Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence based solutions for the 2030 agenda and its SDGs for leaving no young person behind in Asia and the Pacific

BANGLADESH

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being

Situational Analysis

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, which is crucial for Bangladesh. The country has made progress in reducing maternal and child mortality, increasing life expectancy, and expanding immunization programs. However, challenges persist, including the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), malnutrition, mental health issues, and unequal healthcare access, particularly in rural areas. The government has prioritized Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and strengthened healthcare infrastructure, but resource constraints remain a barrier. Climate change and over population further exacerbates health risks, contributing to waterborne diseases and mental health challenges in rural and coastal regions. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed gaps in the healthcare system, highlighting the need for stronger public health policies and emergency preparedness. Addressing these challenges requires multi-sectoral collaboration, investment in preventive healthcare, and equitable health services. Bangladesh's commitment to SDG 3 remains vital for improving overall public health and achieving sustainable development.

Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive national strategy to digitalize the healthcare sector, including telemedicine and online consultations, to reach underserved populations, particularly in rural areas. Ensure that digital platforms are accessible and affordable for all citizens.

- Implement widespread mental health awareness campaigns and establish accessible counseling centers in schools and local communities. Promote online mental health services, including hotlines and virtual therapy, to increase accessibility for youth and marginalized groups.

- Increase government investment in healthcare facilities in rural and coastal regions, ensuring access to basic medical services and emergency transportation. Strengthen public-private partnerships and focusing on youth led networks for proper monitoring to improve healthcare infrastructure and delivery.

- Increase integrated comprehensive and inclusive health education and launch nationwide health awareness programs that focus on preventive healthcare, hygiene, and the importance of mental well-being, with special emphasis on rural areas and vulnerable populations.

- Strengthen healthcare system, security to healthcare professionals & enforce health law focusing on children and maternal health and reproductive health.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Situational Analysis

According to a 2024 UN report, women's labor force participation in 2022 rose to nearly 43%, up from 36% five years earlier. In Bangladesh, increased school enrollment for girls and improved maternal survival rates highlight the impact of investments in education, healthcare, and child marriage prevention. However, significant gaps persist in legal frameworks, social support systems, and gender equality, hindering youth-led and human rights organizations due to resource constraints. Women and gender-diverse individuals remain underrepresented in political and legal spheres, partly due to limited digital literacy programs. This lack of inclusion extends to science and technology, restricting opportunities despite evident potential. Furthermore, women own less than 1.7% of formal enterprises and only 7% of agricultural land (UN, 2024). Achieving SDG 5 requires dismantling discriminatory norms and unequal power structures to ensure women's leadership across social, economic, and political domains.

Recommendations

- Strengthen legal frameworks and societal support systems to ensure individuals' rights and inclusion beyond any discrimination. Promote awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination in urban and rural settings.

- Increase funding and support for youth-led organizations working on gender equality. Create partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, and youth groups to build capacity and create inclusive spaces for leadership development.

- Enforce policies to ensure equal representation of women in political and leadership positions, both at national and local levels. Implement affirmative action policies to increase women's participation in decision-making processes, particularly in sectors like politics, business, and academia.

- Expand access to financial support, digital literacy programs, and online platforms for women entrepreneurs, especially in rural and underserved areas. Ensure that women have equal access to business development resources and markets.

- Ensure women's involvement in Science, Technology, Engineering, and overall technology and science-related disciplines as these sectors do not represent women's participation equally.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Situational Analysis

Bangladesh has a large youth workforce, with around 2 million new job seekers entering the market annually. The startup ecosystem is growing, with increased government and private sector support. However, Bangladesh's growing workforce faces a job creation challenge, as economic growth has not kept pace with the increasing number of job seekers, particularly youth and women. The dominance of the informal sector, which employs the majority of workers without proper wages, job security, or social protection, exacerbates vulnerabilities and limits economic stability. A significant workforce skills gap further hinders employment opportunities, as many lack the technical expertise needed for emerging industries, including AI, automation, and sustainable technology. To ensure long-term economic resilience, Bangladesh must support the digital and green economy by investing in renewable energy, climate-tech startups, and IT-driven businesses while expanding digital infrastructure for remote work and entrepreneurship. Additionally, labor rights and compliance remain a pressing concern, with inadequate enforcement of workplace safety regulations, wage disparities, and poor working conditions, especially in key industries like the readymade garment (RMG). Stronger public-private partnerships are essential for bridging these gaps by aligning industry-driven skill development and enforcing fair labor practices. Driving investments in sustainable, high-growth sectors will help create a more inclusive and resilient economy.

Recommendations

- Expand youth employment programs by integrating vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and industry-linked apprenticeships. Provide pre-departure and post-return training for migrant workers on financial literacy, digital remittance management, and skill development to enhance their economic stability and reintegration opportunities.

- Introduce social protection policies, such as health insurance, parental leaves, childcare systems, and pension schemes to improve job security for informal workers and strengthen labor law enforcement mechanisms to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and protection of workers' rights.

- Enhance collaboration between industries and educational institutions to align curricula with market needs and emerging technologies. Promote

multi-stakeholder partnerships to drive investment in job creation, skill development, and inclusive economic growth.

- Provide financial incentives and policy support for businesses adopting digital solutions and sustainable practices.

- Strengthen accountability mechanisms by ensuring open data policies, digital tracking of public funds, and regular audits to promote transparency in economic, labor, and development sectors.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

Situational Analysis

Bangladesh, with its extensive coastline and vast inland waters, heavily depends on aquatic resources for livelihoods and economic activities. However, the country is highly vulnerable to climate change, facing threats such as rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and frequent natural disasters that endanger coastal communities and ecosystems. Millions of Bangladeshis rely on fishing, aquaculture, and related industries, while the Bay of Bengal and inland waters support rich biodiversity, including mangroves, coral reefs, and diverse fish species. Key challenges in sustaining these resources include overfishing due to unsustainable practices, habitat destruction from mangrove deforestation and coastal development, climate change impacts, and pollution. Additionally, Cox's Bazar and Saint Martin's Island, despite their natural beauty, are increasingly affected by marine and coastal pollution, particularly from plastic waste and tourism, posing serious risks to marine biodiversity and local livelihoods.

Recommendations

- Enforce stricter regulations on waste disposal, industrial discharge, and illegal dumping, with increased penalties and strong monitoring to protect marine ecosystems.

- Develop and enforce regulations on responsible fishing, provide training for local fishermen, and promote sustainable fishing practices to preserve marine biodiversity.

- Enhance waste disposal and recycling infrastructure at tourist beaches, ensuring accessible facilities and public awareness campaigns to reduce plastic pollution.

- Invest in marine conservation education, research, and evidence-based policies to protect biodiversity and support sustainable development.

- Reduce carbon emissions through renewable energy, energy efficiency, and policy advocacy while raising awareness to protect vital ecosystems like the Bay of Bengal and Sundarbans.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Situational Analysis

Bangladesh is actively committed to achieving the SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The country is strengthening domestic resource mobilization, advocating for increased Official Development Assistance (ODA), and enhancing capacity-building efforts through international collaboration and technology transfer. Bangladesh also prioritizes policy coherence and multi-stakeholder partnerships to drive sustainable development. However, small and emerging organizations face challenges in accessing mentorship and partnerships due to systemic barriers like reliance on pre-existing networks and nepotism, which hinder their potential contribution to SDG progress.

Recommendations

- Expand investment in digital infrastructure and skills training to equip Bangladesh's workforce for the evolving job market. Increase government support and investment in technology related research and inventions with locally developed or invented raw materials.

- Allocate more budget for climate change research, focusing on mitigation and adaptation, while fostering interdisciplinary collaboration among government, academia, and NGOs.

- Ensure rural and indigenous communities are actively involved in policy-making and development planning to drive equitable economic growth and improve access to essential services.

- Implement comprehensive documentation systems to assess project impacts, identify gaps, and improve policy effectiveness and inclusivity.

- Establish a centralized platform for matching small organizations with larger partners, introduce open and transparent mentorship and partnership calls, and create dedicated funding mechanisms to support collaborative projects.