

# UNITED NATIONS' **Common Country Assessment of BANGLADESH**

January 2005



United Nations  
Country Team in Bangladesh

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# Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANC	Antenatal Care
APP	Alternative Private Providers
ASF	Acid Survivors Foundation
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BER	Bangladesh Economic Review
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' and Exporters Association
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BMI	Body Mass Index
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CPR	Contraception Prevalence Rate
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DC	Delivery Care
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education For All
EOC	Essential Obstetrics Care
EPI	Expanded Programme Immunisation
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HAPP	HIV and AIDS Prevention Programme
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HIES	Household Income Expenditure Survey
HIV	Human-Immune Deficiency
HNPSP	Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program
HPSP	Health and Population Sector Program, ,
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IDU	Intravenous Drug Users
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

IFS	Integrated Food Security
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JSU	Judicial Service Commission
LCG	Local Consultative Group
LDC	Less Developed Country
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MCWC	Maternal & Child Welfare Centers
MDG	Millennium Development Goal(s)
MEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
MFA	Multi-Fibre Arrangement
MFI	Micro-Finance Institution
MSME	Medium and Small Micro Enterprise
NAP	National Agricultural Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OHCHR	Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
PDC	Post-Delivery Care
PMED	Primary and Mass Education Division (GOB)
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PRMCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RDT	Rapid Diagnostic Tests
RMG	Ready-Made Garments
SACOSAN	South Asia Conference on Sanitation
SAPTA	South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement
SBA	Skilled Birth Attendant
SF	School Feeding (Programme)
SHD	Sustainable Human Development
SOE	State Owned Enterprises
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TIP	Trafficking in Person
UN	United Nations
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSSD	World Social Summit for Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

# *Executive Summary*

The Common Country Assessment<sup>1</sup> (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) represent part of the on-going commitment to enhanced collaboration and harmonization among UN agencies working in Bangladesh. The CCA-2004 adopts a rights-based analytical framework around the four clusters of rights -- survival, livelihood, protection and participation -- and builds on the wealth of research and information contained in national documents currently under preparation, in particular the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the first Bangladesh MDG Progress Report 2005 and first CCA prepared in 2000.

Over the last 10 years Bangladesh has made impressive gains in key human development indicators. In the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report, Bangladesh ranked 138 among 177 countries with an HDI score of 0.509, which places it among countries considered to have achieved medium human development. This is the result of macroeconomic stability, low population growth, increase in women's empowerment, reduction in aid dependence, food self-sufficiency, improved disaster management capacity, effective non-governmental organisations (NGOs), free and fair parliamentary elections, a vibrant, pluralist, democratic civil society marked by cultural activism and developmental debates, and an active and free press.

Through the adoption and implementation of sound policies and strategies, Bangladesh has managed to sustain a large measure of economic stability and macroeconomic growth. Throughout the 1990s, the economy grew by an average of 4.75 percent per year. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita has grown steadily from US\$273 in 1990/91 to US\$441 (or US\$1400 in PPP). As a result, the Human Poverty Index for Bangladesh fell from 61 in 1983 to 42.2, an achievement that was all the more remarkable given that the pace of income poverty reduction was only one percent point per year. Nonetheless, 63 million people continue to live below the poverty line. There has, however, been a steep decline in the number of hardcore poor from 36.75 percent in 1983/84 to just under twenty percent or approximately 30 million people. Despite these significant achievements, much needs to be done to ensure the right to survival and to achieve the MDG target of halving the proportion of the poor, and the hungry and malnourished.

The UNDP Gender Development Index (GDI) for 2004 ranked Bangladesh 110 among 144 countries, an increase of 13 positions since 1999. This improvement reflects a closing of the gap between men and women in key indicators such as life expectancy. However, a GEM ranking of 76 shows continued low levels of female representation in Government, in decision-making positions and in ownership of economic assets. A significant gender disparity persists in both income and human poverty, especially at the lower end of income distribution. The female disadvantage in child mortality has remained persistent, while the female-male gap in acute malnutrition has increased over the past decade. On average the incidence of severe malnutrition among girls under five is two to four percent higher than among boys. Similarly, compared to male-headed households, female-headed

households are more likely to be living in extreme poverty. Overall, Bangladesh's performance with regard to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 4) remains mixed. There has been a narrowing of the gender gap in most social MDG indicators in general and in the education sector in particular, where, as a result of targeted government policies, female enrolment rates in primary and secondary schools exceeds those for males. However, in other areas such as economic and political participation and adult literacy, much still remains to be done to ensure the rights to survival, livelihood and participation.

Significant investments in disaster preparedness, including the development of early warning systems and the creation of a wide network of flood and cyclone shelters, has seen a significant decrease in the number of lives lost each year. However, natural disasters are still responsible for significant property losses with major consequences for the poor. There is therefore scope for continued improvement in terms of disaster mitigation and recovery that is targeted to the most vulnerable populations.

Bangladesh has made significant strides in lowering its population growth rates. The current population is estimated at around 140 million. While total fertility rates have been in decline over the last twenty years, this decline appears to have plateaued though further research is required to identify the exact causes. Since 1996 a gradual increase in TFR among poorer households has been observed. A number of factors that could explain this increase include low educational levels, continued son preference, high infant mortality, weak implementation of gender rights and the lack of alternative economic opportunities.

Infant mortality has declined steadily from 92 per thousand live births in 1992 to 53 in 2002. Similarly, under-five mortality rate (U5MR) has declined from 144 per thousand live births in 1990 to 76 in 2002. There continue to be urban-rural differences in under-five mortality rates and a small difference in mortality rates between boys and girls. In order for Bangladesh to maintain progress towards meeting the child and infant mortality goals laid out in the MDGs a number of trends need to be sustained. This includes continuing to expand immunisation coverage to reach marginalised and hard-to-reach population and consolidating and strengthening efforts to control diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. Increased attention is also required to further reduce neonatal mortality by ensuring that all pregnant mothers have access to antenatal care, skilled birth attendants and to emergency obstetric care.

Maternal mortality remains very high at around 320 per hundred thousand live births. Poor nutrition, poverty and a lack of access to health services contribute to some 20,000 maternal deaths each year. Despite improvements in antenatal care, it will be a challenge to meet the goal of reducing MMR to 140 by 2015 because of a number of demographic trends. A third of Bangladesh's population falls within the age group of 10-24 years. Nearly half the adolescent girls (15-19 years) are married, 57 percent become mothers before the age of 19, and half of all adolescent mothers are acutely malnourished. Efforts to provide adolescent girls with greater access to higher education through scholarship and stipend programmes while proven to be effective, will nonetheless take several years to have a meaningful impact on fertility rates, and by extension, MMR rates.

Bangladesh's success in increasing primary school enrolment has been one of the most notable achievements of the last fifteen years and has played an important role in raising the country's HDR scores. The gross enrolment rate in primary education in 2002 was 97 percent, though enrolment rates in urban slums and the CHT remain significantly lower. Bangladesh has more or less achieved gender parity in education at the primary school level. Despite these positive developments, one in five children are still not enrolled in school. Furthermore, while two thirds of those enrolled complete the five-year primary school cycle, upwards of 25 percent of children drop out before reaching the fifth grade though this is a significant improvement over the 38 percent drop out rate recorded in 1995. Under the most optimistic scenario of population stabilisation by 2035, Bangladesh will need some US\$1.7 billion to maintain current momentum and to achieve the MDG 2 by 2015.

Thus, without significantly increased investments in the education sector, it is clear that ensuring the right to a secure livelihood will remain a challenge.

The 1999-2000 Labour Force Survey estimates that of the 74.2 million working age population (15-64 years), about 21.6 percent are employed for wages and salaries, a two percent increase since the 1995-96 LFS. However, while 33.9 percent of men work for wages, only 8.4 percent of women receive some form of remuneration. There are an estimated 7.4 million working children out of which 3.2 million children are child labourers. Twenty four percent of the working population is self-employed. Unemployment rates in Bangladesh, estimated at 4.3 percent, are comparatively low due to pervasive under-employment and the large number of people considered to be out of the labour force. Unemployment rates are high among the youth, especially among young men under the age of 30.

There has been a significant increase in the reports of violence across Bangladesh. Accurate information regarding the nature and extent of violence in the country remains scarce due to lack of data. There is, however, an emerging “culture of violence” which is of rising concern. Violence within the family remains the most under-reported crime in Bangladesh. Cases of marital violence are routinely labelled as “domestic disputes”, and as such do not merit assistance within families, let alone police intervention. This reflects, among other things, the existing patrimonial social structures that force woman into passive acceptance of violence. According to government statistics, one woman is subjected to violence every hour.

Though the Bangladesh Constitution is committed to the equality of rights of all citizens, there are still significant sections of the population who are unable to realise their right to development. A part of the process will necessarily involve ensuring that the most marginalised and vulnerable groups -- women, minorities, children and others -- do not get left behind amidst an overall positive scenario. It is also important to focus on the guarantee of human security with the basic norms of justice as a pre-condition for human development. The commitment to a transparent government through the use of information technology for development is one means of promoting accountability. The decentralisation of administrative and financial responsibilities would help to accelerate the process. These are all important steps towards ensuring that citizens have ownership over the development process. Finally, it is necessary to focus on the crosscutting issues of good governance and environmental sustainability to ensure the achievement of the MDGs and national development objectives. In the circumstances, one of the biggest challenges to the Government remains ensuring the right to participation and protection of the people of Bangladesh.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> All UN agencies, including regional SURFs, contributed to the input and comments for the CCA. Government input was coordinated through GED, Ministry of Planning. The report was drafted by Babar Sobhan, Consultant and edited by Shamim Hamid, Principal Officer, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UNDP Dhaka.



# 1 Conceptual Framework

The Common Country Assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) represent part of the on-going commitment to enhanced collaboration and harmonization among the different UN agencies working in Bangladesh. It builds upon the various provisions laid out in the UN General Assembly Resolution A/C.2/53/L.56, 1 December 1998. The CCA represents the United Nations collective assessment of the overall development situation in Bangladesh and focuses on the identification of development gaps taking into account national priorities. Based on the analysis and priorities identified in the CCA, the UNDAF prioritises key areas for joint Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and UN action, and provides the basis for UN country programming.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1. Scope and Methodology

Since the preparation of the first CCA in 1999-2000, the GOB and the development partners have begun work on a number of key planning documents, most notably the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that will be finalized in June 2005. Furthermore, as part of its on-going commitments to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, Bangladesh has also prepared its first MDG Progress Report. This CCA uses a building block approach and bases its analysis on the wealth of research and information contained in these documents. Thus, the scope of this document has, in part, been determined by the priorities identified through the PRSP process as well as Bangladesh's on-going commitments to the various UN conferences and global conventions.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.2. A Rights-Based Approach

This CCA, like the first one, adopts a rights-based approach to development that is based on international human rights standards and integrates the principles of equality and equity, accountability, empowerment and participation into the plans, policies and processes of development within a country. A rights-based approach focuses on raising levels of accountability in the development process by identifying claim-holders (and their entitlements) and corresponding duty-holders (and their obligations). In this regard, it looks both at the positive obligations of duty-holders (to protect, promote and provide) and at negative obligations (to abstain from violations). It takes into account the duties of the full range of relevant actors, including individuals, states, local organisations and authorities, private companies, aid donors and international institutions. This approach addresses the "need to identify, isolate and analyse factors that impact on the development of human potential and to develop strategies that enable key duty bearers to fulfil their responsibilities. The conceptual framework is seen as a tool to analyze the causes of the problems encountered, establish linkages between them and as a consequence to place greater focus on root causes".<sup>3</sup>

The analytical framework identifies four clusters of rights -- survival, livelihood, protection and participation -- that form the foundation of a paradigm that builds on the concept of sustainable human development (SHD). These clusters of rights analyse poverty through a variety of lenses that start with the basic determinants of **survival** such as health and well-being, food security and

nutrition, and water and sanitation before looking at how this translates into the fulfilment of the right to **livelihood**, measured in terms of access to education and productive employment opportunities. As the measure of a society's well being can be derived in part by how it addresses the needs of marginalised populations, the rights to **protection** and **participation** provide the basic prerequisite for human development including human security<sup>4</sup> and are essential conditions for promoting a democratic and accountable government and society. Integrated into the analysis are Bangladesh's commitments to the Millennium Declaration, the MDGs and various UN Conventions to which Bangladesh is a signatory.

Promoting human rights is an integral part of the UN mandates and programmes. Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant(s) on Civil and Political Rights and on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights guide UN agencies in their work in Bangladesh within which is embedded the notion of assisting member states to respect, protect and fulfil basic human rights. The focus of UN agencies is to identify those groups of people whose rights are not being met and to provide support to the GOB and other stakeholders in their efforts to ensure the gradual and progressive fulfilment of rights for all citizens. The protection of rights is also embodied in the mandates of individual UN agencies such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

This commitment to human rights is also reflected in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Under Articles 15 and 18(1), the State is required to fulfil citizens' basic rights to health, food and shelter. The Constitution also establishes the responsibility of the State to ensure that citizens are able to secure the basic necessities of life and guaranteed employment under Articles 15 and 17 that are mirrored in the commitment to the right to livelihoods explored in chapter four. Embedded in the right to work is the right for people to have access to the factors -- such as education and equality of opportunity -- that would enable people to enjoy levels of consumption and income to meet their basic needs. Finally, Articles 27 to 43 of the Constitution emphasise people's right to participation and protection by guaranteeing the right to protection of life and personal liberty, and home; the right to equality before the law; equality of opportunity in public employment; safeguards against arrest and detention; protection with respect to trial and punishment; prohibition of forced labour; freedom of movement, assembly association, thought and conscience, speech, profession, or occupation and religion; and non-discrimination on a religious basis and are applicable to all citizens, regardless of race, creed, religion, sex or birth.

Thus, the mandate of the Bangladesh Constitution converges uniquely towards the rights-based approach adopted in this CCA for analysing the development situation in Bangladesh. It is here that the CCA sets itself apart from the PRSP and the MDG Progress Report, both of which focus on 'targets' rather than 'rights'. The CCA reflects the UN System's commitments to the norms and standards established through the UN global conferences of the 1990s and through a wealth of UN Conventions. Together with the UNDAF, the CCA is the chief instrument for implementing UN reforms at the country level.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> UN agencies with country office(s) in Bangladesh include UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO, ILO, UNESCO, IFAD, IOM. Other agencies within the UN family include the World Bank and IMF.

<sup>2</sup> This CCA is based on the I-PRSP, the PRSP and the MDG Report, all of which have been prepared through a wide consultative process. To avoid duplication of effort, additional consultations were not carried out separately for the CCA. The draft CCA, however, benefited from comments received from the Government, UN agencies in Bangladesh and in the region, as well as other stakeholders.

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Common Country Assessment Bangladesh, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 2000: pg. 10

<sup>4</sup> These guarantees are laid out in Articles 27-43 of the Constitution of Bangladesh



Figure 1: A Rights-Based Conceptual Framework

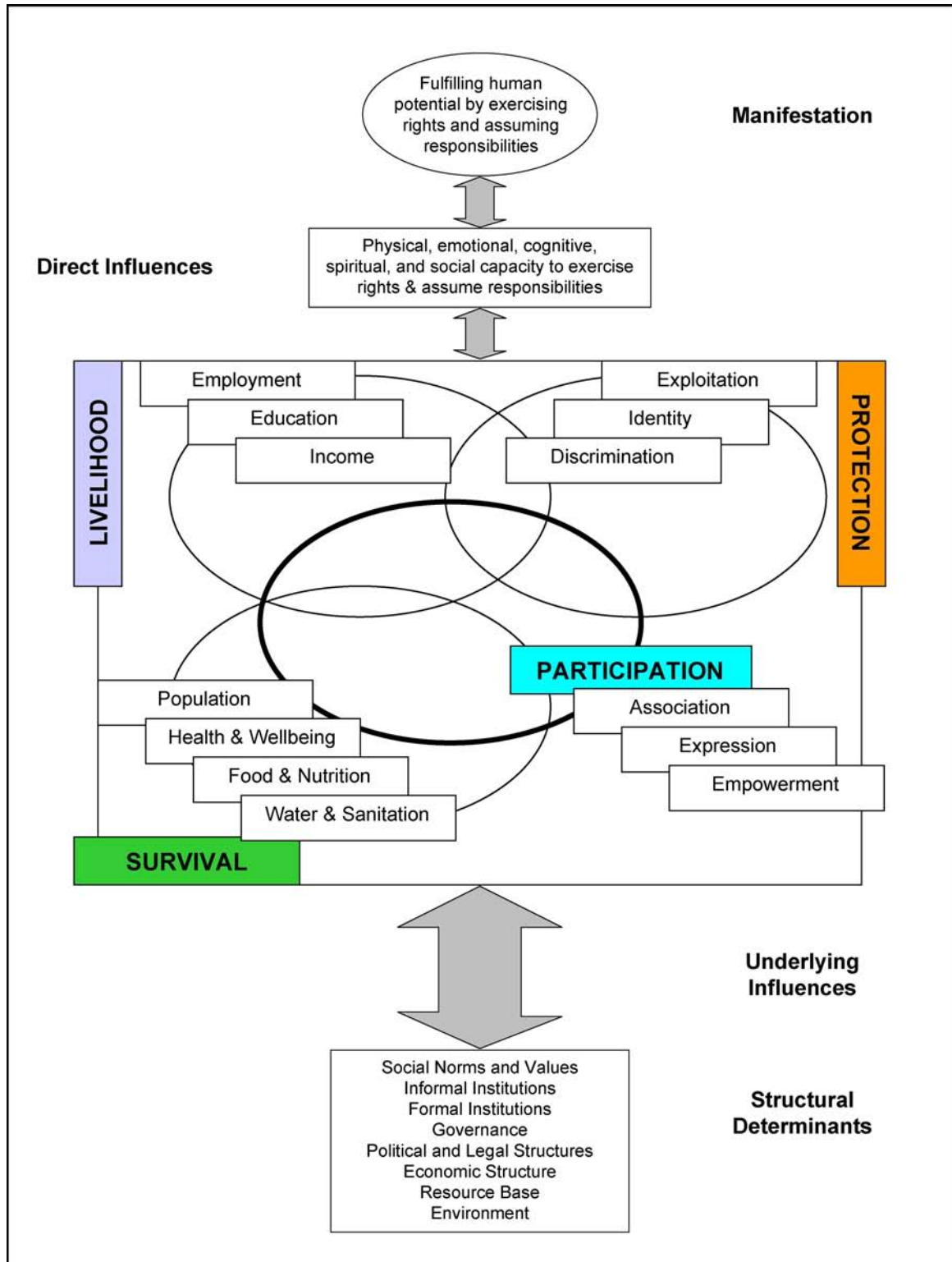


Figure 2: Map of Bangladesh



## 2 Country Context

Over the last 10 years Bangladesh has made impressive gains in key human development indicators. In the 2004 UNDP Human Development Report, Bangladesh ranked 138 among 177 countries with an HDI score of 0.509, which places it among countries considered to have a medium level of human development. This has been the result of macroeconomic stability, low population growth, increase in women's empowerment, reduction in aid dependence, food self-sufficiency, effective disaster management, a vibrant NGO environment, free and fair parliamentary elections, a pluralist, democratic civil society marked by cultural activism and developmental debates, and an active and free press. However, with over 63 million people still living below the poverty line, the ever present threat of sudden shocks -- natural and manmade -- the uncertain impact of globalisation and an increasingly competitive international trade environment, Bangladesh faces considerable challenges in order to sustain and build on the achievements of the last decade and to achieve the MDGs. Significant structural changes are taking place in rural Bangladesh that has spurred rapid economic and migration with the related complexities of rising urban poverty, lack of decent work and adequate shelter.

### 2.1 Poverty and Inequality

There are a number of different estimates of the extent and range of poverty in Bangladesh.<sup>1</sup> In the 2004 Human Development Report, the Human Poverty Index<sup>2</sup> for Bangladesh was 42.2 compared to a score of 61 in 1983.<sup>3</sup> The reduction in human poverty during the early nineties was remarkable given that the pace of income poverty reduction was slow.<sup>4</sup> This generally positive trend is supported by the Household Income Expenditure Survey 2000 (HIES) conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) which estimated that overall poverty (defined as those with a daily caloric intake below 2122 Kcal) decreased from 62.6 percent in 1983/84 to 44.33 percent in 2000.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted however, that this still translates to approximately 63 million people who continue to live below the poverty line. It is also worth noting that within urban areas there has actually been an increase in the percentage of the poor from 47.6 percent in 1988-89 to 52.5 percent in 2000.<sup>6</sup> There has, however, been a decline in the number of hardcore poor from 34.25 million (36.75%) in 1983-84 to approximately 28 million people (19.98%) who are unable to meet their daily caloric intake. The number of landless households (those without land for a homestead) is decreasing at roughly three percent per annum.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, functional landlessness -- the number of households with homestead land but without cultivable land and/or with cultivable land up to 0.2 ha -- is increasing sharply, at the rate of 5.23 and 2.42 percent per annum respectively.<sup>8</sup> However, it should also be noted that there has also been a qualitative change in our understanding of the basic determinants of (rural) poverty in Bangladesh during the 1990s. Traditionally, access to land has been the prime factor in measuring poverty; however shifting patterns away from agricultural production to non-farm activities in the rural economy has meant that it is important to also factor in access to other resources such as credit and employment opportunities as a measure of the poor and non-poor. This in turn requires further attention being devoted to how patterns in rural non-farm activities are changing.

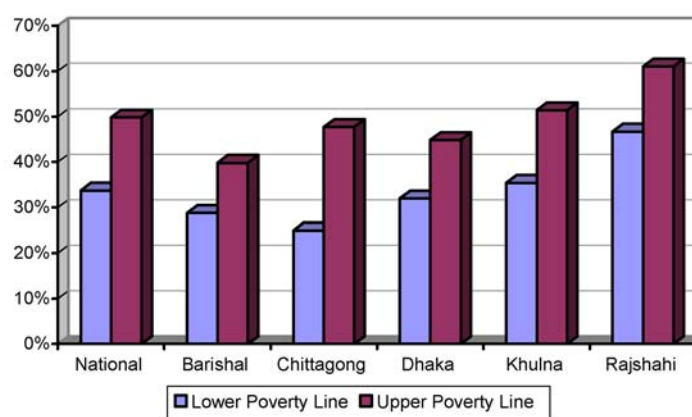
**Table 1: Poverty and Hardcore Poverty on the Basis of Calorie Intake (%)**

Nature of Poverty		1983/84	1985/86	1988/89	1991/92	1995/96	2000
Poverty	National	62.60	55.65	47.75	47.52	47.53	44.33
	Rural	61.94	54.65	47.77	47.64	47.11	42.28
	Urban	67.70	62.55	47.63	46.70	49.67	52.50
Hardcore poverty	National	36.75	26.86	28.36	28.00	25.06	19.98
	Rural	36.66	26.31	28.64	28.27	24.62	18.72
	Urban	37.42	30.67	26.38	26.25	27.27	25.02

Source: HIES-2000, BBS

### 2.1.1 Regional Disparities

There are also significant regional disparities in terms of poverty. HIES data indicate that poverty levels were much more severe in western region Rajshahi (61%), than the southern region Barisal (40%) and central region Dhaka (45%). There is considerable district-level variation in poverty, as suggested by the spatial variation in agricultural wage data as well as various indicators of social deprivations such as illiteracy and child mortality.<sup>9</sup> Progress in poverty reduction was also unequal across regions, with rapid progress in Dhaka compared to Chittagong where there has been no real change in poverty levels. The rapid reduction in poverty in Dhaka Division (as distinct from Dhaka City) is not surprising, given its importance as the administrative, political, and financial centre of the country. In fact, one of the likely reasons why poverty in Dhaka Division did not decline even more may have been the influx of poor migrants from other parts of the country. Various attempts have been made to construct a spatial poverty map, which indicates pockets of severe distress in unfavourable agro-ecological environments, especially in low-lying districts with vulnerability to river erosions. There is a considerable interface between the persistence of chronic poverty and unfavourable agricultural environments (e.g. salinity-prone, flood-prone, river-erosion prone, drought-prone areas). Poverty and social deprivations tend to be higher in the case of the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and other parts of the country.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3: Poverty Rate by Division****Table 2: Poverty Gap ( $p_1$ ) Squared Poverty Gap ( $p_2$ )**

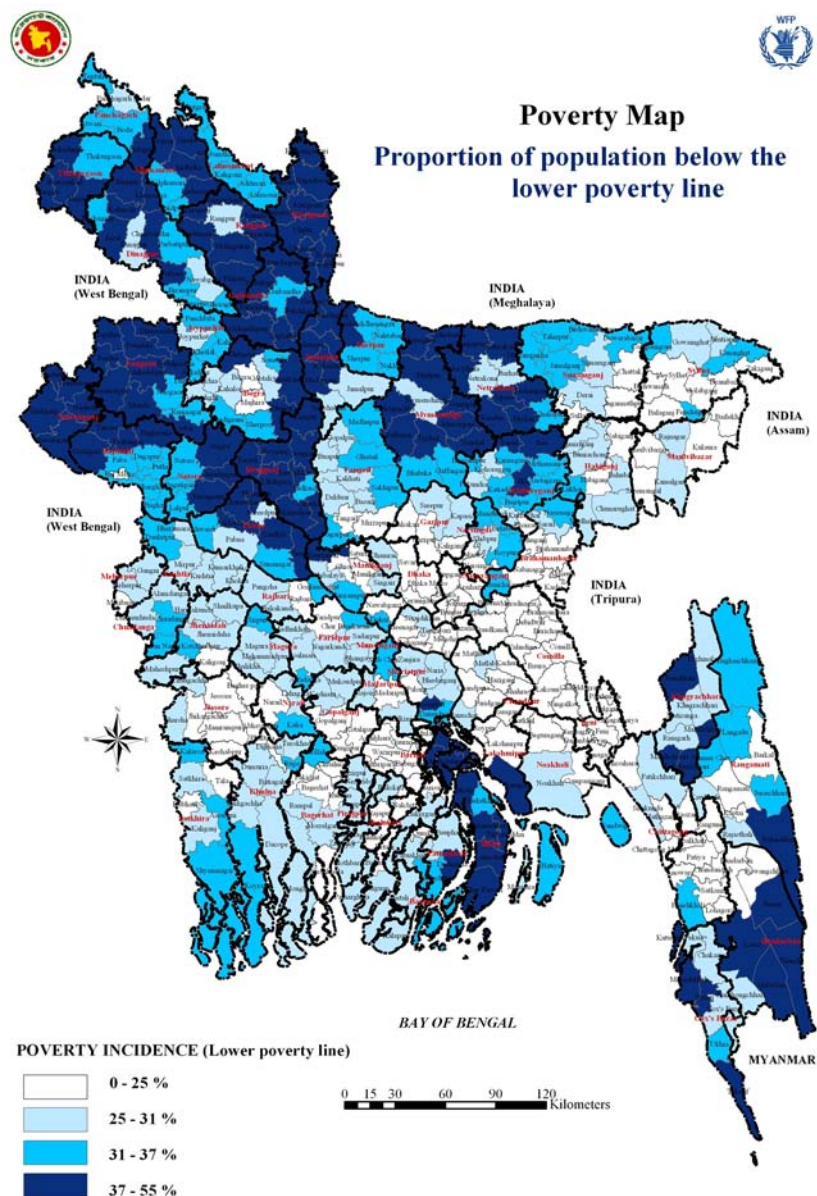
	Lower Poverty Line						Upper Poverty Line					
	Poverty Gap ( $p_1$ )			Squared Poverty Gap ( $p_2$ )			Poverty Gap ( $p_1$ )			Squared Poverty Gap ( $p_2$ )		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
National	7.3	8.2	3.8	2.3	2.6	1.2	12.9	13.8	9.5	4.5	4.8	3.4
Barisal	5.3	5.4	4.2	1.4	1.4	1.4	8.9	8.8	9.8	2.8	2.7	3.8
Chittagong	4.8	4.8	4.9	1.4	1.3	1.6	11.5	11.6	11.1	3.9	3.9	4.0
Dhaka	7.0	9.3	2.1	2.2	3.0	0.5	11.5	13.8	6.6	3.8	4.5	2.2
Khulna	6.5	6.6	5.8	1.7	1.7	1.8	12.7	12.6	13.3	4.2	4.0	5.1
Rajshahi	11.5	12.2	7.0	4.0	4.2	2.4	17.7	18.1	14.6	6.9	7.0	5.9

Source: HIES 2000, BBS cited in Bangladesh Economic Review 2003 (pgs. 147-148)

### 2.1.2 “Breakeven” Households

There are currently 25 million “breakeven” households in Bangladesh. These are households that are borderline non-poor who lack sufficient resources to withstand sudden shocks and for whom falling below the poverty line is a daily reality. The vulnerable non-poor can descend into poverty due to illness, disaster or unanticipated fluctuations in output prices. The latter has assumed particular importance in recent years with rapid crop and agricultural diversification taking place in various parts of the country, especially after 1999. While an increase in the share of breakeven households represents graduation from poverty, it is success in a very limited sense as uncertainties mark the sustainability of the progress in poverty reduction.<sup>11</sup> Limitations in the scale and scope of job creation and the lack of broad based social protection and social safety net schemes further exacerbate the vulnerability of populations that straddle the poverty line and who lack access to many of the opportunities and resources available only to the hardcore poor.

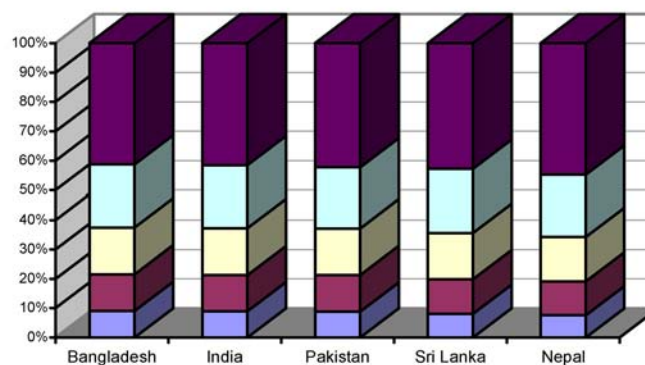
Figure 4: Proportion of Population below the Lower Poverty Line



### 2.1.3 Income Inequality

There has been a significant increase in income inequality during the 1990s. Prior to 1991/92 there were minor variations in the level of consumption expenditure inequality with the Gini coefficient for urban areas of 0.30-0.32, compared to 0.25-0.26 for rural areas.<sup>12</sup> During the course of the 1990s however, the Gini coefficient for urban areas increased to 0.41 in 2000 and to 0.31 in rural areas. As a result, the gap between the bottom 5 percent and the top 5 percent of the population has widened significantly. In 1995/96 the income accruing to the top five percent of the households was 23.62 percent while income share of the lowest five percent was 0.88 percent implying an income differential of 27. By 2000, the differential had increased to 46 (30.6:0.67). In rural areas, the richest-poorest ratio in 2000 was 35.7 compared to 19.73 in 1995/96. In urban areas this ratio increased to 53.4 in 2000 from 32.8 in 1995/96.<sup>13</sup> This has translated into significant differences between the rich and poor with respect to access to health, nutrition and education.<sup>14</sup> The sources of rising inequality are linked with the uneven spread of economic and social opportunities, unequal distribution of assets especially in respect of human capital and financial capital, growing disparity between urban and rural areas as well as between developed and underdeveloped areas. This requires prioritising the access of the poor, especially the extreme poor, to human and financial capital, and other forms of assets. Bridging household capability, on the one hand, and policy and market opportunity, on the other, will be a central part of the strategic thinking to operationalise the idea of pro-poor economic growth.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 5: Regional Comparison of Share of Income / Consumption by Quintiles**



**Table 3: Income Differential between Highest and Lowest Quintile**

	National		Rural		Urban	
	2000	1995/96	2000	1995/96	2000	1995/96
<b>Lowest Quintile</b>	4.97	5.71	5.63	6.49	4.51	5.12
<b>Highest Quintile</b>	55.02	50.08	51.12	45.81	57.66	52.34

Source: BER 2003

### 2.1.4 Gender Dimensions of Poverty

A number of studies indicate that women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty in Bangladesh. The incidence of ultra and extreme poverty is higher for Female-Headed Households (FHH) than male-headed households and it is estimated that over 95 percent of FHH in Bangladesh fall below the poverty line.<sup>16</sup> Female-headed households make up 25 percent of all rural landless households despite being less than 10 percent of households.<sup>17</sup> The emergence of female-headed households is linked with the erosion of family support as manifested in a higher incidence of marital instability and fewer adult family members, particularly male wage-earners members, than is the case in male-headed households. Almost three quarters of female household heads are divorced or widowed compared to a fraction (2%) of male heads. The family size of FHH is much smaller than their male counterparts (3.3 versus 4.4). Income levels in FHH are significantly lower than that of male-headed households. Women heads spent three fifths of their income on food as opposed to half by male heads. Indebtedness is higher among female heads (60% versus 50%) than male heads as is the average amount of outstanding loans. Higher incidence of borrowing to meet a crisis such as death, accident, theft, disability, and payment of dowry for daughter's marriage is further evidence of women's greater vulnerability relative to men.<sup>18</sup>

There are a number of reasons for these disparities. Women lack access to critical economic inputs like land, employment and fair wages. Their health and nutrition needs are not given adequate attention at either the State or household level. Poor women lack sufficient access to education services and their participation in decision making at home and in the community is minimal. Women generally have fewer employment opportunities, less occupational mobility, fewer skills and limited access to training. Because of the greater task-specificity of their work and lower mobility, they face much sharper seasonal fluctuations in employment and earnings. Another gender dimension of poverty concerns the intra-household allocation of food and resources, which tend to favour men over women. Disparities in nutritional intake and medical care favour boys and have a direct impact on the lower survival chances of girls in South Asia. This intra-household disparity correlates very closely with poverty levels.

### 2.1.5 Gaps and Challenges

This brief analysis of the overall poverty and inequality rates paints a mixed picture. On the one hand, it is clear that Bangladesh has made significant progress in terms of achieving macroeconomic stability and promoting growth, which in turn has had a positive impact on poverty rates. Despite these significant achievements in terms of reducing poverty, much will need to be done to achieve the MDG target of halving the proportion of poor and the hungry and malnourished. There are 63 million poor people -- the third largest number of poor people, after China and India -- and it must be recognized that the situation is compounded by natural demographic factors.

It is important to look further at specific manifestations of poverty including income inequality, which continues to rise and the serious regional disparities in poverty rates. This would suggest that the pro-poor nature of the growth path remains open to question. Several layers of economic and social deprivations can be identified within the broad rubric of poverty. This includes a heterogeneous mix of identities, including elderly poor, disabled people, female and child-headed households, people without homestead, socially marginalised ethnicities, deprived castes, and those engaged in dying occupational groups, to name a few. Multiple and overlapping vulnerabilities such as the length duration in poverty, often spanning generations, the negative relationship between vulnerable ecology and chronic social disadvantages, and very high level of consumption short-falls and food insecurity make a compelling case for the need to develop more ambitious and aggressive strategies that can be implemented effectively if Bangladesh is to achieve the MDGs within the next decade.

The question of social protection is inextricably linked with the need to minimise distributive conflicts arising out of the process of volatile economic growth and to maintain a decent rate of poverty reduction by limiting the extent of income turbulence. Bangladesh has a long history of social safety nets -- Food For Work (FFW) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) -- which have been found to be effective in dealing with emergencies and routine crises. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement. Concerns have been voiced over the forms of transfers as well as over the extent of avoidable leakages. Reaching the poorer areas has often been difficult, and there are persistent pockets of seasonal distress whose developmental concerns remain unaddressed.

## 2.2 Macroeconomic Overview

Through the adoption and implementation of sound policies and strategies, Bangladesh has managed to sustain a large measure of economic stability and macroeconomic growth. Throughout the 1990s, the economy grew by an average of almost five percent per year and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita has grown steadily from US\$273 in 1990/91 to US\$441 in 2002/03 (US\$1400 in PPP).<sup>19</sup> There has also been a gradual shift in the composition of the economy away from agriculture towards manufacturing and services. The share of agriculture in GDP has decreased from 29 percent in 1990-91 to around 23 percent in 2002/03 and services now constitute over 50 percent of GDP. In spite of these trends, the agriculture sector remains the single largest employer in Bangladesh. However, best estimates from the GOB and the World Bank suggest that economic growth will have to average closer to seven percent per annum if Bangladesh is to reduce by half the number of

people living below a dollar a day by 2015.<sup>20</sup> This section looks briefly at a number of macroeconomic indicators and focuses on three key areas -- public finance, aid utilisation and international trade -- that underpin the country's ability to address the challenges in health, education and employment creation in both rural and urban Bangladesh.

**Table 4: Selected Macroeconomic Indicators**

Indicator	92/93	93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	Ave.	
GDP growth rate (%)	4.6	4.1	4.9	4.6	5.4	5.2	4.9	5.9	5.3	4.4	5.3	4.96	
GDP per capita (US\$)	280	285	314	330	345	354	362	368	361	389	441	348	
Percentage of GDP													
Savings	Domestic	12.3	13.1	13.1	14.7	15.9	17.4	17.7	17.9	18.0	18.2	18.2	16.05
	National	18.0	18.8	19.1	20.0	20.7	21.8	22.3	23.1	22.4	23.4	23.7	21.21
Investment	Total	17.9	18.4	19.1	20.7	20.7	21.6	22.2	23.0	23.1	23.1	23.2	21.18
	Public	6.5	6.6	6.7	6.4	7.0	6.4	6.7	7.4	7.2	6.4	6.7	6.73
	Private	11.5	11.8	12.4	12.4	13.7	15.3	15.5	15.6	15.8	16.8	16.5	14.3
Budget	Total Revenue	9.1	9.2	9.8	9.2	9.6	9.5	9.0	8.5	9.6	10.2	10.3	9.45
	Tax Revenue	7.3	7.1	7.9	7.3	7.9	7.7	7.4	6.8	7.8	7.8	8.3	7.57
	Total Expenditure	13.0	15.0	14.4	13.9	13.3	12.9	13.6	14.5	14.8	14.9	14.5	14.07
Overall Budget Deficit (-)	3.8	5.8	4.6	4.7	3.7	3.4	4.6	6.1	5.1	4.7	4.2	4.61	
Imports	12.7	12.4	15.4	16.9	16.9	17.1	17.5	17.8	19.9	18.0	18.6	16.65	
Exports	7.4	7.5	9.1	9.5	10.4	11.7	11.6	12.2	13.7	12.6	12.6	10.75	
US\$ Millions													
Foreign Exchange Reserves	2,121	2,765	3,070	2,039	1,719	1,739	1,523	1,602	1,307	1,583	2,470	1,994.36	
FDI US\$ million						190	180	280	79	52	121		

Source: Bangladesh Economic Review (BER) 2003 Statistical Appendices. FDI data from UNCTAD World Investment Report, 2004

### 2.2.1 Public Finance

Despite broadening the tax base and placing increased emphasis on revenue collection, there has been limited success in increasing domestic resource mobilisation, which is particularly significant in light of declining aid transfers. Total revenue -- tax and non-tax -- grew from 7.3 percent of GDP in 1992/93 to 8.3 percent in 2002/03.<sup>21</sup> Thus, while there has been some improvement in revenue generation, it still falls far short of requirements and lags behind that of other countries in the region where revenues average approximately 15 percent of GDP. Revenue generation in Bangladesh is one third that of the developed world.<sup>22</sup> It is, therefore, clear that greater efforts must be made to generate domestic revenues to sustain social and economic development and to make the necessary increases in public investment in health and education to meet the MDGs..

The sectoral allocation of development spending has undergone significant changes in the last two decades, reflecting the changing developmental role of the government.<sup>23</sup> Allocations have fallen appreciably for a number of sectors most notably, industry, water resources, energy, and agriculture. In the case of the industry sector, government allocations have fallen from a high of 11.6 percent in the period 1986-90 to just over 1.24 percent in 2000 as part of a policy of disinvestment from state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The Government has also begun to withdraw from directly productive sectors to focus on the provision of public goods in the form of education, health, physical infrastructure, and rural development.<sup>24</sup> A number of points are worth noting: First, the shift towards investments in health and education will result in the continued improvement in human development *only* if quality and equity are emphasised. Despite an increasing proportion of expenditure on social programmes, the health and education sectors continue to be plagued by problems in targeting, leakage, and policy continuity. Second, further attention needs to be devoted to the distribution of resources in terms of their impact on poverty and through the lens of pro-poor budget allocations.<sup>25</sup> Third, and perhaps most significant in the long run, attention needs to be given to the extent to which the private sector will be able to pick up the slack left by the shift in government spending



priorities and fulfil the same employment generation imperatives that have guided past investment. All three concerns speak directly to serious questions regarding the governance capacity in Bangladesh.

**Table 5: Sectoral Shares in Development Expenditure (%)**

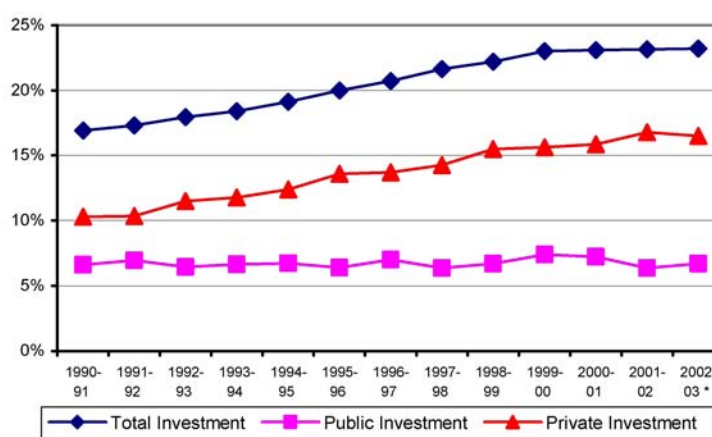
	80/81-84/85	85/86-89/90	90/91-94/95	95/96-99/00
Agriculture	13.09	5.48	5.93	4.72
Rural Development	3.51	2.59	5.40	9.14
Water Resources	13.99	12.63	8.76	7.16
Industry	9.57	11.60	1.59	1.24
Energy	21.87	23.33	17.74	17.08
Transport & Communication	15.34	10.71	18.82	21.96
Physical planning & housing	5.32	3.77	5.48	5.50
Education	3.97	4.40	8.14	13.08
Health and Family Planning	5.18	4.71	7.73	8.04
Others	7.47	17.45	21.60	12.10

Source: Statistical Appendices of World Bank (1991, 1995) and GOB (2002) cited in S. R. Osmani et al, "The Macroeconomics of Poverty Reduction: The Case Study of Bangladesh", UNDP September 2003

### 2.2.2 Savings and Investment

Major reforms are necessary to raise the savings rate as a percent of GDP, specifically by promoting thrift through a wider network of institutions that can attract individual savings and business surpluses. For this, Bangladesh will require the financial sector and the capital markets to play a crucial role in engaging in effective intermediation that converts domestic savings into private sector investments. Although there has been a steady increase in domestic savings, the rate of growth has been slow. In FY 1992/93 the domestic and national savings as percentage of GDP were 12.3 and 18.0 percent respectively which increased to 18.2 and 23.7 percent in FY 2002/03. It is worth noting however, that savings rates, which ten years ago were among the lowest in the region, are now above average, behind only India, Bhutan and the Maldives.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, savings rates are still considered low and an obstacle to achieving the seven to eight percent growth rate necessary to meet the MDGs. One potential source of investible capital that remains largely untapped is the savings accumulated by Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs).

**Figure 6: Investment as % of GDP**



The relatively low rates of savings have translated into limited growth in investment over the last fifteen years. In FY 1992/93, the rate of total investment was 17.9 percent of GDP in which the shares of public and private sector were 6.5 percent and 11.5 percent respectively. The rate of national investment has increased to 23.2 percent of GDP in FY 2002/03 with the bulk of growth (16.5%) coming from private sector contributions compared to 6.7 percent growth in public investment.<sup>27</sup> The coming decade will require a vigorous effort to raise the revenue-GDP ratio in

Bangladesh. This will require a shift away from the current dependence on import taxes towards the gradual expansion of the VAT net to include high-revenue-yielding retail trade along with expansion and simplification of direct taxes to increase revenues without deterring business growth.

The lack of capital -- especially the rate of accumulation of physical, human and social capital -- is clearly one of the binding constraints for development in Bangladesh. There has been some movement toward the development of venture capital funds and investment in business enterprises directly tied to the activities of group members -- Grameen Check and BRAC's handicraft outlet Aarong being the best known examples -- but to date that there has been little attempt to link these to formal financial markets and investors. Investment in physical capital must be balanced and supported by adequate investment in human capital -- literacy, health and nutrition -- to eradicate poverty and to increase employment opportunities. This needs to be backed by measures to strengthen social capital, governance and institutions and by policies which encourage entrepreneurial innovation, transfer of technology, marketing and management expertise. These would need to be reinforced by actions, which exploit positive externalities resulting from trade liberalization and foreign investment.

### 2.2.3 Aid Utilisation

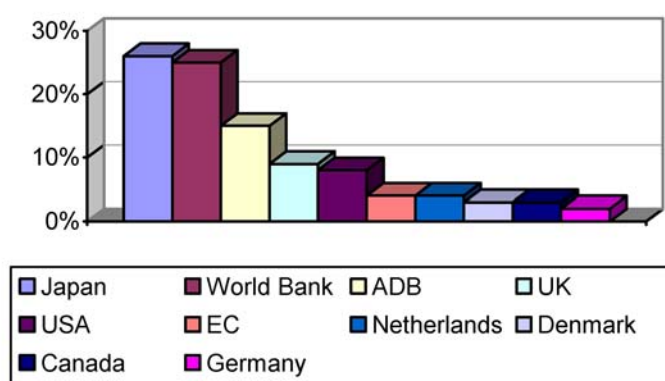
Bangladesh has made notable progress towards reducing its dependence on foreign aid in both relative and absolute terms. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Bangladesh received around US\$2 billion in foreign aid annually, or 8 percent of GDP.<sup>28</sup> Today, aid flows make up around 1.9 percent of GDP. In contrast overseas remittances, which have been increasing by an average 26 percent per annum, contribute approximately 6.4 percent of GDP and 15 percent of export earnings.<sup>29</sup>

Bangladesh received the equivalent of US\$913 million or US\$6.3 per capita in overseas development aid (ODA) in 2002, with Japan the largest donor followed by the International Development Association and the ADB.<sup>30</sup> Aid channelled through NGOs -- which is not included in government figures -- totalled US\$250 million in 2000.<sup>31</sup> Much of the aid has yet to be disbursed due to bureaucratic delays and the inability of the Government to raise matching funds. Over 90

percent of aid now takes the form of long-term loans, which has led to a decrease in the debt-GDP ratio from 36.1 percent in 1999 to 33 percent in 2000.<sup>32</sup> Over 70 percent of total ODA has been directed towards specific MDG targets, most notably trade, transport and hunger.<sup>33</sup> Foreign resources are expected to underwrite about 51 percent of the Annual Development Plan (ADP) in FY04, with the balance coming from domestic sources.<sup>34</sup> The Ministry of Finance has further indicated that aid projects will be evaluated for their impact on poverty alleviation.

However, there continue to be significant obstacles to ensuring the effective utilisation of aid flows in Bangladesh. First, the introduction of the new public procurement policies designed to limit the scope for corruption in the implementation of foreign funded projects has created disincentives to spend. Second, the inability to meet obligations agreed to during previous aid cycles has seriously constrained the country's access to additional foreign aid in the pipeline.<sup>35</sup> Third, the centralised project planning and approval process coupled with confusion relating to the state of the sector-wide approach has made the utilisation of resources more time consuming. Finally, the state of uncertainty pervading the public administration against a backdrop of growing political confrontation has resulted in the reluctance on the part of key government personnel to take action. It is therefore

Figure 7: ODA Disbursements by Donor (2002)

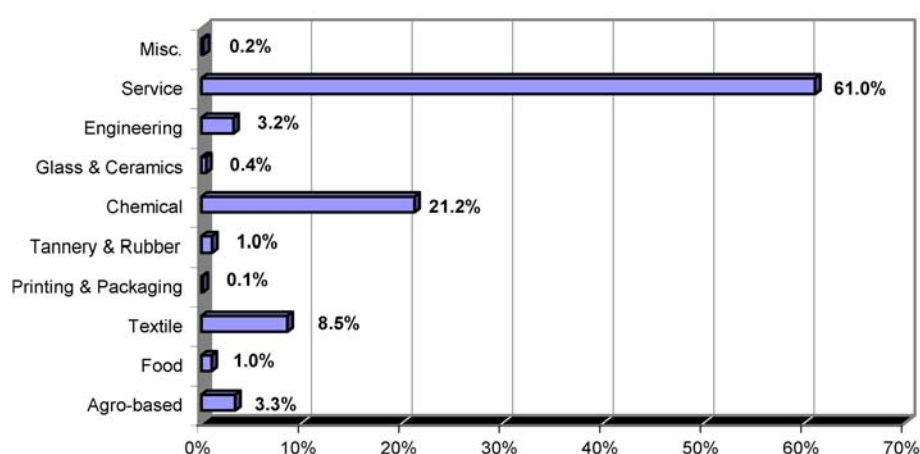


clear that to effectively handle a larger ADP, decentralisation of development administration is a necessary prerequisite.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2.4 Foreign Direct Investment

Bangladesh has few limitations to foreign equity participation and offers benefits to investors such as cheap and abundant labour. However, inadequate basic infrastructure, the slow pace of privatisation, an inefficient financial system, and an uncertain political climate discourage investment. The lack of transparency in Bangladesh's trade regime with regards to the application of trade and trade-related measures, such as customs administration, tariff concessions, advance income tax on imports and exports, and the regulatory framework result in corruption and increased costs of doing business in Bangladesh.

Figure 8: Sector-wise FDI 1971-2002



Nonetheless, recent reforms in fiscal management, governance, state-owned enterprises, banking, telecommunications, and energy have shown encouraging results. From a trickle in the 1980s, inflows of private FDI rose to nearly US\$280 million in fiscal year 1999-2000 the bulk of which went to the power sector.<sup>37</sup> However, recent performance has been less promising with FDI flows for 2001 and 2002 estimated at US\$79 million and US\$51 million respectively.<sup>38</sup> Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows have also supported infrastructure, energy, and export-oriented manufacturing. In 2002, 44 percent of FDI went into the manufacturing sector mostly concentrated in the EPZs.<sup>39</sup> An independent review of the Bangladesh economy does, however, suggest that FDI levels are once again picking up and are estimated to have reached US\$78 million in the first ten months of 2004.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, FDI made up just 2.4 percent of GDP compared to 5.1 percent for India and an average of 37 percent for South and South-East Asia.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, with the exception of investments in the RMG sector, questions remain on the employment generating impact of FDI in Bangladesh. This is borne out by the fact that up to June 2003, a total of \$634 million had been invested in the EPZs resulting in the creation of 128,917 jobs, of which fully 86 percent were in RMG-related fields.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, industries with labour absorption potential, such as agro-processing and paper products, attracted US\$1.35 million in investment and created less than 500 new jobs.

### 2.2.5 International Trade

Bangladesh has taken important steps towards opening up its economy by reducing tariffs and other barriers consistent with the Uruguay Round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations. New regulations now make it easier for firms to import raw materials for export-related production. However, Bangladesh's export performance remains mixed and vulnerable to external shocks, such as the events of 11 September 2001.<sup>43</sup> A combination of weakened external competitiveness, power shortages and disruption at the Chittagong port in 1999 saw the rate of

growth fall to 2.9 percent before recovering to 8.03 percent in 2000. In 2001, exports actually experienced negative growth of 7 percent before recovering again in FY03 to 9.4 percent.<sup>44</sup> This led to a decline in foreign exchange reserves which peaked at US\$3 billion in 1994/95 before falling to just over US\$1.3 billion in 2001. Foreign exchange reserves currently stand at US\$3.23 billion.<sup>45</sup> Remittances by expatriate Bangladeshis continue to constitute an important source of foreign exchange

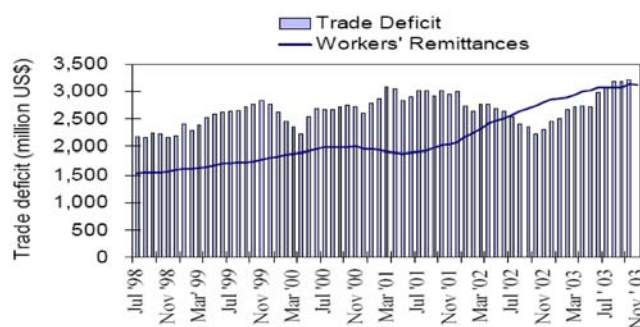
for the country and have helped bridge Bangladesh's trade deficit (see Figure 9). Bangladeshis working abroad sent home approximately US\$24.7 billion between 1984/85 and 2002/03 with just over US\$3 billion received in 2002/03 alone. However, an increased restriction on the movement of persons is an emerging concern not only in terms of the trade deficit but also in terms of contributions to household incomes.

Despite solid growth in the export sector, significant questions exist about its sustainability in the medium term due in part to the fact that Bangladesh's export base remains narrow and undiversified. Three-fourths of Bangladesh's export earnings come from readymade garments (RMG) and knitwear, which grew by 9.8 percent and 25.4 percent respectively during the first nine months of 2004. Export of chemical products (18.8%), leather (7.8%), tea (11.3%) and frozen foods (13.1%) also experienced modest to high growth. The negative growth in the export of raw jute (-9.5%) and jute goods (-3.8%) raises particular concern, given that both have relatively high labour absorptive capacities which are seen as essential for poverty alleviation in Bangladesh. The bulk of export growth, however, is based on volume of sales rather than an increase in average prices for export commodities, which according to independent analysis has not yet recovered to 1996 levels.

There are already signs that the continued expansion of sales, especially to the US -- the largest market for the RMG sector -- will be difficult to sustain. Export of woven garments to the US declined by 10.4 percent to US\$1012.8 million, while the export of knit-RMG declined 36.2 percent. This trend will be further exacerbated with the expiration of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) that has given Bangladesh preferential access to US markets and there is likely to be a significant drop in earnings over the short to medium term. Any decline in the RMG sector will also have significant spill over effects on the 15 million people who work in banking, transport, insurance, packaging, real estate, utility, and consumer goods, sectors that depend on the industry indirectly.<sup>46</sup> In order to be able to compete successfully in the post-MFA era, the RMG industry will have to take measures to improve its productivity and diversify into higher value-added products. While it is likely that larger firms will remain competitive, evidence from 2001 suggests that small sub-contracting firms will be unable to survive and will either merge with larger firms or go out of business altogether. In either scenario, it is clear that the restructuring will entail significant job losses and will have major implications for human development in Bangladesh. In spite of the low wage rates, the RMG industry has nonetheless played an important role in the reduction of poverty and the financial empowerment of women in their domestic relationships.<sup>47</sup> The absence of state financed social security or unemployment benefits may also result in a rapid increase in poverty for displaced workers. Potential indirect effects could include a rise in female poverty, lower primary school enrolment rates, decreased nutritional intake, and reduced power in household relationships. Further, there are currently few alternative industries able to absorb the laid-off garment workers.

Under the circumstances, renewed effort will need to be undertaken to broaden Bangladesh's export basket to reduce the excessive dependence on garments and to assist the RMG sector to enhance its

**Figure 9: Trade Balances and Workers Remittances 1998-2003**



competitive strength in the global market. Moreover, exporters will have to continuously upgrade their technological and scientific capacities to meet increasingly stringent quality, health, safety, environmental and production process standards in developed country markets. Bangladesh will also need to strategize on how to make best use of trade agreements such the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) signed in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2004. Greater access to other regional markets needs to be given a similar high priority in Bangladesh's trade strategy.<sup>48</sup> It is important for Bangladesh to embark on a policy of aggressive export diversification if it is to avoid a serious balance of payments crisis in the medium term.

### **2.2.6 Future Trade Policies**

These trends suggest that trade policy reform must remain a priority. The fundamental goal should be to increase competitiveness in world markets. Since outward-oriented trade strategies yield the best results in terms of income and export growth and employment and savings, future reforms should focus on further reduction of quantitative restrictions and lowering and rationalization of the tariff structure and pursuing a policy of flexible exchange rates. The net result would be an improvement in resource allocation and more competitive and efficient domestic industries ready to exploit new opportunities in a globalised market and the potential for generating high employment. Bringing human development issues and concerns into the centre of trade policy and aligning the processes and outcomes of trade integration with human development, poverty eradication, social protection and employment generation is therefore vital to achieve the MDGs. The main criteria for determining the export diversification sectors should therefore be (a) potential export performance (according to human, financial and institutional resources available); and (b) employment absorption capacity. It is also essential to cover both commodity and market diversification aspects. Commodity diversification component aims at identifying modalities to promote those goods and services that could have dynamic comparative advantages such as directed export credit schemes, confirmation (finance) house modalities to facilitate the exchange between the seller and the buyer, and export promotion facilities for small entrepreneurs.

## **2.3 Governance Structures**

### **2.3.1 Administration**

Bangladesh has a parliamentary form of government with the President as the Head of State and the Prime Minister as the Head of Government. The Constitution provides for a unicameral legislature known as the Jatiya Sangsad, or National Parliament. It comprises 345 members of whom 300 are directly elected by adult franchise, and 45 are female members elected by the Jatiya Sangsad.<sup>49</sup> The country is administratively divided into six divisions each placed under a Divisional Commissioner. Each division is sub-divided into Zilas (districts). A Deputy Commissioner heads the administration of each Zila. The 64 Zilas are further sub-divided into thanas (sub-districts) headed by the Thana Nirbahi Officer. Currently there are 490 thanas of which 30 are in metropolitan cities. Thanas are further divided into 4,451 unions where local governance is entrusted to elected bodies called Pourashavas (municipalities) in urban areas and Union Parishads in rural areas.

Elections are held on a five-year cycle and the last national elections were held in 2001.<sup>50</sup> One of Bangladesh's notable contributions in the areas of electoral democracy has been the holding of elections under the auspices of a neutral caretaker government, which has been seen as a model for other countries emerging from political instability. The advent of multi-party democracy has been one of the notable successes in Bangladesh and elections have been fiercely contested with high voter turnout. However, this success has been marred by the highly confrontational character of politics and by successive opposition parties boycotting Parliament. As a result, parliamentary procedures are poorly understood and oversight functions are not performed effectively. While democratisation has created more public debate on the issues and is enabling a more plural civil society, its impact on promoting an accountable and responsive governance system remains limited.

### 2.3.2 Judicial System

The judicial system in Bangladesh is based on the British model with a Supreme Court made up of the Appellate and High Court Divisions. Criminal and civil courts operate at the Zila level and Grameen (Village) Courts are in the process of being instituted at the village level. Court dockets remains backlogged with cases often taking many years to resolve. Equality in front of the law remains tied to the level of influence and ability to pay, which discriminates against the poor and marginalised. To overcome some of these obstacles, local NGOs working on legal right issues have promoted the use of local dispute resolution mechanisms (such as mediation) as an alternative. Questions have been raised on the use of the legal system as a means of intimidation in particular.<sup>51</sup> Lower courts have become increasingly reluctant to act in cases brought by the Government and this has resulted in a long drawn out process that culminates in appearances before the High Court. The formation of the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) to ensure the separation of the judiciary and executive has been announced, though it is not clear how effective it will be with regard to a genuinely independent lower Judiciary in particular.

### 2.4 Gender

The UNDP Gender Development Index (GDI) for 2004 ranked Bangladesh 110 among 144, which represents an increase of 13 positions since 1999. This improvement can be tied in part to a number of factors relating to Bangladesh's ascendancy into the ranks of those countries considered to be of medium human development. It also reflects a reduction of the gender gap in key indicators such as life expectancy and school enrolment. Bangladesh was also one of the first developing countries to establish a Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1978, three years after the Mexico Conference. Concerted efforts by national and international development agencies, and the Government's own commitment to both national and international pledges, paved the way for the enhancement of women's position and status in society. The Government has already prepared a National Policy for Advancement of Women and made some noteworthy progress in implementing the National Action Plan, prepared in response to the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA).<sup>52</sup>

However, the relatively low score reflects a continued inequality with respect to literacy rates (31.4% compared to 50.3% for men) and real GDP which was approximately 56 percent that of men.<sup>53</sup> Of the 78 countries for which a Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) was calculated, Bangladesh ranked 76th.<sup>54</sup> This reflects the continued low levels of female representation in government, in decision-making roles and in ownership of economic assets, which translates into a significant gender disparity in both income and human poverty, especially at the lower end of income distribution. The female disadvantage in child mortality has remained persistent, while the female-male gap in acute malnutrition (as measured by the incidence of severe stunting and wasting) has increased over the past decade.<sup>55</sup> On average, the incidence of severe malnutrition among girls under five is two to four percent higher than among boys. Similarly, female-headed households are most likely to be living in extreme poverty. Overall, Bangladesh's performance with regard to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 3) remains mixed. There has been a narrowing of the gender gap in most MDG social indicators especially in the education sector, where as a result of targeted government policies, female enrolment rates in primary and secondary schools exceeds those for males. However, in other areas such as economic and political participation and adult literacy, much work still remains to be done.

**Table 6: Trends in Reduction in Anti-Female Bias**

Indicators	1972	1980	1990	1997	2002
Female-Male Ratio	0.93	0.94	1.06	1.06	1.06
Female Literacy (% of Male)	33	40	46	71	62
Female Primary School Enrolment (% of Male)	50	62	85	87	
Female Secondary School Enrolment (% of Male)	30	38	50	54	

Source: World Bank 1997-2000; World Bank 2000

## 2.5 Natural Environment

Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world and makes up eight percent of the 600,000 sq. m. Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin, funnelling nearly all the outflow into the Bay of Bengal.<sup>56</sup> This brings with it a yearly cycle of floods and silt loads that constitute the natural base of soil revitalisation and traditional agriculture and fisheries. At the same time, it also makes Bangladesh prone to natural disasters such as cyclones and floods. In rural areas, the poor depend on common property resources such as open water fisheries, wetland based flora and fauna, and government land and forests for a significant part of their livelihoods. Foraging for food, fodder and building materials contributes to more than 15 percent of the income of a rural household.<sup>57</sup> Women tend to be the primary collectors and managers of biomass goods, and play a major role in managing natural resources -- such as soil, water, forests, and energy.

Major environmental concerns of Bangladesh include arsenic contamination of shallow aquifers, air pollution in urban cities, river water pollution near industrial estates, solid waste disposal, degradation of agricultural soil due to inappropriate use of fertilizer, soil erosion, salinity of soil in coastal zones, and deforestation. The underlying causes of these various challenges -- which will be discussed in more detail in later sections -- cover a range of issues including the promotion of inappropriate policies, a lack of effective regulation of industries and the marginalisation of vulnerable populations. This last point is particularly significant given that much of the growth in recent year, especially in the agriculture sector, has been driven by technological innovation and adaptation. Insufficient attention has been given to the impact of these changes on common property resources and on poor people whose conventional right of use of such resources are most affected.

### 2.5.1 Climate Change

The carbon dioxide emission in Bangladesh is insignificant compared to overall global consumption patterns. The aerosol sector phase out in Bangladesh took place in 2002 and recovery of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) started in 2003 under the National ODS Phase-out Plans prepared and approved by Montreal Protocol Multilateral Fund with mixed results. The use of CFC-11 for instance went down from 88.61 metric tons in 1995 to 2.32 metric tons in 2002. In contrast, HCFC-22 usage increased from 35.17 metric ton to 132.27 metric ton. For the ODS Phase-out Plan about 1000 technicians in the refrigeration sector has been trained so far. About 150 Customs officers have been trained to combat illegal trading of ODS and 300 policy makers including NGOs, journalists, and relevant personnel underwent sequence of courses regarding ODS phase out in Bangladesh.<sup>58</sup> A continuous monitoring programme is essential to evaluate carbon dioxide as well as GHG emissions and for the development of any plan for mitigation of health risks caused by such emissions.

### 2.5.2 Biodiversity

The depletion of biodiversity is the result of various kinds of human interventions that result in the destruction and degradation of land, forest and aquatic habitats. These include agriculture, forestry, fisheries, urbanization, industry, transport, tourism, energy, chemicals and minerals. Deforestation and destruction of natural reserve forests in the CHT have been intensified by development activities including dam, highway and road construction and other infrastructure development. In the fisheries sector, shrimp cultivation has become a major concern and has caused serious environmental damage. The physical loss and modification of aquatic habitats for fish, prawn, turtle and other aquatic organisms are said to be the major factors involved in the depletion of fish varieties. Such shrinkage has also been the result of physical structures and drainage systems that have been constructed in Bangladesh in an effort to control floods, cyclones and other natural disasters.<sup>59</sup> The Government has responded to this by creating sanctuaries and declaring certain regions to be ecologically critical areas and has adopted a management plan to conserve resources.

### 2.5.3 Environmental Policies

While the Government of Bangladesh has ratified over 18 International Conventions, Treaties and Protocols on sustainable management of the environment, concrete action has been less forthcoming and not well coordinated. This is further constrained by the lack of reliable baseline data, monitoring

and evaluation resources to preserve and promote the natural environment in Bangladesh. The 2003 I-PRSP aims to integrate goals of environmental conservation into national poverty reduction strategies by drawing upon the Environmental Policy 1992, the National Environmental Management Plan (NEMAP) 1996, the Dhaka Declaration 2000, and the Declaration of the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002.

**Table 7: Selected Environmental Indicators**

Indicators	1990	2000
Land area covered by forests (%)	9.0	10.2
GDP per unit of energy use (PPP US\$ per kg of oil equivalent)	8.1	10.8
Carbon dioxide emissions per capita (metric tons)	0.1	0.2
Consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (ODP metric tons)	195	805

Source: UNDP Human Development Report selected years

## 2.6 Disaster Vulnerability

Bangladesh has long been associated with extreme vulnerability to natural disasters. However, due to significant investments in disaster preparedness including the development of early warning systems and the creation of a wide network of flood and cyclone shelters, there has been a significant decrease in the number of lives lost each year.<sup>60</sup> However, natural disasters are still responsible for significant property losses with major consequences for the poor. According to Government estimates, during the period 1996-2000, natural disasters claimed, on average, 530 lives and Taka 23.6 billion (US\$0.45) in economic losses per year.

The loss of property, economic assets and livelihoods associated with natural disasters are felt most strongly by the poor. While the incidence of poverty varies across regions, areas that are prone to natural disasters are found to have higher incidences of poverty. The main reason is that natural disasters have a direct bearing on the rural economy, which is intertwined with agricultural production and has resulted in the marginalisation of resource-poor farmers. Furthermore, riverbank erosion causes destruction of property, loss of assets and displacement of thousands of people from their homes each year.<sup>61</sup> A study has found that forced migration due to erosion occurs due to a lack of assets and other resources that would enable affected populations to withstand sudden shocks. Furthermore, the study found that almost without exception, migrants lacked the skills and education that would enable them to secure employment in urban areas leading to further impoverishment. There is scope for continued improvement in terms of disaster mitigation and recovery that is targeted to the most vulnerable populations. Effective disaster management calls for a reliable and timely disaster warning and dissemination system. Risk minimisation activities identified for addressing crucial elements of disaster management include prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and development. In order to design these appropriate institutional and functional arrangements, the GOB is framing a disaster management policy along with a detailed plan of action. This would represent a shift in perspective from crisis management -- i.e. post-disaster coping strategies -- to risk management.

**Table 8: Comparison of Flood Damage**

	1988	1998	2004
Inundated Area (%)	61	68	40-60
Duration of Flood (days)	23	72	21
Persons Affected (millions)	45	31	30
Total Deaths (persons)	2335	918	321

Source: Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre 1988 and 1998 data. Information for the 2004 flood was gathered from the 'Disaster and Emergency Response' draft assessment report on Monsoon Floods



## 2.7 Urbanisation

Target 11 under MDG 7 calls for achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.<sup>62</sup> Most poor people are disadvantaged and endangered by the places and physical conditions in which they live. They experience precarious shelter, problems of overcrowding, sewage and pollution, seasonal exposure to the worst conditions, insecurity of person and property, remoteness, non-existent or inadequate infrastructure, including in terms of access to drinking water, and stigma. Poor housing reflects -- and deepens -- deprivation. The urban population in Bangladesh is increasing at the rate of 4.0 percent per annum, largely attributable to rural-urban migration and approximately 25 percent of the population now live in cities. This is projected to rise to 37 percent by 2020.<sup>63</sup> Almost half the urban population lived in marginal or informal settlements with little or no rights to public services such as water, sanitation and electricity. About 26 percent of urban poor households own a dwelling unit, but only 18 percent own any land.<sup>64</sup> The majority (75%) of housing of the urban poor are built of temporary material, and on average 22 percent have access to electricity.<sup>65</sup> This high growth rate is creating tremendous pressure on urban facilities and services, including law and order, so much so that rapid urbanisation and the attendant increased poverty gaps can be said to represent among the most significant development challenges for Bangladesh over the next five years.

### Text Box 1: Waste Concern

The city of Dhaka produces 4,000 tonnes of solid waste every day -- more than 50% of which is disposed of in ways that are damaging to the environment. The World Bank forecasts that 47,000 tonnes of waste will be produced in Dhaka everyday by the year 2025. Each year the Dhaka City Corporation spends between Taka 30-40 crores on waste management logistics; each ton of waste costing on average Tk. 250.00 to handle -- environmental costs excluded. Existing dumping sites are reaching full capacity and urban waste management is increasing as a serious health and environmental issue.

The NGO, **Waste Concern**, represents an excellent example of public-private partnership and of the effectiveness of UNDP's assistance in supporting the scaling up of a key poverty alleviation initiative. Today, the organisation's 120 workers collect garbage door-to-door from 30,000 households daily, making Waste Concern completely self-reliant for its day-to-day operation. The garbage is collected and separated using labour-intensive methods. The inorganic components are sorted for recycling. The organic components are converted into nutrient rich fertilizer, which sells for Taka 2,500 per ton. Starting with 200 tons, Waste Concern is now annually supplying 700 tonnes of compost to fertilizer companies. The current demand is about 15,000 tonnes a year. The Government of Bangladesh, the Dhaka City Corporation and the Department of Public Health Engineering are replicating this model in 14 municipalities across Bangladesh. The Mayor of Dhaka has shown great interest in the composting scheme and has granted land to the NGO for a composting plant. In 2004 the Government invited Waste Concern to assist in drafting a waste management policy so that the concept could be replicated nationally.

## 2.8 HIV/AIDS

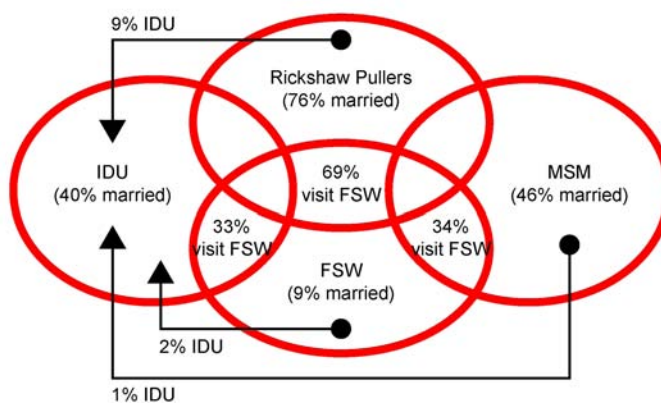
Although prevalence rates are still low in Bangladesh, HIV/AIDS is an emerging public health risk that has the potential of significant negative impact on a broad range of socio-economic development indicators unless steps are taken to contain its spread. One of the most important challenges is accurately defining an epidemic and to accurately quantify the prevalence of risk factors in Bangladesh. While the overall HIV infection rates for the five rounds of BSS carried out to date have remained below one percent, HIV prevalence among IDUs surveyed in Central A that comprises Dhaka and surrounding areas increased sharply from 1.7 percent in round 3 (2001) to 4 percent in round 4 (2002). In the fifth round BSS (2003-04), while the overall HIV positivity among IDUs in Central A remained four percent, the rate in one of the seven sample areas rose to 8.9 percent of the 157 IDUs. The 5th round BSS also shows high rates of active syphilis of 9.7 percent and 12 percent

among FSWs surveyed in Central A and in the South East respectively. Syphilis like other sexually transmitted infections is a major risk factor for HIV transmission. Given the low levels of voluntary testing, limited counselling capacity and the stigma and fear of being identified as a person living with HIV, it is likely that official HIV prevalence rates are significantly underestimated.

A number of vulnerability indicators suggest that HIV prevalence rates could dramatically spike in a relatively short space of time unless steps are taken to increase awareness and education among the general population. Bangladesh is located between India and Myanmar, two countries that have experienced rapid HIV growth rates making Bangladesh vulnerable to the spread of the virus through trans-border trade and mobility. Again, the HIV rate among intravenous drug users (IDUs) in North-Eastern Bangladesh, which lies close to the Golden Triangle that

channels up to 20 percent of the world's heroin supply, has already reached the five percent threshold that suggests an emerging epidemic with one surveyed area reporting an HIV rate as high as 8/9 percent.<sup>66</sup> In addition, there is significant internal and trans-border commercial transportation that make long-distance truck drivers among the high-risk groups. It is reported that 60 percent of long distance truck drivers have sex with commercial sex workers (CSWs) about twice a month and the majority (76.7%) indulge in unprotected sex.<sup>67</sup> Also, premarital, extramarital and male-to-male sex are far more widespread than traditionally acknowledged, and in all cases condom use is low. Studies of the sex industry identify large numbers of commercial sex workers whose customers represent all segments of society. Female sex workers (FSWs) have an average of 2-5 clients a day which means that half a million men a day run the risk of contracting HIV and passing it on to their families.<sup>68</sup> Behavioural surveys of groups monitored under sero-surveillance also find very low rates of consistent condom use: two percent for brothel and street-based FSW and four percent for hotel-based FSWs.

Figure 10: HIV Risk Associations



Bangladesh has a large population of youths and adolescents. Global and regional data show that this group is particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS due to poor access to information and lack of or inadequate youth/adolescent friendly services for the prevention and care of HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health. Adolescents growing up in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment find themselves under tremendous pressure and ill equipped to face the HIV/AIDS challenge. A UNICEF report indicates that the key social and economic problems likely to contribute to the spread of HIV, include homelessness, endemic violence against women, low status of females, inadequate sexual and reproductive health services, low levels of literacy, early age at marriage, high rates of labour migration, widespread sexual abuse of children, increasing level of drug abuse, and overall poor protection of human and legal rights.

The national response to the potential threat of HIV remains limited, partly because other challenges are considered more pressing and urgent. However, Bangladesh has only a limited window of opportunity to avoid a situation where HIV infections threaten development prospects, and the potential beneficial impact of the early introduction of treatment, care and support services as part of comprehensive early response systems to the threat cannot be overstated. Bangladesh has neither the resources nor the capacity to respond to the HIV threat once it actually reaches epidemic proportions and it is therefore particularly important for development partners to act today while the opportunity still exists to significantly alter the patterns and spread of the virus through the

general population. Urgent consideration needs to be given to the free provision of anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs in a phased manner to prevent, for example, the spread of mother-baby transmission. There are no hospitals in the country that provide delivery services to pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS. Access to affordable and confidential testing also needs to be considerably expanded. Given the large population of youths and adolescents in Bangladesh, the lack of or inadequate youth/adolescent friendly services for the prevention and care of HIV/AIDS and Reproductive Health make them a potential at-risk population.

There are over 385 NGOs and civil society actors who run programmes to raise awareness about HIV risk factors and who could act be mobilised to be at the vanguard of a well-coordinated grassroots campaign.<sup>69</sup> The campaign could promote greater understanding and tolerance for those living with HIV, support the creation and implementation of anti-discriminatory legislation that govern the treatment of HIV patients with the healthcare system or at the workplace, and reinforce efforts to promote open public dialogue around HIV.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The measures used in this study attempt to capture three aspects of poverty: incidence, depth, and severity. The *head-count index* (H), given by the percentage of the population living in households with a consumption per capita that is less than the poverty line. This can be interpreted as a measure of the “incidence” of poverty. The measure has the advantage that it is easy to interpret, but it tells us nothing about the depth or severity of poverty. The *poverty-gap index* (PG), defined by the mean distance below the poverty line as a proportion of that line (where the mean is formed over the entire population, counting the non-poor as having zero poverty gap). One can interpret this as a measure of poverty “depth.” Its disadvantage is that it is unaffected by changes in inequality among the poor. The *squared poverty-gap index* (SPG), defined as the mean of the squared proportionate poverty gaps (again the mean is formed over the entire population, counting the non-poor as having zero poverty gap). Thus the poverty gaps are weighted in aggregation, with greater weight given to larger gaps, and where the weights are simply the poverty gaps themselves. This simple change to the conventional poverty-gap index allows the index to reflect changes in the “severity” of poverty, in that it will be sensitive to inequality among the poor. In the Bangladesh context, the poverty line corresponds to 2112 calories per person per day. There are several methods for setting the poverty line. Of these, the approach which is based on costing of a given food bundle (corresponding to 2112 calories per person per day), the so-called fixed-bundle approach, is found to be better than other methods such as Food-Energy Intake (FFI).
- <sup>2</sup> While the HDI measures average achievement, the human poverty index for developing countries (HPI-1) measures *deprivations* in the three basic dimensions of human development captured in the HDI: A long and healthy life--vulnerability to death at a relatively early age, as measured by the probability at birth of not surviving to age 40. Knowledge--exclusion from the world of reading and communications, as measured by the adult illiteracy rate. A decent standard of living--lack of access to overall economic provisioning, as measured by the un-weighted average of two indicators, the percentage of the population without sustainable access to an improved water source and the percentage of children under weight for age.
- <sup>3</sup> This equates to a HPI rank of 72 compared to an overall rank of 138 for Bangladesh.
- <sup>4</sup> According to Bangladesh Human Development Report-2000 Human Poverty Index (HPI) was 61.3 in 1981-83. It came down to 34.8 in 1998-2000.
- <sup>5</sup> The Bangladesh MDG Progress Report (GOB/UNCT 2005) estimates that 49.6% of the population live below US\$1 a day.
- <sup>6</sup> Part of the explanation for this might lie in the rapid rate of urbanisation over the last 5-10 years without a concomitant improvement in livelihood prospects for the poor in urban areas. In addition, it should also be noted that the vast majority of those moving to urban areas are economic migrants who lack opportunities and assets in their community and would therefore be more likely to come from the hardcore poor.
- <sup>7</sup> BBS 1986 and 1999.
- <sup>8</sup> op. cit.
- <sup>9</sup> HIES-2000, BBS BER 2003 (pgs. 147-148)
- <sup>10</sup> Rafi, M. and Chowdhury, A. M. R. (eds.) (2000) *Counting the Hills: Assessing Development in Chittagong Hill Tracts*. University Press Ltd.: Dhaka.
- <sup>11</sup> Sen, Binayak and David Hulme (eds.) (2004) *Chronic Poverty in Bangladesh*, pg. 25.
- <sup>12</sup> Ravallion, M., and Sen, B. (1996) “When Method Matters: Monitoring Poverty in Bangladesh”, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 44: 761-792. cited in Sen and Hulme (2004) pg. 27
- <sup>13</sup> BER 2003 op. cit. pg. 152
- <sup>14</sup> Sen and Hulme (2004) op. cit. chp. 4 pg. 61
- <sup>15</sup> Sen and Hulme (2004) op. cit. pgs. 28-30
- <sup>16</sup> UNDP 1996 quoted in “Women in Bangladesh: Country Briefing Paper” ADB 2001 pg. 19
- <sup>17</sup> Other estimates -- Afsar 1997; MOWCA 1998 -- suggest that the actual proportion is closer to 20-30 percent
- <sup>18</sup> ADB 2001 op. cit
- <sup>19</sup> Bangladesh Economic Review (BER), 2003 and UNDP Human Development Report 2004.
- <sup>20</sup> Bangladesh: A National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh March 2003 pg. 34
- <sup>21</sup> Bangladesh Economic Review 2002/03, Chapter 1, Box 1.2, pg. 12, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh 2003
- <sup>22</sup> Figures cited in background paper prepared for the PRSP on domestic resource mobilisation (April 2004, Dhaka).
- <sup>23</sup> For more on the allocation and efficiency of public expenditure, see Mahmud (2002).
- <sup>24</sup> The food for work programme, which is a major poverty-alleviating programme in Bangladesh, is not included in the Development Plan. In spite of declining volume of food aid, the government has continued, and even expanded this programme.

- <sup>25</sup> For example, the benefits of investments in tertiary education tend to accrue to better off students more than students from less well off backgrounds who are underrepresented in universities and colleges.
- <sup>26</sup> Asian Development Outlook 2003, Asian Development Bank.
- <sup>27</sup> Despite notable exceptions, such as the closing of the Adamjee Jute Mills loss-making state enterprises continue to absorb a disproportionate share of public resources with losses amounting to 1.3% of GDP in 2000-01. However the GOB has attempted to substantially lower operating costs through a policy of downsizing and retrenchment.
- <sup>28</sup> Figure 1, GOB, ERD, Flow of External Resources into Bangladesh, March 2002.
- <sup>29</sup> Remittances from migrant workers, particularly in the Middle East, have been an important part of the nation's foreign exchange resources for the past decade and a half. The future volume of such remittances depends on global interest in migrant workers, and realism suggests that it is doubtful that future growth in remittances will compensate for decreases in ODA.
- <sup>30</sup> OECD 2002 <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/21/1867292.gif>
- <sup>31</sup> NGO Affairs Bureau: Flow of Foreign Grant Fund Data
- <sup>32</sup> Bangladesh Country Report, Economist Intelligence Unit 2002
- <sup>33</sup> Millennium Development Needs Assessment, Bangladesh Country Study, Begum A and Salimullah M; Millennium Secretariat and BIDS.
- <sup>34</sup> This reflects efforts to reduce the dependence on bank borrowing (public debt) which was raised in 2000-01 when the bank borrowing had reached 20.7 percent and was the subject of intense public debate.
- <sup>35</sup> For example, over 30 projects in the environment field remain in the pipeline due to the inability of the GOB to implement on-going projects in a timely manner.
- <sup>36</sup> "State of the Bangladesh Economy in the Fiscal Year 2003/04 Second Interim Report" Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Dhaka 2004.
- <sup>37</sup> UNCTAD: World Investment Report 2004 and EIU 2003.
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> Bangladesh Country Report, October 2003, EIU. The top foreign investors in 2002 included Telenor of Norway, AES and Unocal of the US, Lafarge and Total of France, TMI of Malaysia, Cemex of Mexico, Taiheyo of Japan, Holcim and Nestlé of Switzerland, and BASF of Germany, according to the BOI.
- <sup>40</sup> State of the Bangladesh Economy in the Fiscal Year 2003-2004 Second Interim Report (July 2003 - April 2004) CPD, Dhaka, 2004 pg. 42.
- <sup>41</sup> UNCTAD *op. cit.*
- <sup>42</sup> BEPZA quoted in [http://www.jetro.go.jp/bangladesh/eng/link\\_files/fdi\\_bd6.html](http://www.jetro.go.jp/bangladesh/eng/link_files/fdi_bd6.html)
- <sup>43</sup> BER 2003 chapter 6.
- <sup>44</sup> US\$6548.44 million compared to US\$5986.09 million in FY 2001/02.
- <sup>45</sup> Daily Star, 5 September 2004.
- <sup>46</sup> Hiller and Olfames 2003.
- <sup>47</sup> Khundker 2002 in Appelbaum 2002
- <sup>48</sup> To date, access to the EU, Canada, Australia and Norway has been secured. Bangladesh has also entered into negotiations on the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and is also in discussion with China, Malaysia and a number of other South East Asian countries.
- <sup>49</sup> The 14th amendment to the Constitution passed in the Parliament on 16 May 2004. The amendment provides for 45 reserved seats for women to be elected by the 300 members of the parliament and distributed among political parties based of their proportional representation in the parliament. The bill has been criticized in certain quarters on the grounds that it would not genuinely increase the involvement of women in the political system.
- <sup>50</sup> In last three major elections opposition parties came to power.
- <sup>51</sup> The filing of cases against political opponents has become common.
- <sup>52</sup> Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women with reservations [(Articles 2, 13, 9(a), and 16.1 (9c) and 16.1 (f)]. Recently, the Government withdrew the reservations on Articles 13(a) and 6.1(f). The remaining reservations are under review. Since the provisions of this Convention are not yet incorporated into national legislation, the Government is not legally bound to them.
- <sup>53</sup> UNDP Human Development Report, 2004.
- <sup>54</sup> The two countries with lower GEM scores are Yemen and Saudi Arabia.
- <sup>55</sup> PRB 2003a.
- <sup>56</sup> Gayen, P. (1998).
- <sup>57</sup> National Human Development Report 1998: BIDS and UNDP (1998).
- <sup>58</sup> Department of Environment, 2002.
- <sup>59</sup> According to the IUCN Red List of endangered species, 54 species of inland fish, 8 amphibians, 58 reptiles, 41 resident birds and 40 mammals are threatened. Among marine and migratory species, 4 fish, 5 reptiles, 6 birds and 3 mammals are threatened. In case of the plants, the Red Data Book lists about 96 seed-bearing plant species as threatened.
- <sup>60</sup> For example, in 1991 there was a devastating cyclone and tidal surge in Southern Bangladesh that resulted in the death of approximately half a million people. A similar cyclone in 1994 resulted in significant property damage but the death toll was under five thousand.
- <sup>61</sup> Hutton, D and C. Emdadul Haque (2004) Human Vulnerability, Displacement and Resettlement: Adaptation process of river-bank induced displaces in Bangladesh, Overseas Development Institute, London
- <sup>62</sup> See also CERD (art. 5), CEDAW (art. 14.2), CRC (arts. 16.1 and 27.3), Millennium Development Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability (slum dwellers).
- <sup>63</sup> Census 2001 Preliminary Report, August 2001, Dhaka, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Growth projections from The Challenge of the Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements UN Habitat 2003, Table B2, pg. 253.
- <sup>64</sup> Households may own the structure but not the land on which it is constructed.
- <sup>65</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 2.1A, pg. 10 (LFS, August 2002)
- <sup>66</sup> 5th Round Behavioural and Sero Surveillance (BSS) 2003-04
- <sup>67</sup> 4th Round Behavioural and Sero Surveillance (BSS) 2002-03
- <sup>68</sup> Working Paper for Log-frame Workshop of Next HPSP of Government of Bangladesh
- <sup>69</sup> Impact-FHI, 2003

# 3 The Right to Survival

An assessment of Bangladesh and its development challenges must begin by looking at the basic well-being of its citizens through the fulfilment of the right to survival. The analysis in this chapter will look at, among other issues, the interface between population growth, fertility and contraceptive prevalence, nutrition, and health. Particular attention will be given to the emerging issue of adolescent reproductive rights. Subsequent sections will look at trends in maternal and infant mortality rates and their relationship to nutrition, access to safe water and sanitation.

## 3.1 Population

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with an estimated 142 million people living in an area of 147,570 square kilometres. The ratio of 13 people per hectare is the highest in the world outside of city-states such as Hong Kong. This density is projected to rise to 20 people per hectare by 2020.<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh experienced rapid population growth in the post Second World War period due to improvements in public health and sharp reductions in mortality from famine and certain diseases. The population has doubled since independence in 1971. About 23.1 percent of the population is urban and 76.9 percent rural. Just over 39.4 percent of the population is below 15 years of age and half the population (49.5%) is between the ages of 15 and 49.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1.1 Growth Rates

The country has made significant strides in lowering its population growth rates from an average of 2.7 percent in the 1970s to around 1.54 percent today through successful campaigns to promote smaller families.<sup>3</sup> This reduction in population growth rates is tied in part to a significant decrease in the total fertility rate (TFR) from 6.3 in 1975 to the current rate of 3.0, which compares favourably with South Asia and other developing countries.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, even if Bangladesh attains replacement level fertility by 2006, the population will continue to increase for another two to three decades before it stabilises because of the projected rise in the number of women of reproductive age (15-49) -- currently estimated to be approximately 31 million -- and in particular adolescent girls. Demographic pressures will continue to be a serious obstacle to poverty alleviation efforts and at today's growth rates, the population is projected to reach 172 million by 2020 and is only expected to stabilise at 250 million.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 9: Population Projections**

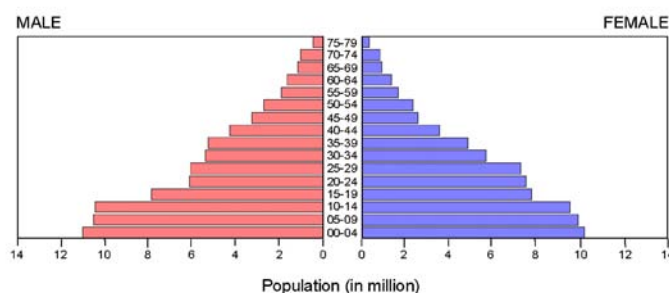
	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2015
Optimistic Scenario	131.43 M	136.08 M	139.17 M	143.03 M	146.58 M	149.93 M	157.74 M
Likely Trend	131.43 M	136.13 M	141.05 M	146.14 M	151.18 M	156.21 M	168.77 M
Pessimistic Scenario	131.43 M	136.17 M	143.93 M	150.70 M	157.74 M	163.87 M	183.01 M

Source: Compiled based on MOHFW (1996). "Strategic Directions for the Bangladesh National Family Planning Programme 1995-2005", pp. 17, 24, 33 and projections from the Bangladesh MDG Progress Report 2005

### 3.1.2 Age Structure and Life Expectancy

The age structure in Bangladesh reflects past high fertility levels with 39.4 percent (or approximately 51 million) below the age of 15, and 50 percent between the ages of 10 and 24.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, 6.2 percent of the population is above the age of 60.<sup>7</sup> There has, however, been a steady increase in life expectancy for both men and women. Until recently, the life expectancy rates for men were higher than for women (58.1:57.6 in 1996).<sup>8</sup> However, for the first time, this has shifted marginally in favour of women 60.9:60.1, which brings Bangladesh in line with the majority of other countries.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, females make up just over 49 percent of the population.<sup>10</sup> Overall, the male-female sex ratio in Bangladesh is 106.6:103.6 in rural areas and 117.2 in urban areas, which is in part due to male migration to urban areas due to a lack of employment opportunities and increased fragmentation of landholdings in rural areas.<sup>11</sup> However, the gap in sex ratios suggests significant gender-based disparities in the ability of women to fulfil their basic rights to food and medical care.

Figure 11: Population Pyramid



Source: Based on data in Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional), BBS, July 2003

Table 10: Life Expectancy Rates

Time (Year)	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2007	2010	2015	Source
Urban Male	61.66	62.28	63.12	63.76	63.99	64.41	64.94	65.83	MDG
	61.66	62.28	64.34	69.91	70.03	70.27	70.55	71.04	BBS
Urban Female	60.79	61.35	62.12	62.70	62.90	63.28	63.75	64.56	MDG
	60.79	61.35	63.42	69.37	69.47	69.68	69.95	70.39	BBS
Rural Male	56.84	57.62	58.7	59.45	59.52	60.06	60.83	62.15	MDG
	56.84	57.62	60.23	67.41	67.44	67.75	68.18	68.92	BBS
Rural Female	55.57	56.33	57.39	58.10	58.24	58.77	59.53	60.82	MDG
	55.57	56.33	59.00	66.55	66.68	66.99	67.42	68.15	BBS

Source: Bangladesh MDG Progress Report 2005

### 3.1.3 Fertility Rates

Total fertility rate has declined sharply, from 6.3 in 1971-75 to 3.0 in 2001-2003. Fertility declined most rapidly in the late 1980s, and early 1990s before plateauing at around 3.3. After almost a decade long stagnation, TFR declined from 3.3 to 3.0 in 2001-03. The modest fertility decline is observed in all divisions except Sylhet (4.2) and Chittagong (3.7).<sup>12</sup> Of more concern, however is a gradual increase since 1996 in TFR among poorer households. Factors that could explain this include low educational levels, continued son preference, high infant mortality, unfulfilled realisation of gender rights and the lack of alternative economic opportunities. As can be seen from

Figure 12: Regional TFR Trends: 1999-00 and 2004

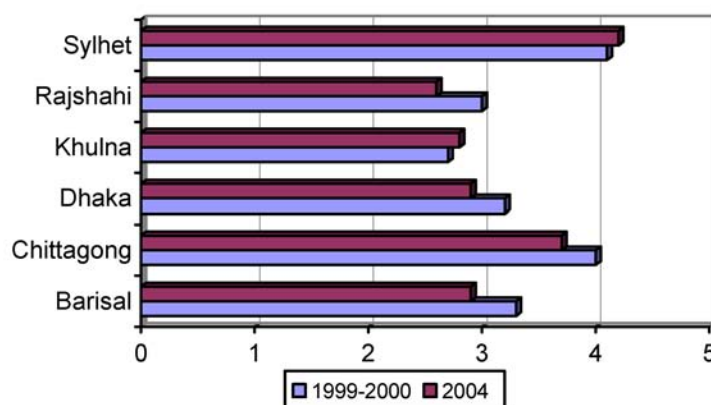


Table 10, in order for Bangladesh to achieve population stabilization, there is an urgent need to renew efforts to bring TFR rates below 3 through the promotion of contraception, increased age at first marriage of girls and delayed commencement of child-bearing. Moreover, contraceptive prevalence rates, which currently stand at around 58.1 percent will have to increase significantly to about 67-68 percent in order for fertility rates to reach replacement levels by 2006.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 11: Trends in TFR by Economic Strata**

	Economic Quintiles				
	1 (Poor)	2	3	4	5 (Rich)
1993	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.3	2.9
1996	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.3	2.5
2000	4.1	3.5	3.3	2.9	2.5
2001	4.2	3.7	3.2	2.9	2.4
Average	3.9	3.6	3.4	4.1	2.6

Source: Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey, 2001

**Table 12: Total Fertility Rate Scenarios for Population Stabilisation**

Time (Year)	1993	1996	1999	2002	2005	2008	2011	2015
Stable Pop by 2050	3.371	3.214	3.195	3.16	3.089	3.018	2.947	2.849
Stable Pop by 2045	3.371	3.214	3.195	3.131	3.039	2.947	2.852	2.723
Stable Pop by 2035	3.371	3.214	3.195	3.058	2.747	2.348	2.058	2.055

Note: Projections are from the Bangladesh MDG Progress Report 2005

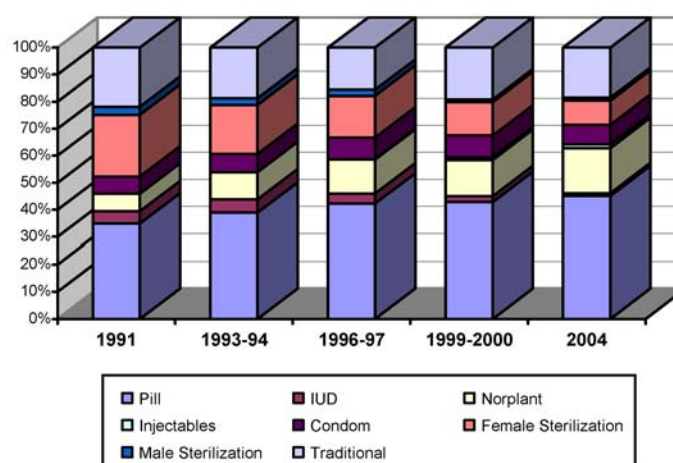
### 3.1.4 Family Planning

Bangladesh has made notable progress towards increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) from a low of 7.7 percent in 1975 to 58.1 percent in 2004.<sup>14</sup> However, much of the increase was due to the use of traditional methods among married women, with only a modest (4%) increase in modern method use between 1999 and 2004.

Significant regional differences exist in the use of FP methods with CPR highest (68.3%) in Rajshahi Division compared to just under 32 percent for Sylhet Division (34%). Another major concern regarding FP methods is that

nearly 50 percent of women who use contraceptives discontinue use within the first year. Some success has been achieved through the use of “doorstep” delivery methods to reach uneducated and rural women, especially those from more conservative parts of the country. However, with a growing reliance on clinic-based services, it can be argued that the most marginalised members of society will not be reached. This suggests that further thought needs to be given to how best to combine the use of clinic-based services with more aggressive outreach and education campaigns to ensure that all women in Bangladesh are able to make informed choices with regard to their reproductive rights.

**Figure 13: Contraception Method Mix 1991-2004**



An important strategy to reduce fertility rates over the medium and long term will be to promote higher ages at first marriage for women and safe motherhood practices. Although the mean age of marriage for women in the 20-24 year age group has increased to 16 years, it is still below the legal age of marriage. Early marriage coupled with limited family planning has resulted in 57.3 percent of all married women having initiated child-bearing by the age of 19.<sup>6</sup> Teenage mothers are more likely to suffer from severe complications during delivery, resulting in higher mortality and morbidity among themselves and their children. Adolescents, who account for about one-fourth of the population, and are most vulnerable to high-risk behaviour, have little or no access to reproductive health services and counselling.

### **3.1.5 Male Involvement in Family Planning**

Although male involvement is one of the most cost-effective ways of increasing contraceptive use especially in patriarchal societies such as Bangladesh, it is still neglected within the public health domain. The lack of effective policy measures have failed to aggressively promote new procedures such as non-scalpel method of vasectomy (NSV) and use of low cost alternatives such as condoms. Despite the high failure rates, traditional methods are most frequently practised (10.8%). The increase in the use of condoms (4.2%) and male sterilisation (0.6%) has been small in comparison. In the case of male involvement in reproductive health, including family planning, a number of strategies designed specifically to change attitudes and behaviour need to be promoted. These include wider publicity in the mass media (radio, TV and newspaper) encouraging greater male involvement and its implication for the family and society; more male focused BCC activities to motivate and inform people about the benefits of male family planning methods; the introduction of male units for counselling on FP and RH and increased awareness of male methods; raising awareness in the school system and the community especially among community leaders and service providers.

### **3.1.6 Adolescent Reproductive Health**

Bangladesh has around 31.5 million adolescents, which is 22.5 percent of the population.<sup>15</sup> Adolescent mothers are more likely to suffer pregnancy related complication and mortality rates -- neonatal, post neonatal, infant, child, under-five -- are higher for younger mothers. The infant mortality rate for mothers below 20 years is 103, compared to 79 for mothers between 30-39 years.<sup>16</sup> These trends in ARH reflect a much deeper problem of gender discrimination in Bangladesh that begins at birth with higher rates of female malnutrition and is extended through the life of a woman in the form of limited access to educational and employment opportunities, social pressures relating to marriage and the ever present threat of violence. Although the average age at first marriage is 18 years for females and 21 years for males, the divide is highly pronounced among adolescent girls in rural areas. Dowry still remains at the core of marriage negotiations and a major cause of violence. A recent study on ARH in Bangladesh indicated that a substantial proportion of adolescents and young people are not aware about causes of menstruation, consequences of unprotected sexual activity, gonorrhoea, syphilis, HIV/AIDS, and availability of treatment facilities for STDs. Around seven percent of all adolescents -- unmarried and married -- 21 percent of unmarried youth, and over 50 percent of unmarried adolescent and youth did not use a condom during their first sexual intercourse.<sup>17</sup>

The Government of Bangladesh has identified adolescent health and education both as a priority and challenge and has incorporated this issue in the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program (HNPS). Although ARH is one of the priority programmes of the Government, it faces operational barriers that can be clustered into three broad groups: physical access barriers, psychological and social barriers, and quality barriers. The post-ICPD document "Population and Development Issues of Bangladesh: National Plan of Action, 1997" also identified the Adolescent Health issue as one of the challenging areas in Reproductive Health and Nutrition for the Bangladeshi women. It states that, son preference and low status of women in society affect girl adolescents' nutrition, education and access to health care. Early marriage and early matrimony affect their overall health status and unmarried adolescents have very limited access to reproductive health services and information. They need proper nutrition and hygienic practices and information about puberty, safe sexual



behaviour and health risks. They need to inform parents about their health and psychological needs. The curative care for adolescents include proper treatment of health including common ailments and menstrual complications.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.1.7 Maternal Mortality and Morbidity

Despite some improvements, maternal mortality in Bangladesh remains very high with estimates ranging from 320-400 per hundred thousand live births.<sup>19</sup> There are also regional differences with maternal mortality in urban areas being 204 compared to 340 in rural areas.<sup>20</sup> The high levels of maternal mortality reflect the fact that maternal health care in Bangladesh remains poor. Poverty, the low status of women, poor nutrition, and a lack of access to health services contribute to some 12,000 maternal deaths each year. More than 70 percent of maternal deaths are due to direct obstetric reasons. For every 10 to 15 deliveries, one suffers from the long-term morbidity. The major causes of maternal death are postpartum haemorrhage, eclampsia, abortion complications, obstructed labour, postpartum sepsis, concomitant medical causes, and violence and injuries. From gender perspective, it is important to note that 14 percent of the pregnant women's deaths are associated with violence and injury.<sup>21</sup> One-fifth of all maternal deaths are due to obstetrical causes related to abortion and its complications.

Figure 14: Leading Causes of Maternal Mortality

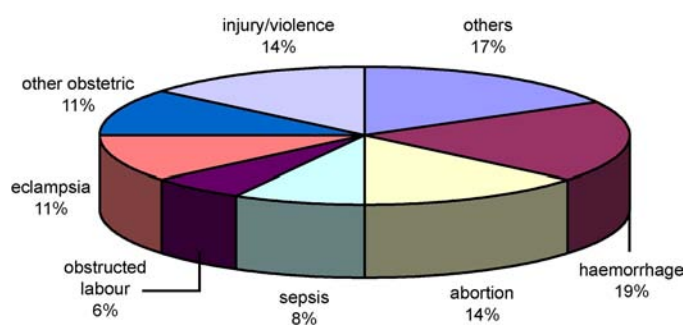
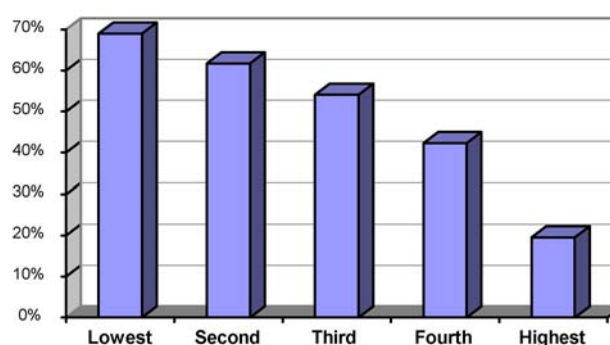


Figure 15: % of Mothers not receiving ANC, DC or PDC by Economic Quintile



According to the 2001 Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey, 20 percent of mothers in the richest asset quintile do not have access to any of the three forms of maternal care -- antenatal (ANC), delivery care (DC), and post-delivery care (PDC) -- compared to 70 percent of the poorest asset-quintile who lack access.<sup>22</sup> The vast majority of deliveries (87.7%) take place at home and a skilled birth attendant (SBA)<sup>23</sup> is present in less than 13 percent of all cases.<sup>24</sup> However, this masks the wide variations that exist among various groups. Thus while 40 percent of births in the highest income quintiles are attended by an SBA, in the lowest quintiles this falls to four percent. This suggests that monitoring indicators need to cover the different characteristics of poverty groups.

Division-wise differences are also pronounced. Only 19 percent of mothers from Barisal division reported receiving ANC. Overall, only 12 percent of women had three or more visits. Only 14 and 18 percent of pregnant women had their blood and urine tested respectively during antenatal visit. Mothers with some education as well as those from the wealthiest households are twice as likely to receive antenatal care as their counterparts with no education and the poor.<sup>25</sup>

Making motherhood safe, therefore, requires action on three fronts: (a) reducing the numbers of high-risk and unwanted pregnancies, (b) reducing the numbers of obstetric complications, and (c) reducing fatality rates for women with complications. However, these measures will only be effective if they can build on efforts to change social and cultural norms that deny women and girls in Bangladesh the right and ability to make informed choices relating to reproductive health. The Essential Obstetrics Care (EOC) programme through the Maternal and Child Welfare Centers (MCWC) was introduced in the early 1990s. Subsequently, a more holistic approach was adopted through the National Maternal Health Strategy 2000 which essentially takes a rights-based approach to maternal health with Safe Motherhood as the central theme. The Strategy has been integrated into the Health and Population Sector Program, HPSP (1998-2003) and into the follow-up, the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program, HNPSP (2004-2006). Interventions such as Safe Motherhood Services that provide iron, folic acid and vitamin A supplements to the target population have been included in the HNPSP, with the objective of bringing down maternal malnutrition to below 20 percent by 2015.<sup>26</sup> Other interventions under this project include training programmes for SBAs.

Figure 16: Situation on Maternal Care in Bangladesh

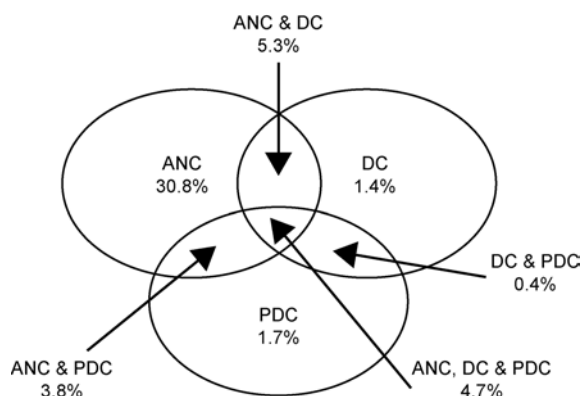
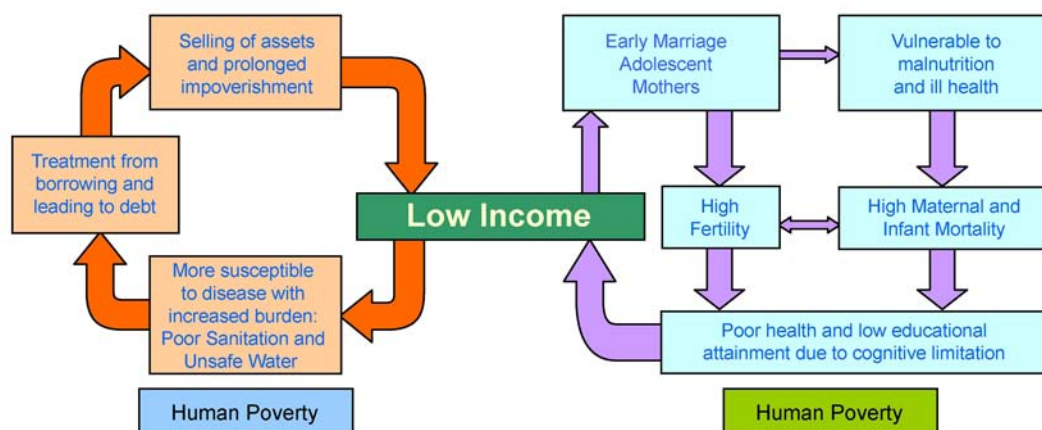


Figure 17: Poverty-Reproductive Health Nexus



However, these measures might not be sufficient to enable Bangladesh to meet the goal of reducing MMR to 140 by 2015 because of a number of demographic trends. A third of Bangladesh’s population falls within the age group of 10-24 years. Nearly half the adolescent girls (15-19 years) are married, 57 percent become mothers before the age of 19 and suffer from stunting which leads to obstructed deliveries, and half of all adolescent mothers are acutely malnourished. Thus, MMR among adolescent mothers is 30-50 percent higher than the national rate. In the absence of concerted efforts to increase the age of marriage and first pregnancy and changes in fertility and health seeking behaviour it is unlikely that MMR will decrease at the rates necessary to meet the MDG targets by

2015. Efforts to provide adolescent girls with greater access to higher education through scholarship and stipend programmes while proven to be effective, will nonetheless take several years to have a meaningful impact on fertility rates and by extension maternal mortality rates. The experience of Bangladesh shows that reducing maternal mortality and morbidity is both an output and an entry point for addressing key strategic issues associated with women's rights, such as violence (medical and social aspects). Efforts are also needed to reduce morbidity and the long term suffering of the millions of women who survive obstetric complications. The relevant strategies and interventions must therefore focus on enhancing women's status, dignity and self-esteem, if effectiveness is to be ensured.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1.8 Infant and Child Mortality

Infant and child mortality is a key indicator of the care, health and nutrition status of children as well as the social, cultural, and economic progress of a country and world governments have committed to reducing under-five mortality by two thirds by 2015 as part of the MDGs. Over the last decade Bangladesh has had one of the fastest rates of decrease in the developing world.<sup>28</sup> Infant mortality has declined steadily from 92 per thousand live births in 1992 and is now estimated to be 53 per thousand births in 2002/03.<sup>29</sup> However, rural IMR is 57 per thousand (M58:F55) compared to just 37 per thousand in urban areas (M38:F37).

**Table 13: Regional Differentials in IMR (2002)**

Division	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Both Sex	Male	Female	Both Sex	Male	Female	Both Sex	Male	Female
Barisal	60.56	59.63	61.53	62.78	51.83	63.76	29.33	30.63	27.79
Chittagong	52.25	52.56	51.93	55.95	55.61	56.29	33.38	36.88	29.83
Dhaka	45.70	46.00	45.39	47.79	48.97	46.56	40.70	38.90	42.56
Khulna	44.96	46.58	43.33	46.89	48.14	45.63	34.93	38.40	31.50
Rajshahi	63.71	67.07	60.24	66.88	70.27	63.34	33.15	34.38	32.01
Sylhet	65.45	66.51	64.35	67.69	68.42	66.94	32.30	40.03	23.20

Source: Summary Report of Sample Vital Registration System 2002, BBS

Similarly, under-five mortality rate (U5MR) has declined from 144 per thousand live births in 1990 to 76 per thousand in 2002<sup>30</sup> but urban-rural differences continue to exist. In 2002, the urban rate was 55 per thousand compared to 80 per thousand in rural areas. There is also notable differences in under-five mortality rates between boys and girls; in rural areas the U5MR for boys was 83 per thousand compared to 78 for girls and in urban areas the rate was 58 per thousand for males and 52 per thousand for girls. The majority of under-five deaths are due to three main causes of acute respiratory infections (21%), prenatal complications (29%) and diarrhoea (8%).<sup>31</sup>

Neonatal mortality -- more than half of which occur in the first week -- currently accounts for about two-thirds of infant deaths and almost half of under-five deaths. As with IMR and U5MR, neonatal mortality has also declined from 52 per thousand live births in 1989-93 to 41 per thousand in 1999-03.<sup>32</sup> Low birth weight, premature birth and birth asphyxia make up two thirds of all neo-natal deaths. Neonatal and perinatal causes contribute to 48 percent of all U5MR in Bangladesh. As expected, neonatal mortality is found to be higher for male than for female children, but contrary to all expectations, postnatal mortality is considerably higher for girls than for boys, reflecting gender bias in child rearing in Bangladesh. A number of factors contribute to infant and child mortality including the prevalence of early marriage, pressures to reproduce at an early age and maternal malnutrition. This is further aggravated by the limited access to medical facilities and trained medical practitioners during pregnancy and unhygienic living conditions, particularly in urban slums, that significantly increase the risk of water-borne and other diseases. It should also be noted that there has been an epidemiological transition of mortality patterns in Bangladesh. Due to the relative decline in deaths caused by infectious diseases, injuries and accidents are now emerging as important

causes of deaths: for example, eight percent of all under-five deaths and 30 percent of total deaths among children aged one to four years have been found to be caused by injuries and accidents such as drowning. In order for Bangladesh to continue to maintain its progress towards meeting the child and infant mortality goals laid out in the MDGs, a number of trends need to be sustained. This includes continuing to expand immunisation coverage to reach marginalised population and consolidating and strengthening efforts to control diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. Increased attention is also required to further reduce neonatal mortality by ensuring that all pregnant mothers have access to antenatal care, skilled birth attendants, emergency obstetric care and postnatal care.

**Table 14: Trends in Early Childhood Mortality**

Approximate reference period	Neonatal mortality	Infant mortality (IMR)	Under-five mortality (U5MR)
1989-1993	52	87	133
1992-1996	48	82	116
1995-1999	42	66	94
1999-2003	41	65	88

Source: BDHS 2004, p 25

### 3.2 Health and Wellbeing

While there has been substantial progress in the prevention and control of communicable diseases, tuberculosis, malaria, and childhood illness, acute respiratory infections (ARI), diarrhoeal diseases, and HIV/AIDS still pose considerable threats. Moreover, the share of non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases as well as injuries are expected to rise in the future from the present level of 40 percent of the disease burden.

The malaria threat in Bangladesh is deepening in parts of the country although aggregate statistics suggest a progressive lowering of incidence rates over the last four years to around one percent. While 13 of the 64 districts in the country are particularly affected, marginalized communities living in the remote hill tracts and adjacent districts of East and Northeast border of the country are most vulnerable.<sup>33</sup> National mechanisms to combat malaria have been weakened due to insufficient resources, poor surveillance, increased resistance to drugs, prohibitive costs of insecticides, and poor community mobilisation. Scaling up ITN programme to provide coverage to 70 percent of the high-risk population (14.7 million) particularly in the remote, poor and largely tribal families, remains a big challenge. Additional investments will also be required to combat drug resistance problems and to institute Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDT) and effective treatment strategies, as well as to increase the number of trained malaria experts in high-risk areas.

Bangladesh ranks fourth on the list of the 22 highest TB burdened countries in the world. The estimated incidence of all cases and of new smear-positive cases is 233 and 105 per 100,000 respectively.<sup>34</sup> About 70,000 patients are estimated to die of TB each year. Currently, only 30 to 50 percent of those diagnosed with TB are adequately treated. Without ensuring “directly observed treatment” (WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia 1999) and making services accessible for all patients, there is every reason to believe that the situation with regard to tuberculosis will in fact worsen with the emergence of multi-drug resistant TB and HIV/TB co-infection. Bangladesh is committed to achieve the international targets of detection of 70 percent of smear-positive patients and cure rates of 85 percent by 2005. In order to gradually decrease TB incidence and prevalence these targets have to be maintained (or increased) after 2005.

#### 3.2.1 Immunisation Rates

Bangladesh continues to have a mixed record with regard to immunisation coverage, which has been proven to be one of the most effective means of reducing infant and child mortality and will

have to be a key strategy for achieving the MDGs for child welfare. Following a steady increase in immunisation rates for children under the age of 12 months as well as for those between the ages of 12 and 23 months through the early 1990s peaking at 62 and 84 percent respectively in 1994, a steady decline was noted between 1995 and 1997 when the rates were 51 and 67 percent respectively.<sup>35</sup> Currently 63 percent of children in Bangladesh below the age of one and 74 percent between the ages of 12 and 23 months are fully immunised. Despite this improvement, it is estimated that approximately 1.5 million children remain unprotected with drop rates of between 20 and 30 percent. Greater efforts will have to be made to raise immunisation rates if the MDGs are to be met.

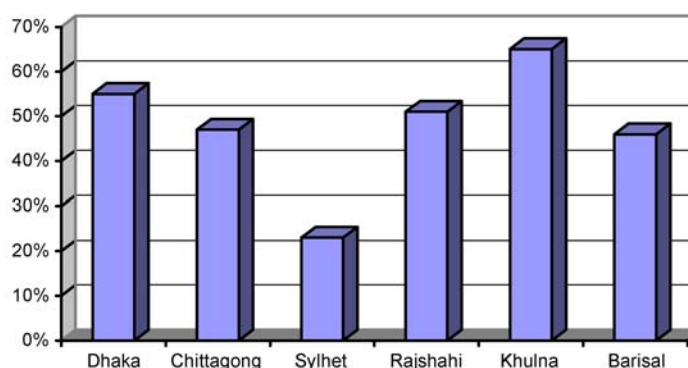
**Table 15: Immunisation Rates in Bangladesh**

Year	Percentage of children immunized (< 12 months)				Percentage of children immunized (12-23 months)			
	BCG	OPV3 / DPT3	Measles	Fully Immunised	BCG	OPV3 / DPT3	Measles	Fully Immunised
1991	86	62	54	50	86	69	65	62
1992	86	62	60	53	89	74	68	65
1993	89	63	59	50	92	80	76	74
1994	95	74	71	62	96	88	86	84
1995	94	73	67	59	95	84	78	76
1997	88	66	59	51	90	77	69	67
1998	91	68	62	54	92	78	72	70
1999	94	66	61	52	95	82	73	72
2000	95	68	61	53	96	81	71	69
2001	94	66	64	52	94	83	76	75
2002	95	70	65	56	95	85	77	76
2003	95	72	69	63	95	83	75	74

Source: EPI Coverage Evaluation Survey 2003

There are also significant disparities in immunisation rates based on gender and location. Drop out rates for females in both rural and urban areas are on average five percentage points higher than for boys. Differences also exist between rural and urban dwellers with coverage rates for children under the age of one approaching 62 percent in rural areas compared to 72 percent in urban areas. A similar difference -- 72 percent for rural areas compared to 83 percent for urban areas -- also exist for those between the ages of 12 and 23 months. It should be noted, however, that coverage rates in urban slums, especially in Dhaka, is significantly lower than the city average. There are also significant geographical differences in coverage rates. The lowest was in Sylhet Division with 23 percent for children under 12 months and highest 65 percent in Khulna Division for the same group of children. Such a difference is not unique for immunisation. Sylhet lags behind in other indicators of development including family planning acceptance, education level, and nutritional status.<sup>36</sup> Explanations for these low rates include ecology (a large part of the division remains under flood waters for most part of the year), poor staff-population ratio (a large number of field positions remains vacant for years), conservatism leading to less emancipation of women and less adaptation of new ideas, and lower density of NGO programmes.<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 18: Immunisation Coverage of Children (under 12 months) by Division 2001**



This implies that there are significant access and outreach constraints to be addressed, which will require a concerted effort on the part of both the Government and NGOs working to ensure that children from marginalised communities and in remote areas are brought under immunisation drives. A small study finds that there is direct correlation between immunisation rates and proximity to health clinics: children who live more than two miles from a health facility are 30 percent less likely to be immunised than the average.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, mothers having a secondary school education and above are 40 percent more likely to immunise their children than those with education levels of primary school and below.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.2.2 Access to Health Services

Data shows that most of the private hospital facilities are concentrated in urban areas and are small in terms of the number of hospital beds. However, private clinics show shorter stays and higher occupancy rates than public facilities of comparable size, indicating a greater degree of resource efficiency. The private sector provides the overwhelming majority of outpatient curative care especially among the poor, while the public sector serves the larger proportion of inpatient curative care, preventive and promotive care. However, there continues to be an absence of proper competition between private and public health care services and a lack of sensitivity to the needs of poor clients.

**Table 16: Availability of Medical Facilities**

Year	Hospitals			Hospital Beds			Doctors	Nurses	Midwives
	Govt.	Private	Total	Govt.	Private	Total			
1991	610	280	890	27,111	7,242	34,353	21,004	9,655	7,713
1996	645	288	933	29,502	8,025	37,527	27,425	13,830	11,200
2001	670	712	1,382	33,368	12,239	45,607	32,498	18,135	15,798

Source: BBS Statistical Pocketbook 2002 (2001 data) and Director-General of Health Services (Health Information Unit), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

In the private sector, providers can be grouped into three main categories: the organized private sector which includes qualified practitioners of different systems of medicine; NGOs; and the private informal sector which consists of providers not having any formal medical qualifications such as allopathy and homeopathy and are known as Alternative Private Providers (APPs). APPs provide the majority of health care services in rural areas, but policy-makers have largely overlooked their role. Although of the APPs lack recognised formal education their low fees make them an attractive alternative for the poor. A large share of the income of APPs comes from selling medicines. In addition to these specific health challenges, the health system suffers from lack of funding and adequate management. Patients with access to health services in Bangladesh face many problems including doctor absenteeism, inadequate nursing services, the lack of adequate diagnostic facilities, overcrowding, and lack of sensitivity to female patients. These problems are especially acute in rural health centres due to the lack of local government influence and citizen input on the operation of the health system.

Overall, Bangladesh spends only 1.2 percent of GDP on health against a WHO target of 5 percent. Private expenditures make up around 2.6 percent of GDP. Health expenditure per capita is barely adequate to meet expanding health demands in Bangladesh. Thus, despite the fact that the Government spends about US\$5 per capita on HNP services, patients still face private out-of-pocket expenditure to the tune of US\$7. This is in contrast to the WHO Commission on Macroeconomics and Health (CMH) recommendation that least-developed countries spend on an average approximately US\$13 per person per year, with a suggested optimum expenditure of approximately US\$24 per capita per year. Overall 70 percent of health expenditure in Bangladesh is out of pocket, with 50 percent being spent on drugs and pharmaceuticals. Over the last three years, around seven percent of government spending has gone to the health sector.

As a result, ill health continues to be one of the most pervasive sources of vulnerability and distress among the poor in Bangladesh. A study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) in 2001 finds that the cost of treatment adversely affects other household consumption items: 68 percent of those who sought in-patient treatment reported a direct impact on food consumption levels and 13 percent experienced problems financing their children's education as a result of illness.<sup>40</sup> The study also shows that across all classes, 8.8 percent of monthly household income is spent on illness treatment. Health expenditures are disproportionately high among the poorest households, who spend approximately 38 percent of household income on treatment of illnesses compared to the richest households who spend only 3.4 percent. The findings clearly indicate that poorer households face significant economic pressure to finance their treatment, and are open to a real risk of indebtedness in times of illness. A number of NGOs have begun experimenting with community health insurance schemes that offer a means for extending social protection and for channelling high but ineffective private spending.

### 3.3 Nutrition

Malnutrition is perhaps the most significant underlying cause of childhood illness and mortality. According to the HIES 2000, the problem is most serious for the poorest 14 percent of the rural population consuming fewer than 1600 calories per capita per day, levels barely adequate for survival. Another 10 percent consume between 1600 and 1800 calories per day, while roughly 23 percent consume more than 1800 calories but less than the minimum caloric requirement set in Bangladesh at 2122 per day.

In all, roughly half the country's rural households can be considered food insecure. Millions of children and women in Bangladesh suffer from one or more forms of malnutrition, including low birth weight, childhood growth failure (stunting), vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency disorders and anaemia. Recent data indicate that 43 percent of children under five are stunted (short-for-age) and 48 percent are under-weight (low weight-for-age).<sup>41</sup>

Malnutrition is a direct result of the high prevalence of low birth weight (LBW) in Bangladesh, inadequate dietary intake and diseases, and an indirect result of household food insecurity, inadequate maternal and childcare and poor health services and health environment. Other causes of malnutrition include inadequate breastfeeding and infant feeding practices and infectious diseases, including diarrhoea. There are also strong regional dimensions to malnutrition rates in Bangladesh. The rural districts of Sylhet, Comilla, Faridpur, Tangail, Jamalpur, Noakhali and Chittagong account for nearly one-half of all severely stunted children in the country. By contrast, the lowest rates of child malnutrition are found in the urban areas of Dhaka and Khulna division where the level of malnutrition is roughly half that of rural Barisal and Pathuakali.

#### 3.3.1 Maternal Malnutrition

In Bangladesh, about one-third of infants are born with LBW, mostly due to intrauterine growth retardation.<sup>42</sup> The prevalence is high because adolescent girls and women are frequently malnourished and do not consume adequate nutritious food during pregnancy. Malnutrition in non-pregnant rural women declined from 54 percent in 1996/97 to 49 percent in 1999/2000, but is still considered high.<sup>43</sup> LBW is more common among adolescent mothers for whom childbearing imposes a double set of nutritional demands as they struggle to complete their own growth while also providing the nutrients needed for the development of the foetus. LBW has serious consequences for future health, growth and development, including an increased risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and coronary heart disease in adulthood. These chronic diseases are becoming increasingly common in Bangladesh.

Severe anaemia during pregnancy increases the risk of maternal death and of having underweight children. The most common cause is iron deficiency; other important causes include deficiencies of folic acid and vitamin A, parasitic infections such as hookworms, malaria, and AIDS. Iron deficiency anaemia impairs the growth and learning ability of children, lowers resistance to infectious

diseases, and reduces the physical work capacity and productivity of adults. Aggregate data from surveys in urban areas, the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the rest of rural Bangladesh conducted in 2001 and 2003 indicate that the prevalence of anaemia is a severe public health problem in preschool children (49%) and pregnant women (46%) and a moderate public health problem in non-pregnant women (33%) and adolescents (28%).<sup>44</sup>

Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in the world. Iodine deficiency is caused by high rainfall and frequent flooding, which leaches iodine from the soil. The adverse effects of iodine deficiency include mental and physical congenital defects in newborns, low learning capacity, impaired growth, and poor health and low productivity among the general population. Goitre prevalence decreased from 47 percent in 1993 to 18 percent in 1999 and biological iodine deficiency among population decreased from 69 percent in 1993 to 43 percent in 1999. These statistics reflect the increase in the coverage of iodised salt from households consuming iodized salt from 14 percent in 1995 to 70 percent in 2003. Despite this encouraging result, IDD remain a significant public health problem in the country.

### 3.3.2 Child Malnutrition

Bangladesh made substantial progress in reducing child malnutrition between 1990 and 2000, with the percentage of underweight children falling from 67 to 48 percent, and child stunting falling from 66 to 43 percent.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, in 2004 according to WHO criteria the prevalence of child underweight and stunting was still among the highest in the world and more severe than in most other developing countries, including sub-Saharan Africa. The incidence of malnutrition is higher among girls than boys.<sup>46</sup> Compared to 16 other Asian countries, the proportion of underweight children in Bangladesh is 16 percent higher than would be expected at its level of per capita GDP.

Infant and child feeding practices are especially important for child nutrition. In Bangladesh almost all children (97%) are breastfed at some time, and 87 percent of children continue to be breastfed at 20-23 months.<sup>47</sup> However, the initiation of breastfeeding is often delayed, with only 17 percent of infants put to the breast within one hour of birth and only 63 percent within the first day of life.<sup>48</sup> While colostrum feeding has improved, the traditional practice of giving pre-lacteal feeds to the newborn before commencing breastfeeding persists. Supplementation of breast milk with complementary liquids and foods often begins before the recommended six months of exclusive breastfeeding: only 30 percent of infants aged four to five months and 11 percent of children aged six to seven months are exclusively breastfed.<sup>49</sup> Early introduction of complementary foods, especially under unhygienic conditions, increases the risk of malnutrition because these foods are often nutritionally inferior to breast milk and may be contaminated with pathogens. The quality of complementary foods is often poor, and the frequency of feeding too low. The lack of adherence to recommended breastfeeding practices might partly stem from aggressive marketing of breast-milk substitutes, despite legislation prohibiting the advertisement of the formula.

Vitamin A deficiency causes increased morbidity and mortality among infants, children and pregnant women, poor growth of children, and contributes to anaemia. The prevalence of night blindness, an early indicator of vitamin A deficiency, has been maintained below the one percent threshold that indicates a public health problem since 1997. This success has largely been due to the vitamin A supplementation programme, which increased coverage from 41 percent in 1993 to over 85 percent in the second half of the decade by linking the distribution of vitamin A capsules with the National Immunisation Days (NIDs) for polio. While this finding is encouraging, it is important to recognize that vitamin A supplementation is controlling VAD but not eliminating it, and infants and children continue to consume diets that are inadequate in vitamin A. Furthermore, vitamin A deficiency still remains a significant problem among women. In 1997, 2.7 percent of pregnant women and 2.4 percent of lactating women were affected by night blindness.

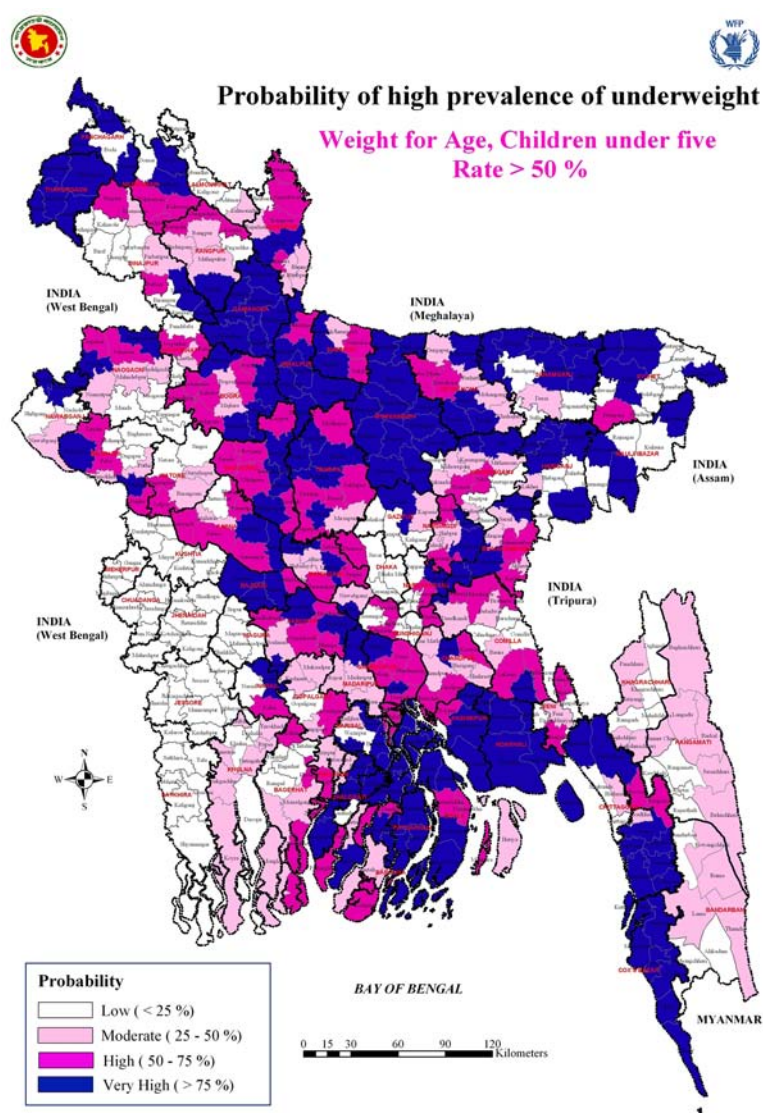


Table 17: Nutritional Status of Children by Background Characteristics

Background Characteristics	Height-for-age (stunting)		Weight-for-height (wasting)		Weight-for-age (underweight)	
	Percentage below = 3 SD	Percentage below = 2 SD1	Percentage below = 3 SD	Percentage below = 2 SD1	Percentage below = 3 SD	Percentage below = 2 SD1
<b>Residence</b>						
Urban	13.6	37.6	1.2	11.5	12.0	42.2
Rural	17.7	44.3	1.3	13.2	13.0	48.8
<b>Division</b>						
Barisal	20.2	48.9	0.4	7.2	12.4	46.3
Chittagong	19.4	46.2	1.5	14.1	16.4	49.9
Dhaka	18.5	44.7	1.1	11.7	12.6	47.6
Khulna	8.6	31.7	1.9	14.2	8.3	40.3
Rajshahi	14.5	40.3	1.3	14.2	12.0	48.1
Sylhet	20.1	46.2	1.0	12.2	13.1	49.8
<b>Mother's education<sup>2</sup></b>						
No education	22.8	50.5	1.3	13.9	17.0	55.4
Primary incomplete	16.9	45.2	1.0	13.4	12.5	48.6
Primary complete	20.0	46.2	1.8	13.0	14.3	48.8
Secondary incomplete	10.4	35.7	1.6	12.1	9.0	41.6
Complete secondary or higher	2.0	17.4	0.2	9.6	3.0	21.8

Source: Niport 2004 (BDHS 2004)

Figure 19: Weight for Age: Children under five rate &gt; 50%



### 3.4 Water and Sanitation

Increased access to water and sanitation is a prerequisite for improved health outcomes within households through its impact on food and nutrition, and indirectly as a means of sustaining a healthy environment. Safe drinking water and sanitation is considered a basic right of all citizens and Government policies have focused on making safe drinking water and sanitation services available to all in the shortest possible time and at a reasonable price.<sup>50</sup> Since the 1970s Bangladesh's drinking water and sanitation policies have focused on the installation and promotion of tube-wells resulting in over 97 percent of the population having access to tube-wells (hand-pumps), taps or ring wells.<sup>51</sup> Over 93 of rural households and 100 percent of urban households were thought to have access to safe drinking water. However, progress towards ensuring universal access to safe drinking water took a serious blow with the discovery of arsenic in ground water above World Health Organisation recommended standards. As a result coverage figures have been revised downward to reflect the emergence of arsenic contamination and it is estimated that current levels of access are around 70-74 percent. It is estimated that a total of 46-57 million people (above 10 ppb) and 28-35 million (using the local standard of 50 ppb) in Bangladesh may be exposed to arsenic poisoning.<sup>52</sup> A recent survey in 15 Upazilas has shown that awareness regarding arsenic contamination and arsenicosis has risen from 31 percent in 2000 to 72 percent in 2003. Safe water options -- including 96 deep tube wells, 82 pond sand filters, 955 rain water harvesting tanks, 118 dug wells, with another 250 wells being renovated -- were installed in 15 arsenic-affected Upazilas. Some researchers, based on empirical evidence, argue that arsenicosis affects poor disproportionately than the rich.<sup>53</sup> In many areas heavy withdrawal of groundwater for irrigation have also lowered the water tables below the effective reach of hand tube-wells.<sup>54</sup> Seepage of agro-chemicals into shallow aquifers further contributes to the pollution of water. Another cause of surface water contamination in Bangladesh is faecal pollution originating from indiscriminate defecation and inadequate sanitation facilities. Despite attempts to improve water quality, it is likely that communities will have to look to multiple sources of water for different activities.

Approximately 43 percent of households use sanitary latrines. However, there are significant differences in access based on location with only 41 percent of rural residents having access to sanitation facilities, a further 25 percent use unhygienic latrines and rest do not use any latrines compared to 61 percent in urban areas.<sup>55</sup> However, the most pronounced difference is for urban slum dwellers where access rates are less than 14 percent. Thirty one percent of the households lack the financial resources construct a latrine while about five percent do not have any land on which they can construct latrines.<sup>56</sup> While use of scarce water is difficult at best, knowledge about basic health practices remains limited especially among poorer households. Only 26.7 percent of people wash their hands with water, soap or ashes after defecation, three percent wash their hands with soap and water before having a meal, feeding children and preparing food.<sup>57</sup>

Overall, it is estimated that medical treatment for hygiene-related diseases in Bangladesh costs US\$80 million each year.<sup>58</sup> The impact of environmental degradation has direct linkages with poverty. Institutional arrangements for facilitation, service delivery, effective management of solid waste, industrial wastes, deforestation, pesticides and excreta, overhead and maintenance, monitoring and periodic reviews are neither designed nor effectively organised. Furthermore, the nutritional status of under-fives is strongly related to sanitation conditions suggesting longer-term impacts beyond immediate illness.<sup>59</sup> Water supply and sanitation problems have obvious implications for public health. Diarrhoeal diseases from unsafe water, is a leading cause of death in the rural areas and 110,000 children below the age of five die of diarrhoea every year because of inadequate sanitation.<sup>60</sup> In regions with safe water supply and total sanitation coverage, diarrhoea has reduced by 99 percent, dysentery by 90 percent and stomach-related problems by 51 percent, in rural areas. Monthly treatment costs have decreased by 55 percent in rural areas and approximately 25 percent in urban areas. Illness related loss of working days have reduced from 77 to 35 per year in rural areas and nearly a third lower in urban areas. School days lost due to illness have fallen from 16 to seven per year in rural areas.

The South Asia Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN), held in Dhaka in October 2003, culminated in the Dhaka Declaration on Sanitation and the subsequent commitment by the Government of Bangladesh to achieve 100% sanitation coverage by 2010. In 2004, over five million people were mobilised for promoting sanitation and hygiene through a variety of communication activities including awareness building, training, community participation such as WATSAN committees in villages, Unions and Upazilas. Some 40,000 student brigades have been trained in sanitation and hygiene to carry on promotion activities in their own and their neighbours' homes. Based on community action plans, 4,000 community water facilities and 55,000 water seal and low-cost latrines have been constructed and 136 private latrine production centres are in the process of being established.

**Table 18: Access to Safe Water and Sanitation Facilities (%)**

	Safe Drinking Water				Safe Water for Household Work			Sanitation Facilities			
	1991	1995	1997	2000	1995	1997	2000	1991	1995	1997	2000
<b>National</b>	89.5	96.3	97.4	97.5	39.3	65.5	63.7	NA	35.3	43.8	43.4
<b>Urban</b>	94.9	99.1	99.4	99.5	56.6	90.6	89.1	43.1	66.1	87.0	61.2
<b>Rural</b>	88.3	95.1	97.2	97.3	31.0	62.7	60.6	6.1	20.6	38.9	41.3

Source: BDHS: Summary Findings, 1994 & 1995, BBS, MICS BBS 1997 and 2000 and Bangladesh Country Paper on Sanitation for SACOSAN, GOB, Oct 2003

### 3.5 Gaps and Challenges

Bangladesh has a mixed record in the field of public health. While significant improvements have been made in a range of indicators thanks in no small measure to efforts of local NGOs, these trends hide the fact that less than 40 percent of the population have access to modern and affordable primary health care services and are reliant on fee-based private services. There continues to be significant problems with the quality of services being provided especially to the poor. In areas such as fertility rates and contraceptive prevalence, progress appears to be slowing down or stagnating. Rapid urbanisation and the lack of access to safe water and sanitation remain serious obstacles to continued improvement in public health outcomes. Gender bias in nutrition and health care in childhood, early marriage and early pregnancies, lack of voluntary check on the family size and poor state of prenatal and maternal health care services only intensify women's health problems. In short, there is considerable scope for improvement of public health services through better planning and targeting including the reallocation of existing resources towards interventions that are genuinely pro-poor and through reductions in waste and better management practices that draws on the experiences of NGO-Government partnerships in EPI and family planning. What is needed is a combination of approaches for different socio-economic groups. This includes community insurance for the poor, employment-related social insurance for the organised sector employees and voluntary insurance for those who can afford to pay.

Policies required to address malnutrition include communication of dietary guidelines through mass media, fortification of selected food items and supplementary feeding through nutrition intervention programmes. A person's health status also influences biochemical absorption of food nutrients. Prevention and control of infectious and parasitic diseases can contribute significantly to general health outcomes through improved nutrition. Safe drinking water and improved sanitation have important impact on nutritional outcomes, particularly because of high prevalence of diarrhoeal and other water-borne diseases. Policies and programmes that can improve water safety and sanitation are infrastructure development, public investment in water supply and sanitation; health education, and proper care practices for children. Diversification of agricultural production in rural areas through home gardening and backyard poultry-raising is one strategy to ensure balanced nutrition. The regional concentration of malnutrition suggests that geographical targeting of nutritional interventions might well be the best means of achieving the largest absolute reduction in child malnutrition.

At least 25 million people must gain access to arsenic free, safe water over the next 10 years if Bangladesh is going to be able to ensure universal coverage by 2015. This is a considerable challenge since at present there is no ideal solution for communities that are highly affected by arsenic. A number of options, however, exist, such as hand dug wells, deep tubewells, pond sand filters and rainwater harvesting. However all of the options have certain disadvantages under certain circumstances and it is likely therefore, that communities and individuals will have to adjust to using water from different sources for different purposes if their water demands are to be met at a viable cost. Therefore, resources will be required, not only to support the installation of water sources, but also to raise awareness and train communities in appropriate water use. According to the Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment for Bangladesh, some US\$4.9 per capita is required between now and 2015, in order to meet the water and sanitation goals.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> BCAS (1998) Bangladesh 2020: A Long Term Perspective, United Press, Dhaka.

<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh Population Census 2001, BBS 2003.

<sup>3</sup> This compared to growth rates of 1.8 for the whole of South Asia and 1.9 for developing countries.

<sup>4</sup> Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004 (Preliminary Report), National Institute of Population Research and Training, Mitra and Associates, Macro International Inc., September 2004.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that this presumes that Bangladesh reaches the replacement level of fertility by 2010. A delay of ten years would see the population stabilise in 2085. Project Population Estimates, July 1995, Dhaka, Population Wing, Planning Commission quoted in background paper on Health, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, April 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Bangladesh Population Census 2001 op. cit.

- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> Bangladesh Human Development Report, BIDS, UNDP 1999.
- <sup>9</sup> It should be noted that there is some dispute about this latest data as there is no clear explanation for the sudden increase in female life expectancy in Bangladesh.
- <sup>10</sup> Bangladesh Population Census 2001, BBS 2003.
- <sup>11</sup> Barkat A and S Akhter (2003). "A Mushrooming Population: The Threat of Slumisation Instead of Urbanisation in Bangladesh", *Harvard Asia Pacific Review*, Vol. 5, Issue 1, Winter 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2004 (Preliminary Report), National Institute of Population Research and Training, Mitra and Associates, Macro International Inc., September 2004.
- <sup>13</sup> There is also evidence to suggest that contraceptive use tends to be highly irregular which further reduces its impact.
- <sup>14</sup> Statistical Pocketbook 2002, BBS April 2004, pg. 371.
- <sup>15</sup> BDHS 2004 *op. cit.*
- <sup>16</sup> Barkat A and M. Majid (2002) Position Paper on Health, Population and Family Planning Commission, GOB.
- <sup>17</sup> Barkat A, SH Khan, M Majid, N Sabina (2000). *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Bangladesh: A Needs Assessment*, Conducted for International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB).
- <sup>18</sup> Akhter H.H, "Reproductive Rights, Reproductive Health, Morbidity and Mortality", in *Population and Development Issues of Bangladesh: National Plan of Action, 1997*, MOHFW, edited by Abul Barkat and SR Howlader.
- <sup>19</sup> Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey 2001. The "Summary Report of Sample Vital Registration System 2002, BBS" records MMR as 315 per hundred thousand births.
- <sup>20</sup> Summary Report of Sample Vital Registration System 2002, BBS.
- <sup>21</sup> Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Programme Implementation Plan, Part II, HPSP, April 1998.
- <sup>22</sup> Cited in Sen and Hulme 2004 *Chronic Poverty in Bangladesh: Tales of Ascent, Descent, Marginality and Persistence: The State of the Poorest* 2004/2005.
- <sup>23</sup> Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs) cover all medical professionals, nurses, midwives and Skilled Family Welfare Visitors (FWVs).
- <sup>24</sup> PRB 2001.
- <sup>25</sup> Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey 2001.
- <sup>26</sup> PIP of HNPSP ( July 2003-2006).
- <sup>27</sup> Maternal Health Strategy, October 2001, MOHFW.
- <sup>28</sup> It should be noted that despite this impressive progress Bangladesh is still unlikely to meet its MDG targets by 2015.
- <sup>29</sup> UNDP 2004 *op. cit.* However, there continue to be methodology variations by source. According to BDHS 2004, the IMR for the period 1999-2003 is 65.
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid.* Again, there continues to be some discrepancies in the data for U5MR with BDHS estimates for the period being 88.
- <sup>31</sup> Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey 2003 (unpublished) quoted in National Plan of Action for Children Bangladesh, Government of Bangladesh and UNICEF, pg. 2.
- <sup>32</sup> BDHS 2004, pg. 25
- <sup>33</sup> Mahmood et al. 2000.
- <sup>34</sup> WHO 2002.
- <sup>35</sup> This decline was in part due to a cut in donor funding for EPI activities and the failure of the Government and NGO sector to adequately pick up the slack. Subsequently, added investment and an emphasis on achieving universal coverage, immunization rates have once again begun to pick up.
- <sup>36</sup> BDHS 2001: Chowdhury et. al. 1999a quoted in Chowdhury et. al. 2002.
- <sup>37</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>38</sup> Jamil et. al. 1999.
- <sup>39</sup> Chowdhury et. al. 2002.
- <sup>40</sup> Sen, B. (2001). The health divide: analysis of inequality in health in Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (mimeo), Dhaka Bangladesh.
- <sup>41</sup> BDHS 2004.
- <sup>42</sup> BBS, UNICEF, 2004.
- <sup>43</sup> BDHS, 1999-2000.
- <sup>44</sup> BBS and UNICEF, 2004.
- <sup>45</sup> BBS Child Nutrition Surveys, 1989/1990 and 2000.
- <sup>46</sup> BBS, Child Nutrition Survey, 1992-2000.
- <sup>47</sup> BDHS, 1999-2000.
- <sup>48</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>49</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>50</sup> Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment, Bangladesh Country Study, Dr Anwara Begum and Dr M. Salimullah, BIDS in Collaboration with the Millennium Project Secretariat, 17 January 2004, pg. 101.
- <sup>51</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
- <sup>52</sup> DPHE and DGHS, August 2002, Internet.
- <sup>53</sup> Barkat Abul, KS Anwar, AA Mollah, A Hossain, AKM Maksud and AKM Munir Socio-economic Consequences of Chronic Arsenic Poisoning in Bangladesh, University of Dhaka and Bangladesh Arsenic Control Society, Ministry of Science and Technology, GOB (2001).
- <sup>54</sup> *op. cit. ref. 1.*
- <sup>55</sup> The information is taken from a country wide extensive survey conducted by the Local Government Division (LGD) of GOB in 2003 on the status of existing sanitation. The survey covered 21.08 million households in 64 districts, 278 Paurasavas (Municipalities) and six City Corporations.
- <sup>56</sup> Bangladesh Country Paper on Sanitation for SACOSAN, GOB, October 2003.
- <sup>57</sup> WatSan Information Booklet, NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation.
- <sup>58</sup> S. A.. Ahmed, Water & Sanitation Program, personal communication April 2002, based upon "Health Care Expenditures in Bangladesh" in "Health Situation and Health Care Expenditures in Bangladesh, Evidences from Nationally Representative Surveys", BBS, April 1999
- <sup>59</sup> Steven A. Esrey, "Water, Waste, and Well-Being: A Multi-country Study", in *American Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol. 143, No. 6, 1996.
- <sup>60</sup> *op. cit. ref. 1, pg. 102.*



# 4 *The Right to Livelihood*

The concept of sustainable livelihoods was introduced in the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. The concept argues that while employment and income open up the route to other human development goals, livelihoods should be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable for current and future generations. This requires an analytical framework that looks at people's capacities to exercise choices, access opportunities and resources and not foreclose options for others to make their living, either now, or in the future. In line with these national and global concepts and commitments, this chapter begins with an overview of trends in education and employment and highlights emerging problems and the gaps that need to be addressed to ensure the fulfilment of the right to livelihood. The analysis then identifies the underlying causes tied to changes in the rural economy and the impact on food security.

The right to education is of sufficient importance in the context of Bangladesh to merit discussion as a stand-alone issue. However it is also an important underlying factor that has a direct impact on access to productive employment opportunities and the fulfilment of basic survival rights. Thus, while significant progress towards increasing access -- especially at the primary school level -- is noted, much remains to be done in terms of improving quality and participation in secondary and tertiary education. These constraints continue to limit the opportunities for vulnerable households to secure new and productive employment that would allow them to move out of the cycle of poverty.

There is now a growing body of research which argues that traditional notions of what constitutes "urban" and "rural" in Bangladesh is rapidly changing as external economic forces, the impact of globalisation and the expansion of physical infrastructure radically transform village life.<sup>1</sup> Where access to land was once the sole determinant of well-being, growth in the non-farm sector and the emergence of local bazaar centres have created a new set of livelihood opportunities for the poor that underpinned a significant decline in human poverty rates in Bangladesh.<sup>2</sup> However, the pace of change is uneven. Large sections of the poor whose primary asset remains their labour -- whether engaged in agricultural labour or in the non-farm sector -- continue to be marginalised from the development process.

## **4.1 Education**

Education and the acquisition of knowledge are instrumental for the fulfilment of all human rights, including the right to work, health and political participation. Lack of education, as manifested by high illiteracy rates, also constitutes an important dimension of poverty. The fundamental relationship between poverty and the right to education is underlined by the fact that universal primary education is a Millennium Development Goal to be achieved worldwide by 2015.<sup>3</sup> The analysis of progress in the education sector can be related to the fulfilment of basic survival rights discussed previously and ensuring secure livelihoods and employment opportunities as discussed in this chapter.

### 4.1.1 Literacy Rates

A constitutional obligation to battle the high adult illiteracy rate in Bangladesh prompted successive governments to launch a major non-formal education programme in the 1990s, focusing on basic literacy. Priority was given to achieving universal coverage of youth and young adults in the age range 11 to 45 years. Based on UNESCO Institute of Statistics weighted data, the adult (15+) literacy rate in Bangladesh is estimated to be 41.1 percent -- an improvement over the 35 percent rate in 1990.<sup>4</sup> These figures mask significant gender differences in literacy rates with male literacy estimated at around 50.3 percent compared to just 31.4 percent for females. There are also significant differences in rural and urban literacy rates with urban literacy rates estimated at 63.6 percent compared to 37.2 percent in rural areas.<sup>5</sup> The BBS estimated that in 1991 the literacy rates for the 15-24 years age group was 51.7 percent for males compared to 38.0 percent for females. By 2000 the gap had narrowed significantly with literacy for males having increased to 67.4 percent compared to a 22 percentage point jump in female literacy rates to 60.4 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 20: Divisional Literacy Rates (%)

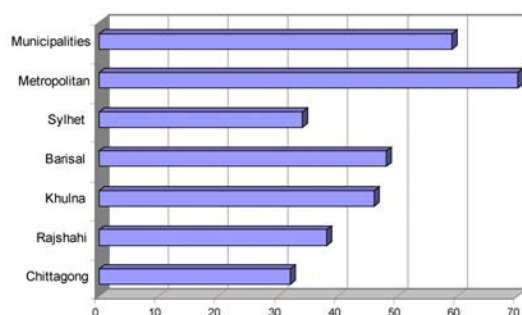
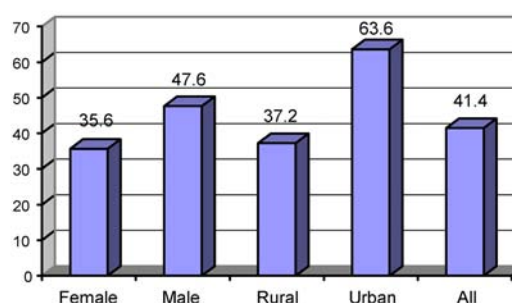


Figure 21: Literacy Rate, 2001 (%)



### 4.1.2 Early Childhood Development and Preschool Education

Early childhood development and preschool education have not been a part of the public education services. It is widely recognized that early childhood development through early learning and stimulation starting from birth of child and preschool education have a strong positive influence on preparedness for school and later performance and achievement of children in school. Children from poor families, especially first generation learners, can benefit greatly from early childhood programmes. There is also a social demand for preschool education as indicated by the large number of community-initiated pre-schools attached to primary schools. The Government, recognizing the value of early childhood development and the social demand for pre-schools, have encouraged NGOs and community organisations to set up and support pre-schools within or near the premises of primary schools. One example is the agreement between the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and the BRAC education programme that opened some 15,000 preschools under BRAC supervision. An additional 10,000 schools will be opened during 2005. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has started the Early Childhood Development (ECD) project with focus on family and centre-based early learning and stimulation interventions. The project is being implemented on a limited scale in collaboration with various government departments and NGOs having ongoing service delivery outlets to reach families. It is expected that the project activities will gradually be expanded all over Bangladesh.

## 4.2 Primary School Education

### 4.2.1 Enrolment

Bangladesh's success in increasing primary school enrolment has been one of the most notable achievements of the last fifteen years and has played an important role in raising the country's HDI scores. During the decade of the 90s, net and gross enrolment and completion rates all increased by 20 percent.<sup>7</sup> One of the main factors in this improvement was the nationwide implementation since 1993 of the 1990 compulsory primary education law. Incentives in the form of a monthly grain



ration for all children to attend primary school was introduced and text books were distributed free of cost. The “food for education” programme targeting children from poor households was initiated in 1993 and was later replaced by a stipend programme that provides Taka 100 for a child enrolled and attending primary school and Taka 125 for more than one child in school per family. The programme is targeted at the 40 percent of students considered ‘poor’.<sup>8</sup>

The gross enrolment rate in primary education in Bangladesh in 2002 was 89 percent, though enrolment rates in urban slums and the CHT remain significantly lower at 59.7 and 77 percent respectively. Net primary school enrolment rates stood at approximately 83 percent in 2003 with rates for girls marginally higher than for boys (84.3% compared to 81.1%).<sup>9</sup> However, after a steady increase throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, enrolment rates appear to have levelled off. There are significant regional disparities with rates in Khulna Division exceeding 90 percent compared to 75 percent in Sylhet. There are gender differences in enrolment rates in urban slums, the rates being 61 and 58 percent for girls and boys respectively.

**Table 19: Gross Primary School Enrolment ('000s)**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>Total</b>	120.5	126.4	130.2	140.7	151.8	172.8	175.8	180.3	183.6	176.2	176.7	176.6	176.8
<b>Boys</b>	66.6	69.1	70.5	75.3	80.5	90.9	92.2	93.6	95.7	90.6	90.6	89.9	89.3
<b>Girls</b>	53.9	57.3	59.7	65.4	71.3	81.9	83.6	86.7	87.8	85.6	86.1	86.7	87.5
<b>(%)</b>	(44.7)	(45.3)	(45.9)	(46.5)	(47.0)	(47.4)	(47.6)	(48.1)	(47.8)	(48.6)	(48.7)	(49.1)	(49.5)

Source: PMED data cited in Bangladesh Economic Review 2003

**Table 20: Net Primary School Enrolment (%) by Division**

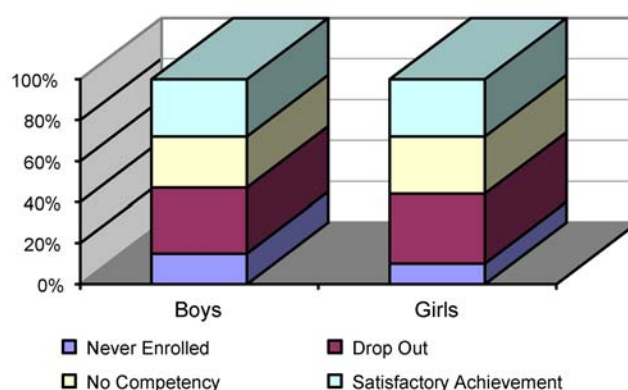
Divisions	1997		1998		1999		2000	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>National</b>	78.5	79.1	80.0	83.0	76.9	79.7	80.7	82.8
<b>Barisal</b>	81.3	86.5	88.0	89.0	80.1	83.0	84.0	85.9
<b>Chittagong</b>	81.6	79.2	82.0	81.0	78.8	81.2	79.6	82.4
<b>Dhaka</b>	76.7	77.2	87.0	90.0	74.2	76.5	79.1	79.6
<b>Khulna</b>	80.6	83.4	87.0	94.0	83.0	87.1	85.3	89.1
<b>Rajshahi</b>	77.4	78.6	78.0	83.0	76.3	79.8	81.3	83.9
<b>Sylhet</b>	74.8	73.8	78.0	80.0	72.3	72.2	78.6	79.9

Source: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), BBS (various years) quoted in “Progotir Pathey” 1997, 1998 and 2000 and “Asha” 1999

#### 4.2.2 Completion and Learning Achievement

Despite these developments, one in seven children are still not enrolled in school.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, while two thirds of those enrolled complete the five-year primary school cycle, upwards of 33 percent of children drop out before reaching the fifth grade, though this is an improvement over the 38 percent drop out rate recorded in 1995.<sup>11</sup> Just under 60 percent of all children attend school on a regular basis and achievement rates continue to be low with only 28 percent of all children achieving the satisfactory minimal level of competency in the key areas of reading, writing, numeracy and life skills.<sup>12</sup> Factors that continue to hinder performance include crowded classrooms<sup>13</sup> -- the average student-teacher ratio is 59 and the ratio is even more skewed in government primary schools (76.36 students per teacher)<sup>14</sup> -- lack of learning material, untrained and unenthusiastic teachers and limited contact hours in schools.<sup>15</sup> Thus, almost three quarters of all children in Bangladesh still lack the benefit of a quality and meaningful primary school education.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 22: Completion and Learning Achievement Rates



### 4.2.3 Strategies to Improve Performance

Aggressive efforts by the Government and NGOs to expand the scope of primary education has seen over 62,116 primary schools being established in Bangladesh with virtually every village having its own school.<sup>17</sup> 1.7 million children attend non-formal educational institutions that cater to the specific circumstances and needs of children from poor households. These schools stress the need for flexible timetables and school years, learning materials and child-centred pedagogic approaches, trained teachers that are sympathetic to the special learning needs of children, not burdening the family with the cash cost of exercise books and pencils<sup>18</sup>, the importance of developing a rapport between teacher and parents as well as the proximity of the school, especially for girls. Most important is the assurance to parents and children that the teacher is present every day on time and that children indeed learn. The recruitment of female teachers, subsidies to girls, stipend programs for students, and the provision of girls' toilets are some of the interventions being implemented to sustain the pace of primary school attendance by girls. Curriculum improvements, upgrading teaching methods, instituting transparent, participatory management and financing of school committee boards, efficient monitoring and reorientation through evaluation remain options to be developed to further strengthen the education system. Extra-curricular activities, leadership training and social services within the school usually attract and retain students and these need to be systematised in order to sustain the positive developments in the education system. Nonetheless, there are significant cohorts such as working children, children living in slums and children with disabilities, that remain outside the educational system.

### 4.3 Secondary Education

Secondary education in Bangladesh covers grades 6 to 12 and is provided through a variety of government and non-government institutions within a regulatory framework established by the Government. There are approximately 18,700 secondary level institutions (including over 1,000 Dakhil and Alim Madrassas) offering secondary level instruction. Ninety eight percent are non-government, but most receive government support to cover teachers' salaries and occasional capital grants.<sup>19</sup> In 2003, the secondary education (junior, secondary and higher secondary) had 9.4 million students and 240,000 teachers. In the madrasa system there were 3.5 million students and 65,000 teachers while another 132,381 (25% females) students were enrolled in vocational schools.<sup>20</sup>

The gross enrolment rate in secondary education in 2001 was 42 percent with significant decline from junior to the higher secondary level. Net enrolment at the junior level was 50.2 percent, at secondary level 32.3 percent and only 14 percent at the higher secondary level. Another 10 percent were enrolled in Madrassas. The total net enrolment rate at the secondary level as a whole was estimated to be 35 percent. The steady reduction in enrolment rates through the secondary school system remains a serious concern and partly explains the low participation rates in higher education, a factor that can threaten Bangladesh's economic development. Without a skilled labour force,

there is a real risk that Bangladesh will be trapped in a cycle of low-wage low value-added production and will be unable to compete with other countries in the region to attract FDI.

**Table 21: Secondary School Gross and Net Enrolment 2001**

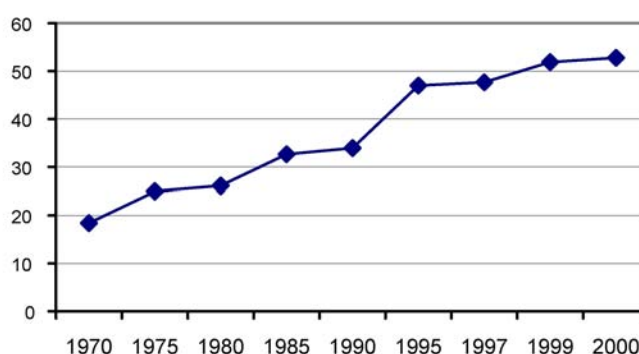
Level	Sex	School Age Population	Gross Enrolment	Net Enrolment	Gross Enrolment Rate (%)	Net Enrolment Rate (%)
Junior Secondary (G VI-VIII)	Both	11,109,859	6,393,122	5,580,410	57.54	50.23
	Male	5,600,472	2,966,102	2,589,606	52.96	46.24
	Female	5,509,387	3,427,020	2,990,804	62.20	54.29
Secondary (G IX-X)	Both	7,207,888	3,139,875	2,330,236	43.56	32.33
	Male	3,641,320	1,558,591	1,157,571	42.80	31.79
	Female	3,566,568	1,581,284	1,172,665	44.34	32.88
Higher Secondary (G XI-XII)	Both	6,812,746	1,177,914	956,572	17.29	14.04
	Male	3,456,457	734,448	596,321	21.25	17.25
	Female	3,356,289	44,346	360,251	13.21	10.73

Source: BANEBS 2001

### 4.3.1 Girls' Participation

Concerted efforts to boost female enrolment and educational achievement through the introduction of stipend schemes, has significantly reduced gender gaps in secondary education. Gross enrolment for girls in 2000 in all levels of secondary school was 42 percent compared to 33.9 percent a decade ago. Girls make up nearly half (49.5%) the total student population in secondary education, but this falls to a third at the higher secondary level. Drop out (24.5%) and repetition rates (13.2%) for boys in grades six through eight are higher than for girls (18.4 and 8% respectively). However, this picture changes dramatically at the higher secondary level where overall drop out rates are 52 percent with female drop out rates being 57.9 percent.<sup>21</sup> A number of factors contribute to this phenomenon including physical security, limits on the mobility of girls including real risks of assault and kidnapping, classroom over-crowding, shortage of female teachers and lack of role models, and social pressure especially in rural areas for girls to get married. Interestingly however, drop out rates from madrassas, though high at 40 percent, is lower than in formal schools. In addition, there are indications that while a significant number of girls complete the full cycle of school they do not sit for end-of-year exams, which precludes them from pursuing tertiary education. This is particularly true for girls who are Female Stipend (FS) beneficiaries. Less than half of the recipients appeared in the SSC level exam and of those that did sit for the SSC examination, only 10 to 15 percent managed to pass.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 23: Female Enrolment Rates Secondary School (%)**



**Table 22: Male Female Ratio in Education**

	Girls per 100 boys		
	1999	2000	2001
<b>Primary</b>	94.92	95.60	96.44
<b>Secondary</b>	95.01	98.64	103.66
<b>Tertiary</b>	46.89	47.21	47.11
<b>Primary and Secondary</b>	94.95	96.71	99.10
<b>Primary, Secondary and Tertiary</b>	93.37	94.56	97.07

Source: BBS analysis presented at ADB/UNESCAP Concluding Workshop on Enhancing Social and Gender Statistics, Bangkok, 24-27 June 2003\*

\* Data compiled from the following publications: National Report, 1999 of Information on Primary Level Institute, Teacher and Class Enrollment, PMED. Primary Education Statistics in Bangladesh-2001, PMED. National Education Survey (Post-Primary)-1999, Final Report, BANBEIS. Statistical Profile on Education in Bangladesh, BANBEIS

### 4.3.2 Quality

The significant rise in enrolment rates has however, been offset by serious shortfall in the quality of education and the levels of educational attainment. Using public examination results at the end of classes 10 and 12 as an indicator of efficiency and quality of secondary education, it was found that in 2001 the overall pass rates for SSC students was 35.2 percent compared to 73.2 percent in 1995. This dramatic drop reflects changes in standards as well as in the calibre of students entering secondary school. However, it also points to serious deficiencies in teaching quality across the system. Pass rates at the HSC level were less than 30 percent in 2001. It should be noted, however, that there are no significant differences in the pass rates for boys and girls.

**Table 23: Secondary School Dropout Rates (%)**

Level	Junior Secondary (Gr. 6-8)		Secondary (Gr. 9-10)		Higher Secondary (Gr. 11-12)	
	All	Female	All	Female	All	Female
1998	24.6	21.4	48.8	54.3	47.9	43.0
1999	21.3	18.4	52.1	57.9	37.8	35.7
2000	20.6	17.9	54.6	56.7	45.2	43.8
2001	19.8	17.2	52.9	54.8	42.7	41.5

Source: <http://dns3.bdcom.com/iactive/moe/agencies2.html> Table 12 and BANEIS 2001

### 4.4 Tertiary Education

Bangladesh has a well-developed network of tertiary education with 21 state general and specialised universities, 53 private universities, 1500 colleges affiliated with the National University and the Bangladesh Open University.<sup>23</sup> A total of 1.08 million students (36% female) were enrolled in public universities and an additional 46,080 students (23% female) were enrolled in private universities in 2003.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, overall enrolment figures remain low with most estimates suggesting that 0.7 percent of students go on to receive some sort of higher degree. This low level of participation in tertiary education is both a result of the high level of attrition through the latter years of secondary education as well a reflection of a continued mismatch between manpower demand and supply. There is intense competition for places at universities especially in the fields of computer science, engineering and medicine, as they offer greater employment opportunities. At the same time, because of less stringent entrance requirements, there is a strong bias towards humanities and social sciences at the cost of science and technology. In degree colleges, where over 80 percent of higher education students are enrolled, the balance is even more skewed. Data in 1999 for public universities show that over 80 percent of the students in public universities were enrolled in general studies rather than in applied sciences and specialised professional courses. This suggests that further efforts need to be devoted to increasing the enrolment of students in science-based university courses.

There are significant gender differentials at all levels of tertiary education. Women make up around 23 percent of the student body in technical or polytechnical institutions and 32.5 percent in professional programmes such as law and medicine. This bias is the result of the culling-out process at the secondary level where female dropout rates are high. Women from poor and lower middle class families in rural areas, who do pursue higher studies, opt for the cheaper, low quality degree colleges due to financial constraints.

#### 4.4.1 Vocational Training

The civilian labour force (15 years and above) in Bangladesh is estimated to be around 60.3 million. However, less than a third (19.2 million) have any formal education at the primary level or beyond, while just over half of the educated work force (10.1 million) have an educational level beyond primary education.<sup>25</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Bangladesh continues to be trapped in a low skill/low wage trajectory. While this has attracted foreign investment from labour intensive industries, the lack of a skilled labour force has severely limited its ability to move into the production of higher value-added goods and thereby substantively address poverty reduction.

Certificate level courses (post-class 8) in various trades and skills are offered in some 100 public sector institutions and some 700 non-government institutions including secondary schools. In 2000-2001, about 114,000 students were enrolled in these courses. This number was almost double the enrolments in the same categories in 1997-98.<sup>26</sup> Diploma level courses (post-class 10) are offered in 600 institutions, the large majority of them in the private sector, including the higher secondary schools and colleges. The Directorate of Technical Education also has introduced a vocational secondary school certificate (SSC) stream and vocational higher secondary certificate (HSC) stream in business in secondary institutions. This has helped to raise the level of enrolment in VTE.

**Table 24: Summary Information on Engineering and Technical Education Institutions**

Year	Institutions	Teachers			Students		
		Total	Female	% Female	Total	Female	% Female
1980	109	1,703	47	2.76	22,156	942	4.25
1985	137	2,303	68	2.95	26,421	1310	4.96
1990	135	2,249	85	3.78	27,060	1450	5.36
1995	137	2,592	97	3.74	36,010	2841	7.89
1997	137	2,649	107	4.04	39,013	3281	8.41
1999	138	2,519	306	12.15	43,629	4310	9.88
2000	138	2,560	314	12.27	44,832	4559	10.17

Source: <http://www.banbeis.org/keyedu2.htm> Table 8

The major weaknesses in vocational and technical education is the mismatch between the training content and the demands of the labour market, rigid and formal curricula and course organisation, lack of coordination among different actors, and insufficient training material. At the same time, it has been noted that the number of people trained in middle-level skills in the country is grossly inadequate. Several important steps need to be taken to reform vocational training in Bangladesh and to make it relevant for the needs of the country. Currently, less than five percent of all students enrolled in secondary education receive any form of vocational or technical training. Such training courses need to be expanded significantly. There is also an urgent need to align technical training course with the needs of employers through the use of flexible learning methods and practical on-the-job training schemes. The need is for the vocational training to be more responsive to the needs of industry. For this to happen a close private-public partnership must be developed at different levels of the VET system, right from policy decision through advisory to operational levels.

## 4.5 Education Financing

Even among LDCs, Bangladesh has one of the lowest proportions of GDP devoted to education. Public expenditure on primary education as a percentage of GDP increased from an average of 0.09 percent in the ten-year period 1973-1983 to 2.40 percent in 1994/95 but has since shown a downward trend, falling to 2.3 percent in 2000/01 and 2.21 percent in 2001/02. This is reflected in the budgetary allocation for education which declined from 16.4 in 1994/95 to 15 percent in 2001/02. Primary education public expenditure per student is about US\$13 while expenditure for non-government education (which caters to 90% of secondary students) is US\$16. Although nearly half the public education budget is allocated to primary education, it is insufficient to meet the goal of universal primary education, and the Government relies on the private and NGO sector to fill the gap. A large percentage of the public expenditure in education is devoted to salaries, leaving little for capital investment and infrastructure development. The Government also provides significant salary subsidies to the NGO sector. In principle, this should enable the Government to maintain and enforce quality standards, but in practice the weak capacity of the regulatory and supervisory organisations and intrusion of partisan politics in educational management has limited its effectiveness.

Total national education expenditure, especially public budget allocation, has to increase substantially in the medium term to meet national goals and priorities of expansion and quality improvement. World Bank estimates that achieving universal elementary education up to eighth grade with the participation of 50 percent of the eligible age group in secondary education by 2008 will require public allocation to education to be raised to four percent of GDP.<sup>27</sup> Quality improvements, desperately needed at all levels of education, will require additional resources. The share of government budget for the education sector will have to rise under this scenario from under 15 percent in 2000 to 26 percent in 2008. In 2004, the education budget was substantially increased to about 13 percent, a level of investment that will need to be sustained in order to ensure that Bangladesh is able to meet its stated goals in education.

## 4.6 Food Security

Immediately after independence in 1971, the country's main focus was to fight against hunger and to achieve food self-sufficiency. However, as Sen noted, *hunger and famine* occur not from a lack of food but from inequalities built into the mechanisms of distribution.<sup>28</sup> The concept of food security thus covers the whole gamut of activities from production to marketing to consumption. While Bangladesh has made excellent progress towards achieving self-reliance in food production, this did not always translate into food security at the individual household level.

### 4.6.1 Availability

Due to steady increase in food production in Bangladesh, the overall per capita food grain availability has averaged 19 oz per day over the last three years, exceeding the optimal food grain availability of 16 oz per day. However, despite the success in meeting the local demand for rice, production of wheat and other non-cereal agricultural produce falls far short of national requirements due to a combination of factors that include seasonal and topographical constraints. This shortage is filled by imports as reflected in the table below.

**Table 25: Import of Selected Commodities**

Commodity	(million US dollar)				
	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Rice	680	115	172	115	224.5
Wheat	32	266	177	171	182.2
Oilseeds	100.1	90	64	72	70.8
Edible Oil	286.9	256	218	251	342.5
Coconut oil	5	6	5.7	4.5	5.7
Milk & dairy products	56	60	61.7	59	60.4
Spices	27	17.9	14.5	12.5	32
Sub-total: Food	475	429.9	364	398.4	511.4
Total Import	8,527	8,374	9,335	8,540	9,086

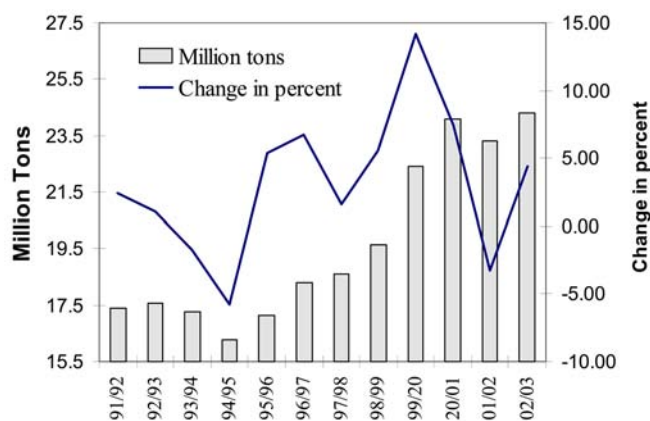
Source: Bangladesh Bank and Bangladesh Economic Survey

There are regional disparities in food availability. In 1999/2000 Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna Divisions were considered to be food deficit with the deficit in Dhaka reaching 1.63 million metric tons. In contrast, Rajshahi had a food grain surplus of 2.7 million metric tons.<sup>29</sup> As inefficiencies in local food markets and distributional mechanisms contribute to the inequality of availability, considerable attention needs to be placed on ensuring efficient systems of inter-regional food procurement and distribution. In addition, there are important seasonal variations in domestic supply. Bangladesh experiences two major periods of food shortage during the two pre-harvest seasons -- February to March and September to October. Agricultural labourers are particularly vulnerable to these lean seasons, as demand for labour, and therefore wage rates, are low. Natural disasters also impact regional food availability. However, since the floods of 1998, particular attention has been given to ensuring adequate food stocks and the Government maintains a reserve supply of one million tons of rice to cater for emergencies.

#### 4.6.2 Crop Production

Bangladesh has been quite successful in terms of food grain (paddy, rice and wheat) production, which reached 26.88 million MT in 2003.<sup>30</sup> However, there is considerable variability in the growth rate of crop production. While the average growth rate was approximately two percent for the period 1992-2003, in three of these ten years, growth was negative which was offset by a seven percent growth rate averaged during another three-year period. For small farmers these fluctuations spell survival or failure and their vulnerability to seasonal impacts on production cycles and the reduction of risks thus become important. The variability depends on climatic and weather factors, vulnerability to natural disasters, poor inputs supply systems, the lack of technical know-how and limited marketing skills.

Figure 24: Net Foodgrain Production 1991/92-2002/03



It is estimated that by 2020 the demand for rice and wheat will increase to approximately 31 million tons. In order to meet this demand, the annual growth rate in crop production will have to be around four to five percent. However, a number of factors suggest that it will be difficult to achieve this increase. First, the stock of productive agricultural land is decreasing by 80,000 hectares per year.<sup>31</sup> Second, HYV yields are showing signs of stagnation and are lower than yields in neighbouring countries. Moreover, the incremental growth registered in the crop sub-sector since 1995, is not due to higher per unit yield but from increased irrigation coverage of HYV Boro areas. Thus, while Bangladesh has managed to achieve food grain self-sufficiency, in the absence of a significant increase in productivity and efficiency in crop production through expanded use of agricultural inputs, there is a strong likelihood that Bangladesh will once again be reliant on grain imports to meet national requirements. In addition, the domestic production of pulses, oil-seeds, vegetables and fruits are far below minimum requirements which has driven up prices beyond the purchasing power of the poor.

#### 4.6.3 Agricultural Research

Farming practices in Bangladesh have remained static with limited crop diversification to fruits and vegetables. This is partly due to lack of knowledge of the producers and partly due to the absence of well-functioning and efficient agricultural markets for these goods. Significant changes have also taken place in the structure and average size of farms. The latter has fallen from 0.81 ha to 0.61 ha of net cultivated area per farm, which is indicative of a growing process of fragmentation

of land holdings, which has increased over the latter half of the 1990s.<sup>32</sup> Land fragmentation has also led to increase in subsistence and sharecropping/contract farming with very low rates of technology adoption. Recent findings show that only 29 percent of technologies developed under the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) are being adopted by farmers.

Immediate attention is needed to revisit the country's research and extension systems to make it more effective and efficient. Current R&E systems are not equipped to deal with changing circumstances caused by globalisation and liberalisation and investments in agricultural research constitutes less than 0.5 percent of agricultural GDP, against the minimum requirement of one percent suggested by international agencies. There is a need to reform R&E systems to make it more client-oriented and demand-driven. Major issues include: human resources development; capacity building; increased involvement of private sector and improving the institutional setting of NARS and the Extension Department. In the absence of major changes in technology or a move towards high value crops, it is increasingly clear that crop farming on small land holdings will become economically unviable.

#### 4.6.4 Agribusiness Development and Rural Markets

Another major constraint facing the agricultural sector is the lack of processing facilities resulting in post-harvest losses of up to 30 percent. The absence of sufficient processing capacity limits the extent to which producers can, for example, store produce for sale throughout the year as opposed to the current situation of over-supply during the post-harvest period, which drives down prices. There is considerable scope for improving processing and preservation technology in Bangladesh. Low capacity utilisation of existing facilities is caused by the non-availability and irregular supply of raw material. It is also influenced by high marketing and handling costs, expensive packaging materials, lack of suitable cold storage facilities for fruits and vegetables (most cold stores are built for potato storage and are under-utilised by 50% according to one estimate). There is significant potential to greatly increase domestic supply of edible oil (currently having yields of approximately 33%) through improved processing techniques.

Agricultural goods reach consumers through a complex network, involving production, assembly, sorting, re-assembly, distribution and retail. In all there are five levels of markets that connect the rural producer with urban and rural consumers and the number of markets nearly doubled between 1985 and 2000 (see Table 26). With a few notable exceptions there are no rules or guidelines that govern the operation of these markets, leading to unacceptable levels of uncertainty into the marketing of agricultural goods. There is also no categorisation or grading of produce or the use of standard weights and packages for sale. Furthermore, the lack of adequate storage facilities increases the pressure on small producers to sell at low prices, while the lack of price information engenders uncertainty and risk-averse behaviour on the part of producers. A policy option that could counter such effects is the integration of markets to lower costs and to provide incentives for producers to increase supply.

**Table 26: Types of Rural Agricultural Markets**

Category of Market	1985	2000
Rural primary market	4,950	8,000
Rural assembly/secondary	2,676	4,000
Urban wholesale market	55	155
Urban wholesale cum retail market	40	82
Urban retail market	182	240
Total / All markets	7,903	1,3077



#### 4.6.5 Fisheries and Livestock

The fisheries sector has become an increasingly important source of economic activity in Bangladesh. Not only does it play an important role in meeting the protein needs of the poor, it also contributes an average of five percent to national GDP. The growth rate in the fisheries sector between 1992 and 2000 was around 8.3 percent per annum though this has slowed to around 2.5 percent over the last two years.<sup>33</sup> In addition, fish and fish products account for about five to six percent of total export earnings.<sup>34</sup> Overall, fish production was around 1.9 million tons in 2001/02 compared to 1.37 million tons in 1996/97 (1.475 millions tons from inland fish -- closed and open -- and an additional 45,000 tons from marine resources).<sup>35</sup>

One notable development in the fisheries sector has been the emergence of shrimp exports during the 1980s. On the one hand, the export of shrimp has grown into a highly lucrative business and more than 300,000 people (owners, traders and paid labour) earn at least part of their income from the industry. On the other hand, the retention of saline waters in shrimp farms and seepage effects have, however, increased soil salinisation in the adjacent areas, reducing rice and other crop yields, and causing die-off of various cropped trees. Availability of fresh water in the locale of shrimp farms has also reduced, adversely affecting the sustainability of the shrimp farming industry itself. In addition, even though the shrimp industry employs a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, the economic benefits tend to accrue to the larger landowners. A study finds that four percent of households with more than 7.5 acres derive the majority (55%) of the direct benefits of shrimp cultivation, while 41 percent of landless households derive only two percent of total income. However, the study also finds that small farmers' ponds are the most profitable, followed by those managed by marginal and landless farmers, with large farmers being technically least efficient. This is consistent with performance of small-scale farms elsewhere in Bangladesh and in other agrarian economies and is due largely to the efficient use of inputs and the relatively low labour cost of the poorer groups.<sup>36</sup>

Prior to the widespread development of shrimp farming, most landless people worked as day labourers or sharecroppers for agricultural landowners. They also had access to common property resources for grazing livestock and access to canals and water bodies for fishing and navigation. These livelihood opportunities have declined significantly as land is flooded for shrimp production and many poor farmers are forced to lease or sell their land to wealthier landowners and previous sharecropping arrangements were discontinued. Alternative livelihood strategies include van/rickshaw pulling, small business, day labouring on shrimp farms as guards and seasonal migration. Other displaced livelihoods include poultry, livestock rearing and cultivation of oilseeds and pulses that contribute to negative health and nutrition outcomes.

There has also been a significant increase in livestock production over the last year. Data from the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock indicate that in 2001-02 the cattle and poultry population increased to 81.7 and 163.5 million respectively, the production of eggs increased to 3890 million and milk and meat output grew to 1.75 million tons and 0.78 million metric tons respectively.<sup>37</sup> Estimates indicate that livestock and poultry rearing accounts for 16 percent of total employment in Bangladesh compared to 21 percent for crop production and utilise approximately 16 million person years. Nearly 80 percent of the employment is devoted to caring of ruminants. Livestock are overwhelmingly indigenous and the use of improved breeds in cattle, goats and sheep is comparatively low.<sup>38</sup> This suggests that there is scope for increasing the production and consumption of livestock if greater emphasis were placed on improving the quality of animal stock through artificial insemination and the use of nutritional supplements. A number of local NGOs have been working in this area to develop pro-poor rearing methods that have made a significant difference in increasing household income. There is a need to expand specialised production units of various sizes along side decentralised producer households. There is thus a vast potential for growth of rural entrepreneurship catering to the livestock industry.

#### 4.6.6 Forestry and Agro-forestry

The forestry sector though small relative to crop production and fisheries, nonetheless contributes approximately two percent of GDP and employs a similar percent of the labour force. Increasing forest productivity through agro-forestry, social forestry and other community based forestry systems has received high priority over the last decade. However, the absence of appropriate technologies and a poor knowledge base are adversely impacting productivity. Furthermore around 9,000 hectares of forestland are lost each year due to poor forest management and indiscriminate logging for commercial purposes and fuel. Forests cover just six percent of the total land area.<sup>39</sup> While population pressure is often cited as a primary reason for encroachment of forest areas and its conversion into crop lands, other factors, such as the disappearance of traditional cultivation practices among tribal communities and a more commercial approach to forest exploitation, have led to large-scale deforestation over the last few decades. Various types of development activities such as dykes, highways, road constructions, and other infrastructure development have further intensified deforestation and destruction of natural forests in Bangladesh.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.6.7 Accessibility

Even when aggregate food supplies are adequate, a number of factors may prevent households or individuals from acquiring enough food. The overall productivity of poor producers may be low or their income levels may be insufficient to enable them to purchase the necessary food from the market at current prices. Households may also lack the necessary asset or access to credit to overcome the period of hardship. Also, families not considered to be the 'poorest of the poor' may remain outside the food assistance programmes that provide cash or kind to supplement food acquisition capacity.

Using consumption of food and nutrients as an indicator of access to food by different socioeconomic groups, per capita daily consumption of all foods increased from 886 grams in 1991-92 to 920 grams in 2000.<sup>41</sup> In addition, important compositional changes occurred in the consumption of food, resulting from substitution of non-cereal for cereal foods. Consumption of wheat, pulses and sugar decreased while consumption of potato, vegetables, fruits, fish, meat and milk increased. This change was more pronounced for urban compared to rural households. Access to and consumption of food is also marked by the distribution patterns among members of a household. Even though households have enough food at their disposal, there is no guarantee that all individuals in the households have equal access to food. Conventional food intake patterns suggest that women and children have less access than adult males. Results of a recent household survey shows that non-pregnant and non-lactating women both consume approximately 90 percentage of their calorie requirement, but children up to six years of age receive, on an average, only 68 percent of their requirement.

**Table 27: Actual Food Consumption against Minimum Requirements**

Food Items	Minimum Required Intake	Actual consumption (gram)			Consumption as % of requirement		
		National	Rural	Urban	National	Rural	Urban
Rice	390	459	479	372	118	123	95
Other Cereals	100	17	14	30	17	14	30
Vegetables	225	196	196	196	87	87	87
Pulses	30	16	15	19	53	50	63
Oil & Fats	20	13	11	19	65	55	95
Spices/onion	10	15	14	21	150	140	210
Fruits	50	28	27	36	56	54	72
Sugar	10	7	6	9	70	60	90
Fish	45	38	38	41	84	84	91
Meat & Eggs	34	19	15	31	56	44	91
Milk	30	30	29	33	100	97	110
Total	944	893	899	862	95	95	91

Source: Hossain M. and M.L. Bose (2000) and Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000 BBS

#### 4.6.8 Utilisation

The average diet in Bangladesh lacks sufficient micronutrients and this hinders effective utilisation of macronutrients and the prevention of diseases. This dietary imbalance is particularly serious among young children, adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women. There are also variations in average per capita consumption of food and nutrients by income levels. While per capita consumption of food grains (including other cereals) exceeds 500 grams (against the minimum requirement of 454 grams), per capita consumption of rice is 362 grams for the lowest income quintile, compared to 513 grams for the highest population quintile. The difference is even more pronounced for some other food items such as soybean oil which is only 0.62 grams for the lowest quintile compared to 11.71 grams for the highest quintile.<sup>42</sup> Overall, the consumption mix remains poor in relation to minimum intake requirements for balanced nutrition. With the exception of rice and spices, actual consumption falls short of minimum requirements for most items. The deficits were particularly high for pulses, fruit, and cereals other than rice, the consumption of pulses meeting only 50 percent of the requirements in urban and rural households.<sup>43</sup>

Policies required to address the problem include communication of dietary guidelines through mass media, fortification of selected food items and supplementary feeding through nutrition intervention programmes. A person's health status also influences biochemical absorption of food nutrients. Prevention and control of infectious and parasitic diseases can contribute significantly to general health outcomes through improved nutrition. Safe drinking water and improved sanitation have important impact on nutritional outcomes, particularly because of high prevalence of diarrhoeal and other water-borne diseases. Policies and programmes that can improve water safety and sanitation are infrastructure development, public investment in water supply and sanitation; health education, and proper care practices for children. Diversification of agricultural production in rural areas through home gardening and backyard poultry-raising is one strategy to ensure balanced nutrition.

#### 4.7 Employment

While there have been significant improvements in the overall macroeconomic indicators in Bangladesh, serious questions remain as to the extent to which these changes have manifested themselves in the creation of new and productive sources of employment for both the rural and the urban poor. This next section looks at overall trends in job creation in Bangladesh over the last five years and looks at how employment patterns are shifting -- especially among women -- and the impact on wages. The chapter looks in particular at two areas -- the rural non-farm sector and small and medium enterprises -- which have been identified as key potential areas for the promotion of sustainable livelihood options in Bangladesh.

##### 4.7.1 The Promotion of Decent Work

Decent work is defined as the aspirations of people in their working lives for opportunity and income, for rights, voice and recognition, for family stability and personal development, for fairness and gender equality. It reflects the concern of government, workers and employers and is captured in four strategic objectives: fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards; employment and income opportunities; social protection and social security; and social dialogue. These objectives hold for all workers, women and men, in both formal and informal economies, in wage employment or work on own account, in the fields, in factories or in offices, in their home or in the community. It is at the national and local level that the overall goal of decent work is translated into changes in people's lives. Integrated decent work country programmes define the priorities and the targets within national development frameworks. They aim to tackle major decent work deficits through efficient programmes, which embrace each of the strategic objectives. Decent work is at the heart of national and local strategies for economic and social progress. It is central to efforts to reduce poverty, and a means to achieving equitable, inclusive developments. Its principles are fully applicable to all peoples everywhere, while the manner of their applications must be determined with due regard to the stage of social and economic development.

To achieve higher growth on a sustainable basis, immediate attention is necessary for the removal

of certain binding constraints, especially in the areas of human resource development. While Bangladesh labour is currently highly competitive in low skilled occupations and has an excellent reputation for hard work and loyalty, the achievement of sustained rapid growth will not be possible without measures to raise labour productivity through skill development, improved working environment, and improved nutrition and health care delivery.

#### 4.7.2 Active Labour Force

The 1999/2000 Labour Force Survey estimated that the total working age population (15-64 years) was 74.2 million of whom 16.6 million were in urban areas and 57 million in rural areas. However, 33.5 million people or just over 45 percent of the working age population in Bangladesh are outside the formal labour market and regulated wage system, although the number of workers entering the labour market has been on the increase.<sup>44</sup> The low participation rate results in an economic dependency ratio<sup>45</sup> of between 138 and 213 percent,<sup>46</sup> which exacerbates the vulnerability of poor households to sudden economic shocks caused by illness or other loss of livelihoods. It is to be noted however, that the participation rate does not capture the large number of people working in the informal sector. Among those considered to be working, a fifth (21.6%) are employed for wages and salaries. Again, while 34 percent of men work for wages, only 8.4 percent of women receive some form of remuneration. Twenty four percent of the working population are self-employed, but by far the largest proportion of the labour force (34.2%) are involved in household work of whom the vast majority (94%) are women.

There are also significant differentials in economic participation rates by sex and age groups.<sup>47</sup> Overall participation rates for males are 84 percent compared to just 23.9 percent for females. Of more significance however, is that participation rates for men are highest for the 35-39 year age cohort compared to women for whom participation rates are highest between the ages of 19 and 26 due in part to the employment of young women in the RMG sector. While female participation rates grew at 14.4 percent compared to male participation rates, which only grew by 1.2 percent,<sup>48</sup> women still only make up 20.8 percent of the total labour force. Interestingly, while the participation rates for urban females grew at 21.7 percent between 1989 and 1995 reflecting in part the tremendous growth in the employment of women in the RMG sector, the fastest rate of growth during the period 1996-2000 has been among rural women (17.1%) which reflects in part the rise in self-employment through the promotion of micro-credit services as well as changing social norms with regard to the employment of women outside the home. This also reflects a decrease in the relative importance of agriculture in the rural economy, and a shift towards a range of small business activities.

**Table 28: Selected Labour Statistics\***

Indicators	Usual			Extended			Indicators	Usual			Extended		
	Active Labour Force							Unemployment rate (%)					
	Both	M	F	Both	M	F		Both	M	F	Both	M	F
National	40.72	32.17	8.56	53.51	33.45	20.00	National	4.3	3.4	7.8	3.3	3.2	3.3
Urban	9.22	7.08	2.14	9.99	7.14	2.84	Urban	5.8	5.0	8.2	5.3	5.0	6.2
Rural	31.50	25.08	6.41	43.52	26.31	17.21	Rural	3.9	2.9	7.6	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Participation Rate (%)							Underemployment Rate (%)					
National	54.9	84.0	23.9	72.1	87.3	55.9	National	16.2	7.4	52.8	31.9	8.4	71.2
Urban	55.8	83.7	26.5	60.4	84.4	35.2	Urban	12.2	4.7	38.2	18.2	4.9	52.0
Rural	54.6	84.0	23.1	75.5	88.1	61.9	Rural	17.8	8.1	57.7	35.0	9.3	74.2

\* The definition of a worker has changed from anyone over the age of 10 used in the previous LFS to anyone over the age of 15, which accounts for the lower figures.

Notes: Usual definition: Those aged fifteen years and above who were either employed for pay or profit or with/without pay or profit, or seeking/available for job during reference period are considered economically active.

Extended definition: Those aged 15 years and above who were either employed for pay or profit or with/without pay or profit, or seeking/available for job during reference period are considered economically active. Economic activities include own household economic activities such as care of poultry and livestock, threshing, boiling, drying, processing and preservation of food.

### 4.7.3 Sectoral Distribution

Just under half (49.6%) of the work force is employed in the agricultural sector despite the fact that the sector contributes only 21 percent to GDP. In contrast, the service sector, which employs 35.6 percent of the population, contributes nearly 50 percent to GDP. Twenty percent of all working women are employed in the industrial sector compared to just 11.3 percent of men which once again demonstrates the dominance of the RMG sector and is a further indication that, with the end of the MFA and the possible contraction of the industry, a disproportionate share of the burden could fall on women.

Figure 25: Sector Share of Employed Labour Force

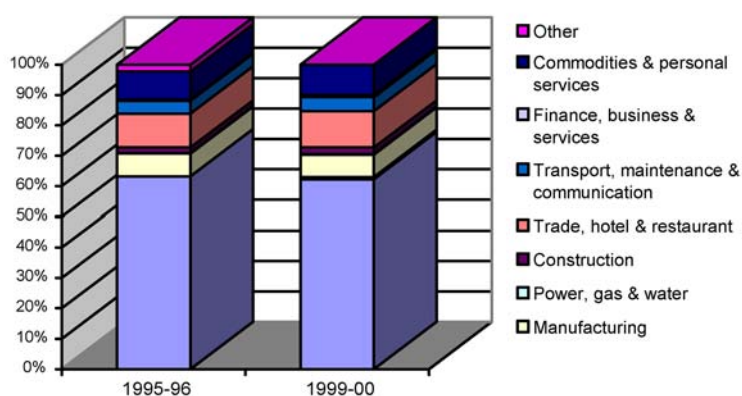


Table 29: Employment Persons by Major Occupations (%)

	National			Urban			Rural		
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
Professional and technical	4.0	3.8	4.7	7.0	6.0	10.3	3.2	3.2	2.9
Administrative and managerial	0.5	0.6	0.2	1.8	2.2	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
Clerical workers	3.1	3.5	1.7	7.6	8.9	3.5	1.8	2.0	1.0
Sales workers	14.8	17.1	5.6	23.7	28.8	6.2	12.2	13.9	5.4
Services	5.7	3.2	15.7	9.8	6.3	21.6	4.6	2.3	13.7
Agricultural forest and related workers	49.6	50.1	47.7	11.7	10.6	15.3	60.5	61.0	58.5
Fisheries	1.5	1.7	0.7	0.7	0.9	0.2	1.7	2.0	0.8
Production, transport labourers	20.8	20.0	23.7	37.7	36.3	42.3	15.9	15.5	17.6
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: LFS 1999-2000: Table 4.2A pg. 40 (LFS, August 2002)

There are also notable employment growth differences based on location and gender. There has been a noticeable increase (20.3%) in financial services. But the manufacturing sector has seen little growth (1.3%), which is an area of serious concern.<sup>49</sup> Around 75.3 percent of the labour force is employed in the private informal sector down from 87 percent five years ago, with another 18.6 percent employed in the formal private sector. Less than six percent of workers are now employed in the public sector.<sup>50</sup>

### 4.7.4 Female Employment

Another significant factor relating to the status of women is their participation in economic activity. Traditionally, women have been involved in the non-monetised sector and in subsistence activities. With increasing poverty, the breakdown of kinship networks and the demand generated by some sectors, an increasing number of women now work outside of the home. The 1999-2000 Labour Force Survey, estimates women's participation in the labour market to be 23.9 percent compared to a male participation rate of 84 percent. About 26.9 percent of women are self-employed compared to 51.6 of men.<sup>51</sup> Thus, strong gender biases exist within the labour force, so that despite the fact that women contribute 76.5 percent of the production in the agriculture sector (using extended definition), particularly in all post harvest activities, only 45.4 percent are considered to be employed in the sector.<sup>52</sup> The number of women in high skilled jobs like doctors, engineers, lawyers, educators, accountant, and bankers and in governmental and non-government services is still very low.

On average, women's earnings are 58.5 percent of the average earnings of male day labourers.<sup>53</sup> Among the self-employed, 66 percent of women compared to 7.3 percent of men earn less than Taka 1000 per month. The distribution is marginally more equitable in the case of salaried workers: 61 percent of women compared to 16 percent men earn less than Taka 1000.<sup>54</sup> Household expenditure surveys report that in the formal sector women's wages are 75 percent of men's wage with the gap in the informal sector being much wider. For example, women contract workers receive wage rates that are 60 percent of the wage rates of male contract workers. Even in sectors where they dominate such as RMG, women's wages are 70-80 percent of male wages because men are employed in the more skilled jobs.

Social policies designed to protect female workers and promote workplace equality can have controversial effects on labour market outcomes. Working-hour restrictions and mandated maternity benefits help to safeguard women's family responsibilities and ensure their physical security, but these regulations also raise the cost of hiring women. However, equal pay and equal opportunity measures potentially increase women's relative earnings and reduce occupational segregation, but they are difficult to implement and enforce. Although not explicitly designed to target women's well-being or equality, seemingly "gender-blind" policies can also yield different outcomes for men and women. In an effort to improve women's relative earnings and labour market status, most countries have adopted policies that promote equal treatment in the workplace. The two most common types of such policies are equal pay and equal opportunity measures. These measures do not target women for protection or special treatment, but they do have the explicit goal of improving women's labour market outcomes by eliminating wage and employment discrimination against women. Bangladesh could possibly look into wage equality in these terms.

#### **4.7.5 Overseas Employment**

According to the data of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), the annual average outflow of labour force between 1991 and 2003 was around 226,000 persons. During the same period, a total of 2,754,000 persons, of which only one percent were women, were reported to have emigrated abroad for employment. This under-representation of women in the overseas labour market was partly due to the restrictions imposed on female migration through a 1981 Presidential Order.<sup>55</sup> Such restrictions have increased women's vulnerability to trafficking as they are forced to seek irregular and clandestine means for international migration.

To address this problem, the Government is re-examining its policy and the ban on women's migration is now in the process of being lifted. In mid-2003 the Government lifted the ban subject to certain conditions such as facilities provided by recruiting agencies and eligibility being restricted to married women over 35 years of age. There is therefore, a need for policies that promote equal access for women to overseas employment opportunities and help in the proper management of migration in order to safeguard the interests of the migrant workers and protect their fundamental rights in destination countries. A first step in this direction is to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990).

#### **4.7.6 Unemployment**

Unemployment rates in Bangladesh, estimated at 4.3 percent, are comparatively low due to pervasive under-employment and the large number of people who are considered to be out of the labour force but are no longer seeking work. There are minor differences between urban and rural areas with unemployment rates being 5.8 percent in the former compared to 3.9 percent in the latter. Unemployment rates for women are just over double those for men (7.8 and 3.4 percent in respectively).<sup>56</sup> The LFS estimates that 16.6 percent of the labour force is considered under-employed.<sup>57</sup> Underemployment rates are far greater for women than for men with over 52.8 percent of women considered to be underemployed compared to just 7.4 percent of men. Rural women (57.7%) are also far more likely to be underemployed compared to urban women (38.2%). However it should be noted that these calculations do not take into account household and child-care work within the home.<sup>58</sup>

Unemployment rates are positively correlated with levels of education. Unemployment rate for those completing grade nine and above is 13 percent compared to 1.4 percent for those with no education.<sup>59</sup> This suggests that the types of employment currently being created are biased towards low value-added manual and unskilled sectors of the economy. There has been a small increase in the overall unemployment levels among those with an education above SSC/HSC from 10.3 percent in 1995-96 to 11.5 percent in 1999-2000. Of particular note is the fact that the unemployment rates for women completing SSC/HSC has almost tripled from 9.7 percent to 26.6 percent compared to a decline in for men from 9.7 to 8.6 percent respectively.<sup>60</sup> This reflects the increase in the number of women continuing their education but also reflects their lack of employment opportunities. Again, unemployment rate is high among girls aged 15 to 24 years whereas among male labour force the highest unemployment rate is observed among the 25-29 age group, which once again reveals insufficient job creation, especially in rural areas, and the limited impact of economic growth.

**Table 30: Youth Unemployment Rates**

Age Group	National			Urban			Rural		
	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female
15 - 19	7.84	8.18	7.40	8.87	10.08	7.62	7.56	7.73	7.33
20 - 24	5.29	7.43	3.64	7.19	11.14	3.95	4.66	6.15	3.55
15 - 24	6.66	7.88	5.42	8.02	10.58	5.67	6.26	7.13	5.34

#### 4.8 Rural Employment

One of the major challenges facing Bangladesh is rapid urbanisation from increasing rural-urban migration for employment. Demographic pressures in rural areas where agriculture offers little promise for expanding employment, has been the root cause of persistent rural poverty. Growing landlessness acts as a 'push factor' for migration, leading to increased underemployment in urban areas, as there has not been a commensurate increase in employment opportunities. Reflecting these underlying dynamics, the thrust of public policy for the next decade and beyond must be to create jobs and generate income in both the urban and rural non-farm sectors. The enormous employment potential of the informal sector, particularly the non-farm rural sector, is already evident. Supported by infrastructure and credit programs, rural and peri-urban non-farm employment in micro-enterprises and in construction could prove to be the solution to absorb a growing, sizable, semi-skilled workforce.

**Table 31: Employment by Activity in Rural Bangladesh, 2000 (%)**

Activity type	Usual LFS	Extended LFS
Crop cultivation	54.0	52.8
Non-crop agriculture	8.3	19.9
Pure non-farm	37.6	27.3
All	100.0	100.0

Source: Mandal and Asaduzzaman (2002)

##### 4.8.1 Rural Non-Farm Sector

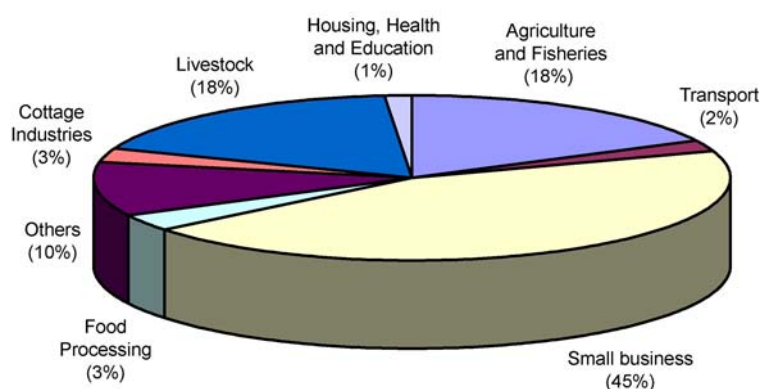
To increase rural employment opportunities and to discourage rural-urban migration there is a need to expand the rural non-farm activities (RNFA) sector.<sup>61</sup> RNFA includes a wide range of services such as rural construction, agro-processing and food processing, rural transportation, input and output trading, grain storing, shop keeping, hotel and restaurants, saw milling and carpentry, manufacturing house building materials, house construction, masonry, metal works, and equipment repairing.<sup>62</sup> In 1995-96, the RNF sector contributed 36 percent to the country's total GDP compared

to about 31 percent by agriculture. During the first half of the 90s, RNF sector grew at 6.8 percent per annum (at 1983/84 prices), while overall GDP grew at 4.5 percent a year. In 1983/84, some 34 per cent of the rural labour force was engaged in non-farm activities as their principal occupation; by 2000 this figure stood at around 38 percent. The proportion of males engaged in this sector has increased throughout the last two decades, while proportion of females has declined sharply.

#### 4.8.2 Micro-Finance

The use of micro-credit became a major poverty alleviation strategy in Bangladesh under both GOB programmes as well as through institutions such as the Grameen Bank and local NGOs for much of the 1980s and 1990s. It is estimated that approximately 12.7 million people are now enrolled in some form of NGO credit and savings programmes.<sup>63</sup> The vast majority of borrowers (10.9 million) are women. It is estimated that the cumulative disbursement is around Taka 18,733.92 crore (US\$3.23 billion) with recovery rates in excess of 97 percent.<sup>64</sup> What is noteworthy, however, is the divergent purposes for which micro-credit loans are now used and in particular its use for rural non-farm activities: 41.79 percent was invested in small business, 17.64 percent in livestock 12.31 percent in agriculture and 7.39 percent in fisheries. However, despite the widespread adoption of micro-credit as a poverty alleviation strategy, it is acknowledged that credit programmes have not reached the poorest of the poor for a variety of reasons including self-exclusion and geographical location.<sup>65</sup>

Figure 26: Micro Credit Loans by Use



Perhaps equally significant, NGO members have managed to accumulate net savings of around Taka 1197.80 crore (US\$206 million). While the mobilisation of rural savings is a significant achievement, MFIs have not to date tried to leverage these resources as a means of promoting economic growth through investment. This is due to a number of different factors including the fact that most beneficiaries are home-based or cooperatives-based entities whose impact on the rural economy in terms of employment and resource generation is quite limited. There also appears to be a lack of active interest among those institutions to provide necessary seed money for start up of rural SMEs. Thus the essential link between potential entrepreneurs and these institutions is missing in the rural economy for which the focus was more on providing micro credit to small borrowers, mostly women. The agricultural credit systems remain weak with little more than 38 percent of rural households receiving some form of credit support. The Agricultural Census of 1995 finds that nearly 78 percent of the farmers i.e., those who have had any cultivable land under own operation, did not receive credit from any source and the use of credit to buy agricultural inputs as well as to invest in processing and other value enhancing activities remain low.

Table 32: Trends in the Share of Non-Farm Sector

Sex	1983/84	1984/85	1990/91	1995/96	1999/00
Both	34.3	34.4	38.6	37.8	38.7
Male	28.5	29.4	35.1	35.0	38.6
Female	89.5	88.8	61.3	51.0	39.0

Source: The Macroeconomics of Poverty Reduction: The Case Study of Bangladesh, UNDP, 2003



### 4.8.3 Trends in the Non-Farm Sector

According to the 1990/91 LFS, self-employed workers, including unpaid family helpers, accounted for about two-thirds of all rural male non-farm workers.<sup>66</sup> In a dynamic setting, one would expect this proportion to fall over time as average scale of activity becomes larger and as the importance of semi-urban-type employment increases within broadly defined 'rural' areas. The fact that the reverse has been observed during the 1980s suggests that the shift of labour force from agriculture to the RNF sector took place mainly at the lower end of the productivity scale where self-employment predominates.

On the other hand, although the proportion of landless among all rural households increased from 34 to 41 percent in the 1980s, there is no evidence of an increase in the proportion of landless among agricultural households. This suggests that the increment in landless households were absorbed almost entirely in the RNF sector. It would thus appear that the shift of labour out of agriculture could be entirely accounted for by increasing landlessness, and not by increasing number of land-owning households diversifying their sources of income towards non-farm activities. It can be concluded, therefore, that this shift has taken place at the lower end of the income scale, since land ownership and income are strongly correlated.

Again, although HIES data for this period does not show any significant increase in per capita rural income, yet the annual growth in agricultural real incomes appears to have slightly exceeded that of rural population. This implies that the growth rate of income in the RNF sector could not have been higher than that of rural population. This would suggest declining overall labour productivity in the RNF sector and would be consistent with a proliferation of low-productivity activities within the RNF sector and possibly some overcrowding.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 33: Changes in Occupations**

Primary Occupation	Land poor (own up to 0.2ha)		Land rich (own 1.0ha & above )	
	1987	2000	1987	2000
<b>Agriculture:</b>	58.0	42.2	74.0	52.4
Own cultivation	12.5	18.1	67.6	51.2
Agricultural wage labour	44.1	22.3	5.9	1.2
Livestock and fisheries	1.4	1.8	0.5	0.0
<b>Non-agriculture:</b>	42.0	57.8	26.0	47.6
Services	14.8	15.1	13.7	25.7
Business	10.9	13.1	3.8	11.5
Shop keeping	1.8	2.6	1.4	2.2
Mechanic	0.8	4.8	0.5	2.7
Rickshaw/van pulling	4.2	9.7	0.9	0.8
Other transport	1.9	1.5	1.4	1.1
Construction labour	5.0	5.9	3.1	1.9
Other non-agricultural labour	2.6	5.1	1.2	1.7

### 4.8.4 Wage Labour Based Rural Enterprises

After remaining more or less static in the 1980s, the proportion of self-employed workers in the RNF sector declined from 66 percent in 1990/91 to 59 percent in 1995/96. This implies a rise in the proportion of wage labour based enterprises, which are likely to be somewhat larger in scale and more productive than the enterprises involving mainly self-employed workers that predominated in the 1980s.<sup>68</sup> The distribution of non-farm income became noticeably more unequally distributed in

the 1990s. Among all the components of rural income, non-farm enterprise income experienced the sharpest increase in inequality -- the concentration ratio increasing from a low 0.22 to a surprisingly high 0.48. The concentration ratio of income from salaried employment also increased from 0.45 to 0.55. These findings suggest that during the 1990s the growth of the RNF sector tilted away from low-productivity self-employment towards relatively larger-scale enterprises that generated larger profits for better-off entrepreneurs and allowed greater differentiation between skilled and unskilled workers.

Moreover, HIES data shows that there was a sharp increase in the share of non-farm income out of total rural household income in the 1990s -- from 26 percent in 1991/92 to 41 percent in 1999/2000. But this was also a period when, according to the LFS there was a slowdown in the shift of agricultural labour to the RNF sector. This would mean that not only did the RNF sector grow more rapidly in terms of value-added compared to the 1980s, there was also an increase in average labour productivity in the RNF sector. Since average labour productivity is positively correlated with the scale of the enterprise, this finding indicates a tilt towards relatively larger-scale enterprises in the 1990s.

The transformation that has occurred between the 1980s and 1990s can be summarised as follows. A rapid shift of labour force into the RNF sector in which the predominant move was into self-employment at the lower end of the productivity scale has given way to a less rapid shift, but one that has been characterised by faster growth of relatively larger-scale enterprises that are more productive and employ more wage labour. Poor rural workers have thus found an increasing opportunity to secure wage employment in the RNF sector instead of overcrowding into petty small-employed activities. This transformation in the dynamics of rural labour force has important implications for the dynamics of poverty in rural Bangladesh. These implications arise from the difference in labour rewards that exist between farm and non-farm sectors on the one hand and between self-employment and wage employment in the RNF sector on the other.

In the case of the extreme poor, self-employment in the non-farm sector does not bring any higher reward compared to casual labour in the same sector. Self-employment is more rewarding only if they can engage in the same kind of work as the moderate non-poor engage in. Otherwise, salaried jobs are a better option -- for both the extreme poor and the moderate poor. It is only after one crosses the poverty threshold that self-employment in non-farm activities begins to catch up with salaried jobs, and it is only for the richest segment of the population that it emerges as the unambiguously most rewarding mode of employment. This suggests that the poor face serious impediments not only in gaining access to salaried jobs, but also in enhancing their return to labour from self-employment.

## 4.9 Income Generation

Given the clear need to boost employment in Bangladesh and the Government's stated policy of divesting from state-owned enterprises to private sector growth and development, especially in rural areas, has become a key poverty eradication strategy in Bangladesh. Although the public sector still holds 26 percent of fixed assets of large-scale enterprises, private firms now account for over 90 percent of employment and output.<sup>69</sup> This indicates that inefficient and loss-making public enterprises need to be phased out as soon as possible. This next section looks briefly at the role played by small and medium enterprises in Bangladesh.

### 4.9.1 Small and Medium Enterprise

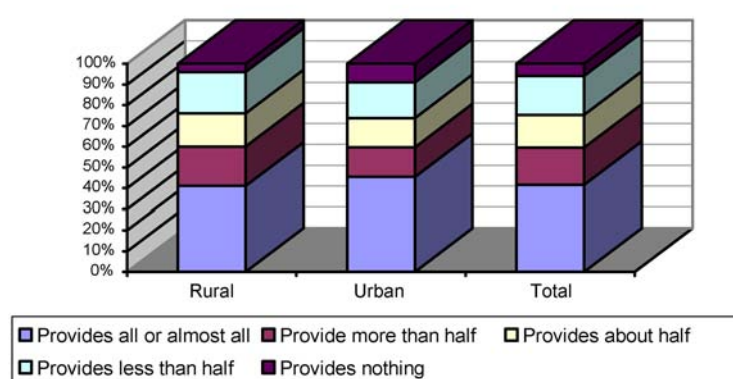
A recent study<sup>70</sup> finds that there are now approximately six million micro, small, and medium enterprises in Bangladesh<sup>71</sup> employing around 31 million people or 40 percent of the adult work force. The average size of an MSME is five workers (including the proprietor) with 36 percent being owner operators and around 83 percent having under six workers. MSMEs contributed approximately Taka 741 billion (US\$12 billion) or about 20-25 percent of total GDP.

**Table 34: Enterprises and Employment by Region**

	Number of MSME	Percentage of all MSME	Number of people employed	Percentage of total employment
Rural	4,521,789	76%	26,760,997	86%
Metropolitan SMA	479,988	8%	1,277,244	4%
Other urban areas	493,922	8%	1,506,372	5%
Peri-urban	361,500	6%	1,233,822	4%
Industrial	10,297	0%	69,816	0%
Commercial	66,690	1%	234,161	1%
Total	5,934,186	100%	31,082,412	100%

Source: National Private Sector Survey of Enterprises in Bangladesh, pg. 19

Most MSMEs in Bangladesh employ on average five workers, including the proprietor, with 36 percent of MSMEs being owner-operated. The average age of MSMEs is 11 years and about one-third are less than four years old. Approximately three-quarters of all MSMEs contribute half or more of household income in both urban and rural areas. Although this level of contribution is high, it is not surprising given that MSMEs in Bangladesh are primarily full-time operations. On average, an enterprise in Bangladesh operates 11 months a year, 28 days per month, and ten hours per day. This suggests that these enterprises constitute an important means for families to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, health and education. The survey finds that one-third of all proprietors have no formal education and over half of them completed primary school or less. Ten percent of proprietors reported that they started their enterprise because they had no other alternative. The median annual net profit per proprietor and unpaid worker is Taka 18,000, after accounting for depreciation. The highest profits are earned in transport and service activities based on actual hours worked.

**Figure 27: % of household income contributed by MSMEs**

The survey results show that the industrial structure of the MSME sector consists of primarily wholesale and retail trade and repairs (40%), production and the sale of agricultural goods (22%), and manufacturing (14%). The vast majority of enterprises in rural areas involve, not surprisingly, the sale of agricultural goods. Based on the full-time equivalent measure, the highest profits are earned in health and social work followed by fishing. Thirty-five percent of MSMEs received credit from informal sources and 35 percent from formal sources. Non-government organisations were the most common source of formal credit. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, given the dominance of women in micro-credit programmes, women own only six percent of MSMEs in Bangladesh. Furthermore, they represent only nine percent of the workforce within MSMEs. Female proprietors tend to be most heavily concentrated in manufacturing of clothing and retail sales.

The small scale of enterprises and the low level of skills required, impact directly on the productivity of firms. The study finds that as enterprises grow larger, skilled labour availability and access to inputs and raw materials become a more serious problem. This suggests that there are limits to the extent to which these firms can actually expand and absorb surplus labour in both rural and urban areas. As with other businesses, MSMEs face a number of constraints with electricity, road conditions, and access to finance being cited as serious problems by approximately one-third of the proprietors interviewed. Other problems include water availability, transportation to markets, and lack of law and order.

#### 4.9.2 Private Sector Development

A review of the private sector in Bangladesh suggests that the donor community can assist the expansion and development of the sector by ensuring an enabling environment (nationally and internationally), credit and business development services for small and medium-sized enterprises through initiatives such as support to private sector associations, and promoting dialogue on policies and strategies for private sector development. Priorities include:

- Assisting the development of small and medium-sized enterprises
- Assisting counterpart institutions in property and chattel registers, in standardisation, certification and quality assurance, and possibly other sectors
- Assisting in establishing a sound relationship between trade unions and employers, and in making the post literacy continuing education programmes more responsive to private sector needs
- Supporting rural electrification and looking into further support of the gas sector
- Supporting electronics and light manufacturing, production of tools, toys and paper products, and in the fisheries sector, in hatcheries, feed meal plants, and in adding value in shrimp processing for exports
- Supporting infrastructure development, energy supplies and exports, telecommunication, transportation including roads, waterways, railways, air traffic and port services, and the handling of fish products for exports
- Supporting capacity building for promotion and protection of the country's own interests internationally
- Ensuring workers' rights, promoting relations between employers and labour unions, improving work conditions, and eliminating child labour.

A major challenge for private sector development in Bangladesh is to create an environment that promotes the dynamic and genuinely entrepreneurial segment of the private sector and forces out rent-seeking entrepreneurs. A wide array of policy and institutional actions will be required to help create this environment and reinforce the efficiency-enhancing pressures created by globalization itself. The policy actions and some of the institutional actions will have to come from the government. However, there is much that the private sector itself can do. This will require a hard look at the current role of the private sector collective bodies.

#### 4.10 Gaps and Challenges

Despite having achieved gender parity in primary school enrolments, Bangladesh still has a long way to go to achieve gender equity, access to quality education for all girls, completion of basic education with acceptable competency levels and relevant life skills and equal roles for women and girls in society. Under the most optimistic scenario of population stabilization by 2035, Bangladesh will need some US\$1.7 billion to maintain current momentum and to achieve universal primary education (MDG 2) by 2015. In addition, current demographic trends mean that the primary school enrolment rate has to grow at a rate of at least one percent point a year for both boys and girls between now and 2015 in order to meet the MDG targets for primary school enrolment. There are an estimated 3.5 million children -- primarily from marginalized households in rural areas, urban slums, coastal areas and the CHT -- who are either not enrolled in school or have dropped out who will need to be reached by educational services. Some key issues, which must be addressed, include:

**Perceptions of lesser value and limited roles of girls:** Gender discrimination starts from birth and continues throughout life in Bangladesh. The perceived lesser value and limited roles of girls and women are embedded in the socio-cultural-economic system. Girls' education, very broadly defined, can play a part in changing these norms and practices. The issue must be addressed both within schools and in the broader society, starting from early childhood and continuing through adolescence.

**Quality of basic education:** As the statistics above illustrate, neither girls nor boys are receiving an education of an acceptable standard. By age 11 only just over a quarter have achieved the expected minimum competencies of primary school. Besides low academic achievement, there is little scope for developing relevant life skills within schools. Although many girls do continue with secondary school, their low competency levels put them at a disadvantage from the very beginning of the secondary cycle. For those who do not go on to secondary school, their low competency levels will be a severe limitation to their participation in economic and social areas throughout life. For girls, because of the gender discrimination they already face, poor quality education doubly disadvantages them. Education, which should enable them to overcome these obstacles, instead fails to give them the skills and confidence they need to actively participate and advance in the social and economic spheres. Most of the 1.5 million out-of-school girls are dropouts from the system. Quality improvement is essential if the goal of universal education is to be attained.

**Equity and access:** Reaching the 10 percent of girls who never enrol in school remains a challenge. The exclusion of nearly 1.5 million girls is a violation of the fundamental and basic right of every child to education. While in general there is high awareness in Bangladesh of the value of education, there are some groups of girls and boys who never enrol. These include working children, girls and boys with disabilities, children in urban slums, children of the ultra poor and girls and boys living in remote areas with limited access to schools. It is not only an access issue, but also one of equity. Very focused efforts will be needed to ensure that these children are enrolled in basic education programmes. In many cases the girls are doubly disadvantaged, and special efforts will be needed to enrol and retain them in the education system.

In order to hasten the pace of poverty reduction and improve livelihood opportunities in Bangladesh, macroeconomic policies need to strengthen the process whereby relatively larger scale non-farm enterprises -- mostly in the non-tradable sector -- can prosper so that the surplus labour in the agriculture sector can be absorbed quickly into salaried jobs. On the demand side, policies will have to create the conditions that will continue to boost the production of non-tradables. On the supply side, it will have to help remove the impediments that at present prevent the poor from taking full advantage of growth in this sector.

Despite the fact that salaried jobs in the non-farm sector offer the highest returns to labour to the poor, only about six to seven percent of poor households have salaried jobs in the non-farm sector compared to 12 percent for the moderate poor. This suggests that access to salaried jobs in the non-farm sector is a major distinguishing feature between the two groups. This would suggest the need to explore in more detail the barriers to entry that prevent the poor from gaining access to such jobs over time, thereby preventing them from escaping the poverty trap.

While salaried jobs are one of the routes out of poverty, self-employment in non-farm activities is another. However, in the case of the extreme poor, self-employment in the non-farm sector does not bring higher rewards compared to casual labour in the same sector. Self-employment is more rewarding only if it involves the same kind of work open to the moderate non-poor. In all other scenarios, salaried jobs are a better option -- for both the extreme poor and the moderate poor. It is only after one crosses the poverty threshold that self-employment in non-farm activities begins to catch up with salaried jobs, and it is only for the richest segment of the population it emerges as the unambiguously most rewarding mode of employment. This suggests that the poor face serious impediments in enhancing the return to labour from self-employment, not just in gaining access to salaried jobs.

Though efficient and productive agriculture is a precondition for rapid sustainable growth, it is unlikely to be the engine of growth in future. With unemployment and underemployment increasing as millions enter the job market each year, exports and job-oriented manufacturing with major employment generation must hold the key to national development over the next quarter century. Productivity improvements in Bangladesh manufacturing will have to come primarily from imported capital goods (machinery and equipment) embedded with improved technology. This could be complemented with skill development through technical and vocational training. However, the prevailing policy environment that promotes competition, governs resource allocation and creates markets for manufactured goods at home and abroad will condition expansion of the domestic manufacturing base. To make this possible, the limited but important industrial successes achieved so far, mainly in an export enclave environment, needs to be replicated throughout the economy. Much of the gains in industrial production are likely to come from labour-intensive export-oriented production, from the benefits of global integration of production, and the leadership role played by private enterprise.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See for example Osmani, S. R. et al, (2003) and Toufique, K. and Turton C. (2002).
- <sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the decline in human poverty has not been matched by a commensurate decrease in income poverty and inequality, which sharply increased during the 1990s.
- <sup>3</sup> See also CRC (arts. 28 and 29 and General Comment No. 1); CERD (art. 5(e)(v)); CEDAW (art. 10) Millennium Development Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education. Goal 3: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education.
- <sup>4</sup> The adult literacy rate for 2001 was quoted in the UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005. Education Watch data cited in <http://www.learningchannel.org/article/view/70060/1/>.
- <sup>5</sup> Education Watch 2002: op cit. pg. 5
- <sup>6</sup> However, as with life expectancy rates there is no clear indication as to why there has been such a dramatic increase in female literacy rates over the last decade.
- <sup>7</sup> Girls Education Strategy for Bangladesh, UNICEF, February 2004.
- <sup>8</sup> Education With Quality And Equity: Background Paper prepared for the PRSP. April 2004: Dhaka. pg. 4 See also BER 2003 GOB pg. 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Girls Education Strategy for Bangladesh, UNICEF, February 2004.
- <sup>10</sup> BANBEIS 2002.
- <sup>11</sup> ibid
- <sup>12</sup> Never Enrolled: Figures from Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2003 (preliminary findings) BBS and UNICEF -- Drop Out Rate: Child Education and Literacy Survey 2002, MoPE, GOB -- Low Achievement: EFA 2000 Assessment Bangladesh Country Report, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, GOB.
- <sup>13</sup> The ratio ranges between 19-22 in countries in the region such as China, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.
- <sup>14</sup> EFA Assessment 2000, UNESCO.
- <sup>15</sup> On average children attend school for 120 minutes per day for classes 1-2 and 240 minutes for classes 3-5. As a result Bangladeshi students attend school for around 440 hours per year compared to around 1200 contact hours per year in China and Indonesia.
- <sup>16</sup> Education Watch 2002: op cit. pg. 5.
- <sup>17</sup> Though the number of government primary schools remains nearly the same (about 37,700) during this time, the real growth took place in the non-governmental sector which doubled in number to 24,416 from 11,845.
- <sup>18</sup> Unofficial payments and fees (for sports, transportation of government-supplied textbooks, terminal examination fees etc.) within a "free and compulsory" primary schools and private tuition costs act as additional obstacles to educational access for poor families. According to one estimate, on an average, families spend Taka 1,000 a year for private tutoring. Parents find this expenditure necessary to ensure that their children will complete primary education and go on to the secondary school, because of deficient instruction in school.
- <sup>19</sup> Madrassas are religious educational establishment that emphasises religious instruction and until recently were the most common form of education available to those from deprived backgrounds. Critics of the madrassa system argue that these schools over-emphasise the study of the Koran over basic numeracy and literacy skills.
- <sup>20</sup> Education with quality and equity: Background Paper for PRSP: Dhaka Bangladesh 2004 no source cited but could be quoting National Education Commission 2003 data. According to the BBS Statistical Pocketbook 2002, these figures were 15,837 schools, 187,707 teachers and 7.2 million students in 2001.
- <sup>21</sup> UNICEF op. cit. 2004
- <sup>22</sup> MIS data quoted in Poor Governance and PRSP: A Strategic Review of Key Concerns and Agenda for Governance Solutions.
- <sup>23</sup> There has also been an eight-fold increase in the number of private universities in the country since 1992.
- <sup>24</sup> Data from University Grants Commission (UNESCO).
- <sup>25</sup> Labour Force Survey 1999-2000

- <sup>26</sup> JBIC p.51
- <sup>27</sup> World Bank, Education Sector Review, vol. I, 2000, pp. 58-108.
- <sup>28</sup> Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation.
- <sup>29</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics figures cited in PRSP Background Paper on Food Security Dhaka 2004 (unpublished).
- <sup>30</sup> [http://www.GoBfinance.org/previous\\_budget/economic\\_2003/chapter\\_07.pdf](http://www.GoBfinance.org/previous_budget/economic_2003/chapter_07.pdf). The increase in 2003 follows a brief decline in the growth of crop production in 2002.
- <sup>31</sup> The rate of net loss of cultivatable land due to erosion and other environmental factors has been around 1.0 percent, which when combined with a population growth rate of 1.5 percent, suggests that the net per capita cultivatable land is decreasing at the rate of 2.5 percent annually.
- <sup>32</sup> The reasons for land fragmentation includes poverty, shortage of land as well as Islamic inheritance laws.
- <sup>33</sup> [http://www.GoBfinance.org/previous\\_budget/economic\\_2003/chapter\\_07.pdf](http://www.GoBfinance.org/previous_budget/economic_2003/chapter_07.pdf)
- <sup>34</sup> In 2001-02, Tk.2032.75 crore was earned from exporting 38,988 million tons of fish and fish products, which was an increase of 20 percent over the previous year.
- <sup>35</sup> Although reliable statistics remain difficult to obtain, there appears to have been a significant decline in output in inland fishing from 57 percent of total production in 1991 to approximately 33 percent in 2000. Inland (fresh water) or pond aquaculture is now a major activity and it is estimated that ponds account for 80 percent of total cultured fish production in the country. Much of the production is artisanal, but small and medium scale commercial activities are increasing. Coastal and marine capture fishery, which accounted for nearly 31 percent of total production in 1991, has declined to 26 percent by 2000.
- <sup>36</sup> BCAS 2001
- <sup>37</sup> In 1991-92 these figures were 41.9 and 110.5 million tons, 3790 million and 135.2 million tons and 46.0 million tons respectively.
- <sup>38</sup> Nine, three and two percent, respectively.
- <sup>39</sup> The Forest Department of Bangladesh manages around 2.6 million hectares or 18 percent of the land surface of the country based on records when the Forest Act of 1927 came into being. However, according to the Forest Department's latest information it now controls 10.3 percent of land surface (Forest Department 2001). The largest category of the forests is "reserved forests" which include the Sundarbans (mangroves) in the southwest (601,700 ha), the CHT region in the southeast (322,331 ha) and the Madhupur tracts in the north-central region (17,107 ha). The much smaller category of forest is the protected forests. The basic difference between the reserved and the protected forests is that the inhabitants in the reserved forest areas have no rights over the forest produces compared to protected forests. In many cases the protected forest is an intermediate category that eventually turns into reserved forest. The last category of forest is the un-classed state forests (USF), most in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Village common forests managed by the indigenous people in the CHT include substantially forested portions of the USF lands.
- <sup>40</sup> The State of the Environment Report of Bangladesh (2001) listed the following factors of degradation of forest resources: shifting cultivation (Jhum), and inappropriate utilisation of forest resources, overgrazing, illegal felling, and fuel wood collection, uncontrolled and wasteful commercial exploitation of forest resources, monoculture and commercial plantation, high population pressure on forestlands, conversion of forests and wetlands for agricultural use, Poverty and unemployment in the rural areas, and Encroachment into forestland.
- <sup>41</sup> Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2000, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
- <sup>42</sup> Ninno, C.D and Dorosh P.1988 Government Policy, Markets and Food Security in Bangladesh, April 1998.
- <sup>43</sup> It is important to note that consumption of spices exceeded requirement by 40 percent and 110 percent for rural and urban households respectively. Such a high level of consumption of spices is governed by food culture, rather than by any nutritional consideration. The items for which consumptions were approximately closer to requirement were oil and fat, sugar/gur, fish, meat and milk.
- <sup>44</sup> Defined as not actively seeking work as compared to the unemployed who are out of work but actively seeking it.
- <sup>45</sup> The Bangladesh LFS defines economic dependency as the ratio of the economically inactive population to the economically active population.
- <sup>46</sup> Using the extended and usual definitions respectively.
- <sup>47</sup> The economic participation rate is the ratio of economically active persons to the population of age 15 years or over expressed as a percentage.
- <sup>48</sup> Compared to a growth rate of 3.5 percent previously.
- <sup>49</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 4.5B pg. 45 (LFS, August 2002).
- <sup>50</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 4.7 pg. 47 (LFS, August 2002).
- <sup>51</sup> Not surprisingly the one exception to this trend is the percentage of women engaged in unpaid family work is 34.3 percent compared to just 6.4 percent for men.
- <sup>52</sup> LFS, BBS 2002
- <sup>53</sup> Alam and Begum 1996
- <sup>54</sup> LFS, BBS 2002
- <sup>55</sup> While the Order allowed professionals and skilled women to migrate for employment, it barred semi-skilled and unskilled female workers from doing so. In 1988, the policy was reviewed and the barrier to migration was relaxed and applications for skilled, semi and un-skilled migrant women were considered on a case-by-case basis. However in 1997 the ban was re-imposed and this time even some professionals were barred from migrating for employment.
- <sup>56</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 5.2 pg. 64 (LFS, August 2002).
- <sup>57</sup> Underemployment is defined as the condition whereby a person's employment is considered inadequate in terms of hours worked, income earned, productivity or use of skills and the person is looking for alternative work to augment their income.
- <sup>58</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 5.6A pg. 68 (LFS, August 2002).
- <sup>59</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 5.4 pgs. 65-66 (LFS, August 2002).
- <sup>60</sup> LFS 1999-2000: Table 5.4 pgs. 65-66 (LFS, August 2002) and LFS 1995-96: Table 5.3, pg. 63.
- <sup>61</sup> The RFNA sector is defined as activities that are not directly related to the agronomic or biological operations of crop and non-crop enterprises. These include manufacturing, trading, installation, operation, repair and maintenance of various farm machinery; the manufacturing and marketing of poultry and fish feeds, poultry and fish farm equipment, veterinary services, etc.
- <sup>62</sup> A recent study report prepared for the Planning Commission identified as many as 230 activities, which can be largely categorized as rural non-farm enterprises.
- <sup>63</sup> According to CDF statistics up to June 2002 a total of 681 NGOs operate microfinance programmes.
- <sup>64</sup> There continues to be some debates regarding the accuracy of NGO figures and the methods followed to ensure repayment. That said, however, there is no doubt that microcredit programmes represent one of the major success stories in Bangladesh over the last twenty years.

<sup>65</sup> Hashemi and Schuler 1997 quoted in CCA 1999.

<sup>66</sup> According to the LFS data, this proportion is estimated to be about 55 percent for 1983/84 compared to 66 percent for 1990/91. However, the estimate for 1984/85 is almost similar to that for 1990/91.

<sup>67</sup> There is also some direct evidence of overcrowding and declining productivity in some specific areas such as handloom and other cottage industries (Mahmud 2001b).

<sup>68</sup> For fuller discussion and related evidence on the growth and structure of the non-farm sector in Bangladesh, see Mahmud (1996, 2001b).

<sup>69</sup> citation

<sup>70</sup> National Private-Sector Survey of Enterprises In Bangladesh, 2003 International Consulting Group (DFID, USAID, SDCA and SIDA) October 2003.

<sup>71</sup> Defined as enterprises with up to 100 workers.



# 5 *The Right to Protection and Participation*

Articles 27-43 of the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the right to protection of life and personal liberty, and home; the right to equality before the law; equality of opportunity in public employment; safeguards against arrest and detention; protection with respect to trial and punishment; prohibition of forced labour; freedom of movement, assembly association, thought and conscience, speech, profession, or occupation and religion; and non-discrimination on a religious basis. These rights are applicable to all citizens, regardless of race, creed, religion, sex or birth. At the same time, the UNDP Human Development Report 2002 notes: “Democratic governance...is more than people having the right to vote. It must be about strengthening democratic institutions so that they keep pace with the changing distribution of economic and political power. And it must be about promoting democratic politics that make participation and public accountability possible even when the relevant power and processes lie outside the formal institutions of the state’. This section of the report builds on the convergence of the Bangladesh Constitution and UN mandates on democratic governance to analyse through a filter of human security, law and order, and protection against violence, discrimination and exploitation, the right of the people of Bangladesh to protection and participation.

## **5.1 Human Security**

The criminal laws of Bangladesh dealing with human security are hostile to the poor and disadvantaged sections of the society, despite constitutional guarantees to the contrary. Laws are open to interpretation and the use of discretionary power. Limited information on the number of preventive detention cases makes it difficult to assess the true extent of use and abuse of specific laws and their effect on human security. Many laws and practices of the criminal justice system are ‘anti-poor’ having a more harmful effect on the poor and disadvantaged. Consequently, many citizens, especially the poor, do not feel adequately protected.

### **5.1.1 Law and Order**

There has been a significant increase in the reports of violence across Bangladesh. Accurate information regarding the nature and extent of violence in the country remains a problem due to a lack of data. There is, however, an emerging “culture of violence tied to the political system in Bangladesh which is particularly disturbing. During the run up to the 2001 Parliamentary Elections, 422 clashes between the two leading political parties resulted in 103 deaths and 1,180 injuries in 73 days under the Caretaker Government.<sup>1</sup> The use of violence and armed cadres by all major political parties has become routine and has resulted in a perception that the lack of law and order is a major problem in the country. The continued fractious nature of politics in Bangladesh has seen more than 436 persons killed and another 6,281 people injured in politically motivated violence throughout the year.<sup>2</sup>

The deployment of the army in an anti-crime drive known as “Operation Clean Heart” between October 2003 and January 2004 in response to growing lawlessness was seen as an acknowledgement by the Government that law and order was deteriorating. The use of the Armed Forces for law and order purposes was criticised in many quarters and came under further scrutiny when the Parliament adopted the Joint Drive Indemnity Act which shielded security forces from legal consequences for all acts committed under the drive. In 2002, the Law Commission, an independent body, recommended amendments to Section 54 to curb police abuse, but these have not yet been adopted. In addition, the High Court issued a 15-point directive to amend the Criminal Procedure Code by October 2003. Extortion from businesses and individuals is common. Newspaper reports indicate that in the absence of effective law and order and a malfunctioning justice system, vigilante killings by mobs are on the rise.<sup>3</sup> Of particular concern is the growing reports of police misconduct and use of force against suspects. Despite strictures against torture, police routinely employ physical and psychological intimidation on suspects and custodial deaths are not uncommon. According to the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma, there were 1,296 victims of torture and 115 deaths due to torture by security forces during 2003.<sup>4</sup>

### 5.1.2 Violence against Women

A recent study indicates that violence within the family remains the most under-reported crime in Bangladesh. Cases of marital violence are routinely labelled as “domestic disputes”, and as such do not merit assistance within families, let alone police intervention. This reinforces among other things the existing patrimonial social structures that force woman into passive acceptance of violence.<sup>5</sup> According to government statistics, one woman is subjected to violence every hour in Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup> During 2003 a total of 1,381 crimes were reported in the press of which 502 (36%) were on children under the age of 18.<sup>7</sup> There were 433 reports of gang rape (defined as rape by more than one individual) and 27 reports of rape and attempted rape by law enforcement officials. In addition, after women reported that they were raped, they were frequently detained in “safe custody” in jail cells where they endured poor conditions and were sometimes subjected to further abuse. Although the law prohibits women in safe custody from being housed with criminals, in practice, no separate facilities exist. In 2002, the Government began transferring women in safe custody to vagrant homes or NGO-run shelters, where available.

Bangladesh law specifically prohibits certain forms of discrimination against women through legislation such as the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Cruelty to Women Law, and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act. However, enforcement remains weak and much of the reported violence against women continue to be related to disputes over dowries: 261 dowry-related killings were reported during 2003, 23 women committed suicide, and 108 women were physically tortured following disputes over dowry. The law prohibits spousal rape and physical abuse, but it makes no specific provision for spousal rape as a crime. The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act provides special procedures for persons accused of violence against women and children. The law calls for harsher penalties, provides compensation to victims, and requires action against investigating officers for negligence or wilful failure in duty. An amendment to this act was passed in July 2003,

**Table 35: Gender Related Violence**

Nature of Violence	Age					Total	Cases
	13-18	19-24	25-30	30+	Unknown		
Physical torture	8	25	6	3	66	108	54
Death from physical torture	28	78	46	4	67	223	123
Rape					2	2	
Acid burn		8	2	3	6	19	9
Suicide	3	6	3	2	8	22	7
<b>Total</b>	39	117	57	12	149	374	193

Source: Human Rights in Bangladesh 2002, ASK

which has weakened the provisions for dowry crimes and attempting to address the issue of suicide committed by female victims of acts of “dishonour.” According to government sources, the Social Welfare Department runs six vagrant homes and one training centre for destitute persons, with a total capacity of 2,300 individuals. In addition, the Women Affairs Department runs shelters for abused women and children in each of the six divisional headquarters.

Evidence indicates that there is an alarming increase in the number of reported incidents of acid attacks in Bangladesh. The Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) estimates that reported acid attacks have increased from 47 in 1997 to 338 cases in 2001, and further estimates that the 1,252 cases recorded during this period is only a fraction of the total number of incidents as many cases go unreported.<sup>8</sup> Over half of the victims are female and one-third are children. Girls below 18 years were targeted in 44 percent of the 151 acid attacks reported in the newspapers in 2001, while girls less than 12 years of age were

targeted in 14 percent of the cases. ASF data from 2001 show a similar pattern: of the 340 cases reported in 2001, 38 percent of the victims were under 18, and within this group, 77 percent were girls. The most common motivation for acid attacks against women is revenge by a rejected suitor. Few perpetrators of the acid attacks are prosecuted. In an attempt to curtail these crimes, the Government enacted legislation in March 2002 to control the availability of acid. However, a lack of awareness and poor application of the law has limited its impact. Other initiatives include the new Acid Crime Control Law that provides for speedier prosecutions in special tribunals and generally does not allow bail. Nonetheless, acid attacks continue with 249 attacks reported in the press in 2003.

The use of fatwas (religious edicts) against women as a means of control is common despite the fact that fatwas are in contravention of both constitutional and international rights. In 2001, 34 cases of violence instigated by fatwas were reported in the newspapers.<sup>9</sup> Fifty three percent related to insistence on *hilla* marriage following oral *talaq* (divorce).<sup>10</sup> Other instances were when women demanded punishment for rape (18%) or for pre-marital or extra-marital affairs/pregnancy (15%). In 14 percent of incidents, the causes were not known. The punishments included forced *hilla* marriage, flogging in public, social ostracism and physical violence. In 2003, an additional 46 fatwa cases were recorded with 14 (30%) related to rape charges. Domestic violence also constitutes a major problem in Bangladesh but is rarely reported due to cultural and societal norms. As mentioned previously, the police remain reluctant to intervene in so-called domestic disputes, which partially explain the relatively low number of cases actually reported. In 2003, there were 331 cases of domestic violence reported in the press including 237 murders and 94 cases of torture. Only about a third (115 cases) resulted in a case being filed with the police.

### 5.1.3 Violence against Children

The most disturbing aspect of the situation of girl children has been their vulnerability to violence, particularly to rape. Media reports show that a large number of girls are victims of rape and acid attack. Of the 308 incidents of rape and attempted rape reported in the national newspapers in 2001, where age of the victims was mentioned, about 58 percent of all victims of rape murders

#### Text Box 2: The Illegality of Fatwas in Bangladesh

In January 2001, the High Court ruled that all fatwas, or expert opinions on Islamic law were illegal. Fatwas include decisions based upon the sightings of the moon as to when religious events should take place; matters of marriage and divorce; the meting out of punishments for perceived moral transgressions; and other religious issues. Islamic tradition dictates that only those Muftis (religious scholars) who have expertise in Islamic law are authorised to declare a fatwa. However, in practice, village religious leaders sometimes make declarations in individual cases and call the declaration a fatwa. Sometimes this results in extrajudicial punishments, often against women for their perceived moral transgressions. In deeming all fatwas illegal, the High Court's intention was to end the extrajudicial enforcement of fatwas or other declarations by religious leaders. The pronouncement resulted in violent public protests (see Section III), that caused the Appellate Court to stay the High Court ruling. No date has been set for a rehearing.

were below 18 years, while 21 percent were under the age of 12 years. Accessing justice for rape is difficult due to the apathy of police and medical officials in providing required evidence. Social stigma against the rape victims is another reason why only an insignificant proportion of such incidents result in court cases. Of the total 778 cases of rape reported in 2001, 297 cases were filed, 11 cases were mediated and six rape survivors were placed in safe custody. According to human rights groups, 575 children were abducted, nearly 1,300 suffered unnatural deaths, and over 3,100 children fell victim to serious abuses such as rape, sexual harassment, torture, and acid attack during 2003.

#### **5.1.4 Police Training**

To strengthen protection and law and order for ensuring human security, there is need for a police force with enhanced capacity through training that caters to the concerns of women and children, the poor and other vulnerable groups. Such training programmes should focus on operational rules and procedures, with emphasis on academic as well as physical training. Management training should be revamped, to promote greater professionalism. The training wing of police headquarters should be strengthened in terms of manpower and knowledge, so that police officers are properly equipped to carry out their work effectively and responsibly. In addition, existing oversight mechanisms should be broadened to include civilian oversight of police services. At the national level, a national crime prevention committee should be established, as an immediate priority. Similarly, citizens' committees could be set up at the district and the police station levels, and community policing should be adopted as a national strategy to facilitate community participation in crime prevention, and to reduce the vulnerability of the poor. To promote volunteerism and shared responsibility, volunteer groups such as the Volunteer Special Constabulary, Police National Cadet Corps, Special Police, and Police Boys Club could be organized, as such initiatives can contribute to crime prevention, promote good citizenship, and reflect the people's commitment against crime.

## **5.2 Exploitation**

The exploitation of vulnerable groups represent one of the most pressing cases for the adoption of a rights-based approach and its focus on claim-holders and their ability to exercise their rights. In the context of Bangladesh, those most at risk of exploitation including women and children exposed to the risks of trafficking and forced to work or to live on the streets.

### **5.2.1 Human Trafficking**

Bangladesh is a country of origin and transit in trafficking and prostitution.<sup>11</sup> The major areas of origin are in the north of the country, but women and children from neighbouring Myanmar are also trafficked through Bangladesh. NGOs working in the field opine that trafficking is on the rise in the country, but reliable data on the actual number of persons trafficked is not available. Most trafficked persons are forced into the sex industry, domestic labour or hard labour. Human rights monitors estimate that more than 20,000 women and children are trafficked annually from the country for the purpose of prostitution. Trafficked persons are usually lured by promises of good jobs or marriage, some are forced into involuntary servitude outside the country, while others voluntarily choose this option to escape exploitative situations or discrimination within the family or community. Parents sometimes willingly send their children away to escape poverty, unaware of the threats and consequences of trafficking.<sup>12</sup> Single mothers, orphans, and others outside the normal family support system are also susceptible to becoming victims of trafficking. It is common for traffickers living abroad to arrive in a village to "marry" a woman, only to dispose of her upon arrival in the destination country. In such cases the women are sold by their new "friends" or "husbands" into bonded labour, menial jobs, or prostitution. In the past, young boys have been recruited as camel jockeys in the UAE but after adverse publicity and policy measures put in place by the Government of UAE, this has reduced significantly.

The border with India is loosely controlled, especially around Jessore and Benapole, making illegal border crossings, and hence trafficking, easy. Perpetrators include organised criminals and

employment agencies in collusion with law enforcement officials who falsify documents and fail to aggressively prosecute traffickers. When perpetrators are caught trafficking across the border, police frequently record the crimes as “passport fraud” rather than “trafficking” which further complicates efforts to effectively monitor the problem. Corruption at lower levels of Government also assists trafficking. If caught, prosecuted and convicted, corrupt officials may receive a reprimand but their employment is rarely terminated. It is clear, however, that there are elaborate networks that service established markets through these operations. Between July 2000 and May 2003, approximately 496 incidences of trafficking were documented and 253 traffickers were arrested, of whom only 35 were convicted.<sup>13</sup> A newspaper report quoting statistics from the Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS) said only one percent of trafficked children and 55 percent of kidnapped children were rescued between January 2000 and June 2002. According to CWCS, most trafficked boys are less than 10 years of age, while most trafficked girls are between 11 and 16 years of age. Trafficking in children for immoral or illegal purposes carries the death penalty or life imprisonment but very few perpetrators are ever punished.

The Government of Bangladesh is making significant efforts to fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Convicted traffickers are handed tough sentences but the backlog of approximately one million court cases severely hamper speedy closure of criminal cases. Police and government officials have received specialised training from international organisations and NGOs in investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases. After the announcement of US Government Report on Trafficking in Person (TIP) where Bangladesh has been placed in Tier 3, the Ministry of Home Affairs undertook some steps to combat human trafficking. Sixty eight District Special Cells has been formed to monitor and prosecute the traffickers. A Special Cell has been established at the Police Headquarters in Dhaka and the Home Ministry has started a project to enhance the capacity of immigration officials to stop irregular movement and to facilitate safe migration. The Government has initiated an anti-exploitation public information campaign for citizens going abroad. In January, Bangladesh signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and has recently adopted a national plan of action to address child sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons. Incorporating community based prevention programmes, an ILO-IPEC project is being implemented to prevent children from being trafficked.

### 5.2.2 Child Labour

Because of widespread poverty, many children enter the labour force at a very young age. According to the Government’s National Child Labour Survey published in November 2003, there are an estimated 7.4 million or one in seventeen children between the ages of 5 and 17 years, engaged in some form of economic activity.<sup>14</sup> Based on ILO conventions, it is estimated that almost half or 3.2 million children would be considered as child labour.<sup>15</sup> Children often work alongside other family members in small-scale and subsistence agriculture. Hours are usually long, the pay low, and the conditions sometimes hazardous. Not surprisingly, over half (56%) were employed in the agricultural sector followed by production and transportation (25%) and sales (14%). Among working children -- i.e. below the age of 15 or working in excess of 43 hours a week -- just under 50 percent work as unpaid labour in family farms and businesses. Of more concern, however, is the fact that approximately 40.6 percent of child labour or 1.29 million children were engaged in hazardous labour in particular in beedi (hand-rolled cigarette), leather and brick-breaking

#### Text Box 3: Child Labour Elimination in the RMG Industry

The BGMEA-ILO-UNICEF project conducted a joint survey in 1995 of BGMEA member factories aimed at eliminating and rehabilitating child labour from this sector. The survey team identified 10,546 child workers and found that 43 percent of the factories employed child labour. The interventions under the project proved very successful and the proportion of factories employing child labour dropped from 43% in 1995 to 2% in 2001 and 1% in 2002. By 2003 only 23 (0.32%) of the factories were employing some 58 child labour.

industries. There is virtually no enforcement of child labour laws outside the export garment sector. Penalties for child labour violations are nominal fines ranging from about US\$4 to US\$10 (Taka 228 to Taka 570). The Ministry of Labour has fewer than 110 inspectors to monitor 180,000 registered factories and establishments. These inspectors are charged with enforcing labour laws pertaining to more than 1.5 million workers. Most child workers are employed in agriculture and other informal sectors, where no government oversight occurs.

The Non-Formal Education Directorate (GOB), international organisations, and NGO partners have sponsored programs to provide education to some working children in urban slum areas around the country. The Government has been a member of ILO-IPEC since 1994. ILO-IPEC programs include a US\$6 million project to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in five targeted industries: beedi production, match making, tanneries, construction, and child domestic workers. As of December 2003, 19,874 children have been removed from hazardous work; 19,508 were attending non-formal education training; 7,623 had been admitted to formal schooling; and 3,060 are receiving pre-vocational training. Employers from 51 beedi and brick-breaking industries have declared their sites to be “child labour free.” The Government has also launched a major initiative in the form of a time bound program to protect, remove, rehabilitate and prevent the worst forms of child labour in the country.

### 5.2.3 Child Domestic Labour

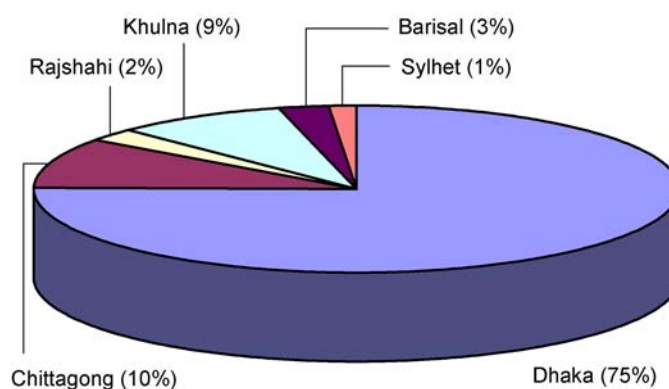
The employment of children as domestic help in both rural and urban areas is ubiquitous in Bangladesh and because of the “hidden” nature of the work it is difficult to estimate the precise number of underage domestic workers. It is safe to say, however, that outside of work within the home and in agriculture, an estimated 200,000 to one million children are employed as domestic help. Given the often-informal nature of domestic work, regulation is difficult. Long working hours, the absence of minimum wages, and physical maltreatment are common which for girls translate into sexual harassment and abuse. Furthermore, child domestic workers are more likely than not deprived of their basic rights to education, health care and other fundamental rights laid out in the CRC. Recently, the Government brought criminal charges against employers who abused their domestic servants. New laws have been introduced under which every child must attend school up to the fifth grade, or until the age of 10 years. However, there are no effective mechanisms for enforcing these laws.

### 5.2.4 Street Children

One consequence of rapid urbanization has been a growing number of children who live and work on the streets of the major cities. There is a lack of accurate data but Government estimates place the number of street children at 1.8 million. A study conducted in 2001 estimates that there are 445,226 street children in the six divisional cities of Bangladesh, of whom 53 percent are boys and 47 percent girls. Not surprisingly, the vast majority (75%) are found in Dhaka city.<sup>16</sup> Over 90 percent of street children are between the ages of 12 and 18 of whom eight percent or 35,000 are below the age of nine. Furthermore, though most children remain in contact with families or adult guardians, 15 percent of all street children live without care and supervision and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Children on the streets constitute a high-risk category and face a wide

Figure 28: Distribution of Street Children in Bangladesh



range of risks including economic exploitation, social prejudice and are subject to abuse and maltreatment by law enforcement officials and adults in general. Around one-third of all street children are illiterate and less than 13 percent have completed five years of schooling. A combination of poor diet and nutrition and limited access to safe water and sanitation leads to high incidences of ill health among these children. Most street children work and are engaged in a range of different occupations, many of which are considered hazardous. In addition, girl children face the added risk of sexual abuse, violence and rape. There is an urgent need to develop interventions that would provide street children with shelter, access to services and opportunities for personal growth and development.

### 5.2.5 The Right to Identity

One of the key areas that would make a significant difference in terms of acting on child exploitation in all its forms would be to emphasise the right to identity. Birth registration rates in Bangladesh are low with less than five percent of all citizens registered. Due to aggressive efforts by the Government, the registration of newborn children has become much more common and now around 80 percent of all babies born in government facilities are registered. However, in the absence of tangible benefits such as access to health and education services, there are few incentives for parents to register the birth of their child.

## 5.3 Discrimination

### 5.3.1 Gender Discrimination

The Constitution of Bangladesh grants equal rights to women and men in all spheres of public life [Article 28(1), 28(2), and 28(3)]. However, due to cultural factors, women's human rights are often violated. Various laws that have been enacted and amended to protect women's rights include the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961, the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act of 1974, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, the Family Court Ordinance of 1985, and the Child Marriage Registration Act of 1992. However, women, especially poor women, are often not aware of their rights.

Discrimination against women remains widespread in Bangladesh due in part to cultural practices that favour boys over girls. A sex ratio of 103 in favour of men and lower child mortality rates for males compared to females demonstrate that women fare less well than men. Women have higher morbidity and mortality rates at all age groups, and household expenditure on women's health (47.7%) is less than that of men (52.3%). Women's social vulnerability is pervasive and endemic and their social subordination makes them more vulnerable to poverty. Women are able to exercise few of their *rights* and *choice* in terms of personal decision regarding education, marriage, child bearing, family expenditure pattern, and participation in the labour market or income generating activities. Discriminations against women at the social level are reflected in early marriage, the dowry system (although the practice has been declared illegal), and weak legal and social protection in the event of divorce and abandonment.

Women were first elected to local bodies in 1973. However, until the GOB enacted a law for direct elections to reserve seats for women in local level elections in 1997, female participation was on the basis of a process of nomination or indirect election. This resulted in around 12,828 women being elected as Union Parishad members in the 1997 local elections. A total of 20 and 110 women were elected as chairpersons and members, respectively, for general seats. The Government has already issued different executive orders to ensure the participation of women members in the various decision-making committees, but in practice, implementation remains uneven. Apart from the reserved seats, women can also contest for general seats. However, there are currently only seven women parliamentarians in the 300-seat National Parliament of Bangladesh. The situation is slightly better in the case of local government: 25 percent of the members in the Union Parishads (Councils), the City Corporation and Pourashava (municipality) are women who have been directly elected to the local bodies.

### 5.3.2 State of Refugees

Bangladesh is not a party to any international or regional refugee instruments, nor does it have any legislative or administrative provisions for political asylum-seekers. However, there exists a tradition of providing asylum to populations fleeing from persecution and human rights violations in their own countries. Support of fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed in articles 26 to 47 of the Constitution of Bangladesh: Article 25(1)(c) of the Constitution for instance, asserts that the State shall “support oppressed peoples throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism, colonialism or racism.”

In 1991 and 1992 some 250,000, mainly Muslims from the Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar, sought asylum in Bangladesh. They were given *prima facie* refugee status and provided with UNHCR’s protection and assistance. Preliminary registration was conducted by the GOB in 1992 and all the refugees were sheltered in some 20 camps outside of Cox’s Bazaar. The then-Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MDMR) was entrusted with the task of providing asylum, assistance and relief. The Government of Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR in June 1992 to deal with the refugee problem. In the absence of an asylum policy in Bangladesh, UNHCR exercises its statutory mandate for urban asylum-seekers that places refugees under the care of UNHCR and unofficially allows them to stay in Bangladesh until a solution is found. Many of the mostly non-Muslim urban asylum-seekers entered Bangladesh either legally with a valid visa or illegally through the India-Bangladesh or Myanmar-Bangladesh borders. Their presence becomes known only when they approach the UNHCR with an asylum claim. For such cases, UNHCR exercises its mandate and grant asylum for applicants with valid claims. Urban refugees currently in the country come from Myanmar (non-Muslim), Somalia, Sierra Leone, Iran, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Although the GOB has not formally recognised them as refugees, it tolerates their presence. The total number of such refugees currently stands at 151 persons.

Biharis are a non-Bengali population, most of whom fled from the Indian State of Bihar to the former East Pakistan before and after the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. When former East Pakistan became Bangladesh following the war of independence in 1971, the Biharis opted for Pakistan. To date, Pakistan has refused to acknowledge them as citizens. Almost all were either born or have been living in Bangladesh for the last 33 years. The older generation has not learned the Bengali language, maintaining preference to Urdu, the state language of Pakistan, as an expression of their allegiance to the State of Pakistan. On the other hand, those born in Bangladesh have been *de facto* assimilated into the mainstream Bengali-speaking environment and their children attend normal Bengali medium schools. No concrete solution is in sight for this group so far although it occasionally comes in the national agenda.

Despite the absence of a legislative and administrative foundation for protection of refugees from refoulement, the GOB has indicated its commitment at various international forums to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement. However this has yet to be translated into a national legislation and thus, there is no scope for any asylum-seeker or refugee to resort to any legal recourse. Of the recognised *prima facie* refugees over 236,300 had been repatriated by end 2003, but the situation in early 2004 saw some 19,600 refugees still living in two camps. The GOB has verbally rejected a proposal for a project promoting the self-reliance of the refugees, fearing that they might become *de facto* settlers, adding to the population pressure that the country is currently facing. Taking into consideration the GOB views, UNHCR is proposing Rights for Temporary Stay and Freedom of Movement for these refugees.

### 5.3.3 Minorities

According to the 1991 population census, Muslims form 88.3 percent, Hindus 10.5 percent, Buddhists 0.59 percent, Christians 0.32 percent and other communities 0.26 percent of the population. However, there is some dispute over the accuracy of these estimates. In addition there are a large number of different ethnic groups in Bangladesh though the exact number remains contested. The 2001 Census Report identifies 29 distinct groups but members of the ethnic communities maintain that there are



more than 45 different ethnic groups in Bangladesh. The ethnic communities of Bangladesh can be divided into two groups based on their geographical habitats: the Plains group and the Hill groups. The plains groups live along the borders of the north-west, north and northeast of the country.<sup>17</sup>

Since 2001 there has been an increase in religion based violence including land grabbing and desecration of holy sites. Minority communities were attacked through acts of arson, destruction of property, robbery and physical attacks. In Ramgonj, a minority populated village, about 50 families had to leave the village and twelve people were injured due to gang attacks.<sup>18</sup> In Dumuria and Bottiaghata, Khulna district, within a span of three days, 40 houses of the minority community were robbed.<sup>19</sup> In Bhola about 300 minority families were affected by terrorist attacks.<sup>20</sup> Many Hindus are yet to recover landholdings lost because of the now-defunct Vested Property Act. The Act was a Pakistan-era law that allowed “enemy” lands to be expropriated by the Government. It is estimated that 1.64 million acres or around 53 percent of all land owned by Hindu households, (mainly agricultural land) was seized, affecting around one million households or 40 percent of the Hindu population directly.<sup>21</sup> It should, however, be noted that Muslims in India incurred similar losses to property. Recently, the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh has been subjected to persecution through assaults on its mosques and on individual members of the community.<sup>22</sup> The increasing level of religious intolerance is threatening human security in many areas.

#### **5.3.4 People with Disabilities**

The law provides for equal treatment and freedom from discrimination for persons with disabilities; however, in practice, persons with disabilities face social and economic discrimination. The Bangladesh Persons with Disability Welfare Act provides for equal rights for disabled persons. The Act focuses on prevention of disability, treatment, education, rehabilitation and employment, transport accessibility and advocacy for the disabled. For the first time, the Government appointed a number of disabled persons to official positions during the year. According to the National Forum of Organisations Working With the Disabled,<sup>23</sup> approximately 14 percent of the country’s population has some form of disability. The economic condition of most families limits their ability to assist with the special needs of the disabled, and superstition and fear of persons with disabilities sometimes results in their isolation. Government facilities for treating persons with mental handicaps are inadequate. A few private initiatives exist in the areas of medical and vocational rehabilitation, as well as employment of persons with disabilities

The rate of disability is higher in boys than in girls. According to the Health and Demographic Survey (2000) conducted by the Bureau of Statistics, 7.38 males per 1000 population were found to have disabilities compared to 4.66 per 1000 for females with disabilities.<sup>24</sup> In the absence of reliable data on the number of children with disabilities, it is guesstimated that nearly 340,000 children suffer from some form of disability. Children with disabilities face multiple difficulties in accessing the fundamental rights guaranteed under the law. National policy regarding the disabled appears to be almost entirely adult-oriented. There is no formal definition of childhood (or adult disability) in Bangladesh. The rights of the disabled are not ensured by the Constitution, and there is no legislation to ensure the rights of disabled children.<sup>25</sup>

### **5.4 The Right to Association**

Since the restoration of democracy, the right to association in Bangladesh has been widely enjoyed and exploited by a wide range of groups and organisations. The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, subject to restrictions in the interest of public order and public health. However, Section 144 of the criminal code which allows the Government to ban assemblies of more than four persons, has often been interpreted by ruling political parties to their advantage.

#### **5.4.1 Civil Society**

The growth of civil society and in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been one of the great success stories in Bangladesh. Though the country has a long tradition of social activism throughout its history -- the language movement being one example<sup>26</sup> -- the emergence of the NGO

### What is Democratic Governance ?

- People's human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, allowing them to live with dignity;
- People have a say in decisions that affect their lives;
- People can hold decision-makers accountable;
- Inclusive and fair rules, institutions and practises govern social interactions;
- Women are equal partners with men in private and public spheres of life and decision-making;
- People are free from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, gender or any other attribute;
- The needs of future generations are reflected in current policies;
- Economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs and aspirations;
- Economic and social policies aim at eradicating poverty and expanding the choices that all people have in their lives.

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2002

sector has been a relatively new phenomenon that began in the late 1970s. Today, NGOs are a significant provider of social services, in particular health and education, to the rural poor. Specialised micro-finance institutions (MFIs) such as the Grameen Bank, pioneered the microcredit model that has been replicated all around the world and MFIs have had considerable success in helping to provide alternative income-generating opportunities for poor women in Bangladesh. The emergence of NGOs has also played a significant role in the improvement of human development indicators and compensated, in part, for weak

market and state institutions. Within the context of a rights-based approach, it should be noted that local NGOs have also played a significant role in terms of helping poor and marginalised groups to make claims for the fulfilment of their rights to education and health and secure and sustainable livelihoods. Today there are well over a thousand NGOs registered with the Government. From village cooperatives and women's groups on the one hand to large internationally recognised institutions with staff running into the thousands, civil society in Bangladesh has thrived since the restoration of democracy.

Over the last fifteen years, development NGOs have begun to assert themselves as part of a broader civil society. NGOs played an important role in the 1990 movement that saw the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in 1991, and took the lead in organising a nationwide election-monitoring exercise by citizens. NGOs have also emerged as advocates for women's rights, for environmental protection and for the poor. The growing activism of NGOs came to a head in 1996 when local NGOs, under the auspices of ADAB, the Association of Development Agencies, Bangladesh, joined forces with other segments of civil society, including the bureaucracy, to demand that power be handed over to a caretaker government as laid out in the Constitutional Amendment passed during the seventh national parliament. The decision to join forces with broader civil society actors marked the watershed for NGOs to move beyond a micro-level social development agenda characterised by service delivery, to voicing opinions and views on political decision-making.

Legitimate questions have been raised on the accountability and representation of (foreign funded) NGOs and there have been several attempts to limit the work of NGOs to basic service provision. In a couple of notable cases, prominent NGOs have come under fire from within and outside the sector for allegedly crossing the line into direct partisan activities. Legislation is under consideration for tightening the regulatory environment for NGOs including issues relating to registration and taxation.

#### 5.4.2 Workers Rights

Subject to Government approval, the Constitution endorses the worker's right to join unions. Of a total work force of 40 million, 1.8 million (4.4%) belong to unions, most of which have political affiliations. There are no reliable labour statistics for the large informal sector, which employs the vast majority of people.<sup>27</sup> An estimated 15 percent of the approximately 5,450 labour unions are affiliated with 25 officially registered National Trade Union (NTU) centres. There are also several

unregistered NTUs. With the exception of railway, postal, telegraph, and telephone department workers civil servants, police, and military personnel are forbidden to join unions largely because of the highly political nature of those unions. Many civil servants such as teachers and nurses, form associations that function similar to labour unions, such as providing members' welfare, offering legal services, and addressing grievances

Collective bargaining by workers is legal only if unions are legally registered as collective bargaining agents with the Registrar of Trade Unions. As labour unions are generally affiliated with various political parties, each industry has more than one labour union, which in turn leads to internal conflicts between different groups of workers that hinder collective action. Collective bargaining occasionally occurs in large private enterprises such as pharmaceuticals, jute, or textiles, but workers more often forgo collective bargaining and opt for job security instead. Collective bargaining in small private enterprises is rare. The right to strike is not recognised specifically in the law, but strikes are a common form of workers' protest.

The country's five Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are exempted from the Employment of Labour (Standing Orders) Act, the Industrial Relations Ordinance, and the Factories Act. These laws ensure the freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, and set forth wage, hour, and occupational safety and health standards. While substitutes for some of the provisions of these laws were implemented through other regulations, professional and industry-based unions are prohibited in the EPZs. The ILO 2001 report on the application of International Labour Conventions highlighted the lack of progress and discrepancies between legislation and certain ILO Conventions, including freedom of association and collective bargaining. The report noted that there were particular problems with voluntary bargaining in the private sector, a lack of legal protection against acts of interference, and a denial of protection against anti-union discrimination and the right to collective bargaining.

A significant step towards the normalisation of industrial relations within the EPZs was recently taken with the passage of the EPZ Trade Union and Industrial Relations Bill (2004). The Bill, passed in July 2004, represents a gradual approach to the restoration of full workers' rights. It provides, as a provisional arrangement, for worker representation in the form of independent and freely-elected workers' welfare committees (WWCs) up until 1 November 2006 -- when full-fledged trade unions would be allowed to operate within the sector. With the enabling legislation in place, follow-up action and continued oversight of this restoration process are necessary to ensure that industrial democracy takes firm root and fully develops within the EPZs.

Since Bangladesh is a signatory to the relevant ILO conventions, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are normally recognised as rights of the workers by the Government. However, for these rights to be properly implemented, it is important to first strengthen the capacities of workers, employers and the Government so that each is aware of its respective duties, roles and responsibilities and is able to appreciate each other's views through social dialogue. Thus, necessary capacity building efforts in this connection is the first step in facilitating implementation of these rights. A more conducive environment will help to further strengthen trade union movement in the country and will contribute to improvement of industrial productivity.

Alongside physical security, social security and social protection issues also need to be looked at, even though their implementation may be a gradual process because of present state of the economy. There is also a need to promote social dialogue among all concerned stakeholders. This is an important component of the decent work agenda. Social dialogue, if successful, can be considered as the key to building consensus and commitments to common objectives while providing the means of accommodating competing goals and managing conflict. Successful social dialogue requires respect for core labour standards. It is the "essence" of Decent Work and may address any and every aspect concerning employment and employment relations.

## 5.5 The Right to Expression

### 5.5.1 Freedom of the Press

Bangladesh enjoys a reasonably free print media with hundreds of daily and weekly publications providing a forum for a wide range of views. However, with literacy rates below fifty percent, the total circulation of all print media in Bangladesh -- English and Bengali -- is still less than one million and readership is concentrated almost wholly in urban areas. In addition to government-owned wire services, there is one private wire service affiliated with overseas ownership. Overall, news groups have made full use of the freedom of the press and there has been a rise in investigative journalism and the media is increasingly able to criticise public policies. The Government owns and controls virtually all radio and television stations with the exception of a few privately owned cable stations, such as ATN Bangla, Channel i, NTV, and private broadcaster Radio Metrowave. However, during recent years, there has been an increase in attacks on the press. In 2003, 200 journalists were physically assaulted or received death threats, 15 were arrested and the offices of 15 news organisations and press clubs were attacked.

### 5.5.2 Political Expression

With the help of the indigenously developed institution of a non-partisan 'Caretaker Government' to oversee the pre-election period, three consecutive elections resulted in the peaceful transfer of power between the two main parties, BNP and AL. The elections in 1991 and 1996 were "*recognised to be more free and fair than any election in the last fifty years and were seen by outside observers to compare favourably with elections in our neighbouring countries*".<sup>28</sup> The international community also endorsed the October 2001 elections as free and fair.<sup>29</sup> Local elections at the Union Parishad level in 1997 that led for the first time to the election of some 12,000 women and witnessed exceptionally high voter turnout (74%), are all indications of a deepening democracy. In addition to peaceful national and local elections, other democratic features that have evolved over the last decade include an active civil society promoting awareness of civil liberties (including strong women's associations), a legal framework providing strong constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights, and a strong and relatively independent media, particularly the print media.

However, while recognizing the progress made in democratic governance, it is important not to lose sight of the need to keep up the momentum of democratisation. So, although Bangladesh has formal institutions of democracy in place, continued efforts will be needed to ensure that these institutions function effectively and efficiently.

To date, the Parliament has largely failed to carry out its legislative, representative and oversight roles, and instead has been plagued by highly confrontational relations between the two main political parties, frequent boycotting by the opposition, non-application of the rules of procedure, and debates largely dominated by party-politics rather than dialogue on important policy matters. There is inadequate debate on policy and legislation in the Parliament and most policies are formulated at the ministerial level without being announced in the Parliament.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, there is also little appreciation of the constructive role of opposition. As one writer observes "*parliament (is) perceived as a piece of machinery to be dominated by the ruling party with little or no role left for opposition or minority parties. Nor, in the view of the governing party is the public to be consulted, at least not in between elections.*"<sup>31</sup>

## 5.6 Empowerment

Despite the fact that women lead the two main political parties in Bangladesh, overall their representation in senior positions in the civil service and the judiciary remain low.<sup>32</sup> The Government has recently introduced quotas for gazetted and non-gazetted posts and lateral entry opportunities for women, and has made special quota provisions under which the President can directly appoint women at the Deputy and Joint Secretary levels. More women have been appointed in police and the armed forces.

An inventory of the status of women's employment carried out by the Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality (PLAGE) Project of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs reveals that, on average, only 15 percent of all employees in 16 selected ministries are women. Other than the Women's Ministry, where 62.27 percent of total employees are women, only three other ministries employ women above this average -- education (16.73%), health and family welfare (27.41%) and social welfare (22.03%) as these are considered traditional sectors for women. Women are particularly underrepresented in the Department of Local Government (1.77%) of the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Government and Co-operatives, in the Home Ministry (2.07%) and in the Agriculture Ministry (2.59%).<sup>33</sup> The PLAGE Project also reported that women constitute only 10 percent of all employees in the public sector and are concentrated at the entry level so that women's participation in policy-making remains marginal.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, less than eight of the 15 percent quota reserved for women in the public sector has been met. For the first time in Bangladesh, four women were appointed as Deputy Commissioners (Deputy Secretary rank) in March 2001. In April, another four were appointed as Additional Deputy Commissioners. The administration also announced that one Assistant Sub-Inspector and two Constables would be selected from amongst women in each police station of the country. This would require creation of 2,220 positions for women police officials. Currently there are only 492 women police officials, 51 Sub-Inspectors, 90 Assistant Sub-Inspectors and 351 Constables.<sup>35</sup>

### 5.6.1 Local Governance

Although successive governments have recognised the importance of decentralisation, in practice, the rhetoric has by far surpassed concrete action. The Local Government Commission in 1997 recommended a four-tier local government system comprising Gram Parishad, Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad. However, of these, only the Union Parishads (UP) is currently functioning. The legislative framework on decentralisation (consisting of over 100 laws and ordinances) is complex and confusing. Furthermore, many of the provisions in these laws act to reinforce the tight control of central over local government. The result is a local government system with little effective participation, limited power to deliver services, and largely subordinate to central government and local party interests.

Another obstacle to the effective functioning of local government bodies is limited capacity. UPs need technical assistance for implementation of different projects but have to depend on Upazila officials who are rarely responsive to UP needs. Furthermore, control over most local level resources has been shifted from Union Parishad to the Upazila and District Administration including the responsibility for leasing the *jal mahals*, *hat-bazars*, ferry ghats, khas lands. This has further removed opportunities for increased local revenue mobilisation. Furthermore, the absence of elected bodies at the Upazila Parishad has created a leadership crisis at the local level with limited functional accountability to the citizens. One important point to note is that legislators tend to insert themselves into decision-making roles at the constituency level rather than to act as an advisor as a means of controlling the distribution of development aid and thereby ensuring political support. While the channelling of block grants to local governments has begun the process of decentralisation of financial authority, the fact that less than one percent of total ADP are made available as block grant and are not directly channelled to UPs, has created conditions for the continued misuse of development resources.

Legislative reform is alone not enough and needs to be supported by training of Upazila and UP staff. The role of women UP members must also be clarified to ensure a truly participatory role in the decision-making processes. The strong patronage system in Bangladesh calls for effective 'checks and balances' to ensure financial accountability. There is also a need to take a holistic approach with better donor coordination on local governance initiatives. There is also a need for greater collaboration with civil society partners, especially NGOs and CBOs active in local communities, in the implementation and monitoring of programmes supporting decentralisation.

## 5.7 Gaps and Challenges

Ensuring the right to protection and participation is tied to important questions relating to governance systems in Bangladesh. While positive steps have been noted in the fulfilment of certain clusters of rights discussed earlier in this report, there is a concern that there has not been a similar improvement in meeting the basic rights of citizens to lead secure lives. As the PRSP background paper on governance notes “Establishing good governance requires the presence of socially responsible, non-market institutions including central government, local government, local community...” with improvements in governance being defined as “institutional changes that lead to the minimisation of the economic and political transaction costs, ensure human security, and create favourable conditions for maximising the quality of life, especially of the poor and the vulnerable.”

The preceding analysis indicates that increasing violence in all spheres of life have led to worsening human security for vulnerable groups. Those most in need of protection, including women and children, increasingly find themselves victims of abuse, often from those very institutions that are supposed to protect their rights. There is a growing concern about the lack of human security especially relating to the access of the poor to avenues for redress, particularly the criminal justice system, which is seen as the purview of the rich and powerful. While local NGOs and activist groups have stepped into the breach, the fact remains that in order to improve human security, substantive institutional reforms will be needed to embed the notions of safe-guarding and promoting human rights within a culture of duty-bearers, especially within the judicial system and law enforcement agencies.

Other emerging trends suggest that gender discrimination and the marginalisation of ethnic and religious minorities continue to be a serious problem in Bangladesh. The rights-based approach therefore calls for UN agencies and their partners to focus precisely on those groups whose rights are not being fulfilled. Bangladesh has shown its ability to develop effective social protection schemes in response to a broad range of challenges and the lessons learnt need to be applied to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

This however, is not easy as the situation is complicated by the strong hierarchical culture in Bangladesh which allows those in position of power to wield disproportionate influence without being accountable for their actions. The lack of effective monitoring with checks and balances has created a system that is disconnected from the needs of the poor and the marginalised and largely serves to preserve the entitlements of the privileged. This is evident in the slow pace of decentralisation of local government. There is therefore, need for a broad based participatory approach to identify the needs of the vulnerable groups and to ensure the transparency and effective support and assistance to the poor.

The wider participation of local communities, especially women, must be encouraged to ensure transparent and effective assistance to the poor. Participatory processes that include the poor need to be introduced in planning, implementation and overall decision-making at the Union Parishads. This requires legal and regulatory reforms promoting an effective and efficient decentralised local government system that will allow local revenue collection and utilisation, and further delegation of fiscal authority to the Union Parishads.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> FEMA, *Observation Report on Bangladesh Parliamentary Elections, 1 October 2001*, Dhaka, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/80424/1/>

<sup>3</sup> On 30 April 2003, 13 alleged robbers were lynched in Mymensingh, and during the week of December 6 of the same year, villagers lynched over 40 alleged bandits in the Noakhali district.

<sup>4</sup> US State Department Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Bangladesh. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27944.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Human Security in Bangladesh: In Search of Justice and Dignity, UNDP 2002.

<sup>6</sup> N.M. Nurul Haq, *Ittefaq*, 19 February 2000.

- <sup>7</sup> In 702 cases the age of the victim was not mentioned but it is reasonable to suppose that a large number of the victims were also under the age of 18. The reports were compiled from the following national newspapers -- Prothom Alo, Bhorer Kagoj, Sangbad, Ittefaq, Janakantha, Inqilab, Banglabazar, Jugantor, Dinkal and Daily Star.
- <sup>8</sup> [http://www.acidsurvivors.org/index\\_home.htm](http://www.acidsurvivors.org/index_home.htm)
- <sup>9</sup> From records maintained by the Documentation Unit of ASK based on information from ten national daily newspapers.
- <sup>10</sup> According to the conventional use of Sharia, a wife divorced by pronouncement of oral talaq has to go through an intervening marriage with another man, consummate the marriage and then get a divorce in order to remarry the previous husband. According to MFLO, however, pronouncement of oral talaq is not sufficient for the divorce to be effective as any man wishing to divorce his wife should give the Chairman of the Union Parishod or municipality a notice in writing of his intention to divorce and also supply a copy of this to the wife. The Ordinance further stipulates that nothing should prevent a wife from remarrying the same husband, without an intervening marriage with a third person, unless such termination is made effective for the third time (MFLO Section 7). Fatwa in these instances thus violates the existing law on two accounts, i.e., first by accepting the oral pronouncement of talaq as legal divorce, and second by insisting on an intervening marriage following an oral talaq.
- <sup>11</sup> The term "transit" country refers to the fact that people from Myanmar and other countries to the east of Bangladesh are often "trafficked" to India, Pakistan and the Middle East on routes that pass through Bangladesh and are often subject to abuse and exploitation as a result.
- <sup>12</sup> UNICEF and local NGOs have devoted considerable resources to conducting awareness raising campaigns among adolescents and parents regarding the dangers of trafficking. See for example "Background Paper on Good Practices and Priorities to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Bangladesh" UNICEF and Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, GOB Dhaka 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> Bangladesh Counter Trafficking Theme Group: Presentation made by Carol Horning, USAID Bangladesh, October 2003.
- <sup>14</sup> The study found that children up to the age of 17 were involved in 200 different activities of which 49 would be considered harmful to their physical and mental well-being.
- <sup>15</sup> National Child Labour Survey 2002-03 quoted in National Plan for Children, op. cit.
- <sup>16</sup> Arise Baseline Survey 2001, UNDP.
- <sup>17</sup> For instance, ethnic groups like the Koch, Munda, Oraon, Paharia, Rajbongshi and Saontal have been traditionally living in certain parts of Bogra, Dinajpur, Kushtia, Pabna, Rajshahi and Rangpur districts in the northern border.
- <sup>18</sup> Janakantha, 29 April 2001.
- <sup>19</sup> Sangbad, 21 June 2001.
- <sup>20</sup> Prothom Alo, 14 August 2001.
- <sup>21</sup> An enquiry into causes and consequences of deprivation of Hindu minorities in Bangladesh through the Vested Property Act: Framework for a realistic solution, Abul Barkat edit. pgs. 283-289 and 435-452, PRIP Trust, Dhaka, July 2000.
- <sup>22</sup> The Ahmadiyyat is a missionary movement that has gathered 10 million adherents from Indonesia and Malaysia to Pakistan and Central and West Africa and in the Americas. Originating in Pakistan, the sect has repeatedly faced charges of heresy from mainstream Muslims.
- <sup>23</sup> An umbrella organization consisting of more than 80 NGOs working in various fields of disability.
- <sup>24</sup> The average disability per thousand is around 6.04 persons.
- <sup>25</sup> op. cit. ref. 20 cited in PRSP background paper on Women and Children, pg..23
- <sup>26</sup> The Language Movement of 1952 demanded the recognition of Bangla as a state language of Pakistan. It signalled the growing discontent in East Pakistan about discriminatory practices and policies. Matters came to head in the run up to the 1970 General Elections which saw the Awami League win the largest number of seats in the National Parliament of Pakistan. The refusal of West Pakistan to allow the AL to form the government triggered the nine month War of Liberation that led to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Throughout this time, civil society and in particular student groups were at the forefront of opposition to the policies of then West Pakistan.
- <sup>27</sup> This section is based on the following report: <http://www.nationbynation.com/Bangladesh/Human.html>
- <sup>28</sup> Rehman Sobhan in 'Bangladesh: Promise and Performance', Rounaq Jahan ed 2000.
- <sup>29</sup> See 'A Rigged Election: An Illegitimate Government', Centre for Research and Information, 2002.
- <sup>30</sup> DFID (2002), Bangladesh -- Financial Management Reform Programme (FMRP).
- <sup>31</sup> H Blair in 'Bangladesh: Promise and Performance', Rounaq Jahan ed 2000.
- <sup>32</sup> It should also be noted that both party leaders ascended to their positions by virtue of their connections to men as wife and daughter.
- <sup>33</sup> Nari Unnayan Barta, MOWCA, 5 February 2001.
- <sup>34</sup> Fact sheets on Utilisation of Job Quota Reserved for Women prepared by PLAGE, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs for the Workshop on Status of Female Participation in the Public Sector, September 2001.
- <sup>35</sup> Jugantor, 4 March 2001.





# 6 Towards the UNDAF

## 6.1 Partnerships

A central element of the MDGs embodied in Goal 8 is the emphasis on building partnerships and collaborative strategies for meeting the targets laid out in the Millennium Declaration. UN Agencies working in Bangladesh have formed a broad range of partnerships with Government and the NGO community and has reached out to the private sector. The Local Consultative Group (LCG) in Bangladesh plays an important role in promoting greater cooperation and aid coordination.

The LCG is the chief mechanism for formal, local-level dialogue on aid coordination in Bangladesh. The members comprise bilateral donors, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, IMF, UNDP, FAO, WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA. Government and NGOs are sometimes invited to make presentations or to participate in discussions. While the World Bank acts as the Secretariat, the LCG is managed by an Executive Committee comprising three permanent members -- the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the UN Resident Coordinator -- and two bilateral donors who rotate annually. Donor coordination takes place at the thematic/sectoral level by means of some 22 LCG subgroups. They operate on a basis of a set of guidelines that are informal, inclusive and flexible. The LCG thematic subgroups have also been the conduit through which UN agencies have interacted with the GOB on the preparation of the PRSP.

Other coordination mechanisms include (i) the UN Country Team; (ii) the Security Management Team comprising all UN agencies; and (iii) the Disaster Management Team that coordinates relief operations in the event of major disasters such as floods and cyclones.

## 6.2 Towards a Rights-based Approach to Development

UN System assistance in Bangladesh focuses on the establishment and promotion of standards and norms that represent or bring about human development. Such standards take a wide variety of forms, e.g. international conventions, national legislation, government policies, policy goals, policy guidelines, targets and indicators. Beyond that, a major focus of the UN System is to create, among the duty-bearers, the required institutional capacity and collective motivation to achieve and safeguard all reasonable standards and norms for human development.

Towards this end, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and civil society partners to formulate the “National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation on Children, Including Trafficking” which was approved by the Cabinet in February 2002. Parallel efforts towards further refinement of standards and “best practices” are taking place within UNICEF’s “Early Childhood Development” project, the “Empowerment of Adolescent Girls” project, and in the struggle against arsenic-contamination of groundwater resources. A strong focus on the needs of claim-holders is also manifest in the activities of WHO and UNFPA, especially in the field of reproductive health and in support of the National Maternal Health Strategy.

A rights-based approach to development is equally pronounced in the activities of ILO, not least in its “Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work” and its “Time-Bound Initiative on the Worst Forms of Child Labour” -- as well as in its emerging focus on the Right to Decent Work. The protection role of UNHCR vis-à-vis refugees from Myanmar and the pro-active advocacy role of IOM vis-à-vis the large number of Bangladeshis migrants working abroad are good examples of promoting the right to protection.

UNESCO, FAO and WFP through their support to household food security and nutrition among Bangladesh’s ultra-poor households, improved crop production, and promoting universal primary education are addressing the right to livelihood and the right to survival.

Supporting the right to protection, UNDP’s governance programme has published a report entitled “*Human Security in Bangladesh: in Search of Justice and Dignity*” which demonstrates that many of Bangladesh’s human insecurity problems go back a very long time and therefore do not easily lend themselves to “quick fix” solutions. At the same vein, UNICEF has helped the Government to develop a curriculum on juvenile justice, has provided training to probation officers on psycho-social protection, and has elaborated a National Policy on Alternative Models of Care and Protection for Children in Contact with the Law.

### 6.3 Looking to the Future

The assessment in the preceding sections paint a mixed picture. While it is clear that Bangladesh has made significant progress in a number of important areas, meeting the MDGs remains a major challenge because poverty levels are high, gender inequality is pervasive and human insecurity has emerged as a significant problem. It is necessary, therefore, through a continued rights-based approach to development, to consolidate and further strengthen the impressive achievements of the last decade that promoted Bangladesh from low to medium human development.

Key indicators in the realisation of survival rights have shown dramatic improvements. Children in Bangladesh in 2004 have a far better chance of surviving the first year of life, to live longer. They are more likely to be immunised and be enrolled in school. On the other hand, children continue to face a very real threat of malnutrition and hunger, which directly impacts their physical and mental development. The high levels of malnutrition exist because while food production has increased to the point where the country is self-sufficient, its availability remains uneven. If you are a poor woman or child in rural Bangladesh your chances of meeting your daily nutritional intake requirements can depend on a variety of factors beyond your control. While chances of being enrolled in school -- in particular as a girl -- are significantly better than for previous generations, the quality of education remains mixed. For girls and boys, progress through the education system remains difficult with limited options and choices the further up the system one goes. While Bangladesh has been successful in reducing the impact of diseases such as malaria, new threats -- in particular HIV/AIDS -- have begun to emerge. The challenge for Bangladesh and its development partners will be to continue to sustain the impressive gains of the last decade in health and education and to work towards ensuring that these gains are extended to the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. At the same time, significant investments will need to be made for an effective transition to providing quality services within the system.

It will also require concerted efforts to better manage the rapid urbanisation that has seen major increases in the size of cities with the capital Dhaka alone now being home to over 20 million people. Part of the impetus will come from the transition of Bangladesh from a predominantly agricultural economy towards industry and services. Non-farm activities now constitute a significant source of economic activity in rural Bangladesh but more needs to be done to increase employment opportunities for people and especially for the educated youth. This will require infrastructure development to attract industries away from Dhaka and other metropolitan areas to peri-urban and rural areas.

Considerable effort will need to be made for managed growth in urbanisation. This will require exploring new and innovative means for meeting minimal standards of housing and shelter and in particular the fast growing urban slums. Significant public health issues relating to access to safe water and sanitation have arisen in both urban and rural areas and the capacity of the public health system through partnerships with both government and non-government providers will have to be further strengthened.

The single biggest determinant to the realisation of the right to livelihoods will be a continued reduction in poverty levels. Though no longer considered among the poorest countries in the world, Bangladesh is nonetheless home to nearly 63 million poor people, and the demographic challenges of keeping pace in human development remain considerable. The overall economic picture though sound, is not without its challenges. Significant structural reforms are helping to make Bangladesh more competitive in the global economy. However, the impact of these changes remains uneven. Today only one in two adults has a job. If you are young or a woman, your chances of being employed are even lower. The challenge facing Bangladesh and its development partners is how to translate improved economic growth into new jobs and livelihoods for the poor. This will require a continued emphasis on pro-poor growth as well as continued investments in people through increased access to higher education, training, and capacity building as well as improved health and nutrition to increase productivity. Bangladesh will have to position itself to take advantage of the opportunities provided by globalisation and private sector partnerships at both the local and global level.

Two areas -- youth and gender -- emerge among the key areas of concern for the future. Despite significant gains in terms of women's empowerment in areas such as access to education and economic participation, the fact remains that women continue to be under-represented in all aspects of social and economic life and continue to receive lower wages. The country cannot afford to ignore the resources and capacities of fifty percent of its population. As the work of NGOs and MFIs has shown, women represent an untapped human resource in the country.

With over half the population under the age of 25, young people represent the future of the country. While there have been significant improvements in educational access, many young people feel that current school curricula do not adequately prepare them for a rich and meaningful life. Endemic under- and unemployment among young people give rise to alienation and frustration, which in turn exacerbate the law and order situation in the country.

Though committed to the equality of rights of all citizens, there are still significant winners and losers in Bangladesh. A part of the maturation process will necessarily involve ensuring that the most marginal and vulnerable groups -- women, minorities, children and others -- do not get left behind amidst an overall positive scenario. It is also important to continue to focus on the guarantee of human security as a basic pre-condition for human development. People need to feel secure at home and at work and the basic norms of justice must prevail for all. It is particularly important to protect women, children and the most vulnerable. Also, citizens must have ownership of the development process.

A transparent government through the use of information technology for development is one means of promoting inclusion and accountability. The decentralisation of administrative and financial responsibilities should also be accelerated. Finally, besides the challenges indicated above, it is necessary to focus on the cross-cutting issues of good governance and environmental sustainability to ensure the achievement of the MDGs and the PRSP development objectives.

### Status of Ratification and Accession of International Human Rights Instruments in Bangladesh

No	Convention/Covenant	Ratification/ Accession
1.	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (16 December 1966) Bangladesh is yet to ratify two follow up Optional Protocols to ICCPR on the abolition of the death penalty	06 September 2000
2.	International Convention Against Apartheid in Sports (10 December 1985)	
3.	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention 1930 (No. 29) and 1957 (No. 105)	22 June 1972
4.	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Rights to Organise Convention 1948 (No. 87)	22 June 1972
5.	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention 1949 (No. 98)	22 June 1972
6.	Equal Remuneration Convention 1951 (No. 100)	22 June 1972
7.	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	22 June 1972
8.	Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (28 July 1951)	
9.	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (18 December 1990) (MWC)	7 October 1998
10.	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (7 March 1966)	11 June 1979
11.	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (30 November 1973)	5 February 1985
12.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (20 November 1989)	3 August 1990
13.	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC) and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC)	06 September 2000
14.	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (18 December 1979)	6 November 1994
15.	Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forums of Discrimination against Women	06 September 2000
16.	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (9 December 1948)	5 October 1998
17.	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) (16 December 1966)	5 October 1998
18.	Convention on the Political Rights of Women (31 March 1953)	5 October 1998
19.	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (10 December 1962)	5 October 1998
20.	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (10 December 1984). Bangladesh is yet to ratify to optional protocols including Article 22, allowing for individual complaints procedure	5 October 1998
21.	International Criminal Court (ICC)	

Source: Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations, New York; Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Asia-Pacific Ratification of UN Human Rights Treaties.

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## United Nations Country Team in Bangladesh



Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator  
GPO Box 224  
Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh

Tel: 811 8600  
e-mail: [rc.bd@undp.org](mailto:rc.bd@undp.org)