

Evaluations of The Actions For Achieving Millenium Development Goals

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Abstract

Poverty in the developing countries has been the most disturbing factor in formulating strategies for initiating sustainable development programs. In fact most of the governments have been trying to put their maximum energies in the realization of the agenda of poverty alleviation. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitute a set of time-bound, explicitly numerical development targets which are measurable using certain indicators that most nations of the world have accepted. There are eight (8) goals, eighteen (18) targets and forty eight (48) indicators. Many of the developing countries are yet to set them on a path which is likely to help them reach the targets by 2015. Based on secondary sources, the present paper describes the success and failure of MDGs and to examine the present Bangladesh situation. Bangladesh has achieved remarkable progress in the areas of primary schooling, girls' education, immunization, micro credit, female economic participation, birth control, physical mobility and safety nets. But Bangladesh however, is not on the way to achieve the first target of MDGs. It also discusses the evaluation reports and reviews them critically as far as possible on certain selected issues.

Key Words: Millenium Development Goals, Evaluation, Bangladesh

Introduction

In September 2000, 189 countries attending the UN Millennium Summit, signed the UN Millennium Declaration, a manifesto to eradicate extreme poverty, hunger and disease among the one billion people in the world who subsist on barely anything (UN, 2000). The project set a deadline of 2015 to achieve eight goals, called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For strong economic growth and to reduce poverty of developing countries member countries of UN propose some goals. Bangladesh is one of the signatories among 189 countries in declaration of MDG. The goals constitute a set of time-bound indicators which most nations of the world have accepted. There are eight (8) goals, eighteen (18) targets and forty eight (48) indicators. The objective of this paper is to examine whether the perspectives and framework within which Bangladesh is trying if at all, to attain the MDG is right or along the right direction.

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Review of Literature

In Bangladesh, several empirical studies on MDGs have been undertaken since 1990. Some of the studies may not be entirely relevant to the present study, but their findings, methodology of analysis and suggestions have a great influence on the present study.

A.R Bhuyan (2006) Has studied the key concern. The paper highlighted these goals and assessed Bangladesh's achievement in the first Five years after the adoption of the Declaration and its prospects to reach the goals by the 2015 deadline.

The Millennium Development Goals Report (Statistical Annex, 2006) showed where we stand in 2006 in achieving these goals. The Study also showed that, developed countries had confirmed their commitment to the goals through increased aid and enhanced debt relief. The study also revealed the disparities in progress. The report examined that some progress had been made. This should provide the incentive to keep moving forward, but there was still a long way to go to keep their promises to the current and future generations.

A recent UNDP report said that Bangladesh could be role model for UNDP for showing that sustained improvement in human development was possible in a poor country at a relatively modest level of income growth (UNDP, 2005).

A in this study, we have attempted to give an overview of the different aspects of MDGs and to provide suggestions and ways to implement this in Bangladesh.

Objective

The present study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. To clarify the meaning of MDG.
2. To delineate the poverty alleviation measures to reach social development goals,
3. To examine the present scenario of Millennium Development Goals from Bangladesh perspective.

Methodology

In the light of the objectives, the study carried out was mainly based on secondary information and data from different reports, articles and books of relevance. Other than that, information obtained from various seminars, symposiums were also used to conduct the research. Finally, the opinions of experts in the field have facilitated the study greatly.

Poverty Alleviation Measures To Reach Social Development Goals

Bangladesh government is bound by constitutional obligation, to build up and sustain a social structure that guarantees the fulfillment of the basic needs of citizens. Such a structure, it is logically assumed, will facilitate people to enjoy the benefits of freedom in the society. The government has chalked out, what it calls the poverty reduction strategy to substantially reduce poverty by the year 2015.

Bangladesh's MDG

Bangladesh has the largest number of poor people in the world after China and India. About 49.6 % people can not earn even one dollar a day. This huge number of people is deprived of food and shelter, as well as other basic human needs like education, health, safe drinking water, etc. The primary objective of MDGs is to alleviate poverty by the year 2015. The agreed goals to be attained by the year 2015 are:

Table: 1 Millennium Development Goals (At a glance)

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day. ● Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015.
4. Reduce child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under five mortality rate.
5. Improve maternal health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. ● Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources. ● Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. ● By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

8. Develop a global partnership for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable nondiscriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction - both nationally and internationally.● Address the special needs of the least developed countries. This includes: tariff- and quota-free access for least developed countries' exports; an enhanced program of debt relief for HIPC and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction.● Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states (through the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly.● Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.● In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth. ● In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, essential drugs in developing countries.● In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.
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Source: A.R Bhuyan, *A Review of Bangladesh Achievement*.

Let us examine the present situation of Bangladesh to see where we are in relation to achieving the MDGs.

The Success And Failure Of Millennium Development Goals

MDGs are not being implemented on track as the developed countries have not kept the promises to provide funds. Considering the constraints, Bangladesh achieved a considerable success in reducing the gender gap increasing education; success in mainstreaming women in to the development process. The women of the country are now playing an important role in the area of Micro Credit. Despite such success, Bangladesh currently is far behind in meeting the MDGs. So some of the observations regarding the implementation of MDG are discussed below:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Bangladesh has two targets to achieve this goal. First target is to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day. According to base year 1991, 58.8% people earned less than one dollar a day. By 2015 it has to be reduced to 29.8%.

Table: 2 Poverty situations in Bangladesh

Index	Base year 1990	Current situation	Rate of progress	Time needed
Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day	58.8%	40.9%	1%	2019
Poverty gap ratio	17.2%	10.9%	0.3%	2028
Share of poorest quintile in national consumption		9.1%	Negative	Uncertain
proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption	28%	36%	Negative	Uncertain

Source: *www.supro.org, July 2007.*

To monitor this target there are some indicators. Ratio & types of people whose income is less than one dollar a day stood at 40.9% in 2007. This was 58.8% in base year 1990-95 and 49.6% in 2002-02. Currently poverty gap ratio is 10.9%, which was 17.2% in base year 1990-95. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption is now 9.1%.

Second target is to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. According to base year 1991, 28% of people suffered from acute hunger. It has to be reduced 14% by 2015. There are two indicators in this target; percentage of people living in hard core poverty is 36% in 2007, though it was supposed to be 21% according to the target. In 2007 prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age is 47.5%, which was 67% in 1990-95 and 51% in 2002-02.

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

The second target of MDGs is to ensure full course of primary education for all boys and girls by the year of 2015. Bangladesh has to increase net enrollment rate from 73.7 % in 1992 to 100 % by 2015 and reduce primary school dropout rates from 38 % in 1994 to 0%. While a significant 87 percent has been achieved in terms of primary school enrollment, dropout rates remain high and therefore primary school completion rate is low. Progress has been made in adult literacy-54% in 2005, but additional effort is needed to reach the target. According to a study conducted by 10 NGOs with the Commonwealth Education Fund, the dropout rate has increased from 33 percent to 47 percent in 2007. Moreover, official statistics show, the net enrolment of six to ten year old children declined to 93 percent in 2005 from 97 percent in 2002(Source: A.R Bhuyan). A recent study also showed that some children could not read and write properly even after completion of five years of primary education. The increasing dropout rate suggests that Bangladesh is unlikely to attain a 100 percent completion of primary education by the MDG deadline of 2015.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Gender equality and women empowerment are a core MDG. It is a development objective in its own right, and its achievement is essential for attaining the goal of poverty reduction. The global target of education-related MDG is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels of education by 2015.

Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in achieving the first target of removing gender disparity in schooling. The female-male ratio of students in primary schools has steadily increased from about 45:55 in 1990 to 50:50 in 2002. At the secondary level, more girls are now enrolled than boys, thanks to the female secondary stipend programme. Female-male ratio in secondary schools was 53:47 in 2000 (GOB, 2005). The goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education can thus be said to have been already achieved. Considerable gender disparity, however, remains in tertiary education. The current female-male ratio of 20-24 year old literates is 55:71. The MDG target is to raise it to 100:100 by 2015. The recent growth in Universities and institutes of higher learning in the country has brightened the prospect of achieving the targeted gender parity in tertiary education by 2015. Significant gender inequality is visible in other areas, too. Thus, the presence of women is negligible in the Parliament, in the judiciary and in the top administrative jobs of the country. There are also disparities in employment opportunities and wages. Female wage is 70 percent of male wage in the agriculture sector and 42 percent in non-agricultural sectors. The proportion of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sectors is also very low - only 22 percent of the total.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

"Reduce Child Mortality" comprises of the following indicators to be achieved by the stipulated timeframe of UN declaration,

- Reduce under-5 child mortality rate by two-third;
- Reduce infant mortality rate;
- Achieve 100% immunization rate.

Table: 3 Achievement (in %) of reduction of under-5 child mortality by 2015

Indicator	Status in 2005	Current status 2007	Progress rate	Time needed at current pace
Reduce under 5 child mortality	76/1000	69/1000	1.4%	2022
Infant mortality	53/1000	46/1000	1.3%	2019
Immunization	69%	77%	1.3%	2024

Source: UN-MDG Report 2005, WB Country Strategy, 2006-09

As mentioned in UN declaration, in case of reducing child mortality the statistical base year would be as 1990 and the respective countries have to achieve the target of two-third reducing by 2015. That means the under-five mortality from 151 to 50, infant mortality from 94 to 31 would be reduced and immunization rate will reach 100% from 53% in 1990.

According to MDG Bangladesh Progress Report-2005 (Prepared by UN & Bangladesh jointly) claimed the significant decline of child mortality rate which was 151 in 1990, 84 in 2000, 76 in 2002 and stood as 69 in 2007. In this situation, if we analyze the progress of last five years (2002-06), current progress rate is only 1.4% whereas we have to achieve minimum 3% progress per year for reaching the MDG in time.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Improving maternal health is an important MDG. Although the maternal mortality ratio is on track, it remains a challenge for Bangladesh to sustain the rate given the complex socio-economic factors that affect the goal. Also, the percentage of skilled birth attendants is low. In 1990, maternal mortality rate (MMR) in Bangladesh was 570 per 100,000 live births (Chowdhury, 2006). The MDG objective for Bangladesh is to reduce it by 75 percent, i.e., to 143 by 2015. However, the progress made in reducing MMR, even though significant, is not sufficient to bring it down to the target level in 2015. MMR came down from 570 in 1990 to 450 in 1995 and then to 320 in 2005 (Chowdhury, 2006). A lot more will therefore be needed to achieve the MDG target. The government, however, appears very optimistic as the PRSP prepared recently by the Government aims to bring the MMR down to 147 by 2015.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and other diseases:

Health is a fundamental right of the people, recognized in the constitution. The Government of Bangladesh therefore considers health as a high priority sector. It is also committed to achieving the MDG of combating HIV/AIDS and other killer diseases. Bangladesh has made some progress in combating the spread of malaria with the number of prevalence dropping from 42 cases per 100,000 in 2001 to 34 in 2005. The morbidity rate is relatively high in Bangladesh. According to the Health and Demographic Survey (HDS) of 2000 conducted by the BBS, 188 persons per thousand are diseased in Bangladesh. The morbidity rate is higher among females than the males and among the poor than the non-poor. Besides, the poor may be affected by many other diseases that are not covered by the current Essential Service Package (ESP). However, in the last few decades, the incidence of diseases like diarrhoea, malaria, tuberculosis, anaemia, elephantiasis, goitre, black fever, whooping cough, polio and diphtheria has come down. On the other hand, some noncommunicable diseases such as, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental illness, and cancer have increased. Also, dengue fever and arsenic contamination have created a serious public health problem.

HIV/AIDS is classified as the deadliest epidemic of our time. However, up to now, Bangladesh is fortunate to be a low-prevalent country. In the total population of 137 million, the reported cases of HIV/AIDS is very low (363 reported cases as of December 2003). However, according to WHO/UNAIDS report, an estimated 2500- 15000 HIV-infected people were there in Bangladesh at the end of 2003. The prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS has thus become a great challenge for Bangladesh.

Goal:7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Bangladesh has an obligation to fulfill these commitments as signatory of MDGs. Ensure Environmental Sustainability is indicated as MDG-7 out of total 8 MDGs. UN Inter-Governmental Climate Change (IPCC) 2007, an UN report on climate change says, the temperature of the world might be increased from 1.1 to 2.9 degree in 2100 and sea level might be raised by 23 inches due to temperature incensement. If the sea level rises 1 meter, 15-17% Southern areas of Bangladesh will sink in the sea. Already 40 lac people of Bangladesh have become a environmental refugees for river erosion and the scientists warn that it will exceed 2 crore in future. By 2030 the sea might encroach expanded 120 kilometers inside of Bangladesh, which means Cox's bazaar sea beach might be lost. (Jaijaidin: 30 April & 6 June, Somokal: 5 June 2007)

ESCAP reports that Bangladesh uses about 1800 tons insecticides per year for agricultural cultivation and sea water is being polluted by these chemical fertilizer residue and insecticide. Ship breaking yards situated in Sitakunda, a town 5 km far from Chittagong, where about 40 expired ships are breaking per year, spreads polluted oil in to the sea and the ship breakers are affected by poisoned gases. A national daily, Daily Somokal dated 14 October, 2006 published a report that more than 5000 villagers and labours have been affected by these poisoned gases.

Table:4 Environmental Sustainability, target and achievement of Bangladesh

<i>Bangladesh targets</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2007 target</i>	<i>Achieved 2007-2008</i>
Integrate the principle of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources	Proportion of land area covered by forest	15%	10.30%
	Proportion of protected area to surface area to maintain biological diversity.		0.5%
	Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per US\$ 1000 GDP		92kg
	Carbon dioxide emissions (Metric tons per capita)		0.2 metric ton

<i>Bangladesh targets</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>2007 target</i>	<i>Achieved 2007-2008</i>
Ensure that 100% of urban and 96.5% of rural population have access to safe water by 2015. Ensure that 100% of urban and rural population have access to improved sanitation by 2010	Proportion of the population with sustainable access to an improved water source.	100%	77%
	Proportion of the population with access to improved situation- Urban Rural.	85% 55.5%	51% 35%

Source: Dept. of Forest, Earth Trend (Country Report Bang.), Poverty Red. in SA, Unicef Bang. Statistics

As per target of MDG, Proportion of land area covered by forest will be 15% in 2007, but the reality is, it is only 10.3 %. We are now 4.7% behind from the target. As per report of daily new paper, Daily Sangbad dated 28 June 2007, we have only 8% forest areas, which is half of the target. The target of access to pure water, we are 23% less from the target and it is 34% in urban sanitation and 19.5% in rural sanitation. This scenario reveals that we are too far from the target yet.

Goal:8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

In order to achieve these goals a new global partnership for development - based on stronger policies, good governance and a real sense of shared responsibility - among stakeholders in both rich and poor countries is essential. Support provided by such partnerships would be most effective in reducing poverty when it is given to poor countries with good economic policies and sound governance.

The GOB - UN report clearly pointed out the gaps in developing countries' promises in the case of Bangladesh as quoted here: "overseas development assistance (ODA) from countries belonging to the development assistance committee (DAC) has been decreasing in recent years, both in rural value and a share of the GNI of donor countries. It has developed from \$1.24 billion (0.28 % of GNI) in 1996 to \$ 1.02 billion (0.22 % of GNI) in 2001". ODA has also fallen from 0.06 % of donors' GNI in 1996 to 0.05 % in 2001. This is far from the target of 0.7 and 0.15 %, respectively as the MDG requirements for these indicators. It will need 5 % of what the world is now spending on arms and other means of destructions to meet MDGs by 2015.

Conclusion

Bangladesh had adverse initial conditions at the start of its journey three decades ago. With extremely high population density, low resources base, high incidence of natural disasters, the implication for long term savings, investment and growth were deemed extremely challenging. However, Bangladesh has achieved considerable success in several spheres such as population control, reduction in child mortality, and child malnutrition, disaster mitigation etc. (Source: A National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development, 2003)

Bangladesh has also made remarkable progress on several MDG's and is already on the verge of achieving the targets in gender parity. It also has a good chance of reaching other targets in areas such as under five mortality and consumption poverty. Other MDG's such as those related to improving maternal health, water sanitation and environmental degradation are going to be much harder to achieve (Alam, June 2006).

Bangladesh appears to be doing well with respect to the goals on Universal primary education, gender equality in education under five mortality, maternal mortality and death from tuberculosis. However the progress in education is to some extent misleading in that the expansion of educational opportunities for both boys and girls has been accompanied by sharp deterioration in their quality.

The World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy focuses on two key aspects of Governance. Core governance includes areas such as improving public financial management and procurement. Strengthening institutions of accountability, supporting legal and judicial reform and enhancing access to information (www. world bank. org. bd 2006).

However, in terms of progress towards achieving the MDGs, we have yet to see concrete results and we may fail to reach a number of targets at the current pace of change. At last we can say that the success and failure of the MDGs largely depend on the effective implementation of each and every goal.

Recommendation

1. Need to ensure employments oriented technical education and change in vocational training method.
2. It requires the development of basic infrastructure for primary education as well as social inclusion to ensure the rights of the marginalized and disadvantaged people of Bangladesh.
3. Ensure increased local government participation to evaluate and eradicate poverty.
4. Good governance is an essential prerequisite for creating an enabling environment,
5. To enhance the existing nutrition program, Government has to take into consideration these issues very actively and in order to reduce the child mortality as per target must be ensured pre and post maternal nutrition for poorest segment and allocate double in health budget.
6. To ensure corruption free environment, good governance will have the practice of transparency and accountability. Accountability and transparency at all levels of government and among other service providers such as NGOs, must be increased.

7. Develop national plans to scale up investments to support growth and the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals.
8. To develop the national policy for Arsenic mitigation and implementation plan for Arsenic Mitigation in Bangladesh.
9. Government and donor funded programs in health, education and infrastructure development need to be implanted more effectively.
10. Government should prepare a national strategy for using organic fertilizer and pesticides in agricultural cultivation and initiatives should be take to stop hill cutting, keeping local biodiversity and forest. Besides this, international river management policy shall have to implement properly and make alliance with affected countries to protest industrially developed countries which are emission carbon and lobby for getting carbon tax.

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank.
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BIDS	Bangladesh Institution of Development Studies
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
HRD	Human Resources Development
LDC	Least Development Countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
NGO	Non Government Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PG	Poverty Gap
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RMG	Readymade Garments

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