

Scenario of Development Planning in Bangladesh Focusing on Sustainable Development Goals

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ABSTRACT

Planning and Development are interrelated. In a sense, one cannot be separated from the other. Planning is used as a tool to influence decisions about development priorities & resource allocation either for a country, a region, a province or an organization. More than last 60 years, development planning has transformed. Central planning and market-oriented planning is the character of most developing countries. Early development planning was led by the Soviet Union, which was the only country engaged in systematic development planning prior to World War II. Today, planning is no longer an issue between centralized planning and market-based planning. Modern history has shown that neither centralized planning nor market-oriented planning alone has succeeded. In the last six decades, development planning has shifted, moving to broader, more complex, multi-disciplinary perception. The government's role today is in making a supporting atmosphere for market to work and correct market failures. As an independent country Bangladesh has been formulating five year plan since 1973. Since then Bangladesh has successfully formulated seven five year plan. The economy of this country has been able to maintain sustained economic growth even in the face of global financial crisis. Bangladesh was one of the forerunners in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and also she is an early starter in the implementing process of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many international organizations and countries opined on the brilliant success of Bangladesh's development. To keep these achievements the country needs good governance in all spheres of life.

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh achieved its independence on 16 December 1971. The dreams of Bangladesh was to implement our democratic rights, to be self-reliant, relieve from economic as well as social exploitation. Our liberation war carried aspiration for us in order to achieve financial steadiness and keep away poverty and deprivation. In practice we were lacking from skilled human resources, infrastructure and insufficient reserves which gave us a negative effect in our development. During that period we had nothing to fight against poverty other than the strong will of the affected people. The scope of nourishment of the country was doubtful to many. In fact the scenario of the country was very vulnerable.

Bangladesh has started her national planning process from 1973. The constitution of Bangladesh, which is considered as the supreme law of the country, was drafted by the elected representatives after one year of our great victory and emphasized on planned economic growth of the country. Article-15 of the Constitution said:

“It shall be a fundamental responsibility of the state to attain, through planned economic growth, a constant increase of productive forces and a steady improvement in the material and cultural standard of living of the people....” The following figure indicates the achievements of various five year plan of Bangladesh:

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| Specific Plan | Plan Periods (FY) | Average GDP Growth Rate | | Per Capita GDP growth | Per Capita GNI* | Life* Expectancy | Poverty Ratio*** |
|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | Plan (%) | Actual (%) | (%) | USD | Years | (%) |
| First Plan | 1973-1978 | 5.5 | 4.0 | 1.3 | 111 | 53.07 | 82.1 |
| Second Plan | 1980-1985 | 5.4 | 3.8 | 1.5 | 145 | 55.10 | 69.9 |
| Third Plan | 1985-1990 | 5.4 | 3.8 | 1.6 | 204 | 56.10 | 56.6 |
| Fourth Plan | 1990-1995 | 5.0 | 4.2 | 2.4 | 253 | 58.70 | 50.1 |
| Fifth Plan | 1997-2002 | 7.1 | 5.1 | 3.5 | 431 | 64.90 | 48.9 |
| Sixth Plan | 2011-2015 | 7.3 | 6.3 | 4.9 | 1314 | 70.70 | 24.8 |

Source: GED, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and Sixth Plan.

METHODS

This paper aims to describe the development scenario of Bangladesh focusing on sustainable development goals. It's always good to collect data from reliable sources. That's why I always depend on secondary data and information. A good number of documents related to sustainable development goals have published/printed by Planning Commission of Bangladesh during last couple of years. Stories behind the incredible advancement of Bangladesh are printed in these publications. Quite a good number of data and information have been used from these documents. Besides, a number of related journals, reports, books and periodicals are consulted during the write-up of this paper. So, depending on secondary materials and data I have written this paper.

NARRATIVES OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Development planning has been improving over the years bit by bit. In many developing countries there have been lots of failures in planning experiences because of over planning and of lack of planning as well (Waterston, 2006). Through this failure and retrying process developing countries have come to an improved and responsive planning stage that can be reflected by the public sector projects' designs and implementations.

Planning can broadly be categorized into two main philosophies in developing countries- centralized planning and market-oriented planning. And most countries prefer various combinations of these two methods which are called mixed economies.

Looking at the early history of development planning one can see that the Soviet Union was the only country engaged in systematic development planning before the time of WW-2. It was the result of socialism and its target was to organize an equitable society. It was the first Five years plan for the development of the national economy of the Soviet Union (USSR) conceived in 1929. Each five-year plan dealt with all aspects of development: capital goods (those used to produce other goods, like factories and machinery), consumer goods (e.g. chairs, carpets, and irons), agriculture, transportation, communications, health, education, and welfare. However, the emphasis varied from plan to plan, although generally the emphasis was on power (electricity), capital goods, and agriculture.

A centrally planned economy is a system where the state makes economic decisions rather than decisions being made by the interaction between consumers and businesses. Unlike a market economy a centrally planned economy controls what is produced and the distribution and use of resources. State-owned enterprises undertake the production of goods and services. In recent years North Korea and Cuba are the only countries which still have committed centrally planned economies. China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Mongolia have moved from this model to socialist market economies which are characterized by a mixed system where they have opened up their economies to outside investments and allowed price to influence key resource allocation decisions.

The centrally planned economy system had several criticisms. The major one was the lack of individual freedom in favor of collective good with the restraining of civil liberties. Also this system ameliorated an insufficient bureaucracy that was incompetent with growing consumer demands. These shortcomings of the system surfaced through the fall of USSR and communism in 1989. However despite the drawbacks many experts do still think the system was successful and a number of developing countries followed the system to achieve their own development goals. (Lindblom 1999)

Other examples of early development planning are the Philippines' National Economic Council in 1935 and India's National Planning Committee in 1938 formed for preparing national development plans. Later in 1950 the Colombo Plan countries made their respective 6 years development plans. Also in 1951 India drew their first five year plan. (Waterson 2006)

highly denounced mainly for being unable to cope with the real restrictions of economy, avoiding elemental choice problems of planning over time and weak connection between model and selecting real projects financed by govt fund.

In 1953 an alternative model appeared. The Feldman–Mahalanobis model is a Neo-Marxian model of economic development, created independently by Soviet economist Grigory Feldman in 1928 (Feldman, 1964) and Indian statistician Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in 1953. (Mahalanobis, 1943) Mahalanobis became essentially the key economist of India's Second Five Year Plan and this model was used as the analytical framework for india's second five year plan in 1955. (Bhagwati and Chakravarty, 1969)

1970s was the era of Southeast Asia's development planning. Indonesia initiated development planning by creating First Five Year Development Plan in 1969. Then in 1970 Malaysia's First Plan, in 1972 Burma's Twenty Year Plan (subdivided into four-year plans), in 1972 Thailand's Third Five Years Plan and in the same year Vietnam's Four-Year National Economic Plan. In 1973 Philippines established a planning agency- National Economic Development Authority. Then in 1976 Vietnam started its Second-Five Years Plan. (Daquila, 2005)

The development planning in 1970s revealed that the supply of the resources could no longer be ameliorated on the basis of market resources only. Because of the interdependence of the different sectors of the national economy needed coordination, long term programming of the national economy was required to solve problems related to production and supply. This idea was bolstered by an input-output analysis performed by Wassily Leontief. Later this analysis produced the Leontief model which was extensively used in most of the development planning. This model predicts how the changes in one industry, consumers, govt. and foreign suppliers affect on others by creating a matrix representation of a nation's economy. So this required quality data and acted as a precise mathematical programming tool.

Over the time it has been noticed that neither centralized planning nor market based planning alone could succeed. The fall of USSR economic planning led to total decentralization of planning. On the contrary the global financial crisis of 2008 resulted from the implosion of US's housing bubble showed that, an uncontrolled market system is very prone to create economic disasters. As a matter of fact China has shown its prosperity by forming centralized planning that recognizes the market. The crisis in 2008 pointed out the necessity of government control. In present times govt.'s responsibility is to work and fix market failures in making an enabling environment for markets.

SDGS AND BANGLADESH

Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in the UN's 70th General Assembly with a view to 'No one will be left behind' in the journey of development. These goals are a universal agreement to end poverty in all its dimensions and craft an equal, just, and secure world- for people, for prosperity and for planet by 2030. So, SDGs are basically an action plan which emphasizes on the core principles of peace, people, planet, prosperity and global partnership beyond boundaries. The SDGs were adopted by 193 member states in UN summit. In the global perspective, abolishing poverty including extreme poverty has been taken as a greatest challenge (The financial Express, 2018). Bangladesh achieved a remarkable success in fulfilling most of the targets (21 targets) included in 8 goals of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This success stories which were achieved ahead of time boost up Bangladesh to work with SDGs. The starting time of 7th five year plan and SDGs was the same. So Bangladesh got a chance to integrate SDGs with 7th five year plan. Bangladesh's progress in the last three years is as follows:

Goal 1: *No Poverty*

Bangladesh is on the track to eradicate extreme poverty which is considered as daily income which is 1.90\$ according to the national poverty line (NPL). The share of government yearly budget expenditure on social protection is also on the track to support SDGs. The government has adopted policies and programs to address multidimensional nature of poverty in the country.

Goal 2: *Zero Hunger*

Agriculture Orientation index (AOI) which is more than 0.5 favors Bangladesh in comparison with India (0.4) and Nepal (0.2) also as Srilanka. Besides government policies and programs have been adopted to address specific hunger and nutrition issues.

Goal 3: *Good Health and Well-Being*

Child related indicators like mortality rate of under-5, neo-natal mortality rate have already crossed the milestone which was set keeping an eye on 2020. Women related indicators like maternal mortality ratio, number of medically –trained provider during birth, proportion of currently married women who use modern contraceptive methods are very close to reach their target.

Goal 4: *Quality Education*

In primary and secondary education, gender parity index (GPI) crosses 1.0 and this index holds this value for the last couple of years which is the highest ranking among south Asian countries. The government has continued to implement policies and programs to increase access to education and training, improve quality and relevance of education, reduce inequality in education and leverage on knowledge and skills in science, technology and innovation. Enrollment in primary education should be given high importance.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

The proportion of female members in parliament has increased about 21% keeping an eye to women empowerment. Women above 15 are facing different kinds of violence by their near ones. Bangladesh ranks 48 in global ranking of countries with a score of 0.721 in promoting women empowerment compared to South Asian neighbor's.

Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Now 87% of total population of Bangladesh has access to safe water resources (target 6.1) and 61% of population has access to safe sanitation (target 6.2). Analyzing the track record it can be said that it is possible to reach the target within 2030.

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

More than 90% population is now getting access to electricity and within 2025 the target is 100%. Use of renewable energy is the priority of the government. Energy efficiency has to be improved.

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Bangladesh has made a growth rate more than 7 percent for the last three years. Diversification of economy and increasing FDI is necessary to keep this progress. The country is on its track to achieve 2020 targets.

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Contribution of manufacturing sector in GDP is increasing. About 100% population is now under coverage of mobile network. The government is providing policy support to private sector investment and fostering public-private partnership in this regard.

Goal 10: Reduced inequalities

Government is working on reducing inequality so that the result of GDP growth can have the impact on the nation as a whole. But the result is not up to the mark yet. According to the HIES, 2016 data income inequality has increased while consumption inequality has remained relatively stable. As government is aware of this that's why government has been following a pro-poor development strategy which combines acceleration of economic growth and reduction of poverty and inequality.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

As a result of natural disaster like cyclones, droughts, river erosion, cold waves, flash floods etc a number cities of Bangladesh is vulnerable. Consequently, Bangladesh has made significant efforts to reduce its disaster vulnerability and is considered today a global leader in coastal resilience due to its significant long term investments in protecting lives. In spite of that the country should take sufficient measures to address climate change and earthquake.

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Waste management system in Bangladesh is still not well organized. A small proportion of solid waste is recycled into compost. The amount of GHG emission from urban solid waste was estimated at 2.19 million CO₂ emissions per year in 2005.

Goal 13: Climate Action

In the context of climate change, Bangladesh is well prepared with a number of climate change related strategies, plans and actions. Through Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF), the country has spent around Tk. 27 billion over last eight years for climate change adaptation.

Goal 14: *Life below Water*

Because of the vast marine territory Bangladesh can get the chance to take full advantage of blue economy. Gas exploration in the deep sea is a government priority. Neighboring countries have already taken necessary steps for deep sea exploration to find natural gas reserve. Management of these resources is a big challenge for Bangladesh. To address these challenges government has established separate organizations like Blue Economy Cell (BEC) and Bangladesh Oceanographic Research Institute (BORI).

Goal 15: *Life on Land*

Forest coverage is now only 17.5% which is targeted to increase 20% by 2020. Increasing tree density is a major target in 7th five year plan. Steps like declaring environmental Conservation Act, creating special bio-diversity zone etc have taken to protect bio-diversity.

Goal 16: *Peace, Justice and strong Institutions*

Appropriate measures undertaken by the government of Bangladesh contributed significantly to improving human trafficking and youth mental and physical abuse. Governance related initiatives like National Integrity Strategy (NIS), Citizen Charter, Grievance Redress System (GRS), and Annual Performance Agreement (APA) have been implementing by the government.

Goal 17: *Partnerships for the Goals*

Bangladesh is on the track to reach the milestones set for 2020. Expansion of fiber optics cable network, increase in optical fiber capacity etc, have been contributing towards achieving the SDG target. If the current average annual performance rate continues in the following years the target for 2030 will be achieved quite easily.

A FEW ACHIEVEMENTS TO THE PATH OF DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY

Four decades ago Bangladesh was a lower income country. Due to consistent economic development, Bangladesh has achieved the status of a lower middle income country. So the list of our successes is significant and we feel proud of these achievements. Bangladesh economy stands on agriculture sector, ready-made garments industry and remittance. Bangladesh produced 3.4 crore tones rice in 2014 in spite of decreasing our cultivable land. In 1970, about 70 percent people were under poverty level. Today it has come down to 25 percent (Khan, 2017). Today we have no 'Monga'. It has disappeared from North-Bengal. Besides women are taking part in agricultural activities along with men. This is why we recognize the valuable contribution of farmers and also those scientists who developed High Yielding Varieties (HYV) for us.

To the new journey of Bangladesh economy, readymade garments (RMG) industry contributed a lot. Once it was difficult to predict that garments sector will be main driving force of our economy and become 78% of export earners. Most of them came from rural area and producing high quality garments. Remittance is another potential area of our economy. Our people are spreading all over the globe even women are going to abroad to work and sending remittance. As a result our economy is blooming and standing in sustainable manner. Bangladesh has witnessed lots of success in health and education sector. Bangladesh has achieved majority of MDG goals particularly infant mortality rate. Besides our life span has increased due to improvement of quality of life and accessibility to health services.

INITIATIVES TAKEN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDGS

Implementation period of sustainable development goals was first introduced in January 1, 2016. Almost four years have passed since then. For the development of Bangladesh and to meet the target of vision 2021 and 2041 it can be considered as a conversion path for the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. The target of the SDGs is to ensure inclusive development so that mass people can be benefited from the impact of SDGs. In 2009, Bangladesh started the preparation of National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS). Later NSDS was modified according to the six five years plan and also with the perspective plan (2010-2021). “Ensure sustained economic growth, environmental protection and social justice which imply improvement of livelihood options of the people, reduction of poverty; ensuring wise use of natural resources, good governance and people’s participation.” (Department of environment, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bangladesh, 2008). NSDS has identified five strategic priority areas along with three cross cutting areas to obtain the set vision. The cross cutting areas are Governance, Human Resource Development and Management & Gender. The strategic priority areas include sustained economic growth. The vision of NSDS is to make Bangladesh happy & prosperous which will be free from any kind of poverty, inequality, illiteracy and corruptions in all its forms.

Bangladesh has already signed specific jobs to individual ministries, divisions and other sub-ordinate offices to meet the targets of SDGs. This task is expected to reduce the redundancy of efforts, improve synergy and facilitate implementation of action plan. In implementation of SDGs, data insufficiency has become a major challenge for the government. We have data of only 70 indicators among 232, which were indicated by the UN to examine the progress of SDGs (The financial express, 2019). General economic division (GED) of Bangladesh published a document on “Data gap analysis for sustainable development goals (SDGs): Bangladesh perspective” published in January, 2017 was the first initiative to analyze the data availability and to monitor and assess the achievement of the targets of SDGs. GED of planning commission published another document titled “Voluntary National Review”(VNR) in June, 2017. Bangladesh is one of the 44 countries that has formally presented VNR on the progress of SDGs implementation at the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF). General economic division has also done the need assessment of SDGs and financial strategy to prove a full scale study of estimation required to achieve the SDGs in Bangladesh in June 2017. According to that strategy, Bangladesh integrated the agenda 2030 in our 7th five year plan. This is a great opportunity for us to implement agenda 2030 in the 7th five year plan. Finally, with the broader participation of non-government organizations (NGOs), development partners, private sector, media and civil societies (CSOs). GED has generated the national action plan for the SDG implementation in June, 2018. The initiatives mentioned above will definitely help Bangladesh in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The definition of development expanded with the concretization of the concept of sustainable development in the 1980s. Now the country is firmly progressing towards strong socio-economic development. At the moment, country needs good governance to continue the progress which will facilitate sustainability of development. Bangladesh is no more a ‘bottomless basket’ nor a ‘Test case of Development’ rather it is a role model of development. According to World Bank, Bangladesh has all the potentials to become a middle income country by 2021.

One of the main challenges in achieving SDGs is vast improvement in implementation of projects and programs. Delays in project implementation have injurious impact on cost as well as intended benefits. Formulation of National Integrity Strategies and its widespread implementation throughout the country will definitely play a positive role in reducing corruption and malpractices from the society. A strong political will is also necessary to reduce corruption from the country. We live with hopes and aspiration. Bangladesh was one of the forerunners of MDGs implementation. Many targets were achieved ahead of time and some others were achieved within the 2015 deadline. Bangladesh is an early starter in the implementation process of the SDGs also. The Government has been following “whole of society” approach in carrying out the task of SDGs implementation by involving various stakeholders. So, it is expected that Bangladesh would be able to achieve SDGs target before the deadline.

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