Bangladesh: Taking Action for Sustainable Development

These (Sustainable Development Goals) are in tandem with our ‘Vision-2021’ and ‘Vision-2041,’ towards realizing the dream of the Father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to build a hunger-, poverty-, illiteracy- and exploitation-free ‘Sonar Bangladesh’ – the Golden Bangladesh.

What are the bold actions being taken by the Government of Bangladesh to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals?

Providing women with the opportunity to learn skills and earn a living can be instrumental in fostering economic growth and advancing gender equality.

Seeking to lift women out of poverty, the Local Government Division in Bangladesh with technical support provided by the SDG Fund, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labor Organization are providing 18 months of employment through the Strengthening Women’s Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO) project.

Implemented in two districts in Bangladesh, it specifically targets very poor and vulnerable households headed by women.

Participants enter into a cash transfer, public works scheme, combined with livelihood and life skills training, savings habit development, and education on their rights and entitlements.

The project has three core benefits: 1) immediate poverty reduction through public asset maintenance and long-term

Sheikh Hasina Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh UN General Assembly 2016
future employability based on livelihood development; 2) improvement of local and critical public infrastructure that serves as a public good and builds disaster resilience of the local community; and 3) full government ownership of the SWAPNO model with a gender sensitive approach advocating for those living in poverty.

Why do the above actions matter to the people in Bangladesh?

Despite considerable progress in reducing poverty, approximately 40 million Bangladeshis still live below the poverty line.

A large portion (about 64%) of those living in poverty have no access to any social protection programmes, reflecting huge under-coverage. This rises to 68% if the near-poor vulnerable population is included.

Kurigram is the poorest of all districts in Bangladesh, with around 1.3 million people below the poverty line, of which 0.9 million are living in abject poverty.

There are study findings that households headed by widowed, divorced or separated women are the poorest, 25% of them living in extreme poverty.

These households in the Kurigram district are the primary beneficiaries of the SWAPNO project.

What SDGs have been particularly advanced?

Goal 1, Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.

Goal 1, Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Goal 5, Target 5.5: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.