



Economics Study Center
University of Dhaka

50 Years of Independence

The story of social gains and exclusion



Liberation from discrimination



Two separate and distinct economies

Exploitation of East Pakistan by ruling classes in the West



9 month long struggle to freedom



Liberation from hunger, poverty, exploitation, discrimination and inequality

A democratic, prosperous and secular Bangladesh



Bangladesh: the success story

Post-liberation war:

GDP grew at 4% over the 1972-1979 period,
Devastated by **floods and famine**



Economy now:

Annual GDP growth rate of around **7% in the last decade**

Attained **food self-sufficiency** at the aggregate level

Average life expectancy has grown from the mid-40s to **over 72 years old today**

Literacy rate increased from **29.23%** to **74.70%** in the **last two decades**

Set to graduate from LDC status to be recognised as a **developing country by 2024**



Challenging Injustice

*“Persistence of poverty and growth in inequality derive from the unjust nature of social order which effectively **excludes the resource poor from equitable opportunities for participating in the development process.**”* - Dr. Rehman Sobhan

Dr. Sobhan talks about 4 areas of structural injustice

Unequal access
to assets

Unequal
participation in
the market

Unequal access
to human
development

Unjust
governance



Source: Challenging the Injustice of Poverty: Agendas for Inclusive Development in South Asia by Prof. Rehman Sobhan

Circumstances that marginalize people from mainstream society

Where people live

Remote and coastal areas, "char" and "haor", and hills, urban slums

Socio-cultural factors

Ethnicity, gender, religion, language status

Personal Attributes

Disabilities and special needs





Poverty and Inequality

- Nationally Gini has risen from 0.36 in 1963 to **0.482 in 2016** (BBS)
- The richest 5% of households gets nearly 28% of the total income, while the bottom 5% gets only 0.23%.
- Lack of decentralisation is also causing a growing spatial inequality in income earnings.
- Bangladesh ranks last among the countries paying minimum wages in the Asia-Pacific region (ILO)



Gender-based Discrimination

Over 70% of married women/girls in Bangladesh experienced abuse from their partners

Half of those reported an assault of a physical nature

No legal framework to discuss gender-based violence against men, boys and transgender

- **36%** of the working-age females are engaged in the workforce compared to 81% males
- Educational attainment (more than secondary) is **1.1%** among poorest quantile
- **59%** marry before age 18, the highest percentage in Asia

Source: BBS 2015; UNFPA





Plight of Indigenous Communities

- Over 50 indigenous communities in Bangladesh but the state does not recognise Indigenous Peoples as “Indigenous”
- Major issues related to Indigenous Peoples’ economic, political, land ownership rights remain ignored
- Poverty rate among the indigenous peoples in the plains is nearly 80% and in the CHT it is around 65% whereas national average is 20.5 %
- Increasing dispossession of land and resources caused by conflict, land grabbing, climate change and various development interventions



Source: ILO; BIDS

Disability Exclusion



- Incidence of poverty is much higher among households that have members with disabilities
- Lack of employment opportunities
- The disability grant for financially insolvent persons with disabilities provides Tk 600 per month which is equivalent of 5.5% of GDP per capita
- Access to education of children with disabilities is very limited in Bangladesh
- Rehabilitation structure remains weak, especially at the community level.
- Transport system is not disabled-friendly



Disability Exclusion



Cost of disability in Bangladesh

US\$148 per year per person with disability

(Source: Economic Costs of Disability in Bangladesh; Zulfqar Ali)



A Non-Inclusive Development

Size of the pie is increasing but not being shared by the larger majority

Common manifestations of exclusion:

- Unequal access to employment opportunities
- Unequal access to formal services such as health and water and sanitation
- Education inequality
- Landlessness

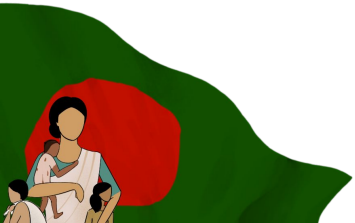
Likely to lead to economic and social ills, and social and political unrest



Recommendations



- ❑ Rights-based approach of social safety net
- ❑ Provide everyone constitutional recognition as per international human rights instruments ratified by the government of Bangladesh
- ❑ Strengthen the capacity of the excluded to compete in the marketplace
- ❑ Designing institutions for collective action by the excluded
- ❑ Enhancing access to quality education
- ❑ Re-design government budget to incorporate the excluded communities
- ❑ Re-design financial policy to ensure credit and savings instruments are accessible



Thank You

