women

The government started this program in 1999 with a view to providing financial support to the poor women, mainly to the widow and destitute women. In 2018, number of the beneficiaries of this allowance raised to 1.2 million. An allocation amounting US\$ 90 million has been allotted to implement this program in 2018.

Ashrayan-2 (Poverty Alleviation and Rehabilitation) Project

'Asrayan Prakaipo', one of the 10 priority projects of the present government, has turned into a measureable one for people who fall prey to natural disasters like cyclone, river erosion and landslides. In the aftermath of a deadly cyclone, that had wracked havoc on coastal lives in 1997, the then HPM Sheikh Hasina came up with this unique scheme to turn around the fortunes of the affected lives. Aim of the project was to rehabilitate the affected people with offering opportunities to mitigate their woes, ensuring basic education, health care and also focusing on skill development for income generating activities. A good number of recipients of this project has been able to overcome the odds, striving for a better future for their children.



Up to June 2018, 148,000 landless, homeless and rootless families have been rehabilitated in 'Barrack House'. A number of 115,775 houses have been built for those poor families.

Target of this project is to rehabilitate 250,000 landless, homeless and rootless families by 2019

Social Safety-Net Programs



- Old Age Allowance Program
- Orphan Rationing Allowance
- Stipend for Disabled Students
- Gratuitous Relief (GR) Program
- Employment Program for Ultra-Poor
- Maternity Allowance for Poor Mother
- Microcredit for Women Self-employment
- Allowance for Insolvent Disabled Citizens
- Honorarium Program for Freedom Fighters
- Working Lactating Mother Assistance Fund
- Livelihood Improvement of Tea Garden Labourers
- Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program
- Capitation Grant for Non-government Orphanage
- Ration for Shaheed Family and Injured Freedom Fighters
- Allowance Program for Widow, Deserted and Destitute Women
- Honorarium and Medical Allowance for Injured Freedom Fighters
- Program for Improving Livelihood of Bede, Transgender People and Backward Community

Conclusion

To conclude it can be said that Bangladesh has made commendable progress in poverty reduction, ensuring social welfare, safety, security and is witnessing impressive improvements in basic human development indicators through successful policy interventions and actions. Poverty reduction, social welfare, safety, equity and inclusion remain the key policy priorities for the Awami League led government. In last one decade the policy priority and focus have not been limited to infrastructural support and creating greater gender coverage, but has included some dynamic policy innovations such as “Free Education for Girls,” in league with regular policy initiatives like compulsory education and free textbooks. The relative school attendance rate of women to men in primary and secondary education has also been reversed.

Agricultural development played contributory role in Bangladesh in ensuring food self-sufficiency, security. Timely policy reforms and investments in agricultural research facilitated the progress of green revolution which resulted in adoption of high-yielding crop varieties. Riding on these development transformations, there are a number of noticeable and emerging features as regards to the “Bangladesh miracle.” This new branding of Bangladesh as development miracle is the outcome of a decade of successful policy interventions.

Vision 2021 is the fuel of this championship. The government has adopted policies and programs to address all sorts of challenges to take the country into a developed one. These include fostering speedy, inclusive and resilient growth, increasing coverage and effectiveness of social protection, achieving gender parity and promoting financial inclusion. All the development and growth endeavors of the government are the outcome of pro poor policies and strategies. These are catalyzing Bangladesh’s expedition to becoming middle income country by 2021 and developed country by 2041. Bangladesh has achieved all these and has been more successful in using its income more effectively in making the country a shining example for the world to follow.

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