

POST MDGS AND EXTREME POVERTY: A case study for Bangladesh

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Bangladesh is one of the developing countries on track to attain many of the MDGs on target in 2015 and by now has already achieved some of them. It is a miracle that with a lower economic growth rate compare to neighbouring countries like India and Pakistan and some others, it has positioned better ranked in the Social Progress Index made by Social Imperative of a Washington based research organization (<http://www.socialprogressimperative.org>).

However, despite its significant progress, still there exists large number of extremely poor households in Bangladesh. They are deprived of many of social and economic facilities because they live in geographically remote areas. As a result they are excluded from public resources and being further marginalised. However, some direct extreme poverty reduction programs are in progress, which are mainly looked after by NGOs in partnership with Government and some development agencies. In this regard, the DFID has strong commitment to eradicate extreme poverty program. Three development partners support three largest programs such as Challenge fund e.g. EEP-Shiree, CFPR-TUP and Char Livelihood Program. Bangladesh needs to invest substantially more to eradicate extreme poverty.

EEP manifesto prepared

A national manifesto for eradicating extreme poverty from Bangladesh has been prepared by grassroots and stakeholders through consultation. It has already endorsed by 150 organizations including some government Departments. Economic Empowerment of Extreme Poor (EEP) –Shiree program has led to develop and advocacy of this manifesto. Bangladesh Government spends more than 2% of GDP per year through social protection sectors where majority of over 90 programs are addressed to most vulnerable people victim of natural climate. Major problem of the Social Safety Net programs are- very small size of grant for individual to bring significant changes to the respective target groups, corruption, errors and small coverage. General Economic Division of the Ministry of Planning in its Sixth Five year Plan has proposed 3% of GDP from present 2% during this plan period. A draft strategy of National Social Protection has been made. It is for revisiting our Social Safety Net Programs and designs those with the national target of MDGs and vision 2021.

Shiree base line survey shows that about 88% of the extreme poor household headed by women and 74% headed by male respectively never went to school. It shows 15% of them suffered from chronic illness. Injuries like road accident and injuries at their work places bring deaths and disability, a chronic case of long term economic loss for them. A recent study conducted by Md. A. Halim Miah and Imran Reza, under PFP –Shiree project entitled , "Cause and Consequences of Child Labour in building economic resilience among extreme poor in northern Bangladesh" reveals that among the child labour having 3 or 4 years education are more likely to be engaged with technical employments earning more.

Meeting the resource gap

Around 40% children drop out before completion of their five years education. A study of Unicef and DG Primary education in 2009 shows that drop-out rate was higher among the poor households where most of them live in Char or islands, Haor, hill tracts and

other geographically remote areas. One of the major causes of drop out is that they do not find interest in classes as they cannot participate in the classes unlike other children from better social and economic background. They cannot participate as they could not take advance preparation of their lessons at home for lack of parental guidance or not having electricity.

Therefore, while revisiting Post MDGs priority setting to design poverty reduction we should think critically the amount of investment to be provided for each poor household and what should be the minimum standard for them. The minimum standard should be at least each house having sanitary latrine, access to safe drinking water and sources of 50 kwh electricity or other renewable energy. The current allocation of \$200-300 per household is very small to graduate them from extreme poverty. If the estimated amount for taking off an extreme poor household to be a moderate poor with building other resilience as well as breaking intergenerational poverty then our recommendation should be around \$1000 per household.

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