

Towards Zero Hunger: Strategies on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goal in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The UN promulgated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 after completion of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs: 2000 - 2015). However, the achievements have been uneven. The Sustainable Development Goals (2015 - 2030) started its journey based on the proposed documents of the UN General Assembly Open Working Group (July 2014). In a very shortest form they include ending extreme poverty and hunger, improving health and education, reducing inequality and injustice, and fixing climate change focusing on 17 goals and 169 associated targets. The aim of the SDG2 is to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030”. The SDG 2 has 8 targets including 3 means of implementation and 13 indicators. Progress on achievement of each target is to be measured in terms of indicators set against each target. Though Bangladesh registered remarkable progresses in achieving the MDGs, the attainments of a few targets such as existence of poverty pockets, prevalence of unemployment and underemployment among the youth, stunting and wasting among the under five children are associated with several challenges. Already, Bangladesh has integrated the goals in its National Development Planning Frameworks, including the Bangladesh Vision 2040, the 7th Five Year Plan (NDPII) 2015/16-2019/20, and a number of Sector Development Plans (SDPs). The objective of the study is to analyze the strategies of SDG2 achievements and critically judge the challenges ahead in implementing the same under Bangladesh perspective. Methodologies applied in preparing this paper includes desk study of relevant literature, articles, essays, conference proceedings and the like materials available in published form in books, peer reviewed materials, journals, magazines, newspapers, printing and electronic media and blogs besides synthesis from own research works.

Keywords: Agriculture; Goals; Hunger; Indicators; Malnutrition; MDG; Poverty; SDG; Targets

Introduction

“Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” [1]. In other words, sustainable development is the conservation of nature and its resources so that the future generations enjoy the advantages of nature as much as the posterity. Hunger defined as a feeling to eat. A person may be in forced hunger caused by lack of food. This sort of hunger exists in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the world. Achieving all aspects of the Sustainable Development Goal 2 (food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture) would help end this hunger largely. Zero Hunger is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals aim to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030, making sure all people-especially children and the more vulnerable-have access to sufficient and

nutritious food all year round. Central and East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean have all made huge progress in eradicating extreme hunger. Unfortunately, extreme hunger and malnutrition remains a huge barrier to development in many countries. 795 million people are estimated to be chronically undernourished as of 2014, often as a direct consequence of environmental degradation, drought and loss of biodiversity. Over 90 million children under the age of five are dangerously underweight. And one person in every four still goes hungry in Africa [2]. “Under nutrition already costs Bangladesh more than 1 billion dollar in lost productivity every year and even more in health costs” [3]. Osmani observed that “No country can expect to build a thriving economy on the back of hungry and undernourished people [4]. The report found that an alarmingly large number of people will remain food insecure and hungry—a quarter of the population, or 40 million people—and most people do not have a sufficiently nutritious and diverse diet in Bangladesh. More than 1 in 3 children are still afflicted by stunted growth, and acute malnutrition has not decreased significantly over many years. On the top of this, there are emerging concerns with food security and nutrition as a result of socioeconomic and climate change. Bangladesh envisions ending hunger by 2024 and tackle malnutrition definitely by 2030.

Global leaders adopted a set of new development goals on January 01, 2016 in a historic UN Summit to be achieved by 2030. The UN General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 25 September 2015 at its 70th session with the Title “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The powerful message is: No one should be left behind. The indicators have been finalized by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016.

Bangladesh attained significant success in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set in September 2000 by leaders of 189 countries gathered at the United Nations Headquarters. They signed the historic Millennium Declaration in which they committed to achieving a set of eight measurable goals that range from halving the extreme poverty and hunger to promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality, by the target date of 2015. Bangladesh has been able to reduce poverty from 31.5 percent in 1991-92 to 24.8 percent in 2015 [5]. Similarly, Bangladesh achievements in universal primary education, reducing child mortality, promoting gender equality and women empowerment was outstanding globally.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the paper is to review and analyze various aspects of sustainable development goal 2 which refers to end hunger by 2030. The other objectives include, but not limited to the study of SDG 2 to recommend appropriate strategies for achieving the targets of the goal under Bangladesh context.

Methods

Methodologies applied in developing this paper includes desk study of relevant literature, articles, essays, conference proceedings and the like materials available in published form in books, peer reviewed materials, journals, magazines, newspapers, printing and electronic media and blogs besides synthesis from own research works.

Results and Discussion

The sustainable development goals

All of the 17 goals of SDGs (Table 1) are interrelated and very much linked with each other's. For example, no hunger can be achieved without elimination of zero poverty. Similarly, we can say that when zero poverty is achieved there would be no hungry people in the society. Bangladesh is considered as a star performer of MDGs. Drawing strength from this achievement Bangladesh is on right track on access to improved drinking water, sanitary latrines, and use of digital media. Attainment of the SDGs would require a strong and effective institutional mechanism involving all stakeholders including public representatives across the country, government and the bureaucracy, educational institutions, private sector, civil society, knowledge community and development partners. This involves promoting sustainable agricultural practices: improving the livelihoods and capacities of small scale farmers, allowing equal access to land, technology

and markets. It also requires international cooperation to ensure investment in infrastructure and technology to improve agricultural productivity. Together with the other goals set out here, we can end hunger by 2030. An integrated approach is very crucial in achieving desired targets across the multiple goals.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as proposed by the OWG	
Goal 1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all
Goal 5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all
Goal 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all
Goal 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
Goal 10	Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Table 1: SDG goals at a glance annexure.

Source: *Setting Priorities for Data Support to 7th FYP and SDGs: An Overview. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). Statistics and Information Division (SID). Ministry of Planning. April 2016. pp: 19-21 [9].*

Sustainable development goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

The Sustainable Development Goal 2 has eight Targets including three Means of Implementation (MoI) and 13 Indicators (Annex Table 2). The aim of the SDG2 is to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030”. The targets of the SDG 2 in brief are: by 2030, (2.1) end hunger and ensure access by all people, (2.2) end all forms of malnutrition, (2.3) double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, (2.4) ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, (2.5) maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species. The brief action plans include: (2.a) increase investment in all areas (2.b) correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets and (2.c) adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets. Progress on achievement of each target will be measured in terms of indicators set against each target. For example, the indicator of achievement for target 2.1 is: prevalence of undernourishment.

Sl. No.	Goals	Target
02	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year around
		2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons
		2.3 Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular, women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment
		2.4 Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthens capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality
		2.5 By 2020, maintain the generic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internally agreed
		2.a Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension service, technology developments and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive in developing countries, in particular least developed countries
		2.b Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of Doha Development Round
		2.c Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility

Table 2: Sustainable development goals (SDGs) and targets.

Source: [9] pp: 19-21.

Strategies for achieving the SDG2 in Bangladesh

The SDG2 has alignment with Development Result Framework (DRF) for Monitoring 7th FYP (BBS 2016) [9]. Three national priority areas such as (1) Macroeconomics mobility of economics growth (2) poverty reduction and (3) Agriculture are related to the implementation of SDG2. The real GDP growth has been projected at 7.4, 7.6 and 8.0 for 2018, 2019 and 2020 respectively (from 7.2 percent in 2017). In line with SDGs implementation; target for Agriculture GDP growth rate has been set at 19.3, 18.0 and 16.6 percent respectively (from 20.7 percent in 2017). Agriculture sector will continue to provide largest employment as a single sector compared to industry and service sector. Employed persons (aged are 15 years) for 2018, 2019 and 2020 has been projected at 43.4, 42.1 and 40.8 percent respectively (from 44.2 percent in 2017). Achieving zero hunger entails doubling of agricultural productivity by 2030. Keeping in view the reality of Bangladesh agriculture, the agriculture sector GDP growth rate for (a) Crop and horticulture for 2018, 2019 and 2020 has been projected at 1.42, 1.41 and 1.40 percent respectively. The GDP growth rate for (b) Animal farming and (c) Forest and related services have been projected at 5.48, 5.68, 5.91 percent and 5.02, 5.17, 5.33 percent respectively over the same years.

Bangladesh has set targets to bring down poverty to 13.5 percent in the population by 2021 and also achieve universal literacy by the end of this decade. These are ambitious targets will require not only political will and resources but also public private partnership and corporate social responsibility. Bangladesh has already become a low middle income country. This vision has already been translated and pronounced at the highest political level. An actionable agenda has been formulated which is known as Perspective Plan (2010 - 2021). Two Five Year Plans (FYPs) are associated with this. Bangladesh integrated the 2030 agenda in the 7th FYP (2016 - 2020). This has offered a tremendous opportunity to implement the 2030 agenda, while reflecting the priorities of the SDGs in the national plan. SDG 2 has been incorporated in this FYP under Agriculture Sector.

The Government has adopted “Whole of Society” approach to ensure wider participation of NGOs, development partners, private sector, media and CSOs in the process of formulation of the Action Plan and implementation of the SDGs. To spearhead the process, ‘SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Committee’ has been formed at the Prime Minister’s Office to facilitate and implementation of SDGs Action Plan.

Law to ensure food for all

Government of Bangladesh is going to enact a law to “Ensure Food for All”. This law will be known as “Food Safety Law-2018”. The draft law has provisions for production, reservation, import, export, nutritional values, food supply and stability of food prices [6].

Analysis

Contemporary researches and experience of Bangladesh suggest that in Goal 2, ‘End hunger’ is attainable by way of achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) is a synergic outcome of Goal 2. The two goals together is thus, undoubtedly a good positioning by the UN in the list of all the sustainable development goals. Both the goals are achievable in Bangladesh comfortably and sustainably on the country’s own accord. However, some fundamental questions in this context could be raised in terms of the prevalent reality in Bangladesh. Some author [7] suggests that full alleviation of poverty (Goal 1) in Bangladesh is neither possible nor desirable. Likewise, ‘poverty’ and ‘hunger’ that go hand and exist in synergistic relationships. He stressed that “End hunger” of Goal 2 is also never fully achievable. Bangladesh is lagging behind many countries, including other nations in South Asia, in a progress report on UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs. Bangladesh scored a rank of 120 out of 157 countries in the SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017 [8] by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Its overall performance on the index was 56.2, lower than the regional average score of 63.3. Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka all scored higher than Bangladesh on the index, while Pakistan and Afghanistan scored lower [4]. However, Bangladesh has set wide institutional net works to integrate people from all walks of life to actively participate in implementation of SDGs.

Now it is almost three years gone to set targets, outputs, outcomes etc. tools to measure the achievements of SDGs. Like other 193 nations Bangladesh is also working out to adopt SDG focused policies, actions planes etc. Government, non-government, autonomous, NGO operated, local and foreign all the educational institute should get maximum budgetary, policy, instrumental support of the government to ensure end poverty. At the same time industrialization, innovation and infrastructure development should get maximum priority of the government for next 10 years to accelerate growth. Thus Bangladesh could start its journey towards the achievement of SDGs by 2030 and ensure its optimum result.

Means of implementation

- Mapping of Ministries: Bangladesh has clearly identified the responsibilities of the ministries and agencies to achieve the SDGs. Bangladesh have mapped out lead, co-lead and associate ministries against each target of SDGs. The mapping exercise is expected to reduce duplication of efforts, enhance synergy and help formulate action plan.

- **Data gap analysis:** Bangladesh planning commission conducted a review of various means of data generation in the country. It reveals that Bangladesh has data for 70 indicators and partially available data for 108 indicators but need to devise new mechanism for data mining for the remaining 63 indicators.
- **National monitoring and evaluation framework:** On the basis of the findings of SDGs Data Gap Analysis, the SDG Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is being prepared by the Ministry. The framework will have a macro level web based data repository system to facilitate data collection, analysis, progress, tracking and reporting.
- **Action Plan to achieve SDGs:** The Government has prepared an action plan for implementation of the SDGs in alignment with the 7th FYP [9].
- **Respective ministries are working towards translating the particular targets into actionable projects/programs/activities in this regard.**
- **Needs Assessment and Financing Strategy:** GED has prepared “SDGs Needs Assessment and Financing Strategy” for Bangladesh to estimate the resources needed for achieving in Bangladesh by 2030.
- **Assimilation of SDGs targets in Performance Agreement:** Bangladesh has introduced Annual Performance Agreement (APA), a results-based performance management system, across the whole spectrum of public sector assessing individual and ministries/agencies performance.

Challenges ahead

The key challenge of Bangladesh for implementing the SDGs is:

1. Integration in the national planning process
2. Financial and non-financial resources
3. Institutional mechanism for implementation
4. Data for monitoring
5. Participation and accountability

Conclusion

SDGs demand concerted and collective efforts with strong political commitment at all levels. The 2030 Agenda comes at a time when Bangladesh has already kicked off its journey towards an upper middle income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2041. Bangladesh has incorporated priorities of SDGs in all her development policies. The government has adopted an inclusive approach to development so that the poorest and the most vulnerable section of the country can be integrated into its national development efforts. As the country moves ahead, challenges in several areas including resources mobilization and data management will have to be addressed. Bangladesh is confident to set the example of a leading SDGs achiever. The problem of ending hunger in terms of food insecurity and malnutrition is inherently multidimensional.

Recommendations

To achieve zero hunger by 2030, the following broad based strategies may be adopted by the stakeholders involved with SDG implementation.

1. Promote a sustainable, diversified and nutrition based agriculture sector
2. Introduce environment friendly advanced technologies (such as nanotechnology) in food production, processing, packaging and delivery
3. Promote “women in agriculture” to ensure sustainable food security and nutrition
4. Introduce more nutrition-sensitive Public Food Distribution System (PFDS) that no one is left behind
5. Enact Law on Food for All
6. Undertake nutrition-specific interventions to prevent acute malnutrition (wasting)
7. Ensure good governance in every step to promote GDP growth rate and employment.

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