



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS VIS-À-VIS BUREAUCRATIC CHALLENGES IN BANGLADESH

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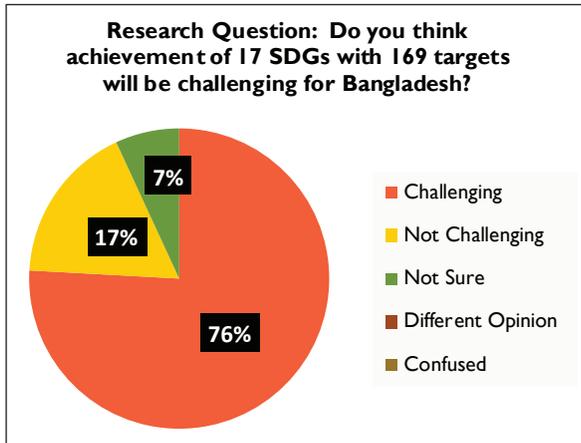
1. Introduction

On 25th September 2015 at the seventeenth session of the UN General Assembly the member states have adopted the declaration of transforming the world. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development which came into effect on 1st January 2016 decided 17 Goals with 169 Targets that have introduced the guideline for the international all inclusive development programme for coming fifteen years. Foreshadowing the commencement of yet another 15 years cycle of global development goals following the footsteps of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for 2000-15 which had 8 goals and 21 targets, it is worth mentioning that Bangladesh has shown considerable success in attaining the MDGs. The present government assumed office in January 2009 after getting a massive mandate from the people in 19th Parliamentary Election held in December 2008. The victory was partly rooted on an elaborate election manifesto of the party, which contained a Vision-2021 for the nation.

2. Role of Civil and Military Bureaucracy

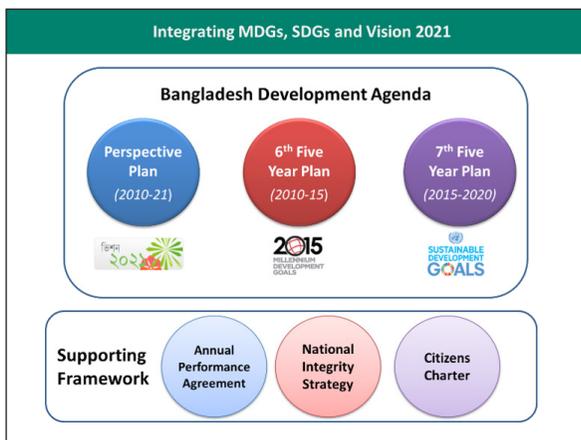
Attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is an acid test and a challenging job for the government of Bangladesh. Realization of SDG will be difficult if all stake holders specially the bureaucrats being the implementers of government decisions do not play their desired roles. Apart from implementation of the SDG, proper role of civil and military bureaucracy is crucial for future socio-economic progress of the country. Considering the challenges and expectations of the people, the government has already started taking steps for the country's development. For starters, the government has established a seven-member advisor panel to the Prime Minister that cover all major aspects concerned with the country's development. So, integrating the MDGs, SDGs and Vision-2021 Bangladesh needs to progress under multidimensional challenges. The research survey also depicts that the attainment of the goals will be challenging for Bangladesh. A survey question was served to 5 Brig Gen /Cdre/Air Cdre, 13 Joint Secretary and 11 Deputy/ Assistant Secretary level bureaucrats to obtain their opinion. Majority of the respondents opine that SDG attainment will be challenging task for Bangladesh with the present state of bureaucracy.

Figure 2: Response on survey question



As implementers of government policies, strategies and visions, the bureaucracy has the most vital role to play in executing SDGs.

Figure 3: Integrating MDG, SDG and Vision 2021

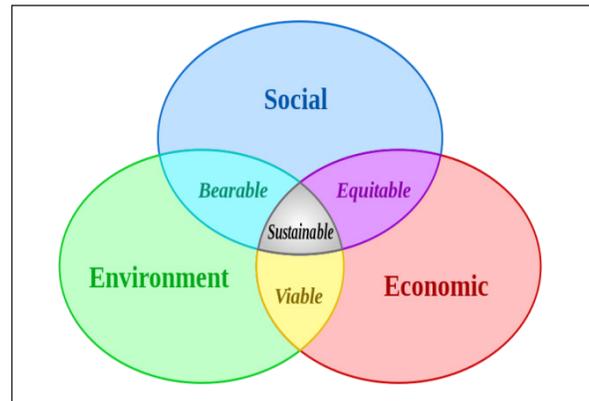


Source: Lecture at NDC on May 2017 of Md. Abul Kalam Azad Principal Co-ordinator, SDG Affairs, PM Office

Consequently, a thorough analysis and critical review of the role of bureaucracy in Bangladesh is needed in order to devise future implementation strategies for SDGs. UN launched SDGs as an aspiring and ambitious agenda to end poverty, protect the planet earth and ensure prosperity and fortune for all, by 2030. These reflect the scale and ambition of the global community seeking to realize human rights, gender equality and empowerment of all. The SDG agenda is a plan of action for the people, planet and collective prosperity by seeking to strengthen global peace and larger freedom, and eradication of poverty and insufficiency in all respect. The UN General Assembly resolution on SDGs communicated the purpose and determination of the international community to “take the bold and transformative steps which are needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path” (UNGA, 2015), and to incorporate and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development, viz. economic, social

and environmental. The five Ps of this development agenda revolves around: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership (Ahmed, 2016). The targets having social, economic and environmental perspectives with overlapping area of challenges.

Figure 4: Dimensions of Sustainable Development



Source: Internet (Wikipedia)

3. Challenges to Attain the SDGs

Followings are the SDGs (UNGA, 2015) vis-à-vis challenges on the way of attainment of the goals:

a. Goal-1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere;

The five specific targets of the goal include removing or eradicating extreme and life-threatening poverty (people who are living on less than \$ 1.25 per day) by 2030. Reducing at least by half the percentage of populaces living below the poverty line; implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems, ensure that everybody has equal rights to economic resources and boost the resilience of the vulnerable poor (United Nations, 2015). Eradicating extreme poverty which currently stands at 17.6% and bringing down the current poverty rate of 31.5% to 16% by 2030 would be a big challenge for Bangladesh. In achieving these targets in Bangladesh, the public, private and non-government sectors shall have to play major roles (Ahmed, 2016). The civil and military bureaucrats have significant roles in this regards.

b. Goal-2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture;

The five specific targets for this goal include ending or eradicating hunger and ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all and ending all forms of malnutrition and starvation; increasing and doubling agricultural yield and incomes of small-scale food producers; ensuring sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices; and

maintaining genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed animals (United Nations, 2015). Achieving and realizing the first two targets would be big challenges for Bangladesh in the absence of a still inadequate social safety and protection system for the poor and vulnerable or susceptible population. The bureaucrats of the ministries of agriculture, food, land, fisheries and livestock are relevant for implementation of these targets (Ahmed, 2016).

c.Goal-3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages; The nine specific targets of the goal contain reducing maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per hundred thousand live births, reducing preventable deaths of infants and under five children to at least 12 and 25 per thousand live births; eliminate the tuberculosis, AIDS, malaria epidemics; dropping mortality from non-communicable diseases by one-third; halving the number of deaths and wounds or injuries from road and rail accidents; and attaining universal health coverage (United Nations, 2015). Bangladesh will face serious challenge in bringing down the maternal mortality ratio from the current 176 per hundred thousand live births to 70, and under one infant mortality rate from the current 30 to 12 per thousand live births. Eradicating and getting rid of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria epidemics will also be a big challenge under the existing social structure and prevailing situations (Ahmed, 2016). The bureaucrats of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as well as the private and NGO sectors are relevant for realizing these targets.

d.Goal-4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; The seven precise targets of the goal include completion of primary and secondary education for all children as well as access to early childhood development and pre-primary school education; similar access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education; and ensuring literacy and numeracy for all youths and adults (United Nations, 2015). The first two targets of the goal will be difficult to implement in Bangladesh, as the literacy rate still drifts around 60% and no significant progress has been made in the areas of pre-primary education and early childhood development (Ahmed, 2016). The bureaucrats of the ministries of education, as well as primary and mass education are relevant for implementation of these targets.

e.Goal-5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; The five targets of the goal contain removing all forms of gender discrimination, eliminating violence against women and unsafe practices like forced or early marriage; identifying the value of voluntary and unpaid care or domestic work; and ensuring equal involvement of women in leadership positions (United Nations, 2015). Meeting these five targets will be an arduous task in Bangladesh because of the social realities, citizens' outlook and societal value systems. The bureaucrats of the Ministries of Women and Children Affairs, Home Affairs, Labour and Employment, and Social Welfare are relevant for realizing these targets (Ahmed, 2016).

f. Goal-6: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All; The six targets of the goal include universal and equitable or unbiased access to safe drinking water, suitable and equitable sanitation and hygiene, improving water, enhancing water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management and protecting water-related ecosystems (United Nations, 2015). Of these, the first target is likely to be achieved as access to safe drinking water already stands at 98.3% in Bangladesh. The achievement of sanitation target will be difficult as the current rate is only 63.8%. The other targets will be also difficult as the professionalism in the management of water-resources sector is poor. The bureaucrats of the ministries of local government and rural development, as well as water resources are relevant for achieving these targets (Ahmed, 2016).

g.Goal-7: Ensure Access to Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable and Modern Energy for All; The three targets of the goal include safeguarding universal access to affordable and modern energy services, significantly increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy mix and doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency (United Nations, 2015). Bangladesh will face difficulty in attaining these targets as the country lags behind in fuel resources, transmission cum distribution systems and renewable energy programs. The bureaucrats of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources are most relevant for realizing these targets.

h.Goal-8: Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All; The 10 targets of the goal include sustaining per capita economic growth at 7 percent, achieving higher levels of economic productivity, promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, progressively improving resource efficiency in consumption and production, achieving full and productive employment for all, substantially reducing youth unemployment, eradicating forced labour, human trafficking and worst forms of child labour, promoting labour rights and safe working environment, implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism and strengthening the capacities of financial institutions for expanding access to financial services. Implementation of these targets would require socio-political stability as well as strengthening the capacity and efficiency of the government manifold through sweeping reforms in administrative and financial governance. The bureaucrats of the ministries of finance, planning, labour and employment, industries, civil aviation and tourism are relevant for implementation of these targets (Ahmed, 2016).

j. Goal-9: Build Resilient Infrastructure, Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization and Foster Innovation; The five targets in the goal include developing reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, increasing the access of small-scale enterprises to financial services, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and enhancing scientific research cum technological competences. These would require massive investments both from the private and public sectors in infrastructures and industries as well as transnational partnerships (United Nations, 2015). The bureaucrats of the ministries of industries, jute and textiles, communication, science and technology, posts, telecommunication and information technology are relevant for achievement of these targets (Ahmed, 2016).

k.Goal-10: Reduce Inequality within and Among Countries; The seven targets of the goal include empowering and promoting socio-economic and political inclusion of all, progressively sustaining income growth of the bottom 40% of population at a higher rate than national average, reducing inequalities by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices;

adopting fiscal, wage and social protection policies for achieving greater equality; facilitating safe migration and mobility of people; improving the regulation, monitoring and enforcement of global financial markets and institutions and ensuring enhanced voice for developing countries in the international economic and financial institutions (United Nations, 2015). All these would require an overhaul of the international and domestic legal cum regulatory regimes of Bangladesh. The bureaucrats of ministries of finance, law, justice and parliamentary affairs, expatriate welfare and overseas employment are relevant for realizing these targets (Ahmed, 2016).

l. Goal-11: Make Cities and Human Settlements Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable; The seven targets of the goal include ensuring adequate, affordable and safe housing and transport for all, providing sustainable systems and improving road safety; enhancing inclusive urbanization and capacity for participatory and integrated planning and management of human settlements; protecting and safeguarding the world's cultural and natural heritages; significantly reducing the losses caused by disasters and natural calamities; reducing the adverse environmental impact of cities; and providing access to safe, inclusive, accessible and green public spaces (United Nations, 2015). Implementation of these targets would be very difficult in Bangladesh due to rapid and unplanned urbanization (currently 30%), over-population, and excessively high population density especially in urban centres, as well as resource constraints (Ahmed, 2016). The bureaucrats of ministries of communication, housing and public works, environment and forests, cultural affairs, and disaster management are relevant for achieving these targets.

m.Goal-12: Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns; The eight targets of the goal comprise implementing a ten year framework of programs. These are on sustainable utilization and production outlines, sustainable management and consumption of natural resources, halving per capita food waste at consumer level and reducing food losses; environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes; reducing waste generation through encouraging companies to adopt sustainable practices (United Nations, 2015). All these targets would require massive efforts by Bangladesh government as well as the relevant private and

non-government entities. The bureaucrats of relevant ministries for achieving these targets are Agriculture, Jute and Textiles, Industries, Food, Planning, Environment and Forests (Ahmed, 2016).

n.Goal-13: Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and Its Impacts; The three targets of the goal are strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to face climate-related hazards and disasters; integrating climate change measures into national plans, policies and strategies; and improving education and awareness, human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation and impact reduction (United Nations, 2015). These would require colossal efforts, especially by relevant government organizations like the ministry of environment and forests, department of environment, ministry of planning, ministry of disaster management and relief, armed forces and the department of disaster management (Ahmed, 2016). The civil and military bureaucrats have significant roles in this regards.

p.Goal-14: Conserve and Sustainably Use The Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development; The seven targets of the goal include prevention and reduction of marine pollution; sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal eco-systems; minimising and addressing the impacts of ocean acidification; effectively regulating harvesting and preventing over-fishing and illegal cum unregulated fishing; conserving at least 10 percent of marine areas; prohibiting certain fisheries subsidies that contribute to over-capacity and over-fishing; and gaining economic benefits to least developed countries from sustainable and optimum use of marine resources (United Nations , 2015). Attainment of these targets would involve closer coordination, efficient management of marine resources by relevant public entities like the ministries of fisheries and livestock, shipping, and water resources, the department of fisheries as well as defence organizations like the Navy and Coast Guards (Ahmed, 2016). So, the civil and military bureaucrats of the concerned ministries will have to play an important role for attainment of the goal.

q.Goal-15: Protect, Restore and Promote Sustainable Use of Terrestrial Ecosystems, Sustainably Manage Forests, Combat Desertification, and Halt and Reverse Land Degradation and Biodiversity Loss; The nine targets of the goal include ensuring

conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services; sustainable management of all types of forests; combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soil; ensuring the conservation of mountain eco-systems; taking urgent action to reduce the degradation and bio-diversity loss of natural habitats, promoting fair sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources; taking urgent action to prevent poaching and trafficking of protected flora and fauna; introducing measures to prevent and reduce the impact of invasive alien species; and integrating ecological and biodiversity values into local and national development plans and processes. All these would require heightened surveillance and effective monitoring cum regulatory roles by government entities like the ministries of land, agriculture, fisheries and livestock, environment and forests, planning, Chittagong hill tracts affairs, armed forces and the departments of forests, and fisheries (Ahmed, 2016). The civil and military bureaucrats of the concerned ministries will have to play important roles for attainment of these targets.

r. Goal-16: Promote Inclusive and Peaceful Societies, Provide Access to Justice for All, Build Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions at All Levels for Sustainable Development; The ten targets of the goal include significant decline in all forms of violence and related deaths; ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence against infants or children; promoting the rule of law and ensuring justice for all; reducing illicit financial and arms transactions, improving the recovery and return of stolen assets, and combating all forms of organized crimes; significantly reducing corruption and bribery; developing effective, transparent and accountable institutions; ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory decision-making at all levels; increasing developing countries' participation in global institutions; providing legal identity to all; and ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms (United Nations, 2015). All these ten targets would require flourishing of good governance and all-encompassing inclusive democratic practices as well as strengthening the watchdog role of constitutional bodies and democratic institutions in Bangladesh. The relevant entities for realizing these goals are Cabinet Division, Prime Minister's Office, the Ministries of Public Administration, Armed Forces Division, Home Affairs, Law, Justice

and Parliamentary Affairs, Information, Anti-Corruption Commission, JatiyaSangsad, political parties, and the civil society at large including NGOs (Ahmed, 2016). The bureaucrats of the above ministries will have a major role to play in this regards.

s. Goal-17: Strengthen the Resources/ Means of Implementation and Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development; The goal stipulates the means of strengthening the implementation as well as revitalisation of Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. It involves the financial and technological aspects, capacity building especially in developing countries, promotion of universal, rules-based, non-discriminatory, equitable, open and multilateral trading system, it also addresses systemic issues like policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships, data, monitoring and accountability issues (United Nations , 2015).The bureaucrats of the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning and Commerce are relevant for achieving this goal.

4. Needs Holistic Approach

The SDGs seem to be an extensive list of uncompromising wishes that are sought by the global community in the light of prevailing realities, future potentials as well as resource constraints of planet earth. To transform these goals and targets into reality on ground the bureaucracy of the government has to play an efficient role. These goals will remain as mere utopian dreams if sufficient efforts cum resources are not involved. If the egalitarian ideals on which these are founded are not accepted globally and a holistic approach by all stakeholders including civil and military bureaucracy are not taken the SDG will remain as a challenge.

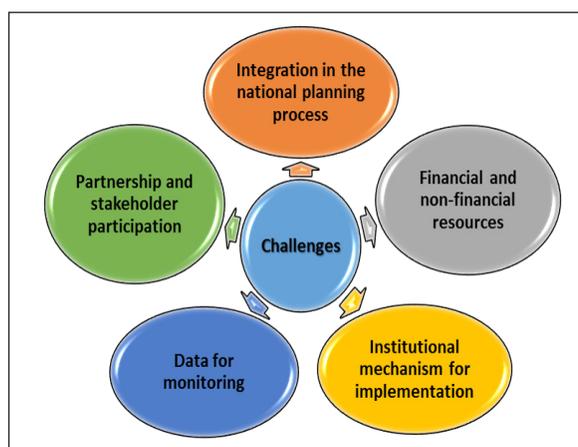
5. Implementation Challenges of SDG

Though Bangladesh has various successes in attaining MDG, yet some lessons learned from the MDGs' implementation are as followings (Fahmida Khatun, 2017):

- a. Low alignment with national plans and policies.
- b. Silo approach in implementation.
- c. Limited data availability.
- d. Lack of linkage to budgetary allocation practices.
- e. Absence of dedicated institutional mechanism for implementation.
- f. Low engagements of stakeholders.
- g. Weak monitoring and accountability practice.

If the lessons learned from the MDG implementation process are taken into account the importance of bureaucracy and its role in national development becomes very vivid and clear. At the same time the weak areas of the bureaucracy have been exposed. The implementation challenges of SDG as identified are; Integration of the goals in the national planning process, Exploring financial and non-financial resources, Developing institutional mechanism for implementation, Exploring data for monitoring and Partnership & stakeholder participation. As a matter of fact, in reality all these need to be addressed by bureaucracy directly or indirectly. The following figure depicts the implementation challenges of SDGs.

Figure 5: Implementation challenges of SDG



Presentation of Dr. Fahmida Khatun (Research Director, CPD) on "MDGs" to SDGs: Inclusive Development Roadmap for Bangladesh to be a High Income Country" at National Defence College on 30 May 2017

6. Development Vis-à-vis Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is directly involved in development administration. The development administration is a concept of administration which is action oriented rather than structure oriented. It is basically oriented towards speedy socioeconomic transformation. The main characteristics of development administrations are change orientation, result orientation, commitment client orientation and framed specific time. Thus the emphasis of development administration shifted towards increasing the capability of bureaucracy with all-pervasive influence over administration that subsequently resulted in development of newer concept of bureaucracy which is often called, 'committed bureaucracy' such a concept of committed bureaucracy is very influential as well as a universal model for developing countries. Even in India, former Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi advocated for committed

bureaucracy (Khan & Ishtiaque, 2006). On the other hand, the impact of governance on development performance is highly complex, and as yet poorly understood and perceived. It is indeed difficult to explain Bangladesh's success in selected areas of economic and social development in the presence of the allegedly poor and deteriorating quality of governance, as apparent in widespread corruption and inefficient administration, political hostility and unrest, dysfunctional parliament, and negative bureaucratic behaviour (Aminuzzaman, 2006). The most important responsibility of bureaucracy in a developing country in addition to strengthen the pre-conditions of development is providing a long-run and broad time horizon and an expanding set of developmental objectives. These are to be realised in both private and public sector. It is evident that the relative importance of the role of bureaucracy will be greater in developing than in developed economies, even though bureaucracies are much weaker in developing than developed societies (Morshed, 1997). Therefore, the capacity building of Bangladesh bureaucracy for SDG is very important.

7. Conclusion

SDG is not only as an ordinary development goal but raises serious concern over the use and protection of natural resources. Sustainability is the core aspect of SDG and a thrust area. The biggest challenge of sustainability can come from its implementation process such as financing, management, administration etc. where bureaucracy has a major role to play. Bangladesh bureaucracy came through a long way, it has its strengths and weaknesses but to achieve the SDGs it needs to trap the potentials and utilize it. Development and growth in people-based socio-political institutions is a must if the bureaucracy is to meet the demands of time and people. Sustainability certainly depends on policies and governance. The implementation mechanisms are also important which brings the governance issues to the forefront. Bangladesh attained success in achieving some MDG targets but at the same time the efficiency of public sector organisation has been reduced, corruption has become rampant, and citizens' trust towards bureaucracy has declined. So bureaucratic commitment, political goodwill, accountability and outcome-oriented bureaucracy is needed for socio-economic progress as expected in SDGs. Bangladesh has to be more dynamic and flexible in bringing changes in its bureaucracy, where

the structure, function and orientation need to be changed for achievement of the goals. 

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