



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

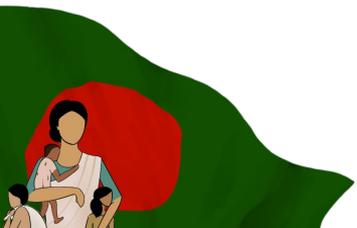
**Likely to lead to economic and social ills, and social and political unrest**



# 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

