



Addressing poverty ...

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Indeed, most prominent method of poverty measurement so far, including under MDG, has been with reference to income. But, it does not give a true picture as to how people live in practice. People's lives and, hence, their poverty are multidimensional. So, in order to find out how a person is actually doing, various dimensions of their living such as education, health, sanitation, housing, access to electricity and water, access to transportation, access to skill training and employment, etc. must be considered. Bangladesh has already initiated a pilot project for measuring multidimensional poverty. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is implementing it. This is a step in the right direction.

In fact, UNDP has been publishing Multidimensional Poverty Indices (MPIs) for a large number of countries including Bangladesh since 2010. The UNDP findings show that in 2010, overall for 104 countries, multidimensional poverty was 21% higher compared to income poverty. Some preliminary estimates made for some parts of the Bangladesh by Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and Institute of Inclusive Finance and Development (InM) show substantially higher multidimensional poverty compared to cost of basic needs (CBN)-based poverty which is the standard measurement of poverty in Bangladesh up to now.

In Bangladesh, a very substantial reduction has been achieved in CBN-based poverty. Poverty and extreme poverty ratios are now down to about 24% and 11% respectively. However, multidimensional measurement is of particular importance as it identifies as to which group of people, which families, even which individuals suffer from which deficits as well as the extents of those deficits. As a result, it is possible to design actions, focusing on relevant dimension(s) for various groups of people to help them achieve sustained improvement in their living conditions to move out of poverty and then on to sustainable development pathway.

For a sustained reduction and eventual elimination of extreme poverty as well as for reduction in inequality, the various groups of the downtrodden listed earlier in this paper must be a major focus of pov-

erty and inequality reduction action programmes. These various groups have differing needs in different respects. Special needs of each should be built into the action programmes. Adequate financial and institutional arrangements need to be made for effective implementation of the programmes. In this context, local governments with appropriately devolved powers as well as administrative authority and financial empowerment can play an important role. Of course, the needs of the poverty groups, other than those specified above, must also be addressed appropriately. In all these actions, multiple dimensions of poverty and of living should be the basis of policy and action programmes to be formulated and implemented.

At the macro level, the policy thrusts and budgetary allocations should be guided by the dynamics of sustainable development that is primarily focused on the human being. That is, the process has to be people-centred, with no one excluded. Therefore, in accordance with the dynamics of this approach, the ongoing unfettered market-based system needs to be appropriately restructured.

Climate change is now a looming unprecedented threat to humanity. Although caused by the now developed countries through emission of huge quantities of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from the time of industrial revolution, leading to global warming, which in turn has brought about increasing natural disasters, melting of permafrost, and sea level rise. Its adverse impacts are mostly falling on the poorer and vulnerable countries and on the poor and vulnerable people in those countries. Eventually, however, the whole world will face the consequences of climate change, signs of which are already visible given that droughts, floods, bushfires, hurricanes, etc. are occurring more frequently and more devastatingly in the developed countries as well. Bangladesh is one of those countries which are in the forefront of climate change impacts.

Goal 13 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is: 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts'. Indeed, environment is one of the three legs of sustainable development, along with economic and social development. Climate

change impacts, not only hamper poverty and inequality reduction, but also accentuate them by causing damages and destruction to crops and other economic activities, houses, infrastructure, and even homesteads turning many non-poor into poor, many poor into extreme poor, and many extreme poor into destitute. A major consequence is also now taking place in the shape of displacement of increasing numbers of people, either because their homesteads and assets are washed away or lands become unproductive due to prolonged drought or salinity ingress. Hence, in any approach to poverty reduction, extreme poverty eradication, and inequality reduction must embrace appropriate actions to combat climate change impacts. The various issues surrounding climate change and its impacts and how to address the phenomenon are dealt with internationally under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). After long negotiations over the years, The Paris Agreement [on Climate Change] for the period to 2030 was adopted on 12 December 2015. Indeed, climate change issues cannot be addressed meaningfully unless it is integrated with economic and social development processes. In fact, in both the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and The Paris Agreement, an integrated approach to economic, social, and environmental issues have been advocated for sustainable development.

Although everybody will not agree with everything in the Paris Agreement, it has opened the door for delineating and implementing future course of actions to combat climate change. The Agreement will be implemented with effect from 2020 so that there is a period of four years to work out how best the Agreement can be implemented by further strengthening its strengths, minimising its weaknesses, and bringing about policy, strategy, and institutional congruence at the international, national, and local levels.

In Bangladesh, there is a strong political will to combat climate change, but it is a global issue. Bangladesh alone can do only so much. Over the past six years, Bangladesh has used Tk. 30 billion from its national budget to implement climate actions, largely

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