

## **Attaining Sustainable Development: Bangladesh's Progress in SDG Localization**

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### ***Abstract***

*Bangladesh has realised the importance of localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Without incorporating the concerned people in planning and implementing through localisation, the SDGs remains unattained. Localisation of the SDGs means defining the scopes, planning out strategies for actions and implementing the SDGs at the local level. The objective of the study is to explore Bangladesh's approach for and progress in attaining sustainable development indicating challenges. The study has followed integrative literature review as a method as it offers insights from different literature and data sets to draw a logical conclusion by assessing outcomes. In Bangladesh, government has taken initiatives for localisation. The country has chalked out a framework for localisation and included localisation components in annual and five-year plans at the national and the sub-national level. It has boarded on a course of localisation of 12 SDGs signifying 40 (39 national plus 1 local) priority indicators. Further efforts include extensive awareness campaigns, the development of action plans at the local level, formation of coordination committees at LGIs, and the organization of workshops at different levels. Bangladesh's approach to enable local government bodies like divisions, district councils, and Upazila Parishads to implement effective methods and allocate resources to achieve targets of SDGs have seen progress over the years but requires more decentralization in terms of authority and resources. However, challenges like resource mobilisation, inadequate skills, weak participatory culture, lack of political commitment, insufficient collaboration, and unfavourable legal framework impede smooth localisation of SDGs. Therefore, the government must empower the local government with qualified personnel along with the development of analytical frameworks to implement SDGs.*

**Key words:** SDGs, Localisation, Bangladesh, SDG achievement, NGOs

### **Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged from a worldwide aspiration to create a more favourable global environment, officially embraced by the United Nations in 2015. This framework encompasses 17

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distinct goals along with 169 specific targets. Notably, the SDGs represent an enhanced version of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which primarily followed a top-down approach. In contrast, the implementation and successful realization of the SDGs promote a bottom-up strategy, acknowledging the capabilities of local and regional governments. This approach aims to harness the strengths of these entities to ensure the effective attainment of SDG targets. It is so because global institutions, supranational organizations, regional and national governments with their abundant resources, extensive capacities, and formal authority, face significant challenges in effecting meaningful change independently due to their limited ability to connect with, rally, and involve citizens and local stakeholders. Likewise, achieving substantial progress toward SDGs cannot be solely dictated from the top-down (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2022).

The importance of localization of the SDGs have been upscaled on the success and lessons of the outcomes of the MDGs. To plan and execute at the local level involving local government institutions (LGIs) and other closely related organizations, developing, and implementing localization framework is important. In Bangladesh, the implementation of SDGs has seen success to some extent thanks to the strong, resilient, and resourceful people of Bangladesh, tackling challenges like poverty, education, and public health and more. However, climate change, global warming, coastal cyclones and floods, corruption, shortcomings of local governance, institutional lacking, gender discriminations, rising inequality and recent devastating effects of Covid-19 pandemic and Ukraine War have significantly affected the otherwise steady progress on achieving SDG targets.

Bangladesh's approach to enable local government bodies like district councils, Upazila Parishads (UZPs) and Union Parishads to implement effective methods and allocate resources to achieve targets of SDGs have seen progress over the years but requires more decentralization. The 8th Five Year Plan of Bangladesh elaborates on recovering from Covid-19, focusing on GDP growth, mitigating the effects of climate change, and building on the progress of the 7FYP to attain the SDGs. While the action plan to achieve SDGs has been properly distributed to different institutions in an effective manner, Bangladesh struggles to recover from the huge economic impact of the Ukraine-Russian fight on the economy and the rising price of commodities. A lot of new people have been driven into poverty and most of them are in the rural areas and the recovery of the country depends a lot on the local government (Hossain, 2020). Within this context it will be interesting to see efforts of Bangladeshi actors to implement localisation of SDGs. In this respect, the answers to the following questions will give an insight to Bangladesh's efforts to SDG localisation and bridge that gap in literature on such crucial issue. what

approach Bangladesh has adopted to localise SDGs? What were the achievements of Bangladesh across the all 17 goals of the global goals? and what are challenges which posing threats to localisation of SDGs in Bangladesh?.

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter is based on the secondary data gathered from related literature: articles, books, newspapers, websites, and other relevant sources. Review of literature was used as a method because there were ample opportunities to draw a logical conclusion based on existing literature on SDG localisation in Bangladesh though few in numbers. Moreover, the integrative data helped to gain insights through assessing localisation process and achievement so far. The existing literature on SDGs localisation and implementation narratives and documents on national action plan, current progress and challenges, impact of covid-19 and Ukraine war were studied and reviewed to gain data for a better understanding of the information gathered and synthesized to establish an analysis.

### **SDGs in Brief**

SDGs is well branded as Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations in 2015 with a resolution to ensure world peace, resolve global hunger and eradicate poverty by 2030. This was a call to action agreed upon by all the UN member countries and stakeholders involved based on the 5Ps- People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership (COAST, 2022). The SDGs are all-encompassing, extensive, focused on people, interconnected, and applicable worldwide. To set the world on a path of sustenance and greater resilience, 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets were announced as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 17 SDGs are interconnected, recognizing that action in each of these sectors will influence results in others and the improvement ought to build equilibrium in social, economic, and ecological sustainability (United Nations, 2015). The goals emphasise that economic development plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty. They encompass a wide range of societal needs, including education, health, social safety nets, and employment opportunities, and tackle climate change and environmental concerns. Inequality is one of the crucial obstructs highlighted by the SDGs (Jahan, Ferdous, & Hasan, 2022).

Countries and stakeholders have decided to emphasise improvement for the people who are left utmost behind. The SDGs aim to put an end to extreme poverty, global hunger, health issues, discrimination against women and girls and ensure equality, inclusiveness, sustainable energy, and overall prosperity of the people. The knowledge, technology, creativity, expertise, and financial properties from the entire humanity is required to attain SDGs across the different demographics.

## **Upscaling from MDGs to SDGs**

MDG stands for Millennium Development Goals. The Millennium Development Goals were a set of eight international points developed in 2000 by the United Nations. They aimed to tackle major challenges and advance life of people all around the world. The MDGs focused on achieving said eight objectives by 2015 (SDGF, n.d.). These eight goals covered various interconnected issues - Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger, Achieve Universal Primary Education, Promoting Gender Equity and Empowering Women, Reduce Child Mortality, Improve Maternal Health, Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and other Diseases, Ensuring Environmental Sustainability, Developing a Global Partnership for Development

The MDGs marked an important milestone in global development efforts, emphasizing the significance of setting specific targets and mobilizing resources to address key challenges. They also laid the foundation for ongoing endeavours to tackle poverty, inequality, and other critical issues through the SDGs and subsequent initiatives. According to Ashraf et al. (2019) Bangladesh showed success areas of MDGs including dropping extreme poverty, decreasing frequency of underweight children less than 5 years, lowering under-five child mortality, enhancing primary school enrolment, accelerating proportion of girls to boys in primary and secondary education and improving maternal health.

## **Localisation of SDGs**

Localisation represents an approach to addressing local needs by harnessing local resources and fostering local partnerships (Ahmed, 2022). Localisation of the SDGs means defining the scopes, planning out strategies for actions and implementing the SDGs on a local level. The idea of 'localization' came from the knowledge of the MDGs that integrated top-down method ignoring wish for inclusive development. It acknowledges that one-size-fits-all approaches may not effectively address the complex and diverse challenges faced by different localities (United Nations, 2018). Localising the SDGs ensures that their implementation is context-relevant, participatory, and inclusive (UNDP, 2019).

“Localizing” refers to the practice of reflecting local situations when working toward the goals and targets delineated in the 2030 Agenda. This includes not only outlining objectives and methods of implementation but also utilising indicators to assess and track growth (Oosterhof, 2018). Localization involves utilizing the SDGs as a framework for local development policies and enabling local and regional governments to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs through grassroots actions. It emphasizes that the SDGs can guide local development policies effectively.

It allows for more responsive and accountable governance, fosters ownership and engagement among local stakeholders, and facilitates the allocation of resources where they are most needed (Baker Melecky, & Silva, 2020).

Although the SDGs are global in nature, their successful attainment relies on the ability to implement them at the sub-national and regional levels. These governments have related duties, mostly in service delivery, to all the SDGs. This is why these governments play a crucial part in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Based on importance given on them, the local bodies become central players to implementation and success of global goals.

What can drive LGIs to achieve SDGs? Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing (2022) identified seven (7) key factors which motivate LGIs to move forward to implement SDGs at the local level.

**Table 1:** Aiding Factors for LGIs to Localise SDGs

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- (1) Reputation building
  - (2) Concrete problems
  - (3) Pragmatic problem solving
  - (4) Resource interdependence
  - (5) Avoiding red-tape
  - (6) Flexible participation
  - (7) Social and political capital
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Firstly, attainment of SDGs at the local level accrues reputation for the LGIs and involved actors. Secondly, participation of local people makes problem visible and concrete rather than abstract. Thirdly, local actors can avoid conflicts and imminence of problems steer pragmatic solutions. Fourthly, though LGIs can work alone theoretically, they are actually dependent on other stakeholders to address local issues. Fifthly, at the local level, the decision and action stay close and that helps LGIs to avoid curse of red tape. Sixthly, in local governance, participation of the inhabitants is easy in terms of time and commitment because of proximity and less difficulties. Finally, participation of local people in localities assist them to develop social and political capital, which in turn removes isolation, and build political or NGO carrier for some (Ansell, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2022). These points infer that LGIs, and other local stakeholders have some concrete motivating factors to engage with activities that spur achievement of SDGs.

However, challenges like lack of awareness and capacity, limited data and monitoring, and coordination and stakeholder engagement slow the progress of SDG localisation. Many local governments and communities lack awareness of the SDGs and the necessary capacity to implement them effectively. This knowledge gap can hinder progress in localizing the goals (UNDESA, 2020). Data availability and quality can be significant challenges in tracking progress towards localized SDGs. Developing robust

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monitoring and evaluation systems at the local level can be resource-intensive and demanding (World Bank, 2019). Coordinating various shareholders, comprising government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector can be complex. Effective engagement and collaboration are essential to ensure that everyone works towards a common vision (UNDP, 2019).

The review of literature discussed origins of global goals in the world stage and spread all over the world. Additionally, the transformation from MDG to SDG identify the importance of localisation efforts. Localization of SDGs means integrating SDG targets and indicators in local planning and project implementation. Here in Bangladesh very few other studies focus on localisation efforts, therefore this study shed light on the issues to explore and make visible Bangladesh's efforts for SDG localisation and progress so far made.

### **Initiatives of Bangladesh to Achieve SDGs and Localisation of SDGs**

The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken numerous significant measures at the national level to effectively execute the SDGs. As part of these efforts, the government established a 20-member Inter-Ministerial Committee for SDGs realization headed by the Principal Coordinator (SDGs Affairs) of the prime minister's office. General Economic Division (GED) of the Finance Ministry provides support to coordinate at policy level, monitor and report SDGs as the secretariat to the committee (COAST, 2022). Bangladesh has tried to mainstream SDG implementation in three phases.

In the first phase, the country conducted first voluntary national review-2017, mapped ministries and other actors, analysed data gap, developed SDG monitoring and evaluation framework and aligned 8FYP with SDGs (Islam, 2022). In the next phase, the government formulated SDG action plan, tracker, financial strategy, collaboration framework for government and the UN agencies, module for foundation training of civil bureaucrats and school curriculum inclusive of SDGs. Moreover, committees for national data coordination, implementation and coordination of SDGs at division, district, and Upazila levels were formed, programmes for public administration skill improvement were implemented and conferences for SDGs implementation review 2018 and 2022 were held. Governances Innovation Unit (GIU) of office of the PM started localisation in 2018 (GIU, 2023). Firstly, through different workshops with ministries, departments, and organisations, GIU set 39 indicators at national priority from 17 goals. Secondly, through workshops at 64 districts and 492 Upazila the GIU finalised 64 and 492 +1 indicators for each district and Upazila. These 39 national indicators and +1 local indicator formulated 39+1 priority indicators. These 39+1 set up is considered as Bangladesh SDGs localisation model (GIU, 2023).

In the third phase, Bangladesh treated SDGs with the whole of society approach to include NGOs, private sectors, and citizens, particularly the youths. Additionally, the country conducted second voluntary national review, 2020, included SDGs in annual performance agreement, five-year plans, and DELTA plan, 2100 (ibid).

In Bangladesh, the majority of initiatives aimed at achieving SDGs are primarily spearheaded by the central government. While there is a strong commitment from the central government to advance SDGs, these efforts often fall short in terms of the quality of interventions and their ability to effectively reach the intended audiences, thus undermining the principle of ‘leave no one behind.’ Henceforth, the localization of SDGs, with a special emphasis on addressing the underdeveloped areas, is of paramount significance. While Bangladesh has earned international recognition for its progress in SDG implementation, there are still lingering issues that demand attention. A significant obstacle to successful SDG implementation is the unequal distribution of development across regions (COAST, 2022). To tackle this challenge effectively and bolster development outcomes, adopting a localization approach is both prudent and promising.

To achieve the 2030 agenda, Bangladesh has started setting goals and targets, determining the means of carrying out and operating indicators to measure and monitor progress for better implementation of ‘localization’ considering subnational contexts. The process of localisation responds to these two significant approaches, (i) how the SDGs can serve as a framework for shaping local development policies and (ii) how the subnational-level institutions (e.g., local governments, non-government and civil society organisations) can contribute to the attainment of the SDGs by activities progressing upward from the lowest levels (GED, 2022). Thus, keeping localisation at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, Bangladesh has boarded on a course of localisation of 12 SDGs (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15 and 16) among 17 SDGs by setting integrated measures at the community level for which direct measure are highly required to prevail over the interconnected challenges related to poverty, health, environment and society (GED, 2022). For localization, all ministries/divisions and especially the Local Government Division (LGD) have been implementing necessary measures. LGD is the most prominent Division in respect of granting development budget for the rural areas (GED 2022).

The Constitution of Bangladesh also plays a vital role by placing significant liabilities for development of society and economy, including ‘the preparation and implementation of plans relating to public services and economic development’ at local level with local bodies, particularly the UPs, the institutions nearest of local people [Article 59(2)(c)]. Bangladesh has secured that SDGs are fully interlinked at the national level to carry out national development plans and strategies.

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The government has undertaken numerous initiatives to advance localisation of the SDGs. These include extensive awareness campaigns, the prioritization of SDGs indicators, the development of action plans at the local level, and the organization of workshops at the district level (Islam, 2022). In such context, an ‘SDG Localization Framework’ was prepared by GED of the Bangladesh Planning Commission, which focused on the localization of the SDGs in all the UPZs of Bangladesh. The GED devised SDG localization framework entails several crucial steps. It is evident from this framework that the initial phase of localisation involves developing short and long-term plans centred around the SDGs (Alam, 2020). This process aims to determine the required resources at UPZ, district, and divisional stages to attain regional targets effectively. To accomplish this, it is essential to establish an SDG plan that aligns with local priorities and objectives. The government plays vital roles in the SDG localization process, necessitating the initial planning of localization initiatives at the UPZ level. Subsequently, these efforts can be extended to UPs. With the help of current organisational structure of the government, localisation activities need to begin at the district and UPZ levels and extended to UP Level. The government has selected at least one underdeveloped district from each of the eight divisions, resulting in a total of nine such districts, for SDG localization pilot project (COAST, 202). In these 9 districts, localisation workshops have played a pivotal role in identifying priorities specific to different sectors and individual Upazilas. However, presence of a guideline that outlines the development and implementation of an SDG localisation plan at the UPZ level, along with a consolidated plan at the district level (Rokiba & Hussain, 2021).

Under the leadership of the Cabinet Division, a team has been formed at each level of UPZ, district, and division to oversee the implementation and coordination of SDGs. Member of parliaments and UPZ chairman will play the role of advisors (Islam, 2022). At the Upazila level, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) has got responsibility of coordination of localisation process among government agencies and local governments (GED, 2022). The primary responsibility of this committee is to adopt an action plan, ensure the execution of SDG initiatives, coordinate efforts, and monitor progress, with a focus on the SDG prioritise of the country. SDG localisation has already commenced at district level in Natore District using current set-up of localisation team (Rokiba & Hussain, 2021). However, for Upazila level there is no development and at UP level, an NGO, The Hunger Project, has come up with SDG Union to implement SDGs.

### **The Natore Model of SDG localisation**

Despite the challenges, an exemplary case of SDG localization can be seen in the Natore Model, implemented by the local administration in the Natore District. The Natore Model, also known as the SDG District Action Plan, aims to align all local government offices and stakeholders with the 2030



Agenda (Rokiba & Hussain, 2021). It addresses local issues, potentials, and action programmes across government agencies. Recognized as a model by the Government of Bangladesh, it has the potential for replication in other administrative units.

The fruitful operation of SDGs in Bangladesh relies on effective integration of them into national planning and localization efforts at the district, UPZ and UP levels. National plans and other documents have already incorporated Agenda 2030. However, additional steps are necessary to ensure inclusiveness and reach marginalized populations. The General Economics Division (GED) of the Government has projected a localization framework, which has been discussed in depth in the SDGs Implementation and Review Committee. The decision was made to have the UPZ level coordinators for local government and other relating organisations to oversee the implementation of this localisation model. The objective is to enhance coordination among stakeholders, optimize the distribution of public resources based on SDG targets, and prioritise marginalised groups. The localisation approach also emphasises incessant efforts for developing capability and marshalling resources for local organisations (Rokiba & Hussain, 2021).

### **Localisation Efforts in Long-term Plans**

Furthermore, building on the progress of the 7FYP, ‘The 8th National Five-Year Plan of Bangladesh’ was formulated and accepted by the Government of Bangladesh. The 8FYP has six core themes and it includes the attainment of the SDGs in its core.

### **Achievement during 7FYP**

During the period of 7FYP there were significant improvements in LGIs, ranging from capacity building, governance improvement, basic service delivery, rural employment generation to formulating master plan (GoB, 2020). For building capacity of the LGIs, the government worked for institutionalising transparency and accountability, digitalisation of Union centres, ensuring access to information, arranging training for officials, supplying technical assistance, and connecting with local citizens (ibid). The government has launched numerous initiatives aimed at enhancing the governance and financial transparency of LGIs. These efforts include implementing Public Financial Management reforms, which have led to enhancements in the frequency and quality of audits. Additionally, web-based financial reporting systems have been introduced for UPs. These efforts continued to quality of audit, upgrading service delivery, predictable fiscal transfer, project implementation and people’s engagement including women. LGIs took initiative to improve basic service delivery, such as reducing use of arsenic contaminated water, enhancing facilities for water supply, drainage, and sewerage in urban areas with planning, gradual maintenance, and improvement.

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Additionally, LGIs and other actors, like Bangladesh Rural Development Board with 'Link Model' concept took initiatives to create rural employment opportunities and generate income, which ultimately lead to reduction of rural poverty. Different projects, providing crossbreed cattle, training, promoting self-employment and capacity building for action research were some of the ways of intervention. The government also assisted LGIs to develop Master Plans. In these endeavours, 254 Municipalities and 2 City Corporation had their Mater Plan prepared and another six were underway (GoB, 2020). However, several changelogs including unclear functions and responsibilities of LGIs, limited own revenue, dependency on national government, limited personnels, poor engagement of people and weak accountability, insufficient transfer of power for efficacy in service delivery, and weak resource mobilisation and fiscal centralisation during 7FYP slowed the attainment of SDGs in localities. Data of 16 developing and 26 developed nations reveal that local bodies contribute to 19% of the overall government expenditure in developing nations and 28% in industrialized nations, whereas this figure stands at a mere 7% in the case of Bangladesh in 2000s (GoB, 2020). Similarly, LGIs' taxes make up 11.4% of the total tax revenue in 16 developing nations and 22.7% and in 24 industrialized nations averagely; and for Bangladesh, this figure is merely 1.6% (ibid).

### **Localisation Plans in 8FYP**

Identifying challenges of the previous plans, for LGIs, the 8FYP incorporate three key objectives—establishing good governance in LGIs, resource mobilisation and coordination among national and sub-national governments and delivery of necessary services to the people (GoB, 2020). For ensuring good governance the plans are to align local plans with national plan, define responsibilities of LGIs, build capacity, ensure people's participation, deliver performance-based grants, conduct action study, and empower women (GoB, 2020). Promotion of effective and quality service delivery will be taken through developing social and physical infrastructure, delivering appropriate services, ensuring safe water and sanitation facilities, improving e-governance, increasing social safety nets recipients, and extending healthcare services (ibid). Efforts will also be made to strengthen resource mobilisation and coordinate central and local governments. For this, national system of fund transfer will be reformed to make it criteria-based and predictable and for increasing own resources of LGIs, focus will be given on property taxes and recover of service cost (ibid).

Moreover, special attention will be given to empowering women and achieving gender equality in rural communities. Different organisations will provide training, ongoing support following training, establish market connections, foster leadership development, and promote income-generating endeavours, among others (GoB, 2020). Collaborative actions with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken to combat issues such as dowry reduction, prevention of child marriages, and addressing the menace of eve-teasing.

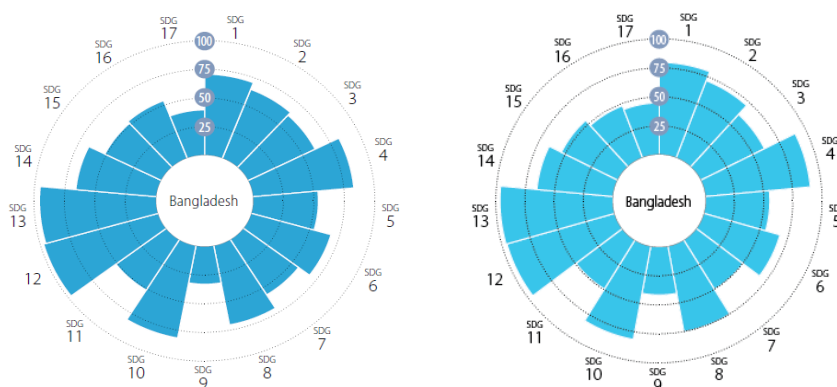
Additionally, to bolster community capacity, concentration will be given on nurturing human resources, fostering networking among all pertinent stakeholders in rural areas, cultivating leadership skills, and enhancing institutional capabilities. The aim for rural residents to have the ability to establish their community objectives, take proactive measures to attain them, and assess their progress effectively.

The key strategies of the government are to reform laws, formulate policies, incorporate best practices, introduce National Integrity Strategy (NIS) to reduce corruption, improve public finance management, develop short-, long-term and master plans transparently, increase capacity of LGIs for resource mobilisation. Furthermore, revenue sharing mechanism, intergovernmental fiscal transfer, staffing such as budget and IT officer, monitoring, auditing, taxation authority and collection process will be improved. National accounting and budgeting software- IBAS++ will be introduced at the local level. Initiatives will also be taken to implement National Rural Development Policy-2001 and build capacity of UPs through coordination, staffing, resource supply, introducing guidelines for service delivery (GoB, 2020).

### Achievements and Setbacks of SDG in Bangladesh

As per Sustainable Development Report 2022, Bangladesh ranks 104th among 163 nations on the overall performance index on the 2030 Agenda. The country score of Bangladesh is 64.2, slightly below the regional average of 65.9 (Sachs et al., 2022). However, in 2023 the country is placed at 101st position scoring 65.9 among 166 nations, much ahead of Pakistan (128th) and India (112) (The Business Post, 2023; Sachs et al., 2023). Bangladesh exhibits high level of commitment to SDGs and moderate level of efforts, incorporates SDGs into sectoral action plans, coordinates SDGS at the national level, starts online SDGs reporting but does not integrate SDGs in national budget (Sachs et al., 2023: 49, 72). Goal wise progress, achievements and setbacks have been presented below.

Average Performance of Bangladesh 2022 (left) and 2023 (right).



**Figure 1:** Average Performance by SDG (Bangladesh) (Sachs et al., 2022 and 2023).

**Table 2:** SDG Dashboard and Trends 2023

Trends	Decreasing	Stagnating	Moderately improving	On track / maintaining SDG achievement	Information unavailable
Challenges					
Major Challenges	<b>SDG 14</b> Life below water <b>SDG 15</b> Life on land <b>SDG 16</b> Peace, justice & strong institutions	<b>SDG 11</b> Sustainable cities & communities <b>SDG 17</b> Partnership for the goals	<b>SDG 3</b> Good health & wellbeing <b>SDG 6</b> Clean water & sanitation <b>SDG 7</b> Affordable & clean energy		
Significant Challenges		<b>SDG 5</b> Gender equality <b>SDG 8</b> Decent work & economic growth	<b>SDG 1</b> No poverty <b>SDG 2</b> Zero hunger <b>SDG 9</b> Industry, innovation, and infrastructure		<b>SDG 10</b> Reduced inequalities
Challenges remain				<b>SDG 4</b> Quality Education	
SDG Achieved				<b>SDG 12</b> Responsible consumption & production <b>SDG 13</b> Climate action	

*Source: Adopted from Sachs et al., 2023.*

The table 2 informs that Bangladesh has done well on goal 12 and 13. Regarding SDG 1 the country's performance is commendable, however facing significant challenges. Like SDG 1, SDG 2, 5, 8, 9, and 10 are encountering significant challenges. Specifically, the SDG 5, in one hand facing significant challenges, on the other hand, struggling with a condition of stagnation and is not improving. Unlike SDG 5, SDG 3, 6, 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, and 17 fall in the red zone with major challenges, while SDG 14, 15 and 16 show decreasing trend (Sachs et al., 2023). Overall, Bangladesh SDG performance demonstrates a lower or middle lower tendency as 30.9% SDGs achieved or on track, 41.2% SDGs progressed limitedly, and 27.9 SDGs seemed worsening (Sachs et al., 2023). More, on the performance on specific goals are given below.

### **Goal 1- End Poverty in all its forms Everywhere**

Bangladesh is among the countries that has showed success in decreasing extreme poverty. The poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90/day was 20.17 per cent in 2010. By 2022, the ratio has dropped to 3.46 per cent (Sachs et al., 2022). In 2023, at \$2.15/day (2017 PPP, %) the ratio increased slightly to 3.8%. Although challenges remain, Bangladesh has reduced extreme poverty, marking that Bangladesh is maintaining the SDG achievement.

Then again, the poverty headcount ratio at \$3.20/day has dropped to 28.17 percent in 2022 from 57.62 percent in 2010 (Sachs et al., 2022). In 2023, at \$3.65/day (2017 PPP, %) the ratio reduced to 18.9%. Major challenges remain in decreasing the proportion of population staying below the upper limit of poverty while extreme poverty has been tackled with success.

### **Goal 2- End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition, and Promote Sustainable Agriculture**

Bangladesh has achieved SDG 2 in the following areas: Cereal yield was 4.8 tonnes (per hectare of harvested land) in 2018, Prevalence of obesity, BMI  $\geq$  30 has seen a steady rise and Human Trophic Level has also been maintained 2019 (Sachs et al., 2022). In brief, moderate improvements have been seen in achieving SDG 2, the goal of ending hunger problems in Bangladesh. The prevalence of undernourishment went down by 5 per cent in the span of 10 years. In 2019, the value stands at 9.7 per cent, right on the track to maintain the SDG achievement (Sachs et al., 2022).

On the other hand, the occurrence of stunting in children under 5 years of age was 28.0 per cent and the occurrence of wasting in children under 5 years of age was 9.8 per cent in 2019 (Sachs et al., 2022). Major challenges remain in securing these objectives. Additionally, the Sustainable Nitrogen Management Index hasn't seen any significant progress as well.

### **Goal 3- Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for all at all Ages**

Most of the progress of SDG 3 is before Covid-19 Pandemic. The maternal mortality rate was 173 per 100,000 live births in 2017, less than half of the mortality rate that was in 2000. Neonatal mortality rate was 17.5 per 1,000 live births and mortality rate under-5 per 1000 live births was 29.1 in 2020 (Sachs et al., 2022). WHO recommended vaccine was received by living babies at pleasing level. All four indexes indicate that Bangladesh has been on track.

The incidence of tuberculosis and new HIV infections have not been seen notable change over the years. The number of deaths in people aged between 30-70 years for chronic diseases such as cancer, heart and lung disease, diabetes has seen a steady decline, indicating progress in healthcare and facilities (Sachs et al., 2022).

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Traffic deaths did not see much improvement, the rate has been almost same over the years, raising public concern. Life expectancy at birth has seen minor increase, adolescent fertility rate has dropped steadily, the rate of births helped by trained health personnel gradually increased over the decade but witnessed a sharp decline in 2018 (Sachs et al., 2022). The subjective well-being also improved in recent times, indicating that Bangladesh is on the right track with the progress being made. There are still many challenges to be tackled in achieving all the targets of SDG 3.

### **Goal 4- Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Life-Long Learning Opportunities for all**

The increase of literacy rate in Bangladesh is quite notable. The percentage has increased nearly 17 per cent over a decade and the value was 94.5 percent in 2020. Net primary enrolment rate was at 95.0 percent in 2010 and participation rate in pre-primary organized learning was 77.5 percent in 2019. Although significant challenges remain in achieving the target value, the lower secondary completion rate of 88.0 per cent in 2018 indicates that Bangladesh is doing well to ensure inclusive and quality education (Sachs et al., 2022).

### **Goal 5- Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls**

Establishing gender equality and women empowerment (Goal 5) has been one of the key challenges in Bangladesh. The government is a strong advocate for gender equality. In 2016, for empowering women, Prime Minister of Bangladesh was awarded UN's Planet 50-50 award (Afia, 2020). Government's continuous efforts for decreasing gender discrimination and ensuring gender equality are epitomised in education, child marriage, family planning, labour force participation and women in parliament.

Bangladesh SDGs Progress Report 2020 (GED, 2020) suggests that the gender gap between enrolment and completion of primary education and secondary education has reduced. The rate of literacy among women has significantly improved, contributing to their empowerment and economic participation. The report further specifies that child marriage dropped from 51.4% in 2011 to 50.3% in 2017-18.

As of 2019, modern methods of family planning received by 77.4 percent of women aged 15 to 49 years (Sachs et al., 2022). The proportion of female-to-male mean years of education received has been almost steady over the years and still requires resolving significant challenges. The rate of female-to-male labour force involvement percentage was 44 in 2020 (Sachs et al., 2022). Moreover, it has been seen presence of a steady number of women in national parliament. Bangladesh SDG progress report (GED, 2020) indicates increasing trend in percentage of seats held by female member in the legislature from 20% in 2016 to 21% in 2019. The country currently ranks 19th globally regarding women's representation in parliament.

However, the Sustainable Development Report 2022 claimed that the progress is not at the satisfactory level and presently going through a period of stagnant with significant challenges to overcome (Sachs et al., 2022). Among the challenges gender violence, low proportion of women in decision-making and leadership position at subnational and national level, and inadequate appreciation of unpaid care and domestic work done by women are prominent.

### **Goal 6- Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for all**

Bangladesh has achieved the target of Freshwater Withdrawal, which was 5.7 per cent of available freshwater sources in 2018 (Sachs et al., 2022). However, Bangladesh lags behind in treating wastewater, the percentage sits at 0.0 according to data until 2018 (Sachs et al., 2022).

As high as 97.7 per cent of the population received services of drinking water in 2020, marking that Bangladesh is maintaining the SDG 6 achievement. On the other hand, sanitation service was received by 54.2 percent of people indicating that there are challenges that need to be tackled and improvements to be made in sanitation services (Sachs et al., 2022).

#### **4.1.7 Goal 7- Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable, and Modern Energy for all**

According to data in 2019, 92.2 and 23.0 percent of people have access to electricity and clean fuel and technology for cooking in Bangladesh respectively (Sachs et al., 2022). Significantly, emission of CO<sub>2</sub> reduced steadily in electricity production. There is still room for further improvement, but Bangladesh is on the right track with the reduction of carbon emissions. But the portion of renewable energy was low.

In such circumstances, Bangladesh prioritises two targets under SDG7:

1. ensure access to electricity for 100 per cent population; and
2. increase renewable energy share in total final energy consumption to 10 percent.

Bangladesh is doing well with the priority one. Currently, electricity is accessed by 95 percent of people as indicated by Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB). Regarding priority number two, Bangladesh needs much improvement. The country targets for 20 percent of renewable energy, however, it produces only 3.25 percent (Hossain & Bhuiyan, 2020).

### **Goal 8- Promote Sustained, Inclusive, and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment, and Decent Work for all**

Bangladesh has achieved the SDG 8 target of Adjusted GDP Growth and reduced the number of victims of modern slavery to a minimal margin. Fatal work-related accidents are almost non-existent. In 2017, 50.0 percent of people have account with bank or other financial institutions, and it means

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the country on the track to achieve the SDG 8 (Sachs et al., 2022). On the other hand, the Unemployment Rate stands at 5.23% in 2022 (ibid.), and it has been steadily rising over the years, raising serious concerns. Fundamental labour rights are not effectively guaranteed, and the score has been declining as well.

### **Goal 9- Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialisation and Foster Innovation**

Although the number of people using the internet in Bangladesh has reached 24.8 per cent in 2020 and 52.8 per cent people have Mobile Broadband Subscriptions, significant challenges remain as communication systems and infrastructure require drastic improvement (Sachs et al., 2022). Then again, excellence of trade and transport-related structure is on the track to maintain SDG achievement. However, the minuscule number of articles published in academic journals or the lack of data on expenditure on research and development indicates that Bangladesh needs to a lot to achieve SDG 9.

### **Goal 10- Reduce Inequality within and among Countries**

Two indicators are used to show inequality, one is Palma Ratio, and another one is Gini Coefficient. Bangladesh has a Palma ratio of 1.28, while the target is 0.9. Then again, the Gini Coefficient of Bangladesh was 32.40 in 2016 with a target of 27.5 (Sachs et al., 2022). According to both Palma Ratio and Gini Coefficient, Bangladesh faces significant challenges to achieve the country's long-term targets to minimise inequality within geographic boundary of the country.

### **Goal 11- Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable**

According to the data, in 2018, the portion of urban population living in slums was 47.6 percent (Sachs et al., 2022). The percentage has declined gradually in the last two decades. The percentage of population who have access to quality water sources was only 35.2. A good number of people (78%) showed their satisfaction on transportation. Concentration of particulate matter (less than 2.5 micron diameter) has slightly decreased in recent years (Sachs et al., 2022). The mentioned figures denote that Bangladesh has to do a lot to make the human settlement inhabitable as designed by the global goals.

### **Goal 12- Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns**

Bangladesh has fulfilled all the target metrics to achieve SDG12 (Sachs et al., 2022). Municipal solid waste, electronic waste, production-based SO<sub>2</sub> emissions, SO<sub>2</sub> emissions embodied in imports, production-based nitrogen emissions, nitrogen emissions embodied in imports, exports of plastic waste, all these indexes indicate that Bangladesh is on the right track to achieve SDG12. Sachs et al. (2022) in SDR 2022 also confirm that Bangladesh has been doing well in fulfilling targets of the SDG 12.



### **Goal 13- Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts**

Among climate vulnerable countries, Bangladesh falls among the top nations and faces cyclones, drought, flood, rising sea and other disasters. Although Bangladesh has successfully maintained low carbon emission rates to maintain SDG achievement, the concerns still remain high due mostly to high cost of the climate change (Sachs et al., 2022). For example, cyclones cost Bangladesh almost 1 billion dollars. Factors like heat, humidity and effects on health may increase the cost of environmental degradation and natural disasters (Sachs et al., 2022). In such scenario. Bangladesh needs more climate financing. World Bank (2022) reported that Bangladesh needs \$12 billion (3% of GDP) for mid-term climate financing. Different sources like carbon taxation, extra funds from budget, and external funding can reduce the climate financing gap. Bangladesh needs immediate actions to address climate related disasters.

### **Goal 14- Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas, and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development**

Bangladesh announced its Marine Protected areas and integrated in National Action Plan in 2019 to control illegal fishing. It is 8.8 percent of its Exclusive Economic Zone (Sachs et al., 2022). In another move, Ship Recycle Act, 2018 was amended for maintaining compliance with the Hong Kong Convention for safe recycling by 2023. Moreover, production and use of one-time useable plastic shopping bags were banned by the government of Bangladesh (TBS, 2022).

### **Goal 15- Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, and Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Halt Biodiversity Loss**

The protection and preservation of Bangladesh's terrestrial forest lands, wetlands, ecosystems, mountains, and biodiversity, as well as the prevention of deforestation, desertification, and ecological degradation are the key challenges to achieve SDG 15. According to the SDR report 2022, in terrestrial sites, 41.5 per cent of the mean area is protected that significant for biodiversity. On the other hand, the percent of the mean area protected in freshwater sites that are crucial to biodiversity is 0.0 in 2020 (Sachs et al., 2022). Major challenges remain in fulfilling these targets as the improvement over the years has been minimal. Furthermore, permanent deforestation rate has increased, and existence of the Red List Index of species went

### **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**

The acts passed on local governments in 2009 changed scenario in local governance that experienced provisions for citizens' engagement and accountable government with good governance. In case of the Union

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Parishad, the act assigned 40 activities to it to formulate strong governance to fulfil needs of the people in the areas of infrastructure, justice, social welfare and so on (Jahan, Ferdous, & Hasan, 2022). However, for establishing peaceful societies the country needs more focus in the areas of safety-security, well-being and social harmony (Khan, Saha, & Bhuiyan, 2018).

### **Goal 17- Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

Bangladesh actively participates in various regional and international organizations and initiatives such as BBIN, BCIM, SAARC, BIMSTEC, APTA, WTO, and WCO. However, the successful achievement of the SDGs relies heavily on meaningful international partnerships and the availability of resources, including external assistance. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is often regarded as an exemplary model for utilizing potential opportunities and accelerating regional integration. Bangladesh can consider adopting their development mechanisms to expedite the progress towards SDG attainment (Ahmed & Karim, 2022).

### **Challenges of Localisation of SDGs**

Despite the prioritization of SDG localization by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), there is a lack of clear institutional mechanisms involving LGIs for effective implementation of the 'Agenda 2030.' The absence of dedicated budgetary allocations at the national level for SDG implementation at the local level hinders the efforts of LGIs (Rokiba & Hussain, 2021). Khan, Saha and Bhuiya (2018) have identified the need for contextualisation of SDG targets relevant to local governments.

#### **Table 3: Challenges of Local Government to Achieve SDGs**

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- (1) Need of dedicated budgetary allocation and skills
  - (2) Lack of contextualisation of SDGs
  - (3) Lack of local resource mobilisation
  - (4) Weak culture of participation and absence of transparent planning
  - (5) Lack of consistent flow of data
  - (6) Weak sense of community and political commitment
  - (7) Poor adjustment in governance, financial management and policy formulation
  - (8) Lack of Coordination and collaboration
  - (9) Lack of effort to present topics easily for local actors
  - (10) Limiting rules and regulations
- 

Local resource mobilisation has been a critical problem. In Bangladesh, LGIs taxes make up only 1.6% of the total tax revenue, while it is more than 22% in developed countries (GoB, 2020). In such context, the local bodies depend totally on the national level. However, due to lack of formula-based allocation and unpredictable grant LGIs struggle to match with the plans and implementation. The LGIs in Bangladesh need enhanced endeavours to mobilise own income to implement SDGs.

Effective localising of the SDGs relies on transparent and accountable planning, which hinges on active involvement of community members, CSOs and NGOs. Nevertheless, in many instances, local residents lack awareness and access to information when their informed opinion and leadership are cherished. Moreover, the culture of participation and welcoming people's voice in decision-making mark poor. Both supply and demand side actors have not been habituated with such practices. In this situation, they require assistance from both governmental bodies and NGOs to enhance their political awareness, fostering greater engagement, monitoring, and oversight of local plans and projects. A coordination among citizens, CSOs, NGOs and local representatives, trust and mutual accountability of them will produce better results. It is of paramount importance to promptly share results with the public.

For precise and effective policy formulation, a consistent stream of up-to-date, accurate, and timely data is crucial. Unfortunately, local institutions and their personnel often do not possess the necessary quality standards to serve as reliable data sources. To address this issue, training programs and the implementation of action research can play a pivotal role in generating timely information that supports evidence-based policy development and planning.

The successful realisation of the 2030 Agenda depends significantly on the presence of unwavering local ownership and political determination and consistent bureaucratic backing. In some cases, the attachment of local people with the local bodies is weak and they lack commitment, time, and energy to be involved. On the other hand, in numerous instances, the prominence of good governance and development at the local level are direct results of the resolute commitment demonstrated by political and bureaucratic leaders. Without strong commitment from local people, political and bureaucratic actors achieving SDGs at local level will be difficult.

To effectively localise the SDGs, substantial systemic changes in local government administration and local institutions are imperative. Reform initiatives of local governance in Bangladesh fail to produce expected outcomes due to lack of unwavering political commitment (Panday, 2011). Moreover, LGIs show weakness in management of financial affairs with poor skills. However, SDG localisation demands adjustment in governance, financial management and policy level.

Varied stakeholders, including diverse government ministries, NGOs, international non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities, are involved in rural development efforts. Unfortunately, there is a notable absence of effective coordination among these actors, leading to project duplication and a failure to address underserved regions. The prevailing circumstances underscore the urgent need for improved coordination and collaboration among all parties engaged in local development initiatives.

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Various studies, such as the one conducted by Mojumder and Panday (2019), have clearly shown that local residents often have limited education and encounter challenges in accessing written information. Additionally, certain information is highly technical and difficult for these individuals to comprehend. Given this scenario, there is a pressing need for proactive efforts on the supply side to ensure that documents related to SDGs are presented to local residents in a simple and comprehensible manner.

Bangladesh has indeed enacted specific laws for each tier of local government; however, there are still noticeable gaps in certain areas. For instance, issues related to resource allocation and financial autonomy for local governments warrant further attention. Consequently, despite the legal framework in place, there is a need for ongoing reform and refinement to strengthen the functionality and impact of local governance in Bangladesh.

Additionally, there is a lack of literature on SDG localization and LGIs, indicating limited academic research on SDGs at the local level in Bangladesh. Lastly, national funds primarily focus on infrastructure development in urban areas like Dhaka, neglecting other areas' needs. To achieve effective SDG localisation, these chronic problems need to be addressed, with a particular emphasis on strengthening LGIs to align their programs with SDG targets, national plans, and local contexts.

### **Conclusion**

The core theme of Sustainable Development Goals is to 'leave no one behind.' Like other countries, Bangladesh has also formulated specific metrics tailored to its local contexts. Bangladesh has selected a set of 40 indicators under the guidance of the SDG Working Committee of The Prime Minister's Office to achieve SDGs within shortest possible time. By selecting the most relevant targets and prioritizing them, GoB has been actively keeping track of the progress on SDGs with the help of different government and private organisations. Key government organisations are Statistics and Informatics Division (SID), Cabinet Division, office of the Prime Minister, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), General Economics Division (GED). With their assistance, SDG tracker has been developed to monitor the progress of SDGs on local levels.

The 8th FYP plan has been distributed between institutions specifically to responsible authorities for carrying out projects that fall under their jurisdiction. Despite the setbacks created by natural disasters, Covid-19 pandemic, Ukraine War, Inflation and severe economic damages, people of Bangladesh have the resilience to stand back up and the local governments can closely work with people at the root level to achieve the prioritized targets of SDG.

To alleviate the increase in poverty inflicted by the disasters in recent years, the local governments should be further enforced with human, infrastructural and economic resources. To that end, the rapid economic

recovery of Bangladesh should be taken to the next level. The rise in poverty was mainly caused by lack of jobs, rise in the prices of commodity and import, losses in export. Bangladesh needs to focus on training more people and strengthening the human resources while working with international development partners to create a better economy for the people. To tackle climate changes and natural disasters, more funds are required, and international negotiations should be prioritized for increased assistance. The government must empower the local government with qualified personnel along with the development of analytical frameworks to implement SDGs.

The major lack of this chapter is that it is dependent on secondary literature and data. But the analysis and studies put together in this document can serve policymakers, researchers and concerned stakeholders to conduct further research and collect primary data on this field to enhance the knowledge on the topic.

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