

# FROM CHALLENGED BEGINNINGS TO STANDING TALL

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## SDGs: Where are we in achieving them?

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This has been evidenced by a spurt in capital flight (USD 5.9 billion in 2015), putting Bangladesh in second highest position in terms of capital flight in South Asia.

The differential impacts of the pandemic have accelerated polarisation between the classes. The inequality will deepen, with further differentiated return on labour and capital due to erosion of income given the preponderance of most of the labour force engaged in the informal sector and loss of employment in both formal and informal sectors due to the pandemic. This would definitely cross the fault line of 0.50 from the existing 0.32 in terms of the Gini coefficient.

### SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Polash lives in the crowded Rayerbazar slum. He earns a living by rowing a small raft that people use to cross a small canal



The nationwide shutdown since March 26 has left the poor and vulnerable people battling hunger. The photo was taken on April 20, 2020 at the capital's Kamalapur area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

cities. All metropolitan cities are affected by serious air pollution, water logging, delayed disposal of waste and traffic congestion. Dhaka ranks second worst in the World Air Quality Index, as of January 19, 2021, exacerbating the health risks.

### SDG 12: SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

Moti Miah uses fertilisers in large amounts, yet he gets a lower harvest—each time lower than before. He realises that the soil is losing its fertility but he sees no alternatives.

Sustainable consumption and production have remained a major challenge within the SDGs. According to a study, food waste is now around 5.5 percent in rural areas; three percent during procurement and preparation stages, 1.4 percent during serving, and 1.1 percent at the plates. About 10 percent of the crops are lost during post-

harvest period. Besides, there is a lack of capacity in managing municipal solid wastes, industrial wastes, e-waste, etc. Production systems like Moti Miah's is not environment-friendly either.

### SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION

Bisaka Munda, an indigenous female traditional resource user (TRU) in the Sundarbans, lost her income like many other TRUs during the pandemic. "Amphan" damaged her house and crop fields too.

The economic hardships resulting from increased frequency of natural disasters due to climate change and Covid-19 are exacerbating people's misery, negatively affecting the resilience capacity of the people and the economy as a whole, which may slow down climate action.

### SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER

Khalil Dhali has been a fisherman in the Sundarbans for 40 years. The availability

of many fish species in the waterways of the forest is becoming scarcer every day.

Water pollution is negatively affecting the habitats and breeding grounds of the aquatic flora and fauna. Over-exploitation of fish is reducing the availability of many fish species on the one hand and the use of illegal means such as pernicious nets and poisons are killing many of them on the other. There is a lack of coordination and strong regulatory framework to ensure a safe and healthy ecosystem of life below water.

### SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND

Rongon resides in the beautiful Sajek valley of Rangamati. As he grew up, he observed how forests are cleared to make room for new resorts to accommodate a greater number of tourists.

Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of deforestation in South Asia—with 2,600 hectares per year. The increasing rate of industrialisation and urbanisation are damaging the habitat conditions of the species. Besides, illegal hill cutting continues in different areas of the country disregarding the laws.

### SDG 16: ENSURING PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Shilpi Das is a woman in her late fifties, who is suffering from an eye condition that requires her to travel from Mymensingh to Dhaka every two weeks to get an injection at a public hospital. Every time she notices that some people without appointments avail the injections before her, or that she has to pay an extra fee—whereas the injection is supposed to be provided by the government for free.

Bangladesh is being run, like other post-colonial countries, by intermediate classes which are interested only in securing wealth by any means necessary at the cost of its institution. As result, inequality is increasing in a number of

ways, including through policy-induced impacts on "vertical inequality" (the differences between individuals or households) and systemic reasons of "horizontal inequality" (the difference between groups of similar origin or cognitive ability that may arise due to culturally formed disparities between them).

### SDG 17: GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On one morning of August 2017, Nazma fled from violence in Rakhine State with her husband and two children and arrived at the refugee camp across the border. Since then, she has given birth to another son and her family is living in the crowded camps. Yet their permanent resettlement rests on international cooperation and partnership, which so far is lacking.

Covid-19 crisis has dealt a massive blow to the revenue collection of the government. The increased foreign aid from bilateral and multilateral sources, however, may have reduced the burden. At the same time, obtaining multilateral and bilateral loans with low interest rates, longer repayment and grace period through negotiations, should be the priority to ease debt servicing, as well as seeking relief, writing off and deferring debts. In the face of Covid-19, global partnership and cooperation has become more than ever a prerequisite for achievement of SDGs.

Simultaneously, conventional policy measures may prove to be ineffectual. In order to avert a diverging K-shaped recovery path, a policy of active restraint should be put in place in order to have a relatively equitable recovery.

*Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, professor of economics at the development studies department in Dhaka University and chairperson of Unnayan Onneshan. Email: rt@du.ac.bd*

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within the slum. The canal formed from the flow of toxic waste and sludge from the Hazaribagh tannery industry over the years, submerging a ditch with liquid industrial waste.

Massive urbanisation is leading to about half the population living in urban areas by 2035. More than 60 percent of the urban population is currently concentrated mainly in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, and Rajshahi. The mushrooming of urban areas is severely damaging the ecological balance of the



SUPREME IN  
THE GLORIOUS  
JOURNEY



Green Delta Insurance has earned 'Superbrands' recognition as Bangladesh's first insurance brand in the non-life insurance category.