

**Workshop on
Strengthening Partnership for Achieving SDGs in the Context of LDC Graduation
Organized by
Economic Relations Division (ERD)
Ministry of Finance**

Outcome Document

Economic Relations Division (ERD) with assistance from its Support to Sustainable Graduation Project (SSGP) organized a workshop on ‘Strengthening Partnership for Achieving SDGs in the Context of LDC Graduation’ at the NEC 2 conference room in the capital on 02 June 2024. State Minister for Finance Ms. Waseqa Ayesha Khan, MP graced the occasion as chief guest. ERD Secretary Mr. Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky chaired the event. Detailed discussions and recommendations coming from the event are documented below.

Welcome Remarks from Mr. A. H. M. Jahangir, Additional Secretary & Wing Chief, DE, ERD:

Mr. A. H. M. Jahangir, in his speech, opined that effective partnership is the cornerstone for achieving the SDGs. He affirmed that ERD, as the coordinating ministry for the implementation of SDG-17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) is playing an important role in the attainment of SDGs. He also noted that there are strong linkages between SDGs and LDC graduation. In this context, he observed that LDC graduation could propel Bangladesh towards the timely attainment of SDG. He informed that the workshop had been organized to coordinate the SDG-17 implementation progress as set out by the revised mapping of ministries or divisions as well as to identify indicator-wise implementation challenges and to figure out possible way out for overcoming the challenges. He also hoped that the workshop would discuss and identify the complementary role of SDG and LDC Graduation in achieving both of them.

Presentation on ‘Strengthening the means of implementation and revitalization of the global partnership for sustainable development’ by Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam, Additional Secretary (SDG Affairs), PMO

In the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam recalled the background of the adoption of the SDGs. He also explained the interlinkages between various SDG goals. Mr. Monirul Islam observed that the speech delivered by Bangabandhu at the UN General Assembly in 1974 is still equally relevant in the global development agenda. Afterwards, he highlighted sequentially on each of the 17 goals of SDGs. He also reflected on the year wise



and sector wise budgetary allocations of the government in line with each of those goals. At the same time, he also explained the role of ERD in the implementation of some specific targets coming under those goals. Focusing on the SDGs financing requirement in the context of Bangladesh, he recalled that US\$ 928.48 Billion additional funding would be required for the country from the year 2017 to 2030. Noting that 85 percent of this financing need would have to be met from domestic sources, Mr. Islam observed that enhancing the country's domestic resource mobilization capacity and increasing the tax-GDP ratio would be crucial for financing the SDGs. He also pointed out that the inflow of ODI in Bangladesh had increased exponentially since the adoption of SDGs which he attributed to the country's enhanced aid utilization capacity. However, he also observed that among the sources of external financing, there are scopes for increased inflow of Foreign Direct Investment in the country.

Presentation on 'Overall Progress of SDG – 17' by Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Deputy Secretary, ERD and Mr. Mohammad Kamrul Hasan Mollah, Deputy Secretary, ERD:

Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, in his presentation, informed that as per the mapping of SDGs, ERD is the coordinator of SDG 17. It was also informed that ERD is the lead for 12 targets and 12 indicators while it is also the data provider for 22 different indicators. He pointed out that SDG 17 which is themed on 'Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development' deals with five areas. These are: finance; technology; capacity building; systemic issue (Policy and Institutional Coherence); as well as data, monitoring and accountability. Later, he reflected on some of the major data sources for various indicators of SDG 17. Afterwards, he highlighted on the indicator wise progress of various targets coming under SDG 17. Noting that there is baseline data for a number of indicators, Mr. Azad said that regular consultations should take place at the working level between the lead agencies and data sources of those indicators to fulfil such gaps. He also observed that partnership development with international organizations like World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Trade Organization (WTO) and UNCTAD would be crucial to tackle Graduation related challenges and harvest the potential benefits. He also called for active participation in the international South-South platforms to gain better access to development partnership related data from the Global South. He opined that access to development partnership related data would be much easier following the integration of AIMS with FAMS.

Presentation on LDC Graduation and SDGs Achievement Nexus by Dr. Rezaul Bashar Siddique, Component Manager (Additional Secretary), SSGP, ERD



In the beginning of his presentation, Dr. Rezaul Bashar Siddique highlighted on the context of the creation of the LDC category. Later, he explained, in detail, the process of LDC graduation. He also reflected on Bangladesh's LDC graduation journey and the way forward. Subsequently, he focused on the challenges that might be created by the country's upcoming graduation from the LDC status. He also highlighted the measures that had been taken by the government to overcome those challenges.

Dr. Siddique, in his presentation, highlighted the complementarity between various SDG goals, indicators and various LDC graduation criteria. Highlighting on the focus areas of DPoA—he also presented the complementarity between those focus areas and SDGs. He explained how SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 7, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 10, SDG 13 and SDG 17 are interlinked, relevant and applicable for LDCs.

In conclusion, Dr. Siddique said that an innovative and improved policy approach and persuasion of a knowledge-based productivity-driven economy would help the LDCs like Bangladesh to graduate with momentum and implement SDGs by 2030. In this context, he observed that improved domestic policy choices and international support within a reinvigorated multilateral system are critical for achieving those targets. However, he put emphasis on better understanding of likely impacts of graduation with sufficient data and analysis, good preparation, and proactive engagement with development actors.

Open Discussion:

At this stage, the floor was opened for comments and feedback from participants. During this session, the following major feedback and recommendations came from them.

- Overseas financial and technical assistance might be sought for SDG related capacity development at the grassroot level.
- Innovative measures should be taken to increase the inflow of FDI and overseas remittance.
- Recent years have witnessed a notable increase in madrasah enrolment due to the lower cost of madrasah education. However, a certain degree of uniformity should be maintained in the educational curriculum to ensure quality across the system.
- The United Nations have recently adopted Multidimensional Vulnerability Index to measure structural vulnerability and the lack of structural resilience across multiple dimensions of sustainable development at the national level. Bangladesh may analyse this concept to evaluate how it can continue to access LDC related benefits in the aftermath of graduation.
- The capacity of NBR should be enhanced to generate more revenue from direct taxes and to bring more people under the tax net.



- Dedicated training and capacity building programs should be carried out for the government officials to develop a resource pool to effectively negotiate climate financing issues at the international level.
- Bangladesh should carry out a voluntary country assessment on SDGs to effectively analyse its progress in various goals and targets and to prioritize accordingly.
- Thorough assessment should be carried out to identify and analyse the root cause of the growing income inequality.
- It is notable that the recent years have seen an upward trend in terms of violence against women and girls. Measures should be taken to identify the associated causes to eradicate this phenomenon.
- Knowledge and capacity enhancement of the desk level officials involved with the SDG related data collection and processing is essential to address the prevalent data gap.
- Increased sensitization is required at the grassroots level regarding the actions required for achieving various SDG related indicators.
- Rise in income inequality is partly driven by inadequate wage level in some particular professional fields. Concerned ministries should work in cohesion to address this issue.
- An assessment should be carried out to evaluate the return on investment made by the country for the attainment of SDGs.
- Most of the technical assistance provided by the OECD should be treated as Aid for Trade. An assessment should be carried out to analyse whether there is any disparity in the technical assistance provided for the capacity enhancement of the LDCs.
- A comprehensive study should be carried out to assess the impacts of the potential increase in the price of medicines in the aftermath of LDC graduation.

Responding to the above feedbacks, Mr. Mohd. Monirul Islam said that despite the impacts of 3Cs (Covid, Climate Change and Conflicts) at the global level, Bangladesh's progress in attaining SDGs over the last five years had been better than the most. He also informed that Bangladesh would participate in the next round of Voluntary National Review scheduled to be held in the year 2025. He also affirmed that a participatory approach would be followed in preparing this VNR report. Citing the example of other countries like Malaysia, he also observed that a slight rise in Gini co-efficient at this stage of development is quite usual for a country. He also emphasized on increased access to technology to reduce the income inequality. He also affirmed that Bangladesh should set its SDG priorities based on its own assessments.

Speech by the Chief Guest: Ms. Waseqa Ayesha Khan, MP, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Finance



Ms. Waseqa Ayesha Khan, in her speech, put emphasis on effective integration of SDGs with other major national plans of the country including Perspective Plan, Delta Plan, Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan and Integrated Energy Masterplan. She also said that the national progress in SDGs should be quarterly monitored and assessed. Noting that there are some ambiguities in many SDG goals and targets, the State Minister said that the country needs to contextualise and customize these goals according to its own needs. She also observed that the reduction of inequalities would be the lynchpin for successful attainment of all other SDG goals. She also said that Bangladesh would be successful in ensuring an equitable development thanks to the prudent government policies as well as the resilience and adaptability of its people. Noting that Bangladesh should make the best use of its demographic dividend, she said that the country needs to bank on the younger generation of the country through motivation, guidance, and performance evaluation. She also emphasized on qualitative assessment of the progress made in the attainment of SDGs.

The Chief Guest, in her remarks, also stressed on effective utilization of overseas development assistance. She said that the country needs to reduce anti-export bias while safeguarding the interest of the domestic industries. She observed that the existing tax exemption provisions should be reviewed and rationalized with a view to increase the country's tax-GDP ratio. She also opined that digitization could play a crucial role in increasing the revenue generation capacity. She also affirmed that strict legal measures should be taken against the acts of tax evasion. She also observed that the dependence on customs revenue should be decreased to enter into Free Trade Agreements with various trading partners. Lastly, she said that country should focus on its strengths and niche areas to utilize its untapped potentials.

Closing by the Chair: Mr. Md. Shahriar Kader Siddiky, Secretary, Economic Relations Division

The Chair, in his speech, put emphasis on the regular and continuous monitoring of SDG progress. He observed that the SDGs Implementation and Review Committee should meet more frequently. Noting that countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia have made rapid progress in attaining SDGs in recent years, the ERD Secretary, in his remarks, said that Bangladesh should try to catch up with those countries. Noting that initiatives have been taken to bring about structural changes in the government's revenue mobilization efforts, he also informed that a new legislation will soon be passed to accept self-declaration of export and import. He informed that such measure would usher a new chapter in the country's tax regime which would benefit numerous stakeholders.

Noting that Bangladesh has huge potentials in the field of blue economy, Mr. Siddiky called for utilizing the country's untapped potentials in this regard through effective planning and



engaging adequate human resource. Pointing out that development partners are eager to support Bangladesh in its development process, he emphasized on effective negotiation with the DPs and prudent utilization of overseas development funds. He informed that an initiative had been taken recently with support from UNDP and FCDO to provide training on climate financing to officials from relevant ministries. The ERD Secretary identified trustworthiness as a major component of good governance. He also called for initiating structural changes in governance from the grassroots level. He affirmed that it is quite usual for a country to experience slight increase in its income inequality during some certain phases of economic transformation. He also informed that measures had been taken by the government to carry out necessary reforms in the revenue structure, salary structure and incentive structure to address the growing inequality. He also recalled that ERD is carrying out field level workshops for capacity building and sensitization at the grassroots level.

The ERD Secretary also observed that there would be a need for change in mindset for diverting a greater portion of the youth population to technical and vocational education. he also said that a comparative analysis should be carried out in this regard to identify the lessons that can be learnt from other countries. He also opined that there is a need for some policy adjustments in the renewable energy sector to enable its greater integration with the on grid system through power purchasing or sharing. He also hoped that the feedback and recommendations coming from the event would provide valuable inputs into the relevant policy formulation. Lastly, he concluded the event by thanking all the participants.

Major Recommendations:

The workshop came up with the following major recommendations:

- Effective coordination is required between the implementation of SDGs and other major national plans of the country including Perspective Plan, Delta Plan, Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan and Integrated Energy Masterplan.
- National progress in SDGs should be quarterly monitored and assessed. The SDGs Implementation and Review Committee should meet more frequently.
- Bangladesh should contextualise and customize these goals as per to its own needs.
- There should be a mechanism for qualitative assessment of the progress made in the attainment of SDGs.
- Bangladesh needs to reduce anti-export bias while safeguarding the interest of the domestic industries.
- The existing tax exemption provisions should be reviewed and rationalized with a view to increase the country's tax-GDP ratio.
- Digitization can play a crucial role in increasing the revenue generation capacity.
- Strict legal measures should be taken against the acts of tax evasion.



- The dependence on customs revenue should be decreased to enter into Free Trade Agreements with various trading partners.
- Bangladesh has huge untapped potentials in the area of Blue Economy which can be utilized through effective planning and engaging adequate human resource.
- Development partners are eager to support Bangladesh in its development process. However, effective negotiation with the DPs and prudent utilization of overseas development funds would be of utmost importance.
- There would be a need for change in mindset for diverting a greater portion of the youth population to technical and vocational education. A comparative analysis should be carried out in this regard to identify the lessons that can be learnt from other countries.
- Policy adjustments should be carried out in the renewable energy sector to enable its greater integration with the on grid system through power purchasing or sharing.
- Regular consultations should take place at the working level between the lead agencies and data sources of those indicators to fulfil the prevalent data gaps for various indicators of SDG 17.
- Active participation in the international South-South platforms can help Bangladesh in gaining better access to development partnership related data from the Global South.
- Access to development partnership related data would be much easier following the integration of AIMS with FAMS.
- Overseas financial and technical assistance might be sought for SDG related capacity development at the grassroot level.
- Innovative measures should be taken to increase the inflow of FDI and overseas remittance.
- Recent years have witnessed a notable increase in madrasah enrolment due to the lower cost of madrasah education. However, a certain degree of uniformity should be maintained in the educational curriculum to ensure quality across the system.
- The United Nations have recently adopted Multidimensional Vulnerability Index to measure structural vulnerability and the lack of structural resilience across multiple dimensions of sustainable development at the national level. Bangladesh may analyse this concept to evaluate how it can continue to access LDC related benefits in the aftermath of graduation.
- The capacity of NBR should be enhanced to generate more revenue from direct taxes and to bring more people under the tax net.
- Dedicated training and capacity building programs should be carried out for the government officials to develop a resource pool to effectively negotiate climate financing issues at the international level.



- Bangladesh should carry out a voluntary country assessment on SDGs to effectively analyse its progress in various goals and targets and to prioritize accordingly.
- Thorough assessment should be carried out to identify and analyse the root cause of the growing income inequality.
- It is notable that the recent years have seen an upward trend in terms of violence against women and girls. Measures should be taken to identify the associated causes to eradicate this phenomenon.
- Knowledge and capacity enhancement of the desk level officials involved with the SDG related data collection and processing is essential to address the prevalent data gap.
- Increased sensitization is required at the grassroots level regarding the actions required for achieving various SDG related indicators.
- Rise in income inequality is partly driven by inadequate wage level in some particular professional fields. Concerned ministries should work in cohesion to address this issue.
- An assessment should be carried out to evaluate the return on investment made by the country for the attainment of SDGs.
- Most of the technical assistance provided by the OECD should be treated as Aid for Trade. An assessment should be carried out to analyse whether there is any disparity in the technical assistance provided for the capacity enhancement of the LDCs.
- A comprehensive study should be carried out to assess the impacts of the potential increase in the price of medicines in the aftermath of LDC graduation.

