

**Final Report on
Mapping the EC Role and Impacts
Through Hearings and Consultations with Socially Excluded Groups**

**Bangladesh Post 2015
Addressing Social Exclusion**

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Abbreviations

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDERM	Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement
BMMS	Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey
CIP	Country Investment Plan
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CHTC	Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission
CSOs	Civil Society organisations
EC	European Commission
ECCDC	Enhanced Copping Capacity of the Disadvantaged Community
EU	European Union
LLIN	Long Lasting Impregnated Nets
ITN	Insecticide-treated Nets
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IP	Indigenous Population
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
SAMS	Sundarban Adibasi Munda Sangastha
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SBA	Skilled Birth Attendants
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendants
RIB	Research Initiatives, Bangladesh
REOPA	Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Asset
VGDU	Vulnerable Group Development for the Ultra Poor Women

1. Introduction

Despite remarkable efforts in terms of economic and human development, Bangladesh still belongs to the group of Least Developed Countries (LDC). About 60 million people live below the poverty line in terms of income and calorie intake. 30 million are living under the lower poverty line. They are called “extreme poor”. Most of those poor are not included in development programs. According to the World Bank (October, 2014) poverty rate is 24.47% and approximately 12%¹ of the rural population currently belongs to the group of extreme poor, which means low consumption, hunger and malnutrition, lack of access to basic health services, illiteracy and other forms of social deprivation. Those deprivations create a big gap between poor and rich, basically in terms of income and wealth distribution. Social power and class structure has been playing a crucial role to create those disparities. With that social context, Bangladesh has reduced its extreme poverty by average 6% between 2010 and 2014, which indicates significant progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of poverty reduction by 2015 (BBS).

The number of extreme poor² among religious, ethnic and indigenous minorities is extraordinarily high. These communities are widely affected by exclusion, which has severe consequences for their access to developmental benefits. The fact that a large share of the extreme poor population and the minority groups still remain outside the reach of development services of the Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is a big challenge for all development actors. Extreme poor people from mainstream Bengali society and religious, ethnic and indigenous minorities as well as people with disabilities are to be called in the context of this study as “socially excluded people”.

The objectives of the consultations and hearing conducted in order to compile this report were to analyze the deficits of EU strategies with Bangladesh to address social exclusion and to provide recommendations on how social exclusion can be addressed more effectively as part of the post-2015 framework i.e. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Consultations and Hearing Methodology

Until 2015, the dialogues are going on to determine to which extent the MDGs have been achieved and how to continue in the Post-2015 agenda. The EU (EC and member states) is an important stakeholder in this process. A strong dialogue between Civil Society and EU institutions is needed, leading up to 2015, to further work for a strong role of the EU in this process. The EU shall do its best to work towards the achievement of the MDGs and to strengthen a post-2015 framework that includes the interest of socially excluded people. This study is part of that initiative and funded by the EU. The methodology brief of this study is following.

1. Review secondary literature and existing analysis of civil society, national and international institutions (EU). What does “socially excluded people” mean and what are causes of social exclusion. What are instruments to address social exclusion?

¹ BBS, Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) 2000, 2005 and 2010. About 49 percent of the population lived in poverty in 2000, which was reduced to 40 percent in 2005, 31.5 percent in 2010 and to an estimated 25.6 percent in June 2014. On the other hand, more than 34 percent people lived in extreme poverty, which dropped to 25.1 percent in 2005, 17.6 percent in 2010, 13.1 percent in 2013 and to an estimated 12.4 percent in June 2014. The rate of poverty reduction over the last four years was on an average 6.0 percent which is the highest in the history of Bangladesh.

² Extreme poor's are not a homogenous group but comprised of landless laborers, female headed households or families with a disabled household head. Extreme poor living on less than \$US 0.50 a day are currently suffering under price hikes for essentials. Though they only have 1-2 meager meals per day, they spend 80 percent of their income for food.

2. Hearings and consultations with local level civil society organisations and socially excluded people, consultations organised in a qualitative and participatory way. How do they define themselves and where do they see the causes of social exclusion? How do they address social exclusion themselves?
3. Discussion of the report with CSOs (5-10) in the country and dialogue meetings with the EU Delegation in the country and with the responsible persons of EuropeAid. What are the activities that are aiming at impacting socially excluded people?
4. Area selections: The consultations and hearing have focused mainly on plain land indigenous communities and Dalits. Mainly RIB (Research Initiatives, Bangladesh), partner organisation of NETZ Bangladesh, facilitated the field level activities.

3. Poverty Dynamic of Last Four Decades

Bangladesh today is out of the shadow of famine (last occurrence in 1974)³, but poverty continues to be the dominant concern for the nation. It is also true that in the last four decades, the country has achieved remarkable gains at macro level – for instance-GDP growth rate, infrastructural development, technological innovation, communication and transportation, expansion of agro-based industry, booming of garments industries, increasing flow of international migration and foreign remittance etc.⁴

Beside these macro level achievements, several gains can also be seen at micro level such as private entrepreneurship in rural and urban economy, micro-credit, social safety nets programs for seasonal hunger and poverty, primary school enrollment, immunization, birth control, physical mobility and gender parity. This impressive development at macro and micro level did not happen by chance, rather it has been the result of collective efforts in which successive governments, national and international NGOs, international donors and most importantly the citizens of Bangladesh as economic actors have played their roles and responsibilities. Bangladesh presently is facing new developments, each featuring implications in shaping the multifaceted patterns of poverty in the country.

Firstly, an adverse agricultural environment as well as remoteness and climatic shocks/ hazards have direct impacts on poverty distribution in Bangladesh. There are some specific poverty stricken regions where clear a correlation between natural disaster and poverty exist. *Char, haor*, coastal and *monga* areas are the most ecologically vulnerable regions in the country and the instance of poverty is higher in those regions compared to other areas. River erosion, drought, flash flood, seasonal flood, cyclones, tornados and other climatic shocks and hazards severely damage the livelihood of the poor living in these areas.

Secondly, remoteness and market accessibility between centre and periphery is another crucial factor that has direct impact on the persistence of poverty in certain regions. Poverty prone areas are far away from the economic hubs of the country. Worse transport and communication facilities between the capital Dhaka and *char, haor* or *monga* regions create serious obstacles by consuming more time in

³ Raisuddin Ahmed et al, (2000), *Out of the Shadow of Famine*, (John Hopkins University Press in cooperation with International Food Policy Research Institute,) Washington D.C..

⁴ While new imageries of corruption, poor governance and confrontational politics bedevil the country, it is instructive to see what else has been achieved. Uniquely for a country facing an extremely vulnerable ecology, Bangladesh has established a credible record of sustained growth within a stable macroeconomic framework. (Source: Wahiduddin Mahmud and Isher J. Ahluwalia (ed.), *State of the Bangladesh Economy: Pluses and Minuses*, Special Issue of Economic and Political Weekly, September 4, 2004).

travel with negative impacts on agricultural growth. Moreover, due to remoteness, people living in rural areas do not get proper healthcare facilities, which has bad affects on their life, health and livelihoods.

Finally, social exclusion is considered as another root cause of poverty for many minority groups in the country. Socially excluded people are often deprived from opportunities available to others to develop their economic status and get away from the vicious cycle of poverty by their own attempts. Here discrimination takes place in public institutions, like in the education and health sector, legal system as well as in social institutions like the household and at community level. Thus, even though the macro economy and per capita income levels may increase, excluded people are likely to be left behind and remain in poverty.⁵

"Giving an immediate boost to agricultural production, the impetus to rural infrastructure building by LGED (i.e. Local Government Engineering Department) from late 80s, far-reaching reforms in the food distribution system in the early 90s, the impetus to non-crop agriculture in the early 90s and the robust growth of these sub-sectors in the late 90s, the consolidation of the micro-credit network over the 80s and 90s, consolidation of safety-net initiatives in late 90s, and above all, the robust engagement of ordinary citizenry on all available opportunities, local and international, have played a part in bringing Bangladesh out of the shadow of famine."⁶ However in that time frame, while choice horizons have expanded, the political leverage of the poor over power structures and decision-making processes shows little evidence of any significant change.⁷

Furthermore, it is evident that wealth disparities between the rich and the poor have been increased throughout the decades in the country. A strong ground of chronic capitalism through use of political power has developed in Bangladesh where political elites, business elites and bureaucracy play a powerful role in mobilizing national resources at macro, meso and micro levels. This leads to the creation of adverse arrangements inside the local level government bodies through regional and local elites and that the extreme poor are deprived of benefits from development interventions.

4. Defining and Mapping Social Excluded People

4.1 Social exclusion in context of class and caste

Social exclusion has been used as a significant terminology to broaden the understanding of multidimensional poverty in countries like Bangladesh. Social exclusion focuses on the social relations of power. According to sociologist Samuel Konenig, "a class which has a strictly hereditary basis is a caste. A member of caste is never allowed to break through its rigid barriers, whereas one belonging to a class may, under certain conditions, change his status. The term 'caste' first used by the Portuguese to denote the divisions in the class system, which was divided caste meaning 'lineage' of 'bread'. The Sanskrit word for the caste is *varna*, which means 'color'. One of the most tragic consequences of caste system is that it prevents the development within the population of a general national consciousness and thus denies the individual from the feeling of belonging to the common people."⁸

⁵ Program for Researcher on Poverty Alleviation, State of the poor, (Grameen Trust Annual Report 2001-2,) pp 14-16..

⁶ Rahman, Hossain Zillur, Bangladesh 2015: Crossing miles, (PPRC Policy Paper, 2006, Dhaka, Bangladesh).

⁷ Westergaard, K. & Hossain, A., (2005), *Boringram Revisited: Persistent Power Structures and Agricultural Growth in a Bangladesh Village*, (University Press Limited, Dhaka).

⁸ Islam, Mazharul and Parvez, Altaf, (2013) *Dalit Initiatives in Bangladesh*, (Nagorik Uddyog and Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement, Dhaka, Bangladesh), P-10.

According to Peter Davis (2011)⁹ social exclusion approaches attempt to draw attention to social and patterned processes of “shutting out”, to stigmatization, to alienation, to the monopolization, or sequestration of scarce resources – sometimes by, and for the benefit of more advantaged groups. Social exclusion systematically denies certain groups of people from the same rights, participation and opportunities as are afforded to others on the basis of their ethnicity, cast, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, health status, identity etc. As a result, social exclusion of particular groups of people reduces their productive capacity, leads to higher rates of poverty as well as reduces the rate of reduction in poverty of a society as a whole (Ali, 2013)¹⁰.

4.2 Social exclusion in the form of “untouchability”

Poverty and exclusion are strictly interlinked to each other. However, there are instances of exclusions, which exist in the absence of poverty. And there are instances of poverty, which may not be rooted in social exclusion. Thus it is important to analyze the historical, political, geographical, environmental, cultural and socio-economic context to explore the root causes of social exclusion.

According to Louis Dumont (*Homo Hierarchicus*, 1972) caste and profession were linked through the intermediary of religion. Caste discrimination is a systematic human rights abuse that leads to extreme poverty, violence, inequality and exclusion. Perceived as polluted of inferior, Dalits are prevented from participating in political, economic, social and cultural life.¹¹

The experiences and practices related to social exclusion are not homogenous. E.g. Dalits and ethnic minorities both are socially excluded groups in Bangladesh, but their ground realities of discrimination and exclusion not similar. Thus, the practice of deprivation and discrimination among excluded groups needs to be understood by focusing on the complex relationship that they have with state authorities and the society at large.

4.3 Religion, Professional Bondage and “untouchability”

In Bangladesh, the caste hierarchy operates through the practices of “untouchability”. Major patterns of exclusion and discrimination based on “untouchability” are inter-generationally transformed among the descent. The unavoidable choice of professions, fixed residential locations, restricted social mobility and interactions are the main processes which persist inter-generational discriminations among Dalit communities and other socially excluded groups.

There is no official data available on the demographic or social aspects of people discriminated based on work and descent. During the latest census in Bangladesh in 2011, an advocacy campaign was taken up to ensure the collection of disaggregated data on the Dalit population, but the outcome was nil. However, reliable estimates reveal that around 5.5 to 6.5 million people in the country face caste-based discrimination (BDERM, 2014)¹².

⁹ Davis, Peter, (2011), *Social exclusion and adverse incorporation in rural Bangladesh: evidence from a mixed-methods study of poverty dynamics*, (Working Paper 193, Chronic Poverty Research Centre).

¹⁰ Ali, Md. Ayub, (2013) *Social Exclusion and Poverty in Bangladesh*, (Unnayan Onneshan, Dhaka, Bangladesh)..

¹¹ Islam, Mazharul and Parvez, Altaf , (2013) *Dalit Initiatives in Bangladesh*, (Nagorik Uddyog and Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement , Dhaka, Bangladesh) P 10-11.

¹² *Benchmarking the Draft UN Principles and Guidelines on the Elimination of (Caste) Discrimination based on Work and Descent: Bangladesh Report-2014*, (Nagorik Uddyog & Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM), Dhaka 2014). According to the BDERM-2014 report, three broad categories of Dalits reside in Bangladesh; *one*, Bengali Dalits who live in villages all over Bangladesh; *two*, Muslim Dalits who again can be found across the country; and, *three*, Dalits who migrated (or were forced to migrate) from India to the then East Bengal – now

Among the Dalits of Bangladesh, cleaners or sweepers, mostly called Harijon are the most discriminated groups who live all over the country [see annex-2, Benchmarking the Draft UN Principles and Guidelines on Elimination of (Caste) Discrimination based on work and descent-study]. Common features of their residential arrangements are that they are very crowded, segregated from people outside their group and with little or no fundamental facilities. In almost all cases, their identity and occupation, which are inter-generationally transmitted, create the structural arrangement of long term deprivation and prejudice.

Dyrhagen, G. and Islam, M. (2006)¹³ shows that in Bangladesh Dalits are socially discriminated and avoided by other communities, excluded from public events and religious spaces. Discriminatory practices do exist to a wide extent, both in Hindu and Muslim communities. This paper describes how Dalits are excluded from public and social spheres. It argues that basic provisions like shelter, food and water are not adequately provided for in areas where Dalits live, and that they have inadequate access to health care facilities and education. They also lack housing, employment and access to political spheres. The paper concludes that although Dalits are playing a significant role in the country's economic, environmental and social development, Dalit communities are some of the most economically marginalized and socially excluded groups in Bangladesh (see annex 3).

4.4 Social Exclusion and Development

Zohir, Rabbani, Mallik, Huq and Afsana (2008)¹⁴ conceptualized exclusion in terms of space and attributes or characteristics. They incorporated two dimensions in defining exclusion: "attribute" and "space". Attributes are considered characteristics of individuals, households or communities that lead to exclusion in one or more spaces. Individuals may be born or acquired these attributes, e.g. through religion, ethnicity or descent. Some of these attributes may be permanent (such as ethnicity, disability) or temporary (such as descent, occupation). Education and health services, land rights, housing facilities, employment, financial services, and access to markets are some of the spaces where exclusion is more prominently practiced.

4.5 Social Exclusion and Gender

Empowerment of women promotes and improves social and economic life of any community. Women's of socially excluded groups are still living in a marginalized position in the patriarchal social structure that dominates the society. They face various discriminative practices in their everyday life. Thus social exclusion creates severe obstacles to both men and women, however many of these barriers are higher for women.

It is evident that education can give women greater access to the labor market and increase their status in the family and society as a whole, which ultimately might improve their lifestyle and future well-being. But education status among women of socially excluded groups is very low. They face physical, verbal and sexual abuse in their workplace. Often they are forced to marry at early ages, which creates a lifelong trap of physical and mental suffering. Their participation in decision making processes at their

mainly living in urban areas and tea plantations. It is evident that the forms of exclusion and deprivation that Dalit communities go through are not fully identical.

¹³ Dyrhagen, G. and Islam, M., (2006), *Consultative Meeting on the Situation of Dalits in Bangladesh*, (International Dalit Solidarity Network and Bangladesh Dalits' Human Rights,; http://www.idsn.org/Documents/asia/pdf/Bangladesh_full_report.pdf).

¹⁴ Zohir, S., Rabbani, M., Mallik B. A., Huq I., Afsana R., (2008), *Exclusion and Poverty: An Analytical Approach for Understanding Exclusion and Assessing Programmes Targeting the Very Poor in Bangladesh*, (BRAC and Economic Research Group,).

own community is very low. As a result women in socially excluded groups often suffer from a double disadvantage.

5. Contextualizing MDGs, Achieving Milestones and Challenges

The experience of Bangladesh highlights the utility and significance of effective contextualization of MDGs implementation. Particularly, the adoption of social mobilization approaches and getting intermediate milestones right in the attainment of the goals have been two success areas.

Bangladesh has shown remarkable results in achieving the targets and goals of MDGs. Social mobilization approaches, which create effective partnerships of Government, NGOs and local governments and which use campaign methods as well as specific incentives, have brought major achievements. The latest report on MDGs (2012) demonstrates that Bangladesh has already met some targets of MDGs, like reducing poverty gap ratio, achieving gender parity at primary and secondary levels education, growing immunization coverage, reduction of under-five mortality rate, spread of road-side forestry, restraining HIV infection, children under five sleeping under insecticide treated bed nets, detection and cure rate of TB under DOTS etc.

Moreover, a recent study shows that out of the total 49 least developed countries, Bangladesh and Cambodia are the top performers in the MDG index (CPD, 2014). A snapshot is given below to illustrate the achievement of Bangladesh in MDG 1 to 6.

5.1 Extreme Poverty

Bangladesh has made admirable improvements in respect of eradication of poverty and hunger among the developing countries. The inclusive growth has resulted in impressive poverty reduction from 56.7% in 1991-92 to 31.5% in 2010. The rate of reduction being faster in the present decade than the earlier ones. The latest HIES 2010 data shows that the incidence of poverty has declined at an annual rate of 2.47% in Bangladesh during 1992-2010 against the MDG target of 2.12 %. Bangladesh has already met one of the indicators of target 1 by bringing down the poverty gap ratio to 6.5 against 2015 target of 8.0. The estimated figures suggest that the MDG target of halving the population living below the poverty line (from 56.7% to 29.0%) has already been achieved in 2012.

For Bangladesh, remaining challenges concerning this MDG are: reducing prevalence of poverty in the country to zero percent, addressing socially excluded group in safety nets programs and scale up mobile banking as a financial inclusion tools for the extreme poor.

5.2 Putting Education First

Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia other than Sri Lanka to have already achieved gender parity in education, not only at primary but also at secondary level. Bangladesh has gained momentous progress in escalating impartial access in education, reduction of drop-outs, improvement in completion of the cycle, and implementation of a number of quality enhancement measures in primary education. The national education enrolment rate is 98.7%, i.e. 99.4% for girls and 97.2% for boys. The Constitution of Bangladesh has a provision for free and compulsory primary education for all. Achieving gender parity in primary and secondary enrolment is another area where Bangladesh shows impressive result.

Despite these encouraging developments, e.g. rising enrolment rates, many children of extreme poor and socially excluded communities are excluded from the formal, i.e. by the state, and non-formal,

mainly by NGOs, education sector and are therefore deprived of their Right to Education. According the UN report “Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children” (January 2014) still more than 5.6 million children have no access to primary (grades 1-5; 2.6 million children) and lower secondary (grades 6-8; 3 million children) education.

5.3 Women’s Agency

Women in Bangladesh have achieved important improvements concerning visibility and mobility. Bangladesh achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. This progress has happened because of some precise public interventions targeting on girl students, such as stipends and exemption of tuition fees for girls in rural areas, and the stipend scheme for girls at the secondary level. Furthermore the access to birth control measures and micro-credit compare favorably with the situation in other developing countries. Social attitudes created to looking positively on women's economic participation have become near universal as well. The Government is committed to attaining the objective of CEDAW (though mentioning several reservations); Beijing Platform for Action and MDGs in conformity with the fundamental rights enshrined in the Bangladesh Constitution and has adopted the National Policy for Women's Advancement (2011) and a series of programs for ensuring sustainable development of women. There has been an increase in the number of women parliamentarians elected (almost 20 percent of total 350 seats, 50 of them are reserved for women) in the last national election.

However, beyond these first-round victories of visibility and mobility lie new constraints and new areas of strategic challenges. Entrenched patriarchal attitudes and insecurities of public spaces serve to inhibit wider engagement by women to unfold their opportunities. Existing social attitudes still put low priority on maternal health. While women's economic participation has expanded, female labour productivity remains very poor.¹⁵

5. Improve Maternal Health, Child Mortality

According to official statistics, Bangladesh has already met the target of reducing under-five mortality rate: against the target of achieving 48 per 1,000 live births in 2015, it has already achieved 44 per 1,000 live births in 2011. The objective of reducing the infant mortality rate is also on track. The successful programs for immunization, control of diarrheal diseases and Vitamin A supplementation are considered to be the most important contributors to the decline in child and infant deaths along with potential effect of overall economic and social development.

Although there are still deep-seated attitudinal problems to be observed in the society, one clear policy failure has been to promote skilled birth attendants (SBA) bypassing traditional birth attendants (TBA) located within the communities. There are not only technical skill issues but also superstition and lack of knowledge. Contextualization and innovating on local monitoring systems are really challenging (i.e. there is a lack of participation in program design, monitoring and evaluation). To address that issues, we need to utilize existing institutional capacities, such as local health centers, local government bodies, NGOs, for effective pre-natal care. In that case, bottom up approaches for reducing child mortality would be a right way to looking forward in future. Another issue of concern and weak area at contextualization is to project the anesthetic program as a case of specialists whereas an effective short-term training could enable locally-based health workers to assist on the matter.¹⁶

¹⁵ Rahman, Hossain Zillur, PPRC Policy Paper (2006), ‘Bangladesh 2015: Crossing miles’, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The maternal mortality ratio in 1990 was 574 per 100,000 live births in Bangladesh. However, according to Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey (BMMS), maternal mortality declined from 322 in 2001 to 194 in 2010, a 40% decline in nine years. The average rate of decline from the base year has been about 3.3% per year, compared with the average annual rate of reduction of 3% required for achieving the MDG in 2015.

5.5 Enhancing the focus on nutrition

Nutritional status is a key dimension of poverty. Bangladesh has significantly reduced poverty and lowered fertility rates and child mortality. There have also been significant improvements in some development indicators such as basic education and rice production. These all help to bring the country towards the aim of its present government of attaining middle-income status in 2021. Prevalent under-nutrition is one of the major obstacles to achieve this goal.

Nutrition is a multi-sectoral issue with many social and contextual determinants. In that case, the Country Investment Plan (CIP) for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition Sector Development Programme (HPNSDP), the health, food, agriculture and education sectors have the opportunity to impact under-nutrition.

To further improve maternal and child nutrition, Bangladesh needs to strengthen direct (nutrition-specific) and indirect (nutrition-sensitive) interventions within sectors (Local Government stock and rural development, social welfare, women and children Affairs, Life stock and Fisheries, Information, Industry, Planning, Finance and others) under a comprehensive multi-sectoral nutrition strategy.¹⁸

5.6 Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

Bangladesh's performance in combating the communicable diseases under this goal is appreciated by the world community. Existing data shows that the frequency of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh currently is less than 0.1% and thus is still below an epidemic level. There was a considerable progress in the decline of malarial deaths in the country over the years.

Expanding quality diagnosis and effective treatment of 90% of malaria cases, promoting use of long lasting impregnated nets (LLIN) and insecticide-treated nets (ITN) in 100% households in the three districts of the Chittagong Hil Tracts and providing intensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign for increasing mass awareness of prevention and control of malaria are some major interventions that were undertaken to control malaria. Bangladesh has already achieved the MDG targets of TB case detection and cure rates.

5.7 Urban poverty: An Emerging Challenge

Despite all progress, urban poverty is increasing. Through social safety nets programs the Government of Bangladesh focused almost exclusively on rural vulnerability and the rural population. Urban poverty is only weakly acknowledged. Housing, internal migration, water, transportation, labor market access, environmental pollution and climate change impact such as different issues are more significant in the lives of the urban poor and have to be factored into design of responsive social protection programs. So

¹⁷ The European Union , Under nutrition in Bangladesh: A common Narrative, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

in future, policy direction and public expenditure will need to include as well interventions for the poor urban people.¹⁹

5.8 MDGs: Weak Points

However, some significant weak points can be found in the formulation of MDG²⁰. Firstly, the MDGs follow a top-down course of action and actions are often not based on rights-based approaches, specific issues were dealt in a fragmented way. Therefore, MDGs in some cases only tackled the symptoms instead of the root causes of the problems addressed. Secondly, progress of specific target and goals are measured by specific indicators, which ignored the structural relationships that may have evolved from the external sources of the progress. It is evident that the success of poverty reduction is dimed by the existence of high inequality in the societies of developing countries, which is raising more questions towards the poverty reduction strategies that strongly followed specific indicators determined by MDG 1. Furthermore, MDGs had very little focus on human rights and human development. Finally, the issue of mutual accountability along with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was practically absent from the MDG framework.

6. Field reality of Socially Excluded People

6.1 Deprivation: Common ground for the excluded groups

Socially excluded groups who live in different part of Bangladesh are not homogeneous. More than 45 indigenous communities live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and plain land areas of the country. Beside them, there are Dalits who also show different socio-cultural characteristics in comparison to the mainstream Bengali society. This study took Santal, Munda and as the representative of indigenous communities and Harijan, Rabidas, Bagdi and Rishi as representatives of the Dalit community.

6.2 Power relationships and land grabbing

The indigenous population (IP) of the CHT, their land including forested areas, constitute resources (which resource directly related their life-cycle acclivities) indispensable for their physical survival as well as provisioning their distinctive social, cultural and religious needs. Land grabbing constitutes the key driving force of the conflict in the CHT between the IP and interest groups of Bengali settlers backed by the military and the state. In addition, there are new patterns of land grabbing among Bengali interest groups, as well as within indigenous groups. These parallel processes, taking place along intra-ethnic and class lines, have made the land conflicts of the CHT even more complex.

To understand the major mechanisms of land grabbing in the CHT one has to understand the role of agencies of the state and the role of various interest groups and organizations in the private sector. Land grabbing happened in different political contexts before and after the introduction of the peace treaty (CHT Peace Accord). Different types of land laws and forms are creating space of land grabbing in the CHT. The system of land property in the CHT is characterized by the co-existence and parallel operation of the three major types of land laws:

¹⁹ Rahman, Hossain Zillur, Hulme, David and others (edit.), *Social Protection in Bangladesh, Building Effective Social Safety Nets and Ladders out of Poverty*, (UNDP-UPL, 2014, Dhaka, Bangladesh), p-16.

²⁰ Post 2015 Development Agenda: *Bangladesh Proposal to UN Post 2015 Development Agenda*, prepared by Bangladesh, a Proposal to replace MDGs for which the terminal Year is 2015. UN will have a new Development Agenda for Post 2015 era, for which the UN system is requested for having proposals from the Member Nations to be submitted to UN by June 2013.

- (i) formal laws, which apply to the entire country;
- (ii) formal laws specific to the CHT and its indigenous population;
- (iii) customary laws of the indigenous population.²¹

Similar things are happening for plain land IP, of whom Santals are one of the biggest groups. Indigenous people of Rajshahi region had been discriminated against for a long time and have lost their land (because of geo-political reason Santals are politically out of focus, NGOs are recently working in these areas). Today most of the land of Santal is occupied by Bengalis. Political interest groups try to occupy their land for economic gains. The right to possess their land, where they have settled for many generations but often do not hold land titles, is a major demand of the Santals.

6.3 Occupational identity works as a Caste

Harijans are not an ethnic group, but considered as Dalits. Their group is defined by the work they are doing as sweepers. Their occupation is passed on to their children. In Saidpur, the Harijan community is facing several types of discrimination. Not only the Muslims, but also Hindu communities look down on them. Because of the social and ideological influence of “impurity” they get oppressed in the society for a long time. They cannot enter a restaurant, people are not having food sitting beside them and do not drink water from the same glass. When their children go to school nobody wants to sit with them. Furthermore they are not allowed to enter Hindu temples. Discussions with them indicate that these types of discrimination lead to a lack of self-awareness and self respect among the group members.

6.4 Powerlessness and issue of social dignity

The condition of Dalits is not possible to change only by developing their economic condition. Problems are manifold and differ in origin. For example in Saidpur 80 Rabidas families are considered to be advanced from Harijans and they can go to eat at public restaurants, which is not possible for Harijans, who even cannot get their haircut at local barber shops. The mainstream society has impoverished them socially. The thinking of the mainstream society needs to be changed.

Due to powerlessness and the prevailing caste system deprived communities are oppressed. As a result, they suffer from an inferiority complex so that most of them do not even try to change their occupation. Their situation has somewhat improved for those who have changed their job, although their number is very low. Their main reason to change their occupation was and is a reducing job demand for sweepers or other occupation that are traditionally conducted by Dalits. The Government has reduced job opportunities, which forces sweepers to change their occupation.

Rabidas community is a professional community and shoe repair is their main work and they face similar discrimination as Harijan. About 3,000 Rabidas live in Saiddpur municipality area, basically from 56 extended families. In 2002, the local organization “Harijan Oikkoparishad” was established to advocate for the rights of all Dalit communities in Saidpur. In 2009, it split into two groups: 1) one group of Rishi and Robidas, 2) Harijan. This separation was triggered as well by a conflict of two national NGOs working with the different groups.

The situation of the local Santali community is quite different, who are whether Hindu or Christians. The latter receive specific support through local missionaries. Their language is even taught at some school

²¹ Adnan, Shapan and Dastidar, Ranajit, (2011), *Alienation of the Lands of Indigenous Peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh*, (CHTC AND IWGIA, Dhaka, Bangladesh), p-34-44.

of the area. The development of agriculture in this region has changed the lives of indigenous people, triggered by the Barendra Land Development Plan. Traditional delivery still takes place at home, but Santals have the opportunity to visit hospitals in complex cases, which is not possible for Dalits. Therefore maternal and infant mortality has been reduced significantly among the Santal community as well.

Although the diversity among the above-mentioned groups is visible, one significant point where most of the socially excluded groups show common feature is that they are the most disadvantaged people among the poor. It leads to extreme poverty and powerlessness that create structural arrangement for exploitation and inequality for the socially excluded people.

7. Impact of MDGs on Socially Excluded People

In the national context, Bangladesh has shown tremendous achievement to fulfill the targets of MDGs. Still, doubts remain about the overall success that was measured by MDG indicators. Additionally, the MDGs failed to change many structural and institutional arrangements that are directly or indirectly responsible in reproducing discriminative practices and ideology in society. Work and descent based discrimination, e.g. in the form of “untouchability” among Dalits, are still visible in Bangladesh. IPs are still deprived from their indigenous land rights. They are deprived from citizen rights. The rate of poverty among the socially excluded groups is still higher compared to the other groups. However, it is also evident that the level of awareness and understanding of the importance of education have increased significantly among socially excluded people. As part of this study more than 60 members from different excluded groups have been contacted and all of them send their children to the government and non-government primary school and are able to do so.

However, especially the situation of gender parity and women’s empowerment among the socially excluded groups are not pleasing. Notions of gender inequality are strongly embedded in differential structures of power and hence vary according to different social positions. Women’s participation in politics is very low among the excluded groups. Early marriage, violence against women and dowry are very common practice among them. Poverty, social insecurity and cultural norms are identified as the root causes of early marriage among the excluded groups. On the other hand, child and infant mortality rate among the socially excluded groups decreased significantly, almost similar to national rates. The successful programs for immunization, control of diarrheal diseases and Vitamin A supplementation are considered to be the most important contributors to the decline in child and infant deaths. It is also evident that the rate of maternal mortality has declined significantly all over the country. The maternal mortality rate among socially excluded groups show similar figures as at national level. From all community members consulted for this study only one person from the Bagdi community recalled a case, seven years ago, in which a woman from their community died during delivery.

There was a considerable progress in the decline of malarial deaths in the country over the years. The frequency of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh currently is less than 0.1 percent and thus is still below an epidemic level. Similar impact in declining malarial and HIV/AIDS can also be found among the socially excluded groups.

8. Field Level Marginalized Group and Civil Society Recommendations

For the consultations at grassroots level three districts have been visited and representatives of five socially excluded groups have been consulted. The districts are Saidpur, Rajshahi and Satkhira, the

groups are Harijan, Munda, Rabidas, Santals and Rajbangshi. Lastly, a national level hearing was organized. Based on the recommendation from local level consultations and national level civil society representatives the following areas are being identified as the most crucial issues for further discussion (e.g. see annex-1 for details). These key areas and recommendations identified are described below.

8.1 Citizenship and Human Rights

- Establishing citizen rights based on the constitution of Bangladesh, particularly for IP in terms of acknowledgement of their ethnic identities.
- Specific law for elimination of (caste) discrimination based on work and descent and its implementation.
- Recognition of indigenous rights as personal law of the specific indigenous communities.
- Enumeration of the actual number of socially excluded communities in the next population census.
- Introduction of reserved seats in parliament and at local government councils.
- Right to form political parties, which is not given at present due to registration criteria by the Bangladesh Election Commission.
- Implementation of the CHT Peace Accord, particularly activating the land commission.

8.2 Government Services

Education

- Introduction of a specific section in the National Education Policy for socially excluded people.
- Close monitoring for ensuring free primary education and reducing dropout and enhance quality education for children of socially excluded people.
- Separate educational stipends and budget allocation for excluded children.
- Promoting and implementation of mother tongue education in primary education, particularly for IPs.
- Establishing schools nearest to the communities and in each village/ area.
- Increase education quota in higher studies, special scholarship programs, residential facilities and appointment of teachers from excluded groups.

Health

- Government policies should reflect cultural practices of IPs and establish cultural exchange centers and special opportunities for excluded groups in the health care system.
- Ensuring the presence of expert health professional at micro level and good governance in health sector.
- Introduce health insurance for extreme poor and socially excluded groups.
- Provide subsidy for the purchase of medicines and professional health care service.
- Identify the excluded groups separately in national health policy and social safety nets programs.

Job Creation and Safety Nets Programs

- Provide special attention to socially excluded groups in safety net programs, particularly in targeting and execution.
- Creating job opportunities through new programs for socially excluded groups through skill development projects.

Land, Natural Resource and Legal Assistant

- Creating correct database of socially excluded groups at union level, e.g. concerning natural resources and land rights.
- Excess to khas, i.e. state-owned, land and open water bodies for livelihood opportunities and retention of this land from illegal occupancy from the mainstream society.
- Specific policy and budget allocation to rehabilitate the landless and excluded people with khas land.
- Provide legal assistance to socially excluded groups to get any government service.
- Legal recognition of traditional land rights of IP.
- Ensure effective functioning of the CHT Land Commission.
- Proper implementation of the Forest Reservation Policy.

Housing

- Ensuring safe and secured residential facilities for socially excluded groups.

8.3 Areas for Policy Intervention and Create Employment opportunities**Education**

- Promote technical and vocational education to children of socially excluded people.

Health

- Launching special and innovative health care programs (such as prize card/ health card) for socially excluded groups.

Create Employment opportunities

- Eliminate work- and descent-based discrimination and create enabling working atmosphere.
- Establishing quota system in government, non-government and autonomous institutions for socially excluded groups.
- Ensuring access to financial services and small capital for small business.
- Create indigenous or community health worker among the excluded groups.

Policy Advocacy

- Create a national platform for deprived communities for mobilizing resources regarding health and education.
- Adequate allocation for research on social excluded groups and their land rights.
- Formulating and implementing a National Plan for resolving the water logging crisis.
- Financial assistance for disaster preparedness and development of infrastructure for socially excluded people.

Land, Natural Resource and Legal Assistant

- Distribution and retention of khas land and water bodies among landless excluded communities.
- Include the socially excluded communities in governments' rehabilitation and settlement projects (such as "one house, one farm") and other activities.

Climate change

- Land acquisition, development, and compensation for socially excluded people affected by climate change.
- Creating and implementing an inter-state agreement for climate change.
- Claiming carbon tax from industrialized countries.

9. EU funded Programs for Social excluded groups and Impacts**9.1 Does the EU development cooperation include socially excluded people?**

During the last 15 years Bangladesh has experienced multidimensional interventions to improve the livelihood of socially excluded people by the development partners. Among them European Union has been given special focus towards the marginalized groups of the country. The EU prioritized rights-based approaches to implement MDGs. To some stance that approach has been found appropriate in developing awareness and sensitizing Government and other development actors on human rights. Below one organizational contemporary case is provided, which provides a snapshot about one European Union funded intervention for socially excluded groups of the country.

Case-1 Parittran

Implementing partner: Parittran

Name of the project: Enhanced Coping Capacity of the Disadvantaged Community (ECCDC)

Duration: 32 months (from May 2012 - December 2014)

Local Partner: SAMS (Sundarban Adibasi Munda Sangastha)

Summary of the project: Parittran, a local human rights and development organization constituted by a group of student from Dalit community has been working since 1993 to ensuring human rights of Dalits. Parittran implements “Enhanced Coping Capacity of the Disadvantaged Community” project funded by European Union in the sub-districts Tala, Satkhira Sadar and Symnagar under Satkhira district. The main objectives of this project are:

1. Enhanced community-based disaster preparedness to response natural disaster and climate change.
2. Strengthened institutional preparedness of the Local Govts,(LGs), Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC), Upozila Disaster Management Committees (UDMC), Civil society organizations (CSOs), to implement appropriate community-based disaster risk reduction measures.
3. Enhanced accessibility into information of the disadvantaged communities.
4. Enhanced capacity of the project personal and those involved for project service delivery.

Disadvantaged Dalits and marginalized communities like Rishi, Munda, cobblers, Fisherman, marginal farmers, Kayra (pig breeder), Behara, Tati (cloth maker), Shikari (hunter) and Moiali (honey collector) are the target beneficiaries of this project (see Annex-4: Protom Alo Dialogue on “Preserving the right to Dalit and deprived community: Anti-Discrimination Act”).

9.2 Is participation of socially excluded in the development of the Country Strategy ensured?

In the period 2014-2020, the EU will promote a more equitable growth and improved democratic governance in Bangladesh with the aim of eradicating extreme poverty and increasing resilience, in line with the Agenda for Change and the country national development strategies (Bangladesh Perspective Plan 2010-2021, Outline Perspective Plan of Bangladesh, Vision 2021, and the 6th Five Year Plan 2011-2015, hereafter referred to as the plan).

From mid-2015, the EU aid will synchronize with Bangladesh 7th Five Year Plan 2016-2020 and the EU is committed to launch joint programming in selected areas with interested EU+ member states. Following an assessment of the existing national development policies and an analysis of the key issues, the MIP proposes to focus on three sectors, which are considered to contribute to the achievement of EU Bangladesh strategic objectives and the EU Agenda for Change. The proposed priority sectors of EU should consider socially excluded groups specifically.

9.3 Are Socially Excluded People included in presents programs and projects?

During the field research this consultant visited two, recently completed, EC-supported projects. One project was “Enhanced Coping Capacity of the Disadvantaged Community” (ECCDC) implemented by Parittran in Satkhira district. The target people were socially excluded groups living in emerging poverty prone areas of the coastal belt. The project followed a rights-based approach, focusing on social awareness as well as mobilization, campaign and advocacy. The other project was “Sustainable Technology Transfer to Enhance Productivity for Ultra Poor” (STEP UP) implemented by NETZ Bangladesh in several districts in Bangladesh. Ultra poor and socially excluded people are the target group and through agricultural technological interventions the project aims on upgrading livelihood of people (e.g. through crops, livestock and fisheries). Out of these two projects, the EU e.g. also invested in programs implemented by the UNDP and Government. These programs were “Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Asset” (REOPA) and “Vulnerable Group Development for the Ultra Poor Women” (VGDUP).²³

9.4 Are socially excluded people reached in reality?

In case of the Parittran project, the total number of final beneficiaries is 25,000 families. Coordination meetings among Ward Disaster Management Committees (WDMC), volunteers and civil groups courtyard meetings with the disadvantaged peoples, workshops with ECOs, CSOs for contingency plan, mass awareness campaigns in different places through drama, skill development training on livestock as well as networking meetings with stakeholders are some of the key activities that has been carried out through this project. Beside these, Parittran successfully linked up beneficiaries to get health services from community clinics, tube-well and latrine from local governments, Vulnerable group feeding (VGF), vulnerable group development (VGD) cards, old-aged allowance, widow and disable allowances through networking and communication through the project intervention.

Rights-based approaches has been adopted in this intervention to raise awareness and enhance coping capacities of the target group during natural disasters. As a result rights claiming initiatives by community member has increased and group members are claiming services to local service providers as the part of their coping mechanism. Women’s active participation in the awareness meeting has also been raised after the project intervention. One other important fact is that through this project Parittran has developed a working relationship with Sundarban Adibasi Munda Sangastha (SAMS) who are the local partner in implementing this particular project. SAMS is composed by Munda community members, who are an indigenous community. Through this partnership, two different community-lead organizations came together to claim their rights and mobilizing their limited resources. This partnership is also a sign of collective voice among the socially excluded groups.

²³ Rahaman, Hossain Zillur, Chowdhury, Liaquat Ali and Ali, Khondoker Shakhawat, (2011), *Social Safety Nets in Bangladesh, A PPRC and UNDP Research Initiatives*, (Dhaka, Bangladesh) Vol-1, P-63-64.

9.5 What is the impact of EU policies on Socially Excluded People?

There are some direct impacts of EU policies on socially excluded people. They are mentioned below.

- 1) The EU follows visibly a rights-based approaches, which we saw e.g. at the Parittran project, and EU-supported projects target on real extreme poor and socially excluded people.
- 2) The EU funds social and economic empowerment projects, such as like REOPA and VGDUP, which also contribute to the empowerment of women from socially excluded groups. These projects were designed following a graduation focus, i.e. multiple components combining protection and promotional goals. That is reflected as well in targeting and coverage: i) in REOPA 24,444 destitute women in eco-vulnerable locations for 2 years; ii) in VGDUP project seasonal food insecurity reduced and job was created for 80,000 destitute women in the same socio-economic condition over 5 years.
- 3) Continuity and scale up of the projects are the big challenge, particularly regarding the successful graduation projects.

9.6 Is there policy coherence?

The proposed EU 2014-2020 Country Strategy Paper focuses on the following three sectors: good governance and human rights, food security and nutrition as well as education and skills training. Firstly, the EU intends to invest in electoral assistance, local governance and access to justice as well as to provide continued support to the development of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, good governance in general and the promotion of human rights. Secondly, the EU intends to promote food security for the most vulnerable women-headed households, in highly food-insecure areas of the country, which are particularly prone to natural disasters and the consequences of climate change. Thirdly, the EU wants continue support in the field education, including technical and vocational training. Building human capital through education and skills development is seen as a key to success of the Bangladesh aspiration of becoming a middle income country in the years ahead. The linkages between education/skills and jobs will therefore be emphasized. These three sectors indicate a coherent policy approach for future development of Bangladesh. That strategy would combine both issue i.e. growth and poverty. But the challenge is financing, size of coverage and the scaling up all over the country.

10. Suggested focus for EU agenda concerning socially excluded people

In the light of the above-mentioned positive developments that have been achieved by EU-support, several gaps persist. Points that the EU agenda should include in future regarding socially excluded people in Bangladesh are listed in the following.

10.1 Human Development

Education is the greatest ladder for social mobility, but an emerging quality divide is rapidly eroding the social mobility potential of education. The quality divides are not only fuelling new economic inequalities, but also creating fertile grounds for social conflicts and non-social behavior. An associated concern is the narrowing of interpretive focus across madrasa (religious) education, which stands at odds with the generally more tolerant social practice of religion.

MDG-influenced discourse emphasis on summary indicators, such as enrolment rates in primary and secondary education, because it is easy to achieve. A shortcut mentality has come to prevail amongst politicians and administrators, and indeed even within the electorate, which unwittingly militates against a more holistic engagement on such critical issues as teaching quality, service ethics, class-room

environment, performance monitoring and system development. Investment in education and human development especially for socially excluded people will boost up economic growth and reduce poverty.

A comprehensive development instrument on education should be based on certain values: strengthening the solidarity among socially excluded people and their inclusion in social structures, strengthening the cultural identity of the children, promoting active participation as citizens, understanding and deep respect for people from other religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations and physical constitutions. Therefore, further recommendations to EU, following suggestions by consultation with socially excluded people and national civil society, are:

1. Support the Government of Bangladesh to introduce a Right to Education Act to ensure the achievement of “Education for All” with quality and equity.
2. Support advocacy initiatives of CSOs for establishing the Right to Education as a fundamental right
3. Support governmental and NGO education programs to take into consideration the living conditions of the hardest to reach, as for example of children from alluvium islands and from socially excluded groups as well as children with disabilities; this has to be considered in budgetary procedures and has to result in higher allocations to these population groups.
4. Continue the support of NGOs to reach the hardest to reach children (not reached by PEDP III) in order to fill the gap of children out of school. Also for these schools a better quality should be ensured through improved trainings and higher teachers’ salaries than in the present NFPE schools.
5. Support the Government and the civil society for ensuring adolescent literacy and continued education including open and distance education system for extreme poor and socially excluded groups.
6. Support the Government and the civil society to establish and stimulate an integrated Early Childhood Development program in the country.

10.2 Nutritional Security

The core finding of recent poverty trends is the contrast between relatively rapid progress on hunger indicators and the persistence of high child malnutrition as indicated in the two indicators of stunting and low birth weight. The challenge of high child malnutrition impinges on behavioral change in terms of food habits, awareness and social factors such as low age of marriage, which leads to low birth-weight. The EU should address this key “off-track MDG” agenda.

Further recommendations to EU, following suggestions by consultation EU with socially excluded people and national civil society, are:

1. To achieve the MDGs as a multilateral partner of the development cooperation with Bangladesh, the EU should direct more intensively their development politics to the needs of extreme poor and socially excluded people in future governmental negotiations.
2. Improved rights protection of socially excluded people should be obtained by institutionalizing the access to the judiciary system.
3. The food situation of under- and malnourished infants should be supported by activities of the Government in cooperation with NGOs and UN organizations systematically.
4. Free access to public health system should be ensured for all socially excluded people.
5. The social safety net should be expanded for socially excluded groups and people that cannot work. In doing so it must be assured that the real needy, as for example widows with children or persons with disability among extreme poor families and old aged, will receive support. Diminishing corruption and the introduction of better control mechanisms are requisites for its achievement.

6. Expand support to the Government of Bangladesh and NGOs in carrying out the food security and livelihood improvement programme focussing on the extreme poor and socially excluded people by starting selection from the bottom of the poverty line (first those with less than 1,600 kcal per day).

10.3 Promotional Safety Nets and Graduation

For addressing a comprehensive social protection strategy, protection and promotion are increasingly recognized as dual goals. However, graduation consequences of promotional safety nets pursued by poor household and especially socially excluded people themselves over and beyond specific project time-lines is a conspicuous knowledge gap. In future, EU-supported projects should focus on promotional safety nets and graduation.

10.4 Poverty Trends in Poverty Pockets

The current poverty trends and feature of poverty in Bangladesh shows a concentration in certain poverty pockets. Areas such as the Monga belt in northern districts have been in policy focus for some time. An updated understanding of poverty trends in such pockets and on the specific situation of excluded groups is an important knowledge gap. Such updated analytical understanding will provide important inputs for the design of the EU future projects.

10.5 Climate Change and Vulnerability

During the last years climate change poses new vulnerabilities, e.g. in the coastal areas. These areas are already becoming burdened with various vulnerabilities. Communities particularly at risk include the coastal population, population in the low-lying haor areas, people living along and on islands within the larger rivers and urban settlements. A researched understanding of their specific risks will be critical in planning for supportive measures, which should be part of any future EU supported project.

10.6 Urban Poverty

Urban poverty is very limited in analytical understanding of the growing phenomenon. The differential characteristics of urban poor vis-à-vis the rural poor has not been adequately captured. The face of urban poverty may also differ across the urban spectrum: from mega-cities to secondary towns. The urban poor face different kind of vulnerabilities, but are presently addressed by rural poverty mitigation approaches. To address this existing this knowledge should be a priority towards the future development agenda for the EU .

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Annexures

Annex 1: Benchmarking the Draft UN Principles and Guidelines on Elimination of (Caste) Discrimination based on work and descent- study by Nagorik Uddoyog

SIGNIFICANT GAPS

General:

- The Constitution of Bangladesh does not make any specific reference to practices related to caste-based discrimination and segregation, such as a prohibition on ‘untouchability’ practices that restrict people from freely accessing shops, restaurants, barber shops, hotels and places of public bathing, or places of worshipping. Nor are there any guidelines for promoting the improvement in the economic and social conditions of work and descent based communities.
- National censuses and government surveys do not take account of caste-based social groups and, therefore, there is no reliable official disaggregated data or information at either the national or state levels about the exact population of Dalits, nor the extent of caste disparities in such areas as development and security of life. There also has not been any comprehensive data or survey on social and economic discrimination built into any of the current Government of India statistical data collection tools, which could also be disaggregated by caste and gender. This makes any specific planning for Dalits and Dalit women, and targeted interventions in terms of development and financial assistance for this excluded community, difficult.
- No affirmative action has so far been taken to improve the socio-economic conditions of Dalits in line with Article 14 of the Constitution. There is no quota or reservation in government jobs for Dalits. The government has not taken any steps to expand the categories of reserved posts to include Dalits.
- Major government policies, such as the national housing policy, water policy and education policy, do not categorically forbid practices of ‘untouchability’ and caste discrimination. On the one hand, certain policies are framed through a universalist perspective or provisioning for all communities, such as the National Food Policy and National Water Policy. No emphasis is thus placed on socially excluded communities such as Dalits, nor in setting a norm of non-discrimination in place when dealing with access to these basic amenities. On the other hand, other policies like the National Housing Policy obligate the government to ensure essential, emergency and limited rehabilitation/housing among ‘ultra poor’, ‘uprooted’ people and to ensure pure drinking water, sanitation of slum dweller and ultra-poor people. Within this broad targeted policy, no mention is made about socially excluded groups such as Dalits; nor is non-discrimination prescribed as a norm.
- No specific measures for Dalit women, or mention of Dalit women within general gender measures, have been created. Even though the National Women’s Development Policy mandates special attention to the right of women from ‘backward groups’, this has not been translated into specific programmes as yet that benefit Dalit women.
- The current budgetary allocations for some welfare measures for mainstreaming the Hijra, Dalit, Harijion and Bede communities is inadequate in comparison to the extent of deprivations faced by

the communities. In the absence of official assessments of the expenditure and impact of such measures, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of such financial outlays.

- Though the state has made periodic submissions to UN system as regards different treaties and covenants, it has not taken sincere measure particularly to operationalize the directives of CERD as regards widespread sensitisation on non-discrimination based on caste. The spirit of CERD Recommendation XXIX is yet to resonate in Bangladesh's legal and policy regimes. This gap needs to be repeatedly brought to the government's notice.

Security of Life and Access to Justice:

- Given the current lack of recognition in law and policy of Dalits as a separate social group requiring special protection, there have been no government steps taken to encourage Dalits to register complaints of caste-based discrimination and violence. Moreover, no police station maintains any separate registrar to record the complaints made by Dalits, which enables the nature and extent of caste violence to remain hidden.
- Despite several laws and policies for the elimination of all forms of physical and mental violence against women in Bangladesh, there is little understanding of the additional vulnerabilities of Dalit women to such violence. Hence, no special mention is made of the nature of intersectional caste and gender violence and exploitation.
- Notwithstanding the Constitution of Bangladesh's provision for equality of all citizens before the law, no law or policy has included any specific provision for ensuring access to legal justice for the Dalits as systematically excluded group. This includes the lack of a legal entitlement to legal aid and other measures to promote Dalits' access to justice.

Employment and Labour:

- The Government of Bangladesh and Local Government Institutions have not made substantial and systematic efforts to create alternative employment opportunities and open up access to markets for Dalits. Moreover no policy or programme has yet been taken up that can facilitate the transition of different Dalit communities from their conventional occupation to market-based employment.
- No comprehensive legislation has been enacted to ensure the rights to decent work, a living wage and basic labour rights for Dalit communities. Neither do the existing laws on employment and labour rights specify in any place caste equality and special protection for Dalits to ensure their decent and dignified work.
- Manual scavenging – which in Bangladesh context basically means manual sewerage work, and occasionally involves manual clearing of solid human waste, particularly in semi-urban and rural contexts – is widely practised but there is no government focus nor plan of action to eradicate this 'inhumane', 'unhygienic' and 'risky' occupation.
- None of the laws, policies and programmes on forced, bonded or child labour currently being implemented by the Bangladesh government make any reference to caste vulnerabilities to these forms of prohibited labour. There seems to be a lack of understanding on the close correlation

between being poor and being vulnerable to discrimination, and between being subject to multiple and persistent forms of discrimination at work and being vulnerable to forced labour or child labour.

- The Bangladesh government has not yet adopted any specific policy regarding the elimination of descent-based work, which is also a form of forced labour.
- IFIs, MNCs, TNCs and other market entities that work in Bangladesh are not – as much as it can be understood from their annual reports and other official documents – aware or sensitized about the extent of discrimination that are practiced in Bangladesh society on the basis of caste. Therefore, they do not follow any principle of ‘affirmative action’ while recruiting employees.

Living Conditions, Health and Education:

- No mention is made in any government policy, law, budget or programme regarding targets or goals for ensuring the availability and non-discriminatory access to healthcare, sanitation and basic hygiene standards for Dalits.
- Despite a constitutional pledge to build an inclusive nation, social exclusion when it comes to land is entrenched as far as Dalits are concerned. The current rules make it virtually impossible for Dalits to get a share of government allocations and schemes in relation to land distribution and rural housing. One main reason is that Dalits or their ancestors are not peasants, connected to agrarian professions. This is an issue that needs to be clearly identified, talked about and then resolved. Even if Dalits were not connected to agrarian professions in many cases, they deserve to have minimum level of land ownership as they are amongst the most vulnerable groups of people in the country.
- Education programmes and policies to date talk about access and equity and refer to the backwardness of ‘tribal’ people and of women and poorer section of the population. No specific mention is made of Dalit communities, nor special provisions made to ensure their educational development on par with the rest of the country’s population.

Disaster Management:

- Neither the Government of Bangladesh nor international organizations working in the country in disaster recovery and development programmes have much awareness or understanding on issues of caste discrimination in disaster relief and recovery. Hence, measures such as social equity audits and caste analysis frameworks in order to tackle exclusion and discrimination in all development and disaster recovery programmes are not at all present.
- National mechanisms for disaster management, relief and rehabilitation do not refer to Dalits, nor provide grievance redress mechanisms that Dalits can access in case of facing any discrimination while access disaster relief and rehabilitation programmes.

V. SIGNIFICANT RECOMMENDATIONS

General:

- In Bangladesh the first and foremost necessity for eliminating caste discrimination in access to

public spaces and services, and physical segregation is to give recognition to the fact that caste based discrimination is part of its social fabric that needs to be addressed. Without this 'recognition' no fruitful action might be taken effectively. Hence, public campaigns and information sharing must be undertaken to create a 'discourse' on the Dalit situation in the country and to promote the elimination of caste discrimination and 'untouchability' practices.

- A law should be enacted for prohibiting caste discrimination and the denial of equal access to public places and services, and laying down punishment for such practices. In this regard, the government should prioritise the enactment of the Anti-Discrimination law proposed by the Law Commission, in consultation with the National Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations.
- The government should promote discussions between officials and Dalit communities and leaders in order to examine the scope for expanding the existing 'affirmative action' regimes to include the community for their development on par with other Bangladesh citizens. It is necessary to have a better understanding on how quota system reform might be put to the better service of Dalits, especially in the areas of both public and private sector employment and education.
- Disaggregated data – national, state, district and community/group-based data - is required on different demographic aspects of Dalit communities, including their population, education and employment status, as regards different demographic aspects. With such data in hand, the government should engage in a participatory process to enable the creation of targeted measures that meet the fundamental development and other needs of Dalits.
- As an immediate measure, a special survey and study should be commissioned by the government to produce data as regards different disadvantaged women groups including Dalit women.
- The government should integrate trainings for all government officials and police at the national, district and local government levels on to understand the heterogeneity of Bangladesh society, gender and caste awareness, and how to particularly address the specific vulnerabilities of Dalits and Dalit women.
- All mediums of public communication, including television documentaries, dramas and movies should be utilized to portray a positive image about the Dalits, both Hindu and Muslim, and to debunk the adverse perceptions of this community.
- More systematic work should be done by religious, cultural, educational and media institutions to build the capacities of Dalits – via inclusion initiatives into such institutions, building their skills to be able to document their life histories and struggles, by engagement with the communities to build understanding and promote harmony among castes and religions.
- All inter-governmental organisations, including international financial institutions, should ensure that development or assistance projects which they support take into account the socio-economic situation of Dalits. International Financial Institutions should incorporate caste and gender disaggregated analysis into corporate social development strategies and poverty and social assessments in order to ensure equal benefits to Dalits. Prior to approval of projects and in on-going projects, in consultation with Dalit NGOs and academics, these institutions should investigate the

effect of their proposed policies and programmes on caste discrimination and ensuring equal access and enjoyment of basic entitlements, and seek ways to strengthen Dalit communities in new and on-going projects through anti-discriminatory and pro-Dalit measures.

- A monitoring mechanism in the form of a Dalit Commission or Equity and Inclusion Commission should be created to monitor the situation of Dalits in all arenas including access to any government measures intended to protect and promote their rights.

Security of Life and Access to Justice:

- The government should issue strict guidelines as to the conduct of police in registering and investigating crimes of discrimination and violence against Dalits. It should be made mandatory that all complaints of caste-based discrimination and violence be immediately registered by the police, and that police officials not resort to investigations without the proper registration of the case.
- Legal awareness programmes must be introduced among Dalit communities, so as to make them aware of their rights and support them in accessing legal remedies for any discrimination or violence done to them. In this regard, the government should link with community-based organisations in order to reach to communities. Dalits have to be convinced that it not their 'destiny' to routinely become subject to discrimination, ill-treatment and violence.
- The government should amend the Legal Aid Rules in order to incorporate mandatory provision of legal aid to Dalits who need to access justice.
- Laws and policies to address violence against women need to be re-examined in order to make specific reference to Dalit women and girls, or multiple discrimination and violence, and should outline protection measures that are particularly applicable to them.

Employment and Labour Rights:

- A comprehensive employment law, covering both public and private sector employment, with a special emphasis on Dalits, must be developed. This legislation should specify reservations for Dalits in employment in the public and private sectors.
- Comprehensive legislation as well as time-bound plans for the complete eradication of manual scavenging must be formulated and implemented, which also provide for the rehabilitation of those engaged in manual scavenging into decent, skilled work.
- With the implementation of economic policy reforms, labourers are at the receiving end. Hence, social security provisions for Dalit workers in the unorganised sectors need to be enacted and implemented by the government.
- To break away from caste shackles, one effective way would be to seek out a livelihood through professions that 'tradition' does not attribute to a Dalit. Vocational training, basic education and competent linking up with the market could be basic forms of support. Adequate and targeted vocational training initiatives need to be developed to equip Dalit youth with gainful and decent employment. This must be coupled with methods to reach information on such initiatives to Dalit communities in rural and urban areas, in order to facilitate their access to such opportunities.

- The government should review its programmes to eliminate prohibited forms of labour - bonded, forced and child labour, including trafficking - and report on both how many Dalits are victims of these forms of labour as well as how many Dalits become beneficiaries of the various government efforts in this regard.

Living Conditions, Health and Education:

- Major livelihood-related policies such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation, land and education policies in Bangladesh need to categorically refer to the disadvantageous condition of the Dalits and provide a framework for improving their access to such basic entitlements.
- For populations such as the sweepers, *methor*, tea-workers and others there need to be specialized health and medical centres established to cater to their health needs. City corporations and municipalities have the responsibility to ensure the physical and mental health of the sweepers and other Dalit workers. They must take up specialized programmes targeting the Dalits in this regard.
- It is important to assess the severity of the problems in Dalit colonies across the country and, accordingly, develop a time-bound plan of action to ensure that adequate and discrimination-free housing, water, food and sanitation facilities are provided to all Dalit households. Dalit communities should be allowed to participate in the evolution of this plan of action.
- The government should ensure that all infrastructure programmes supported by the government facilitate Dalit communities to access water, food, sanitation, land, irrigation and social infrastructure proportionately and without discrimination.
- With proper policies and programmes from the government, the district administration in particular districts can take up specific programmes for improving the overall housing and living condition of the Dalit people. This can be done in collaboration with the Local Government Institutions and Directorate of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) under the Ministry of Local Government.
- A national survey should be undertaken to identify which social groups have access to land and which do not. Based on this survey, all Dalits without title to their 'ancestral' homestead land should be identified and a process started to grant them title. Moreover, targeted land allocations of *khas* lands can be made in order to ensure the prioritising of land entitlement grants to landless groups such as Dalits. The land title should be granted in women's names, or as joint title. Moreover, all lands allotted to Dalits being non-transferable under any circumstances to non-Dalits.
- The government should constitute an 'Equity Working Group' within the Education Ministry to continually devise and monitor targeted education schemes for Dalits. These schemes should be devised in consultation with Dalit communities and CSOs. Schemes would include scholarships allocated for Dalit children in order to encourage their schooling and higher education.
- The government should identify and develop activity-based modules to promote diversity, equity and social inclusion in classrooms and schools, and these should be included in teacher training modules. Time should be allocated within the school schedule for such processes and activities.

- Government officials need to have a comprehensive understanding about the issue of caste discrimination. Discussions on caste, stratification and the politics of exclusion can be included in curricula of training organizations such as BPATC, Judicial Training Academy and Police Academy and other civil services related academies and centres.

Disaster Management:

- The government authorities, through community resource mapping exercises like infrastructure audits, should assess the livelihood patterns, specific vulnerabilities and needs in Dalit localities. This would enable the authorities to set up mechanisms of direct warning signals and would help in devising needs-based employment generation programmes for Dalits recovering from disasters.
- State agencies should collaborate with CSOs to develop tools based on participatory methods and principles of social equity audit, for monitoring / auditing the extent of social equity and inclusion of Dalits in disaster response and risk reduction programmes. This should be coupled with procedures laid down so that the complete inclusion of Dalits and other vulnerable groups is ensured as a non-negotiable entitlement in disaster management.
- The National Plan for Disaster Management should be amended to contain a grievance redress mechanism in case of denial or discrimination in access to disaster relief and rehabilitation materials.

Annex 2: 10 demands for Dalit Groups

1. Establishing Anti-Discrimination Law for securing Human Rights of Dalits and Harijan community. And declaring 'untouchability' as an offensive act in public and private domain.
2. Ensuring the active participation from Dalits and Harijan Communities in preparing a National Development Plan by Mainstream Political Parties and placing it into their election manifesto to ensure the socio-economic development and empowerment of the Dalit and Harijan communities.
3. Establishment of National Commission for Dalits.
4. Introducing Reserve sit in National Parliament and Local government bodies for Dalits and Harijan communities for ensuring their Representation.
5. Safety net programs of the government (such as old aged allowance, widow allowance, disable allowance, VGD & VGF card etc) will have to prioritize Dalits and Harijan communities.
6. Constitutional amendment 29 (3) have to establish for Dalits and Harijan communities, which is already committed by the Honorable Prime Minister, to create Employment and Education opportunities for the Dalits people. Education stipend program also need to be launched for these communities.
7. Up-to-date the Employment Policy for Harijan community in the City Corporations and municipal corporations should be updated and 80 percent position of cleaners or sweepers have to reserve for the member of Harijan community.
8. Fifty percent quota should be secured for Dalits in overseas employment.
9. Ensuring permanent allocation of Khash land for Dalits and Harijan communities and providing financial support to build house at their present residential location.
10. Enumerating Dalits and Harijan communities properly in the national census.

Annex 3: Prothom Alo Dialogue, Preserving the right to Dalit and deprived community: Anti-Discrimination Act**Mizanur Rahman, Chairman, Human Right Commission**

The condition of Dalit in Bangladesh is very unsatisfactory. We have been running movement against this for a long ago. There is no place of discrimination in the constitution. Despite, there is discrimination in every stage of the society. The form of discrimination against Dalits is very shocking. It violates the basic rights of the people. An incident of Jypurhat has shocked us. A lawyer of Rabidas community dined with some his community people in the lawyer's cafeteria. The utensils used during dining were sent to his home and forced him to pay for these utensils, because other lawyers would not use these. Can you imagine this in this 21st century? I went to Birganj with some young lawyers in 2002 or 2003 to conduct a research. There I observed some bitter experiences. The extreme truths those are hidden in these incidents are really inhuman and pathetic. We took initiatives in the Senate Building of University of Dhaka with Mansuher Jonno Foundation, Law Commission, Representatives of Dalit community, and different organizations of civil society to enact a strong law. After completing some consultation meeting, we prepared the Discrimination Eradication Act. Another consultation meeting was conducted and the results were sent to the Law Ministry with some amendments and additions. We hope, the Act will be passed as soon as possible.

Milon Das, Executive Director, Paritran

I am a member of Dalit society. We have been experiencing the discrimination in every step of our lives. I went to a sweat shop with other friends when I was in class five. I was given sweat in paper instead of any utensil. Even water was denied in glass. I went to barbershop to have my hair cut for visiting my uncle's house. After getting my identity, the barber stopped cutting hair in the middle. Then I had to go to uncle's house with bald head. Thus the pattern of discrimination has been changed hardly till today. Hamida Hossain and Meghna Guhthakurta came to see our problems in 2005. From that time, we have been running the movement against such discrimination and for enacting the law against discrimination. Then we thought as if it was the problem of Satkhira, Jessore and Khulna regions. Now it has been turned into national problem. Though we have progressed in education, job market and trade and business, we cannot get rid of hate of the people. We have to live below human standard. I had to get me admitted into education institution after a hard struggle. But I cannot go much with my education life. People throw hateful languages like "The son of cobbler will be barrister!" People hate our occupation. We are afraid of living in the coming future. The condition of Dalit women and children is much more dangerous. Most of the time, we are denied of justice. Sometimes we are threatened to be ousted. We demand a respectful life in all sectors of life including education and jobs. In this regard, the state has to be more empathetic.

Ratan Das, Poritran

There are 100 of disrespectful proverbs in the society about the cobblers. In this circumstances, where a community will a get a place to feel relieved? I had the dream of being a teacher and gathered the quality that is required for being a teacher. Till today, I sat for exam in 46 schools for job. I have to stop in one point- I am the member of Dalit community. I admit that I am not Moheshwar Das, I am Muchi (cobbler) Das. When my identity is revealed, job disappears. I was asked about my caste in every school. I taught in several schools without remuneration for a long time. The sad thing is that I didn't get any job in those schools too. I sat in the exams of the government primary schools for eight times. After knowing my name, they don't want to listen anything else. I attended the exam of government high

schools for twice and several times in family planning. Still I have not broken within. I will keep trying. In some schools, although I secured first position in the job examinations, they could not recruit me. The dream of being teacher will never be removed from my heart. I will go to anywhere of Bangladesh if any one calls me for teaching.

Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, RIB

The law has to be passed in the quickest possible time in parliament. Though it has been stated in the constitution that all people are equal, but there is no practice of that in the society. It is required to have some complementary laws to eradicate discrimination completely from the society. That is why the initiative of anti-discrimination act has been taken up. A good law not only drives out crime from the society, but also creates a social value system. Everyone expressed doubts about the application of this law. I too have doubts. A value system should be developed in the society to apply law properly. The best way of developing social value system is education institutions. It is essential to have anti-discrimination cell in every education institution. In this regard, the mass media can play crucial role. If media publish the discriminations of the society intensively, people will be aware of that. There are some other communities including indigenous and gipsy groups who are deprived. It is urgent to bring them under this law too. If the law is implemented properly, Bangladesh's reputation will be increased internationally.

Sereja Targa, Ethnic Group Representative

This law is necessary for two reasons. One: through this law, Dalit and deprived community will be strengthened. Two: Bangladesh will gain reputation internationally. Discrimination against any community is unacceptable in any democratic society. Racial discrimination is the worst form of discrimination. It disrespects humanity. Racial discrimination should be given special importance. Every human has the right to live with dignity. As human being, people of all class and occupation should be given their deserved right and dignity. That is why, this law should be passed so that no one is subject to racial discrimination and everyone can be proud of his/her community. Names of every community should be mentioned in the law, because, identity increases people's dignity.

Ashok Das, Dalit Group Representative

It seems that discrimination is our fate. We demand relief from this condition. Many of us have changed their identity to live with dignity. If anyone changes his title for living with dignity, what can be more sorrowful than this? That is why, we demand something that can free us from this condition. Though the term *Muchi* (cobbler) has been changed in the law of 1962, still this term is used in many books. In this regard, the state is not behaving properly with us. We hope, you all will consider our issue with due importance.

Nirmol Chandra Das, Horijan Leader

There are a lot of laws in the country. This is not the fact that all laws are serving good purposes. We have been suffering from discrimination from the beginning of our birth. We are having jobs, education with these discriminations with us. We never got hopeless. If we become subject to discrimination after passing laws, we can be able to resort to laws. Law will work as strength. We have been running movement-struggle for a long time for passing such a law. The number of population of Dalits is 1 crore. Among them, the people of Horijan community are more neglected than all. If we did not exist, how could you be able to live in this city? We keep the city clean and clear. If we can access to a better livelihood, we will be able to work better. We do not have ownership to lands other than the

government lands. We were born here; still we are living here and will die here as well. Nonetheless, we are victim to ousting regularly. Then where should we go? Finance minister allotted 10 crore taka for housing last year. But there was not a single brick inserted. Where does money go? Again, this time 50 crore taka has been allotted. We do not know whether anything will be done with this money or not. Many developments take place to the country, but there is no change to our fate.

Suhrid Sarker, Dalit Group Representative

Dalits are a part of the working class people. Working class people are very often deprived from their rights. The movement-struggles Dalit people are going through have not been futile. Now, the law to protect these people is going to be passed. This roundtable meeting proves how far Dalit people have reached. The movement with good intention never goes into vain. People of all communities should come forward to fight against discrimination.

Sanjib Drong, Adivasi Representative

I have seen the draft of anti-discrimination law. What was enshrined in the law of indigenous people, it is missing in this law. For example, the fact that the Dalits and deprived people are repressed historically should be inserted in the forefront of this law. This fact was included in the law for indigenous people. We are human being at the end. But what kind of discrimination prevails between people! Dalits are victim of injustice historically. That is why such a principle should be taken so that the state remains in the side of Dalits and deprived people. The identity of the people is a big issue. If there is any disrespectful thing within the identity of anyone, he/she cannot stand up. One of the major goals of our freedom movement was to build a society free of discrimination. But today, discrimination is in every step of the state. The human values should be created out of the inner core of the state. The law may protect the Dalits from hate ad discrimination; but what will be the case of their land rights? These issues should be taken with due importance.

M. Shah Alam, Member Law Commission

We have submitted the draft of the law in the ministry. But it has not been passed yet. In this regard, the mass media including Prothom Alo should work with proper salience of the issue. The Law Commission has made a draft and submitted to the ministry on the basis of the drafts you have submitted to the law commission. The number of Dalits is more than 70 lacs in Bangladesh. Due to the incorporation of other communities into this community, the number exceeds 80 lacs. The communities we have discussed today have been brought under this law. Therefore, this is very unlikely that any community will be going missing. We have noted all the instructions and suggestions you have recommended. But still, if you find anything is missing, notify us; we will try to bring those under the law. This law tells about each and every class based community. But the names of the communities are not mentioned. It is because, we did not intended to ensure the civic rights under particular name instead of greater civic rights. There are names in the concept paper. Very often, there are questions in the police verification. That is why we have given the duty of verification to the Human Rights Commission. Keep the movement-struggles continue until the implementation of the law. We hope, this will be a good law for you.

Annex 4: Summary Of Development Cooperation Instrument Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020

In the period 2014-2020, the EU will promote a more equitable growth and improved democratic governance in Bangladesh with the aim of eradicating extreme poverty and increasing resilience, in line with the Agenda for Change and the country national development strategies (Bangladesh Perspective Plan 2010-2021, Outline Perspective Plan of Bangladesh, so-called Vision 2021, and the Sixth Five Year Plan 2011-2015, hereafter referred to as the Plan).

From mid-2015, EU aid will synchronise with Bangladesh 7th Five Year Plan 2015-2020 and the EU is committed to launch joint programming in selected areas with interested EU+ Member States. This will require a review of the MIP 2014-2020 for the remaining 5 years, including possible amendments. Following an assessment of the existing national development policies and an analysis of the key issues, the MIP proposes to focus on three sectors which will contribute to the achievement of EU Bangladesh strategic objectives and the EU Agenda for Change:

i) Strengthening Democratic Governance,

ii) Food and Nutrition security,

iii) Education and Skills Development.

Support to the implementation of the Peace Accord in the Chittagong Hill Tracts will continue under the three sectors above. This will help reduce regional disparities.

PRIORITY SECTORS AND SPECIFIC OBJECTS

i) Strengthening Democratic Governance (indicative amount EUR 103-138 million)

The following overall and specific objectives will be pursued:

Overall objective: Support at different levels of government and society an efficient system of good governance, consistent with democratic values of participation, accountability, justice and respect for human rights.

For each of the specific objectives the main expected results are:

Specific objective 1: Foster democratic ownership

- An empowered civil society, social partners and social dialogue contribute to a more accountable and legitimate State
- Adolescents and youth participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives

Specific objective 2: Strengthen local governance

- Capacity, accountability and coordination mechanisms at the lowest levels of local government strengthened for dispute resolution/access to justice and land administration

Specific objective 3: Enhance financial governance

- Public expenditure and participatory fiscal management strengthened

ii) Food security and Nutrition (indicative amount EUR 276-310 million)

The following overall and specific objectives will be pursued:

Overall objective: Reduce food insecurity and malnutrition

For each of the specific objectives the main expected results are:

Specific objective 1: Enhance livelihoods, in particular for extremely poor women & increase resilience

- Food and nutrition security policy enhanced
- Social protection system strengthened
- Income earning opportunities, services and market linkages for the extreme poor scaled up
- Vulnerability to shocks and stresses reduced including expected impacts from climate change

Specific objective 2: Improve maternal and child nutrition

- Nutrition governance strengthened
- Child care, hygiene and diet improved

iii) Education and skills development (indicative amount EUR 276-310 million)

The following overall and specific objectives will be pursued:

Overall objective: Contribute to a better educated, trained and qualified human capital in Bangladesh

For each of the specific objectives the main expected results are:

Specific objective 1: Increase access to, and completion of, quality and equitable education.

- Efficient, inclusive and equitable primary education system further improved
- Access to and completion of education for hard to reach children improved
- Absorptive capacity, completion, and quality of secondary education improved

Specific objective 2: Improve access to an equitable labour market

- Skills development systems further improved
- Individuals employability, awareness of rights, and ability to adapt to labour market enhanced.