

Multidimensional Poverty Analysis Bangladesh



Table of Content

1. Executive Summary.....	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Who is poor, how and why?	3
1.3 Binding Constraints to leave poverty	6
1.4 Quo Vadis Bangladesh?	7
1.5 Sida's Analytical Framework	7
2. How are people poor? – Dimensions of poverty in Bangladesh	9
2.1 Resources.....	9
2.2 Opportunities and choice	12
2.3 Power and voice	17
2.4 Human security.....	20
3. Why are people poor? - The Development Context in Bangladesh	27
3.1 Political and Institutional Context	27
3.2 Economic and Social Contexts.....	31
3.3 The Environmental Context.....	36
3.4 Peace and security context.....	40
3. Conclusions	45
4.1 Binding constraints.....	45
4.2 The way forward: scenarios for tomorrow	49
List of references.....	50

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Bangladesh is at a pivotal moment following the ousting of Prime Minister Hasina as a result of the student- and citizen-led uprising. The interim government is expected to deliver significant reforms, and many are hopeful about the country's future. The country's development dynamics have, however, not changed significantly, with people struggling with inadequate economic opportunities and the effects of corruption and weak institutions, aggravated by multiple crises which are leaving many in poverty. Despite its economic growth and poverty reduction record over the past decade, Bangladesh requires institutional and system reforms for sustainable development. This multidimensional poverty analysis aims to understand the current situation, the manifestation of poverty, and the pathways for people to escape poverty. The study is part of a strategic overview and conducted by the Development Cooperation Section at the Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka, with support from Sida Headquarters, during the period April – October 2024. The 2024 period presents an opportunity for revalidating cooperation, as the Swedish government is preparing a new strategy for the next five years. Understanding the changing landscape and identifying strategic choices are crucial to enable Sweden to continue supporting Bangladesh's journey towards prosperity while addressing the main causes that keep people in poverty.

1.2 Who is poor, how and why?

The poverty in Bangladesh is influenced by various factors, including gender, age, ethnicity and disability. Women face higher income and education disparities, higher discrimination in the labour market, and fewer opportunities to voice their rights. The basic rights of many children, especially those living in slums and informal settlements, are not being met. The elderly suffer from lack of socioeconomic safety nets to maintain a decent standard of living. Ethnic minorities and people with disabilities also suffer from these deprivations. Slum dwellers, nomadic groups, and people living in remote areas face increased deprivations due to limited access to employment and public services and increasing exposure to climate change-induced hazards. The stateless Rohingya population and LGBTQI+ community face unique challenges in poverty. Civil-society actors, human rights defenders, union leaders, and youth activists have contributed to social changes in Bangladesh, but their efforts often come at the expense of their safety and security.

In terms of **resources**, Bangladesh faces significant challenges due to income inequality, high youth unemployment, informality, inadequate social protection, high inflation, and high child marriage rate. Out of the total population of the country, 5 percent are living below the international extreme poverty rate (PPP \$2.15) and 30 percent are poor (PPP \$3.65) in 2022. In 2023, the country experienced a consistent inflation rate above 9 percent, with food inflation reaching a peak of 13 percent in October, causing food insecurity, declining living standards, and increased debt for the poorest individuals. Men earn 36 percent more than women, especially in agriculture, and women over 65 years earn 70 percent lower than their male counterparts. Remittances is a major contributor to the economy, but much needs to be done to optimise its benefits. Land distribution is inequitable, with women owning only 2 percent of agricultural land. Climate change impacts further exacerbate these vulnerabilities, with over 90 million Bangladeshis living in high-risk areas, facing the effects of more frequent and intensifying extreme weather events, but having little or no access to the knowledge and resources needed to recover and adapt. Based on the government's own assessments, the districts that have high poverty incidences are also the same districts most vulnerable to natural disasters and future climate change impacts. This creates a situation where many people currently live just above the poverty line and risk falling below it during the next natural disaster. The urban population faces a housing crisis due to over-urbanization and scarcity of land. Food insecurity is a major issue, with 20 percent of the population experiencing high levels. Despite improvements in literacy rates, the rate of students dropping out without completing their education has increased due to financial insecurity. The country has made progress in the health sector but still faces significant gaps and unmet needs.

Considering **opportunities and choices**, Bangladesh's human development is crucial for poverty reduction, but the country ranks 129th in the 2023 Human Development Index (HDI), with a 29.9 percent loss due to inequality. Environmental hazards, such as heatwaves and floods, have disrupted education and further negatively impacted people in poverty, especially marginalized groups. The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector has helped Bangladesh transition from an agrarian economy to a manufacturing-based one, but agriculture remains the largest employer. The export oriented RMG and textile sectors are experiencing a slowdown, while employment growth in the service sector is steady but modest. Digital technology has brought optimism as Bangladesh aspires to become a hub of ICT outsourcing and ICT-based services. This will however require that the education system is further developed to meet these needs. Automation raises questions about job losses, especially among women. Bangladesh is the sixth largest migrant-sending and eighth largest remittance-receiving country globally; thus, better policies and programs are needed to support the families that are dependent on the income from migrant labour. Ensuring equitable access to financial services is important to secure incomes and growth in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector.

In terms of **power and voice**, Bangladesh has had a negative trend for the past decade, and it created an increasing frustration among large segments of the population. Repression during the January 2024 general elections resulted in mass arrests of opposition parties and violations of freedom of expression. The continuous decrease of the democratic space led to student protests in July 2024, which quickly developed into a mass-movement that demanded the resignation of the sitting Prime Minister and her government. The student movement, which led the change of power at the national level, remains influential but the impact on policies remains uncertain. Media actors face censorship, and women occupy only 21 percent of parliamentary and 23 percent of local council seats. Amnesty International's annual report on human rights in 2023 revealed enforced disappearances, extra judicial killings, and custodial deaths. Workers' rights are severely curtailed, with eight Export Processing Zones prohibiting workers from forming trade unions or freely expressing their rights. The ethnic and religious minorities of the country face human rights violations, including discrimination, harassment, and violence. Rohingya refugees face limited legal status, education, and livelihood opportunities, leading to insecurity and exploitation. Women face barriers in exercising their rights, and formal justice institutions are complex and delayed. The Convention on the Rights of the Child remains unfulfilled, and LGBTQI+ persons face social stigma and legal persecution.

Bangladesh faces numerous threats to its **human security**, including political violence, religious violence, sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, murder, and mass arrests. The 2024 elections saw violent clashes over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition parties and the government, resulting in hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries. Journalists and independent bloggers faced increasing attacks for exercising their right to criticize government policies and practices. Religious and ethnic minorities face more threats of being violently harassed by dominating religious groups and security forces. In Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), indigenous peoples and religious and ethnic minorities have been persecuted, threatened, assaulted, tortured, and displaced by security forces and Bengali settlers. Extensive land grabbing targeting Hindus and Christians, often accompanied by violent attacks, have also been reported. Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar face worsening conditions, with increased killings, crime, and abductions. Humanitarian assistance is dwindling, and the ongoing conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State makes repatriation difficult. Refugees face threats of increasing incidents of murders, kidnappings, extortion, human and drug trafficking, and recruitment by armed groups, particularly posing risks to children and women. Sexual and gender-based violence, particularly against women and girls, is common and includes widespread and endemic violence at home and in public in the country. The abuse rate of women has increased during the pandemic, with sexual assault being the most reported source of violence over time. Climate-induced displacement increases the vulnerability of Bangladeshis to trafficking. Social norms, safety concerns, and poverty contribute to the increasing rate of child marriage.

In terms of the **social and political context**, Bangladesh has undergone a significant shift with the appointment of an interim government following the resignation of the former Prime Minister. The government faces challenges such as poor governance, corrupt institutions, fragmented bureaucracy, high inflation, declining reserves, and financial sector vulnerabilities. The transition presents an opportunity to

implement reforms and address macro-economic gains, income inequality, corruption, and restricted freedoms. Government institutions struggle to address environmental degradation, climate change, and poorly planned urbanization, while local authorities have limited capacity to address poverty. Political and civil rights are under pressure, with fundamental freedoms like freedom of expression curtailed. Repressive legislation, harassment, and threats against dissidents have created a culture of self-censorship. The country's internet plays a significant role in providing news and information, but it scores low on the global Freedom on the Net index. Repressive laws, such as the contested Digital Security Act, have been used to suppress dissent and criminalize critical opinions. Labour laws have not been amended to protect workers' freedom of association and collective bargaining, and the 2006 Labour Act does not effectively prevent sexual harassment at work. Bangladesh's constitution protects fundamental rights but fails to protect vulnerable groups like religious minorities, indigenous peoples, LGBTQI persons, and disabled. Discrimination and violence against women and girls persist due to personal law. Legal problems are common, and the justice system is characterized by corruption and lack of efficiency. Corruption remains endemic, hindering development and ranking Bangladesh 149 out of 180 countries reviewed by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2023.

Looking at **economic and social context**, Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been steadily increasing since the 1990s, with the services sector accounting for over half of GDP. The country's low tax revenue limits government investment in essential services. Despite its high GDP and anticipated export development, Bangladesh also has commercial obstacles such as limited access to renewable energy, excessive corruption, and access to capital. The RMG sector, an important hub for the global garment industry, depends on low minimum wages, threatening the well-being of its workers. Bangladesh will lose preferential trade deals when it leaves the UN's list of Least Developed Countries in 2026. But the needed policy reforms and programs which are required to sustain economic development and export competitiveness are not yet in place (or are being implemented too slowly). Bangladesh also faces challenges in education, healthcare, and antimicrobial resistance. Education is underfunded, with only 2 percent of GDP allocated. The underfunded health sector leads to high out-of-pocket expenditure and poor service delivery, which affect the poorest the most. Antimicrobial resistance is a significant issue, with unqualified healthcare providers prescribing antibiotics. Adolescent fertility remains high. Pollution and climate change cause 272,000 premature deaths and 5.2 billion illness days annually. Infrastructure is crucial for poverty reduction, but there's limited investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and disaster preparedness. Access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) remains a challenge, and geographical disparities limit public sector-driven infrastructure development.

Within the **environmental context**, Bangladesh, placed in the subtropical monsoon climate-regime, is facing degrading ecosystems, inadequate pollution control and waste management, poor enforcement of environmental protection laws and extensive corruption resulting in further exploitation of already limited natural resources. The country's climate finance landscape is complex, complicating accountability for climate finance policy, allocation, disbursement, and participation. Environmental pollution limits human capital formation and affects city attractiveness and competitiveness. The poorest and most vulnerable groups, such as women, elderly, and children under five, suffer long-lasting health effects. Internal climate and rural-urban migration add pressure on cities, increasing traffic, noise, and air pollution. Sea level rise affects coastal areas, increasing vulnerability and causing increased saltwater intrusion. Cyclones and flooding incur a financial impact of USD 3.2 billion annually, potentially rising to 9 percent of GDP by the end of the century without further mitigation. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to climate change-induced disasters. Climate-related events trigger migration towards urban areas. The high population density puts pressure on Bangladesh's natural resources, causing annual crop production losses. Bangladesh faces significant air and noise pollution, causing 21 percent of deaths. Access to improved water sources is limited, and electricity production heavily relies on fossil fuels. Although preparedness for climate change has improved, environmental degradation persists due to inadequate rules, skilled human resources, and political commitment. Uncontrolled urbanization, industrial growth, poor natural resource management, pollution control, and climate change threaten economic progress.

In terms of the **peace, conflict and violence context**, Bangladesh has a complex history, rooted in its struggle for identity and self-determination. British colonial rule and the partition of India in 1947 exacerbated ethnic and linguistic differences, particularly between East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Post-independence, Bangladesh has experienced numerous political crises, including coups, assassinations, and fraudulent elections, leading to tensions between major parties, primarily the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The recent conflict landscape in Bangladesh has been marked by increasing instability and violence. The country has in recent years, under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League rule, seen an increased concentration of power with politicization of judiciary, executive, and constitutional bodies, including oversight bodies such as the Anti-corruption, Electoral and National Human rights Commissions. Social inequality and unemployment have also contributed to conflict, with limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities leading to frustration and unrest. Religious tensions also play a significant role in driving conflict in Bangladesh. The country is predominantly Muslim, with several minority communities, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians, who have been targeted by extremist groups since 2013. Bangladesh faces numerous ethnic tensions, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) conflict that has not yet been resolved despite the signing of a Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) Peace Accord in 1997, which contains important human rights provisions for the indigenous peoples of the CHT. The implementation of the Peace Accord provisions has been slow, and the human rights situation remains dire, with violations such as forced eviction, trumped-up charges, arbitrary arrest, temporary detention, torture, sexual assault, and killings. Natural resources and the biodiversity of the hill tracts have been depleted by land-grabbing, agricultural monoculture, extraction, and mega-projects by for example private corporations and the government. There have been incidents where environmental activists protesting for the protection of natural resources have been harassed and threatened. The ongoing civil war in Myanmar has impacted Bangladesh, particularly in border areas like Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts. The presence of one million Rohingya refugees in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar for over seven years has exacerbated tensions between host and refugee communities and seen a deteriorating security situation. Organized armed groups and gangs exploit the instability in the camps, forcibly recruiting young people and theft, violence, kidnappings, and shootings are now commonplace. Crime and violence are also a concern in cities like Dhaka, affecting the poor and slum areas. Gender-based violence and violence against women and girls are endemic problems in Bangladeshi society as well as among Rohingya refugees.

1.3 Binding Constraints to leave poverty

This section analyses poverty dimensions and development contexts in Bangladesh, identifying challenges and opportunities for change. It suggests addressing "binding constraints" for long-term poverty reduction, which if relieved, would lead to significant gains in poverty reduction. The assessment team identified the following binding constraints which are further elaborated in chapter 5.

- Weak institutions that lack the capacity to establish and enforce regulations as well as mobilize domestic resources, coupled with low public investment in social sectors lead to poor State capacity to deliver basic social services.
- Lack of resilience to climate impacts and environmental degradation, as well as mitigation measures at the national level is severely affecting both life and livelihoods at household level.
- Lack of economic diversification and just transition is limiting competitiveness and creation of work with decent working conditions.
- A widespread culture of corruption, lack of accountability as well as weak capacity of institutions in controlling and sanctioning corruption is a major obstacle to development.
- Conservative social norms are impacting gender roles and limiting the opportunities and choice of individuals.
- Political polarization and radical narratives incite communal divides that pose a threat to democracy, impact conflict dynamics and have human security implications for minority groups.
- Lack of rights and opportunities are pushing Rohingya refugees into poverty traps.

1.4 Quo Vadis Bangladesh?

Bangladesh is at a historic crossroads. After the student uprising that led to the sudden ousting of Prime Minister Hasina on 5 August 2024, the country is facing a window of opportunity to choose its future pathway. Expectations are rising for the interim government to deliver vast reforms and quick results to many of the people who raised their voices and demanded change. While real reforms take time, the notion of hope and aspirations describes the suspense that many in Bangladesh are feeling as the situation develops.

While the current political landscape has changed drastically in the country, the underlying development dynamics that led to this day have not. The frustration stems from inadequate economic opportunities for people to earn a decent living, from the lack of voice and accountability to hold the duty-bearers accountable, and the multiple crises that have hit the country in recent years leaving many in situations of poverty. Bangladesh has a remarkable track record in economic growth and poverty reduction, but reforms are needed to ensure socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable development going forward.

The purpose of this multidimensional poverty analysis is to analyse the development dynamics in Bangladesh to inform about the opportunities and challenges to accomplish change. The study aims to further our understanding of who is living in poverty, how does poverty manifest itself, and what pathways do people have to lift themselves and their families out of poverty in Bangladesh today. It looks both at the underlying long-term trends and reflects the recent changes from different angles to provide guidance for development priorities going forward.

The study is undertaken as part of a strategic overview by the Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka to guide the Swedish development cooperation in the country. Sweden is a long-term development partner to Bangladesh and 2024 marks an opportunity to refocus the course of cooperation as the Swedish government is about to formulate a new strategy for the coming five years of development cooperation. Understanding the changing landscape in the country today and informing the strategic choices to support Bangladesh' efforts to accelerate its journey towards prosperity lies at the heart of this analysis.

1.5 Sida's Analytical Framework

The overall objective of Swedish development cooperation is “to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression.” In order to guide the implementation of the Swedish development cooperation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) conducts regular country analyses in order to understand the development dynamics in a country, and to identify the groups living in poverty, and the pathways that can be used to enable people to escape poverty.

WHO IS POOR AND IN WHAT WAY?

Sida's framework for defining and analysing poverty is called Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA). It places people who are living in poverty at the centre of the analysis by asking **who** is poor, **how** does poverty manifest itself, and what are the underlying reasons that keep people in poverty (**why**). Sida recognizes that poverty is complex and thus Sida's analytical framework identifies four dimensions of poverty: (i) Resources, (ii) Opportunities and choice, (iii) Power and voice, and (iv) Human security. The four dimensions help to identify the main ways in which poverty manifests itself and how it is experienced by people living in poverty. According to Sida's definition, a person living in poverty is resource poor and poor in one, or several, other dimensions.

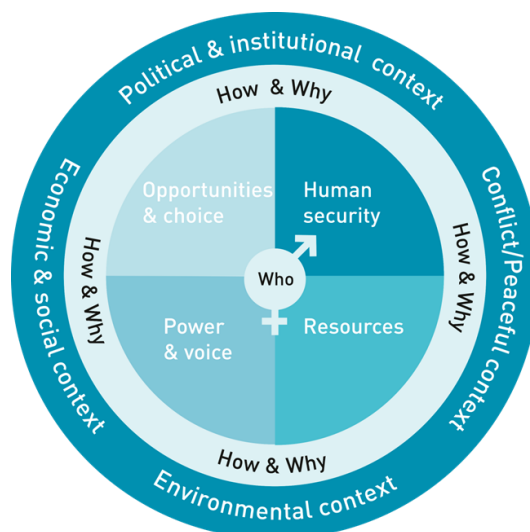


Figure 1: Sida's framework for multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA)

Multiple causes interplay to push people into a situation of poverty – and, in many cases, to keep them there. Being poor in terms of **resources** means not having access to, or power over, resources that can be used to sustain a decent living standard, meet basic needs, and improve one's life. Resources can be both material and non-material: a decent income or physical and human capital, such as being educated or having professional skills, being healthy, having agricultural tools or a cart to transport goods.

Being poor in terms of **opportunities and choice** refers to one's possibilities to develop and/or use the resources to move out of poverty. Access to productive employment, education, health clinics, infrastructure, energy, markets, and information affect the choices available and opportunities to escape from poverty.

Being poor in **power and voice** relates to people's ability to articulate their concerns, needs and rights in an informed way, and to take part in decision-making affecting these concerns inside the household, in local communities and at the national level. Discrimination and violation of human rights are important aspects when analysing this dimension. Power is a relational concept that allows us to better understand socio-cultural hierarchies and relations of which gender is one. Others include age, caste, class, religion, ethnicity, and sexual identity. Reinforcing forms of discrimination based on socio-cultural relations may increase an individual's poverty in this sense.

Being poor in terms of **human security** means that physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence and insecurity are constraints to different groups and individuals' possibilities to exercise their human rights and to find paths out of poverty.

THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

While the dimensions of poverty help to outline how poverty manifests itself, Sida analyses four development contexts that highlight the underlying causes and help identify pathways out of poverty. The four development contexts in Sida's MDP model contain the main elements of a development analysis that explains opportunities and constraints for inclusive and sustainable development as well as ways for people living in poverty to change their situation. The context is often outside of the influence of an individual, but it frames the set of choices and opportunities available to individuals in a given context.

The **economic and social context** covers the size and growth rate of the economy, the key macroeconomic variables, fiscal policy, structure of the economy and exports, use and dependence on natural resources, education system, health system and demographic developments. The **political and institutional context** refers to the formal and informal political institutions, norms, rule of law and human rights. The **peace and conflict context** refers to factors such as social cohesion, trust, conflict resolution mechanisms, justice, and arms control on the one hand and violence, tensions, grievances, and conflicting interests on the other. The

environmental context includes the need to understand the environmental situation, trends and consequences in the country of region – e.g. climate change, loss of biodiversity and ecosystems services, pollution, water quality – and the causes and drivers of degradation. All the dimensions as well as the development context are interlinked. They cannot be analysed and understood in isolation from each other.

FROM CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS TO BINDING CONSTRAINTS

In order to provide operational guidance, the MDPA analysis will strive to identify the most important constraints that restrict the potential for long term poverty reduction. These constraints are the ones which, if they are relieved, would produce the largest gains in poverty reduction – i.e. binding constraints. The analysis discusses why the identified constraints are binding, for whom they constitute constraints, and what needs to happen for these constraints to be relaxed. This includes analysing and identifying appropriate financial flows that can finance change and identifying change actors from the public and the private sectors who can positively contribute to change.

2. How are people poor? – Dimensions of poverty in Bangladesh

This chapter highlights the key aspects of each dimension of the MDPA. It focuses on identifying groups who are living in poverty and understanding their main deprivations, as well as interlinkages between the dimensions. Understanding who is living in poverty and describing the face of poverty help to identify the potential target groups and prioritised areas of intervention for development actors who strive to contribute positively to the development dynamics in Bangladesh.

2.1 Resources

Bangladesh's recent economic growth has made a significant impact on poverty reduction. Internationally, the World Bank is measuring poverty and reports on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Between 2016 and 2022, poverty and extreme poverty rates¹ in Bangladesh fell by 1.3 and 0.6 percentage points per annum to reach 30 and 5 percent, respectively. While this progress is encouraging, several challenges remain. There were no significant changes in inequality from 2016-22, with the Gini coefficient² increasing marginally to 33.4. Consumption growth among the country's urban population is growing faster for better-off households than for poorer households. More people living in poverty have moved into urban areas, compounding the stubborn inequality gap in urban consumption.³ A 2022 survey conducted on 2,046 households revealed that half of the poor in cities fell below the poverty line due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ A category of "new poor" is emerging – households that used to be just above the poverty line, but with little to no savings, and low resilience to external shocks. They are vulnerable to falling into poverty, as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2023, the government raised the minimum wage for garment factory workers from US\$75 to \$113 per month following massive protests.⁵ The protesters had been calling for an increase to \$208, which is still far below the liveable wage estimated by Bangladesh think tanks,⁶ and anecdotal evidence suggested that the increase

¹ The poverty line of \$3.65 per day based on 2017 purchasing power parities (PPPs) is set by the World Bank to be representative of the definitions of poverty adopted in lower-middle-income countries. The new extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per person per day, which replaces the \$1.90 poverty line, is based on 2017 PPP. PPP allows us to put each country's income and consumption data in globally comparable terms.

² The Gini coefficient measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1. Higher values indicate higher inequality.

³ WB report on Bangladesh's progress in poverty reduction based on the recent Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) data: [Bangladesh-Development-Update-October-2023.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](#) and World Bank Poverty and Inequality Toolbox: [Poverty headcount ratio at \\$2.15 a day \(2017 PPP\) \(percent of population\) - Bangladesh | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#), [Poverty headcount ratio at \\$3.65 a day \(2017 PPP\) \(percent of population\) - Bangladesh | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#).

⁴ Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 2023. Urban Poverty Dynamics during Covid-19 Anatomy of Resilience <https://businesspostbd.com/front/covid-created-51-new-poor-in-cities-bids-2023-05-18>

⁵ Al Jazeera, Nov 2023. [Bangladesh PM stands firm on pay rise amid deadly garment worker protests | Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera](#)

⁶ Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2023. Living Wage Estimates for Bangladesh and [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

in wages led to the lay-offs of less-productive workers.⁷ While the wage increase was welcomed by many, the improvement in living standards was dampened by the increase in the cost of living.⁸ In 2023, the country experienced a consistent inflation rate of above 9 percent,⁹ with food inflation reaching a peak of 13 percent in October, the highest in a decade.¹⁰ This higher inflation has significantly impacted the poorest individuals, leading to food insecurity, declining living standards, and increased debt.

The high levels of informality in the labour market, coupled with inadequate social protection measures, perpetuate income inequality and hinder poverty alleviation efforts. Men continue to earn more than women; men earn 36 percent more on average than women do.¹¹ In industries, such as agriculture, this disparity increases to 57 percent. In every age category, women earn less, but the biggest difference is shown in the case of women over 65, whose earnings are almost 70 percent lower than those of males in the same age range. Income inequality and poverty are directly interrelated – the rise in income inequality reduces growth, which in turn deepens poverty.

One of the key economic factors in Bangladesh is remittances, which act as a stimulant for investment, economic expansion, the eradication of poverty, and the development of human capital. In FY24, remittance inflow reached a record high of \$23.91 billion, up 10.66 percent from the previous year and the highest in the last three years.¹² After fighting a foreign exchange crisis for the previous 2.5 years, the expanding trend of remittances will provide the government some breathing room in the coming months.

Efficient land use is imperative in such a densely populated country as Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the distribution of land is highly inequitable. On average, a household owns 0.80 Acres of land. Out of total rural households, 66.65 percent women have no ownership of land, 31.99 percent have some ownership and the remaining 1.31 percent women are not aware about such ownership.¹³ Women only own 2 percent of the agricultural land and women's share seems to be declining.¹⁴ In 2020, about 3.26 million rural Bangladeshi households were landless,¹⁵ and at least 50 percent of households are deemed “land-poor” in some form.¹⁶ Landless households usually constitute a poor and vulnerable group and are the first victims of climatic hazards.¹⁷

Environmental impacts pose a disproportional burden on the poorest and most vulnerable groups, such as women, elders, and children under age five years, who suffer from long-lasting health effects (including impacts on their cognitive development and productivity) and have limited resources to cope with impacts of pollution on their livelihoods. Environmental pollution limits their ability to overcome poverty and impairs the country's human capital formation and retention. The socio-economic poverty map mirrors the climate vulnerability map. This means that the poorest unions are also among the most climate- and disaster vulnerable. The negative environmental trends are compounded by the impacts of climate change, which cause additional vulnerabilities for the country. Bangladesh ranks 7th among countries most affected by climate change,¹⁸ experiencing changes in rainfall, higher temperatures, more extreme weather events like cyclones, floods and droughts, and sea level rise. More than 90 million Bangladeshis (56 percent of the population) are estimated to live in “high climate exposure areas” affected by multiple hazards.¹⁹

⁷ World Bank, April 2017, “[Implications of Minimum Wage Increases on Labor Market Dynamics Lessons for Emerging Economies](#)”, Policy Research Working Paper 8030 by Ximena V. Del Carpio and Laura M. Pabon

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Statista, 2024. [Bangladesh - inflation rate 1987-2029](#)

¹⁰ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\), Inflation Rate and Wage Rate Index \(WRI\) in Bangladesh](#)

¹¹ World Bank, 2024. [What do gender data reveal about the economic struggles of women in Bangladesh?](#)

¹² Bangladesh Bank's Yearly data of wage earner's remittance. [Bangladesh Bank \(bb.org.bd\)](#)

¹³ Report on Agriculture and Rural Statistics, BBS, 2018, [2020-02-02-10-36-84ecf771aa4c2e480f245fb79538ce14.pdf \(portal.gov.bd\)](#)

¹⁴ Hayward, D., 2023. “[Bangladesh - Context and Land Governance](#)”

¹⁵ Morsalin, S. S., & Islam, M. R. 2023. [Landlessness as the key challenge to climate change adaptation of the rural poor in Bangladesh: an empirical study](#). Asian Geographer, 40(2), 121–143.

¹⁶ Hayward, D., 2023. <https://landportal.org/book/narratives/2023/Bangladesh>

¹⁷ This [data card](#) outlines in a visual way some of the key data on climate change vulnerability and land tenure security in Bangladesh. It helps to understand the potential connections between the two issues.

¹⁸ GermanWatch, 2021. [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#)

¹⁹ World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Risk Profile: Bangladesh](#), p 26

Around 38 percent (62.5 million) of the total population of this country live in urban areas and about half of them live in slums.²⁰ There are nearly 10,000 slums in the country, with around half of these in and around Dhaka city.²¹ UNICEF estimates that more than 3.4 million children currently are living in street situations without parental care.²² The tendency of building up slums and squatters on private land, illegal possession on government *khas* land and over-urbanization have created a housing crisis. Three in four slum households live in one room, often lacking access to clean water, safe sanitation, and waste management.²³ Scarcity of land and rising construction costs have caused housing prices to rise. At the same time, there is a shortage of properties targeted to lower and middle-income classes, indicating a potential looming housing crisis.²⁴

Bangladesh faces food insecurity due to high food prices, rising costs, seasonal shocks, reduced income opportunities and poor coping strategies. Climate-sensitive and disaster-prone areas are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, with 30 percent²⁵ of low-income households experiencing this issue, and with female-headed households experiencing more severe consequences. IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis report²⁶ claims that about 20 percent of the population have experienced high levels of acute food insecurity, classified in IPC Phase 3 or above (crisis or worse). During 2024, extreme climate events and inflation are expected to worsen the situation, leading to 22 percent of the population being classified in IPC Phase 3 or above. Around 1 percent of the population is classified as IPC Phase 4 (emergency), the majority out of which are Rohingya refugees and populations living in flood-prone areas. Funding shortfalls could lead to increased food insecurity, protection risks and negative coping mechanisms, such as child marriage, child labour and trafficking.

Bangladesh has improved literacy remarkably with rates around 78 percent, with higher rates among men (80 percent) compared to women (76 percent) and, with higher rates in urban areas (85 percent) compared to rural areas (76 percent).²⁷ At the same time, the rate of students aged 5-24 years dropping out without completing their education has increased from 3 percent in 2019 to 9 percent in 2023, with the COVID-19 pandemic being an important explanatory factor. Financial insecurity is also a major reason for leaving school at a young age. The World Bank reports that Bangladesh's Learning Poverty is 0.5 percent lower than the average for the South Asia region and 2.2 percent lower than the average for lower middle-income countries.²⁸ The recent price hike of essential commodities, particularly food, has made it difficult for people, particularly the poor, to maintain their livelihoods. They spend most of their income on food instead of education, leading to a decline in savings and forcing children into child labour.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in the health sector, with a 3.7 percent²⁹ decline in infant mortality rates in 2024, a neo-natal mortality rate of 20 per 1,000 live birth (0-28 days of age) in 2022 and an under-five mortality rate of 31 per 1,000 live births in 2022.³⁰ However, the under-five mortality rate among the poorest quintile is the highest, with 49 deaths per 1,000 live birth.³¹ The maternal mortality rate is estimated to be 153 per 100,000 live births, lower than 2021, but still far from the country's target of 70 in 2030.³² While Bangladesh has made gains in providing support services in maternal, neonatal and children's health (MNCH) and family planning (FP)/contraceptives and counselling, there are still considerable gaps and unmet needs. Young people in Bangladesh lack sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services, putting them at risk for unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion,

²⁰ The World Bank Group. Population living in slums (percent of urban population)—Bangladesh.

2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.SLUM.UR.ZS?locations=BD>

²¹ UNICEF. Children in cities. 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/children-cities>

²² UNICEF, March 2024, "A qualitative study on children living in street situations in Bangladesh 2024" [Street Situation in Bangladesh 2014.pdf .pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

²³ icddr. Slum Health in Bangladesh: Coping with Ill Health in Urban Slums-Health Seeking and Healthcare Expenditure. Dhaka, Bangladesh; 2019

²⁴ LightCastle Analytics Wing, 2019. [Need for Affordable Housing in the Real Estate Industry](#)

²⁵ World Food Program, Jan 2024. [Bangladesh Food Security Monitoring](#)

²⁶ IPC, 2024. [Acute Food Insecurity Analysis report](#)

²⁷ [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023 Sample Vital Statistics](#)

²⁸ [World Bank, 2022. Bangladesh Learning Poverty Brief](#)

²⁹ MacroTrends, 2024. [Bangladesh Infant Mortality Rate 1950-2024](#)

³⁰ Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2022, Page 49, [Bangladesh DHS 2022 - Key Indicators Report \[PR148\] \(dhsprogram.com\)](#)

³¹ [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. Sample Vital Statistics 2022](#)

³² [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. Sample Vital Statistics 2022](#)

and maternal mortality. Although the adolescent fertility rate (birth per 1000 women ages 15-19) continues to decline, it is still high in Bangladesh compared to most similar countries in the region.³³

There has been an increase in child marriages in Bangladesh, and the country has the eighth highest rate of child marriages worldwide and the highest rate in South Asia.³⁴ In 2023, according to national statistics, 8.2 percent of young women in Bangladesh were married before the age of 15, and at least 41.6 percent of them were married before turning 18.³⁵ In rural areas, child marriage is more common with statistics ranging from 44.4 to 53.8 percent of girls marrying before age 18. The United Nations report that 51 percent of women were married before the age of 18 years and 16 percent were married before the age of 15 years.³⁶ Regionally, across Bangladesh, Rajshahi has the highest rates of child marriage, with 66.7 percent of girls between the ages of 20-24 married before 18, followed by Khulna (61.8 percent), Rangpur (57.9 percent), Barishal (55.6 percent), Mymensingh (52.2 percent), Dhaka (48.6 percent), Chattogram (44.1 percent) and Sylhet (31 percent).³⁷ While the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 sets a minimum marriageable age of 18 for women and 21 for men, there is a “special provision” allowing child marriages with parental consent if it is in the minor’s “best interest”. This provision is ambiguous and lacks comprehensive guidelines on determining the best interest of the child and a minimum age for marriage with parental consent.

Life expectancy at birth in Bangladesh has increased by 7.5 years from 65.6 years in 2000 to 73.1 years in 2021,³⁸ making it comparable to other countries in the region. However, the country faces new challenges such as noncommunicable diseases, disaster risks, environmental threats, mental health disorders, antimicrobial resistance and health emergencies during outbreaks like the COVID-19 pandemic. Health systems face critical challenges such as high out-of-pocket payments, inequitable access to health services, lack of quality care, shortage of skilled service providers, and an increase in unregulated informal providers, stifling progress towards universal health coverage.

In Bangladesh, the exposure to environmental health risk factors is at critically high levels. Four major environmental health risks (air pollution, unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene, and lead exposure) were associated with over 272,000 premature deaths and 5.2 billion days lived with illness, which comes at an annual cost equivalent to 18 percent of GDP.³⁹ The highest impacts are due to ambient air pollution (AAP) and household air pollution (HAP), responsible for nearly 55 percent of the deaths. These two factors should be established as the highest environmental priorities. Unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation, and hygiene (only 62 percent have access to basic handwashing)⁴⁰; and lead exposure also represent pressing challenges, having caused approximately one-fourth and one-fifth of total deaths, respectively. Despite substantial declines in lead exposure over the last two decades, blood lead levels (BLLs) in children and adults remain high, and 17 percent of the population relies on drinking water with arsenic concentrations above the WHO guideline of 10 ppb.⁴¹

2.2 Opportunities and choice

Human development depends on the opportunities and choices provided to everyone. Job and income security, access to health and education, access to decent housing, electricity, water, sanitation, and basic amenities are important for human wellbeing and to promote human development. It also has significant impacts on poverty reduction and growth.

Bangladesh ranks 129th in the 2023 Human Development Index (HDI).⁴² The HDI value increased slightly from 0.662 in 2021 to 0.670 in 2022. Despite improvements in health and living standards, Bangladesh experienced declines in some inequality markers. It ranks higher than South Asian peers such as India and Pakistan but falls short of the global average of 0.739. The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index

³³ World Bank, 2024. [Adolescent fertility rate \(births per 1,000 women ages 15-19\)](#)

³⁴ Unicef press release, 03 May 2023. [Global polycrisis creating uphill battle to end child marriage – UNICEF](#)

³⁵ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2024. [Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics-2023 \(BSVS-2023\)](#)

³⁶ UNICEF, 2024. [Data: Country Profile Bangladesh](#) and UN Women, 2024. [Data: Thematic Area Dashboard](#)

³⁷ Girls Not Brides – Child marriage atlas – Bangladesh. [Child marriage atlas - Girls Not Brides](#)

³⁸ WHO, 2024. [Health data overview for the People’s Republic of Bangladesh](#)

³⁹ [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh: Country Environmental Analysis 2023 by The World Bank](#)

⁴⁰ World Bank, 2024. [People with basic handwashing facilities including soap and water \(percent of population\)](#)

⁴¹ World Bank, 2023. [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh: Country Environment Analysis](#)

⁴² UNDP, 2024. [Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World. Human Development Report 2023/2024.](#)

(IHDI) accounts for disparities in life expectancy, education, and income. The difference between the HDI and IHDI reflects the loss in human development due to inequality. In 2022, Bangladesh's inequality adjusted HDI is 0.470, with a 29.9 percent loss due to inequality. This represents a slight improvement from 30.2 percent in 2021, driven by a reduction in inequality in life expectancy from 15.5 percent to 14.1 percent. Inequality in education remained at 37.3 percent, while income inequality increased from 35.7 percent to 35.9 percent.

The country hosts a total of 36,940 post-primary institutions; thus, it poses both opportunities and barriers to the country's education system. The variety of educational trajectories from the secondary schools up to technical and professional education creates potential for congruence with future career prospects for students. However, access to public institutions is limited, especially in madrasah and vocational education, which worsens the inequality issue among students from lower-income groups. Girls constitute 50.52 percent of the total enrolment but are underrepresented in vocational-technical education at 27.50 percent, hindering their potential for economic mobility. High dropout rates limit the attainment of education by the marginalized groups; at the secondary level, the dropout rate is highest and reaches 32.85 percent. These necessitate addressing the factors through increased public access, equity between genders in certain educational sectors, and a reduction of dropout rates to improve opportunities and choices, enabling education to serve as a better tool for reducing poverty.⁴³

Educational disparities are exacerbated by environmental hazards, which disproportionately affects vulnerable groups through school closures, leading to disruptions, increased drop out-rates and lower educational attainment over time. For example, in April 2024, for the second year in a row, a heatwave caused school closures, which disrupted the education of 33 million children.⁴⁴ Other hazards such as floods frequently disrupt children's education, for example in June 2024 when more than 800 schools were flooded and 500 schools were used as emergency shelters,⁴⁵ or in August 2024 when 7,000 schools were closed due to flooding, affecting 1.75 million primary students in eastern Bangladesh.⁴⁶ There are many reports of school drop-outs following a flood in an area. Hazard-induced school disruptions thus undermine the educational attainment of children living in areas vulnerable to hazards such as floods.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues faced by women in Bangladesh include child marriages, adolescent fertility, unintended pregnancies, and gender-based violence. Social customs, lack of enforcement of laws, long legal processes, and a culture of impunity contribute to these issues. Discriminatory clauses in family laws, such as inheritance and divorce laws, further perpetuate gender discrimination.

Although the rapid expansion of the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector has helped Bangladesh transform from a predominantly agrarian economy to a more manufacturing-based one, agriculture continues to be the largest employer. In 2020, 38 percent of the population was active in the agricultural sector. The sector is steadily decreasing while the industry (22 percent) and the service sectors (41 percent) are increasingly important.⁴⁷ Bangladesh is experiencing a slowdown in the export oriented RMG and textile sectors, including a steady decline in job creation. Large-scale, quality job creation will require greater export orientation among the non-RMG sectors. Bangladesh has failed to diversify its export basket significantly and has not emerged as a major global exporter in any new sector over the last decade. Services sector employment growth has been steady but modest; and higher-value, tradable services are still small scale.⁴⁸ In the last decade, digital technology has brought optimism as Bangladesh is becoming a hub of ICT outsourcing, currently representing 16 percent of the market share in ICT outsourcing, the second largest in

⁴³ [Bangladesh Education Statistics 2023 \(1\).pdf \(portal.gov.bd\)](#)

⁴⁴ ReliefWeb, 2024. [Heat-stricken Bangladesh extends school closures.](#)

⁴⁵ CNN, 2024. [Bangladesh floods: Nearly 2 million people stranded as second wave of devastating floods hits Bangladesh in less than a month.](#)

⁴⁶ Reliefweb, 2024. [Bangladesh: Eastern Flash Floods 2024 Situation Report No. 02 \(As of 30 August 2024\) - Bangladesh | ReliefWeb](#)

⁴⁷ Statista, 2024. [Bangladesh: Distribution of employment by economic sector from 2012 to 2022.](#)

⁴⁸ World Bank, Jobs Diagnostics: Bangladesh.[\(link\)](#)

the world.⁴⁹ Fisheries is also an important sector, employing 9 percent of the labour force of the country,⁵⁰ while playing an important role in nutrition as fish represents 63 percent of animal protein intake.⁵¹

Automation in the RMG industry of Bangladesh is gradually increasing to make the sector more productive and competitive; however, it does raise questions about job losses, especially among women, since women constitute a significant proportion of the workforce employed in the low-paid, manual occupations susceptible to automation. Women's contribution to the garment sector has been gradually decreasing, from 80 percent in 1980 to 53.65 percent in 2021, indicating automation and socio-cultural problems. While 80 percent of the factories say they will implement more automation in the next two years-13 percent more than two years ago-and hire more workers, the gap in skills between male and female workers is huge. Because of dual responsibilities, upskilling activities that women can often engage in are wanted by 70 percent of female workers to learn new machine skills. Inclusive growth will need upskilling both at the level of the government and industry, with women as a priority, so that this gap in requisite skills is met to lay the path for their movement to more technical positions.⁵² Additionally, the study discovered that 70 percent of female operators said they would want to learn new machine skills, demonstrating their readiness to make the investment in upskilling. The study also reveals that women's technical advancement falls behind because of opportunity deprivation brought about by dual responsibilities, rather than a lack of competence. Because of their family duties after work, women are less able than men to participate in skills-improving activities, which contributes to the skill gap that currently exists.⁵³

A textile factory uses an average of 100,000 cubic meters of water per month and there are over 700 such factories in the greater Dhaka area.⁵⁴ Leather tanneries and the textile industry are also the two largest sources of industrial pollution in the Dhaka watershed area.⁵⁵ Both industrialization and geological sources have caused widespread heavy metal and metalloid pollution in Bangladesh, posing substantial threats to the population.⁵⁶ In addition, naturally occurring arsenic aggravates groundwater contamination, affecting 19 percent of the population.⁵⁷ Soil pollution from industries is a major issue that also indirectly affects the rivers through groundwater flows and runoff during rainfall and flood events into the water bodies. Only 59 percent of the population are using safely managed drinking water services,⁵⁸ indicating low access to clean water.

Bangladesh is the sixth largest migrant-sending and eighth largest remittance-receiving country globally.⁵⁹ Nearly 16.1 million Bangladeshi workers have secured short-term contracts in 164 countries since 1976, mostly in the Persian Gulf.⁶⁰ By 2023, over 7.4 million Bangladeshis were working abroad, with large populations in Saudi Arabia (1.3 million), the UAE (1.1 million), and Kuwait (380,000). Migration to Malaysia (416,000), Singapore (80,000), and South Korea (12,000) has also increased. Additionally, an estimated 2.5 million Bangladeshis reside in India, many possibly through irregular migration.⁶¹

The number of unemployed individuals in Bangladesh increased to 2.35 million in the last quarter of 2023, from 2.31 million in the last quarter of 2022.⁶² The national unemployment rate in 2022 is 5.2 percent,⁶³ with female unemployment at 8.3 percent, and youth unemployment at 16 percent. 40 percent of youth aged

⁴⁹ Oxford Internet Institute, 2017.

⁵⁰ Karim et al., 2015. [Labour in Fishing Sector of Bangladesh: Mapping, Status and Awareness about Rights. Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.](#)

⁵¹ Akter et al., 2021. [Contribution of fish to animal protein consumption in daily diet. International Journal of Natural and Social Sciences.](#)

⁵² German Development Cooperation, 2023. [Study on the Decline of Women Workers in the Textile Industry in Bangladesh, p.44.](#)

⁵³ German Development Cooperation, 2023. [Study on the Decline of Women Workers in the Textile Industry in Bangladesh.](#)

⁵⁴ World Bank, 2023. [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh. Country Environmental Analysis, p 25](#)

⁵⁵ World Bank, 2017. [How Dialogue is Shifting Bangladesh's Textile Industry from Pollution Problem to Pollution Solution](#)

⁵⁶ Islam et al., 2018. [Heavy Metal and Metalloid Pollution of Soil, Water and Foods in Bangladesh: A Critical Review, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#)

⁵⁷ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, 2019. [Progotir Pathay, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019. Survey Findings Report, p.44.](#)

⁵⁸ World Bank, 2024. [People Using Safely Managed Drinking Water Services \(percent of population\) – Bangladesh.](#)

⁵⁹ Mixed Migration Centre, 2024. [Beyond dichotomies: Bangladesh's complex migration landscape.](#)

⁶⁰ Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, 2024. [Foreign Employment and Remittances from 1976 to 2023.](#)

⁶¹ Migration Policy Institute, 2024. [Bangladesh's Economic Vitality Ows in Part to Migration and Remittances.](#)

⁶² Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023, [Quarterly Labour Force Survey](#)

⁶³ World Bank, 2024. [Unemployment, total \(percent of total labor force\) \(national estimate\) – Bangladesh.](#)

15-24 are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) – a majority of this group is female.⁶⁴ This has added to rising inequality and contributed to the slow progress of poverty reduction. The lack of access to qualified jobs in relation to the number of university graduates hinders economic mobility and was a major cause to the political unrest related to the student movement of July 2024. The overall level of women not in the workforce is high and growing, although it is comparable to other countries in the region.⁶⁵

There is an increasing trend in labour force participation which currently is 52 percent nationally. However, women's labour force participation is 32 percent, less than half of that for men.⁶⁶ Women's employment in the industry sector is slightly above the average in the income group and region. Out of total rural enterprises (5.8 million) in Bangladesh only 7.5 percent are owned by women.⁶⁷ Social stigma and an unsupportive environment are barriers to women's engagement in the workforce and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, youths who lack the necessary skill sets to be considered marketable in the labour market are not being inclusively empowered by the current educational system; enrolment in technical and vocational education is low (1.2 percent) albeit increasing.⁶⁸

Government and private sector initiatives to expand mobile networks and internet access have enhanced connectivity across the country. While the rate of mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 people had risen to 108 in 2022,⁶⁹ and less than half of them use internet. Meanwhile, women are 19 percentage points less likely than men to own a mobile phone.⁷⁰ The advent of mobile money services, exemplified by platforms like bKash, has revolutionized financial inclusion in Bangladesh. These services have expanded access to formal financial systems, particularly in rural communities where traditional banking infrastructure is scarce. In fact, ownership of a financial account, either through a financial institution or mobile money, is essentially the same for people living in urban and rural areas.⁷¹ This expansion has empowered individuals with access to savings, loans, and remittances, thereby fostering economic growth and poverty reduction. However, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access to financial services across different income levels and genders. Less than half of all adults in Bangladesh have a formal bank account, and among adults in the poorer households they are even fewer.⁷² Women have limited property rights, making them unable to access loans which demand a collateral, and the gender gap in account ownership is almost 30 percent.⁷³ Other gender-specific constraints to entrepreneurship include social norms, weaker business networks and less access to information, lower education levels, weak property rights and enforcement of family law with male biases.

The 2022 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics provides insightful data on the financial inclusion of households, particularly regarding the opening of bank accounts. According to the survey, 14.12 percent of households had at least one member open a bank account in the 12 months preceding the interview. This marks a significant increase from 7.5 percent in the 2016 survey and 7.41 percent in the 2010 survey. When broken down by area, the 2022 data reveals that 13.39 percent of rural households and 15.65 percent of urban households had at least one member open a bank account. This compares to 7.6 percent of rural and 7.3 percent of urban households in 2016, and 5.05 percent of rural and 13.85 percent of urban households in 2010. The data suggests a notable improvement in financial inclusion across both rural and urban areas over the past decade. These statistics highlight the ongoing efforts and progress in financial inclusion in Bangladesh, particularly in increasing access to banking services in both rural and urban regions.⁷⁴

Bangladesh has achieved significant improvements in access to healthcare, notably for mothers and children. Increased coverage of essential services such as antenatal care and immunization programs has

⁶⁴ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics](#)

⁶⁵ World Bank, 2024. [Labor force participation rate, female \(percent of female population ages 15+\)](#)

⁶⁶ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics](#)

⁶⁷ International Growth Centre, 2022. [Progressing female labour force participation in Bangladesh | International Growth Centre \(theigc.org\)](#)

⁶⁸ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics](#)

⁶⁹ World Bank, 2022. [Data: mobile cellular subscriptions \(per 100 people\)](#).

⁷⁰ World Bank, 2021. [Global Findex Database: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilieneec in the Age of Covid-19, p.41.](#)

⁷¹ World Bank, 2021. [Global Findex Database: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of Covid-19 .p. 29.](#)

⁷² World Bank, 2018. [The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution.](#)

⁷³ World Bank, 2018. [The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution.](#)

⁷⁴ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2022.](#)

contributed to lower maternal and infant mortality rates.⁷⁵ Despite these gains, the healthcare sector faces challenges in ensuring access to care such as high out-of-pocket expenditures and shortages of skilled healthcare professionals. Bangladesh is aiming to achieve universal health coverage by 2030 through the revitalization of community-based primary health service provision. However, major challenges remain. A shortage of skilled health workers in Bangladesh with only 6.7 registered physicians per 10,000 inhabitants, combined with chronic health workers' absenteeism, limit access to health services.⁷⁶ Out-of-pocket expenditures have been rising steadily over the past two decades, from 61.82 percent in 2000, 67.96 percent in 2010 to 72.99 percent in 2021. The 2021 level is the third highest among the 45 Least Developed Countries and the seventh highest in the world,⁷⁷ indicating that healthcare increasingly financially burdens individuals. Pharmaceutical expenditures or medicines account for 42 percent of total health expenditures, with an unequal distribution between males accounting for 39 percent and females for 61 percent.⁷⁸ Urban centres have better healthcare facilities, whereas rural areas often lack basic medical services, resulting in poorer health outcomes and higher mortality rates. However, in the urban slums the health care facilities are neglected and very weak compared to other areas in the cities. Corruption within the healthcare system further undermines service delivery and equitable access to healthcare. Efforts to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, enhance workforce capacity, and combat corruption are pivotal to ensuring universal health coverage and improving health outcomes nationwide.

The World Bank's 2024 report on Bangladesh highlights that despite significant improvements in power generation capacity and access to electricity, the country continues to struggle with ensuring quality and reliable power supply. Unreliable power leads to voltage drops, outages, and a GDP loss of about 2 percent. The power system's operation and control require urgent modernization to match the rapid expansion. The system, heavily reliant on manual dispatch and controls, fails to ensure economy and security. Key issues include the lack of Fast Governor Response, leading to frequency fluctuations and voltage instability, which disrupt supply and damage appliances. Unreliable power also results in significant production losses for industrial users. Furthermore, the lack of system automation causes delays in balancing demand and supply, and the absence of a spinning reserve forces reliance on inefficient and costly power plants. The lack of automated merit order dispatch contributes to uneconomic operations and necessitates substantial subsidies.⁷⁹

Bangladesh, a rapidly urbanizing country, is projected to have 56 percent of its population living in urban areas by 2050.⁸⁰ This rapid urban transformation has disrupted social, economic, and built environment balances, leading to high-density living and socio-spatial divisions. The current growth pattern has exhausted housing, urban services, health, and education facilities, threatening the sustainability of the natural and built environment. Policies, programmes, and development projects at the city level should support decentralization of operations and recognize the disparity between rural and urban areas as well as the major cities' unequal priority. Addressing these regional disparities in infrastructure development is essential for fostering balanced economic growth and improving living standards nationwide. Access to local markets is variable across Bangladesh, with urban areas generally having better market access compared to rural regions. Initiatives to improve market infrastructure, such as storage facilities and transportation networks, aim to enhance market access for rural communities and smallholder farmers.⁸¹

According to Transparency International, Bangladesh has made progress in many areas as described above, but key challenges remain. Corruption remains a major impediment in Bangladesh, impeding access to services in many ways. It undermines service quality, exacerbates financial barriers to access, and erodes public trust. Addressing corruption through enhanced transparency, accountability mechanisms, and ethical governance practices is essential for ensuring equitable access to services across the population.

⁷⁵ World Bank Group, 2022. [Bangladesh - Systematic Country Diagnostic: 2021 Update](#).

⁷⁶ World Health Organization Data, 2021. [Medical Doctors, Density of Physicians \(per 10 000 population\), Bangladesh](#).

⁷⁷ World Bank, 2024. [Out-of-Pocket expenditure \(percent of current health expenditure\) – Bangladesh, Least developed countries: Un Classification, World](#).

⁷⁸ Bangladesh Health Economics Unit, Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Expenditure Tracking by Diseases, 2020, Final Report, 9 November 2023, page IV and 21 [2024-02-13-05-48-0bc55b04d4b84d1713644939e31311d4.pdf \(portal.gov.bd\)](#)

⁷⁹ World Bank, 2023. [The World Bank in Bangladesh 2024](#).

⁸⁰ Background paper on URBANISATION IN BANGLADESH: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD. [ASEFSU23-Background-Paper_Sustainable-Urbanisation-in-Bangladesh-Dhaka.pdf](#)

⁸¹ World Bank, 2021. [Bangladesh Rural Income Diagnostic: Enabling Faster and More Equal Income Growth in Rural Bangladesh](#).

Addressing these setbacks requires concerted efforts from policymakers, stakeholders, and international partners to strengthen governance, enhance institutional capacity, and implement sustainable development strategies. The recent changes in the political environment can provide the push that is needed to gather the political will to improve accountability and to prioritize service provision for the people. By overcoming these challenges effectively, Bangladesh can advance towards inclusive and sustainable development across all sectors, ensuring a better future for its population.

2.3 Power and voice

Bangladesh authorities tightened repression ahead of general elections in January 2024. Security forces carried out mass arrests of members of the main opposition parties and violated freedom of expression by increasing pressure on media and civil society critical of incumbent government abuses and policy.⁸² The right to freedom of peaceful assembly continued to be severely restricted. Political opponents were denied the right to organise campaign meetings and political rallies. Voting irregularities were reported and the Asian Network for Free Elections noted that the elections were



A group of students paint the city's walls with the phrase "awaj utha Bangladesh (raise your voice, Bangladesh)" boldly inscribed. Photo: Prabir Das/Daily Star, Source: [In pictures: A revolution told in graffiti | The Daily Star](#)

'neither genuine nor competitive'.⁸³ The frustration over the increased repression culminated in student protests in July 2024 that eventually led to the shift in power from the former Prime Minister Hasina who was forced to flee abroad while an interim government took over with the support from the military. The student-led mass movement led to a concrete change in power at the national level, while it remains to be seen how this will impact the policies going forward.

As further described in the chapter on political and institutional context, media actors are subject to both direct and indirect censorship. As a result, journalists and other opinion leaders fear being detained or subject to degrading treatment, hate speech and threats,⁸⁴ not least women.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, several strong independent media actors remain, which maintain the possibility and prerogative to report on topics and from angles which are not necessarily in favour of the government.

There has been progress in the number of women elected or appointed to decision-making positions.⁸⁶ The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 demonstrates the country's relatively good standing in women's political empowerment. Bangladesh ranks 7th among 146 countries and has the highest gender parity score in the region (54 percent), partly because of its long period of women in head-of-state roles.⁸⁷ But full gender parity is far from being reached. For example, women occupy only 21 percent of parliamentary and 23 percent of local council seats.⁸⁸ There has been backlash against women's rights activism, including violence and intimidation of female human rights defenders and NGOs supporting women's movements. Well-established feminist organisations face challenges attracting young women. There are however

⁸² Human Rights Watch, 2024. [World Report 2024: events of 2023](#) World Report 2024: events of 2023 p. 65,67

⁸³ International IDEA, 2024. [The Global State of Democracy, Democracy Tracker: Bangladesh](#)

⁸⁴ Government of Sweden, 2021. [Country report on human rights, democracy and the rule of law: Bangladesh](#)

⁸⁵ Reporters Without Borders, 2024. [Country report: Bangladesh](#)

⁸⁶ UN Women, 2022. [Advocacy Brief: Women's effective participation and decision-making in public life, elimination of violence, for achieving empowerment of all women and girls](#)

⁸⁷ World Economic Forum, 2024. [Global Gender Gap Report 2024](#) p. 17, 32

⁸⁸ UN Women, 2024. [Local Government Country Profile: Bangladesh](#)

examples of renewed engagement, such as youth-based organisations and networks fighting against sexual harassment and violence against women, often online.⁸⁹

According to Amnesty International's annual report on the human rights situation in 2023, enforced disappearances and extra judicial killings as well as custodial deaths persisted, and rights defenders continued to be harassed, intimidated, and imprisoned.⁹⁰ For example, while Bangladesh chaired the Climate Vulnerable Forum in 2021, climate protesters were killed, opposing a coal-based power plant in Banashkhali, Chittagong.⁹¹

A survey on corruption in service sectors shows that 70.9 percent of the households in Bangladesh had been victims of corruption.⁹² It disproportionately affected impoverished populations, including low-income families, rural residents, and marginalized groups such as children and household heads with disabilities. These groups rely heavily on public services and social protection schemes, making them particularly vulnerable to the impacts of both petty and administrative corruption. Female service recipients were victims of corruption more than male service recipients in some sectors, for example health, while male recipients were victims of corruption more than women in other sectors, such as education. Petty corruption often manifests in the form of bribes required to access basic services. For instance, corruption in the education sector, including bribery for admission or unauthorized fees, impedes access to quality education. In the healthcare sector, corrupt practices like unofficial payments for treatment or medication availability create barriers for the poor, leading to inadequate healthcare and increased financial burdens.

Administrative corruption leads to the misallocation of resources intended for public services and welfare programs. Funds meant for healthcare, education, and social protection are often siphoned off by corrupt officials, resulting in inadequate facilities, lack of essential supplies, and poorly paid staff. This reduces the quality of services available to people living in poverty, who rely heavily on public services due to their inability to afford private alternatives. Corruption perpetuates inequality by ensuring that only those who can afford to pay bribes or have connections can access high-quality services. This creates a cycle of exclusion where the poor are continually marginalized and unable to break free from poverty. The unequal distribution of resources and opportunities further entrenches social divides and hampers inclusive development.⁹³

Workers' rights in Bangladesh are also severely curtailed. Set up to attract foreign investment, the country's eight Export Processing Zones prohibit workers from forming trade union or freely expressing their rights. In the garment sector, which is the country's largest industry and employs more than 4.5 million workers, attempts at forming unions are obstructed, and strikes are often met with brutality by the country's Industrial Police force.⁹⁴ Many adolescent boys and girls are sent to work as part of a family's survival strategy. While the proportion of children engaged in hazardous child labour has decreased from 3.2 percent in 2013 to 2.7 percent in 2022, the number of working children has increased from 8.7 percent to 8.9 percent.⁹⁵ Bangladesh ratified ILO's Minimum Age Convention in 2022 which sets the working age to 14 years.⁹⁶ However, international standards, as outlined in ILO Convention No. 138, recommend a minimum age of 15 years for employment.

Bangladesh is a diverse country with many religious and ethnic minorities. The Constitution recognises the rights of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or language, and prohibits discrimination on these grounds. It also recognises freedom on religion and belief. However, ethnic, and religious minorities are poorly protected against human rights violations, such as harassment, violent attacks, and lack of access to justice, for example vandalism of and attacks on Hindu houses and temples, some with the aim of land grabbing, and insufficient legislation to prosecute perpetrators.^{97,98} The human rights organisations in

⁸⁹ UN Women, 2022. [Advocacy Brief: Women's effective participation and decision-making in public life, elimination of violence, for achieving empowerment of all women and girls](#) p. 5

⁹⁰ Amnesty International, 2024. [The State of the World's Human Rights](#)

⁹¹ The Daily Star, 2021. [Banshkhali Power Plant Site: 5 workers killed as cops open fire](#)

⁹² Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021, by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). [Transparency International Bangladesh \(TIB\) \(ti-bangladesh.org\)](#)

⁹³ TI Bangladesh, 2022. [Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021](#)

⁹⁴ International Trade Union Confederation, 2024. [Legal Profile: Bangladesh](#)

⁹⁵ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. [National Child Labour Survey](#)

⁹⁶ International Labour Organisation, 2024. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/bangladesh-ratifies-minimum-age-convention>

⁹⁷ Government of Sweden, 2021. [Country report on human rights, democracy and the rule of law](#)

⁹⁸ East Asia Forum, 2021. [Minority rights at stake in Bangladesh | East Asia Forum](#)

Bangladesh have agreed that the government has been negligent in protecting the country's minority community.⁹⁹ According to the 2022 census, the country's indigenous population is approximately 1.65 million, or 1 percent of the total population.¹⁰⁰ Indigenous peoples in the country claim that the number is underestimated and that their population stands at five million. Although the country is home to more than 54 indigenous peoples speaking more than 35 languages, Bangladesh has not adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹⁰¹ and the indigenous peoples are not allowed to self-identify as indigenous.¹⁰² The majority of the indigenous peoples live in the plains districts and the rest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).¹⁰³ Overall, indigenous peoples are socio-economically disadvantaged compared with other population groups, and in CHT the communities live in areas where government restrictions and violent conflict remain. A legal review process threatens to weaken the wording of the CHT Regulation, 1900 which is fundamental to the self-government system of the region, and consequently undermine the rights of the indigenous peoples.¹⁰⁴

Rohingya refugees lack legal status, formal education and livelihood opportunities, and their movements outside the camps are restricted, leaving them entirely dependent on humanitarian assistance and at heightened risk of exploitation and abuse. Bangladeshi policies have constrained the ability of refugees to form organizations, gather as civil society actors and elect their own leaders in the camps. Currently, Rohingya camp leaders are selected by Bangladeshi authorities.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, insecurity is growing, and poverty and hopelessness threaten to create a vicious cycle in which refugees, particularly young men, join criminal gangs and armed groups, fuelling the violence. Women and girls are embarking on risky boat journeys or overland travel to Malaysia, their trips often paid for by waiting Rohingya men in exchange for marriage. Others stay and are married off at a young age.¹⁰⁶ The refugees are also prevented from using mobile communication, and internet coverage where existing is intermittent. These measures have a negative effect on the right to freedom of movement and access to information. The lack of governance and rule of law in the camps poses serious protection concerns for human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations, and other stakeholders who speak out about violations and abuses and conditions inside the camps.

Despite progress made in many sectors, women encounter various problems in exercising their rights. As described in previous chapters, this includes limited access to resources, healthcare, and education. Women face numerous legal problems, including legal, social, cultural, and economic barriers in seeking redress for grievances. Formal justice institutions are complex and fraught with delays, resulting in low levels of citizen confidence in the system.¹⁰⁷ One key obstacle to women's empowerment and development is limited access to information regarding rights and entitlements. In spite of the Right to Information Act from 2009, many women lack knowledge of what information means and how to use it. Moreover, cultural barriers and patriarchal views can lead to disapproval of women seeking information.¹⁰⁸ Key family laws in Bangladesh are still based on the traditional Islamic Shariah rules. For example, a daughter is entitled to half a son's share of the father's property. However, many Muslim women receive no share of their inheritance in practice.^{109,110} Though men are entitled to unilateral divorce, women are not. Traditionally, mothers-in-law in Bangladesh have wielded great influence over the decisions and lives of daughters-in-law.

⁹⁹ OHCHR, 2021. [UPR Stakeholder Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Minorities in Bangladesh](#)

¹⁰⁰ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. [Population and Housing Census, preliminary report](#)

¹⁰¹ [CHTC urges urgent action to address escalating tensions in Bandarban, emphasizes the need for a peaceful resolution, protection of civilians, and calls for action against alleged sponsored proxy conflicts - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs](#)

¹⁰² Cultural Survival, 2021. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Alternative Report Submission: Violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Bangladesh](#)

¹⁰³ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2023. [The Indigenous World 2023: Bangladesh](#)

¹⁰⁴ Minority Rights Group, 2024. [Bangladesh: Protect Indigenous Peoples' rights in Chittagong Hill Tracts](#)

¹⁰⁵ Refugees International, December 2022. [Hope amid Despair: Finding Solutions for Rohingya in Bangladesh - Refugees International](#)

¹⁰⁶ International Crisis Group, October 2023. [Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Limiting the Damage of a Protracted Crisis | Crisis Group](#)

¹⁰⁷ USAID, 2022. [Final Report: Assessment of Rule of Law and Justice Sector in Bangladesh](#), p. 41

¹⁰⁸ Dhaka Tribune, 2024. [Promoting women's rights through access to information \(dhakatribune.com\)](#)

¹⁰⁹ The Daily Star, 2024. [Challenging tradition: women's inheritance laws in Bangladesh | The Daily Star](#)

¹¹⁰ Development Policy Centre, 2019 [Inheritance rights of women and Shariah law: the case of Bangladesh - Devpolicy Blog from the Development Policy Centre](#)

Bangladesh has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and passed several acts and developed several policies to implement it. However, the rights of the child have yet to be fully realised. Access to justice for children remains weak and there is a massive backlog in the judicial system. An example of that is 39,000 pending cases within the national juvenile justice system. More than 100,000 children are in institutional care and there is a lack of community/family-based options.¹¹¹ The governance system lacks a child friendly approach although there are examples of progress, mainly at local government level, with better services, improved accountability and meaningful participation of children.¹¹² Moreover, student movements have historically played an important political role in Bangladesh. In recent years, young people and children have taken active leadership in raising their voices for climate justice and environmental rights and against child marriage.^{113,114}

LGBTQI persons are at risk of strong social stigma. Same-sex sexual conduct is criminalised in Bangladesh, although with no convictions to date, and LGBTQI persons continue to face harassment and violence with little protection from the police. While the Government has recognized transgendered people, *hijra*, with some efforts made to recognize their legal status, *hijra* remain stigmatized and at risk of legal persecution.^{115,116}

2.4 Human security

Citizens experience threats to their human security at multiple levels. Political violence is particularly noticeable through armed clashes between opposing political parties during riots and protests. The threat of religious violence is used as an excuse for politically motivated mass arrests. The Conflict Barometer rates the conflict intensity as a 3 in Bangladesh (violent crisis) in 2022, which is the same as the previous year. During the run-up to 2024 elections, violent clashes over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition parties and the government continued.¹¹⁷ Opposition and government supporter engaged in violent protests across the country and multiple arrests were made.¹¹⁸ The initially peaceful student protests in Bangladesh that started in mid-June 2024 were followed by violence and serious human rights violations committed by security forces. Hundreds of people are believed to have been killed, including at least 32 children, and thousands injured.¹¹⁹ For more information on the student protests, see text box below

¹¹¹ UNICEF, 2021. Programme Strategy Note 2022-2026 Child Protection, Bangladesh Country Office

¹¹² Save the Children, 2023. [Child Friendly Local Governance \(CFLG\) Approach for Education Sector in Bangladesh: Evidence and Opinions | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)

¹¹³ The Daily Star, 2022. [Bangladeshi activists join Global Climate Strike](#)

¹¹⁴ Tisdall, EKM & Cuevas-Parra, P 2020, [Challenges for children's participation: Child activism for ending child marriage](#), Children and Youth Services Review, vol. 108.

¹¹⁵ ILGA World, 2024. [LGBTI Rights in Bangladesh](#)

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2024. [World Report 2024: Bangladesh](#)

¹¹⁷ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2022. [Conflict Barometer 2022](#) p 129

¹¹⁸ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2022. [Conflict Barometer 2022](#) p 129

¹¹⁹ OHCHR, August 2024. [OHCHR-Preliminary-Analysis-of-Recent-Protests-and-Unrest-in-Bangladesh-16082024_2.pdf](#)

The 2024 Student-led Anti-discrimination Movement

In June 2024, the Bangladesh Supreme Court reinstated the quota system in government jobs, triggering the resurgence of the quota reform movement in early July. The 30 percent job quota for descendants of freedom fighters led to widespread dissatisfaction, particularly among students who felt that the quota system limited merit-based opportunities. Following weeks of demonstrations, tensions escalated on July 15 after clashes between protesters and members of the youth wing of the government party Awami League.

In the days that followed, the Awami League ordered the closure of all educational institutions and deployed security forces nationwide. Law enforcement agencies, as well as members of the ruling party's student, youth, and volunteer wings, were involved in violent confrontations with the protesters. These clashes resulted in numerous deaths, including among protesters, law enforcement personnel, party members, bystanders, and children.

The protests quickly spread nationwide, driven by broader public concerns about the government's management of the economy, allegations of corruption, human rights issues, and a perceived lack of democratic channels for change.

As the situation escalated, the government imposed a nationwide shoot-at-sight curfew and enacted an extensive blackout of internet and mobile connectivity, effectively isolating Bangladesh. Social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp were blocked to disrupt the protesters' ability to organize and communicate.

There is conflicting information regarding the reported number of deaths. There are indications that obtaining accurate information about the number of fatalities during the July events was hindered by a government directive that restricted the disclosure of the exact death toll to the media ([North East News, 2024](#)). However, on August 16, former Home Affairs Advisor M Sakhawat Hossain suggested that the actual death toll may amount to more than 1,000 individuals. Additionally, more than 20,000 were injured, and over 11,000 were arrested nationwide. On September 20, Takirul Islamm, Central Coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement announced that the total death toll as of then amounted to 1,423 deaths, but that the list was still not complete. At the time, they also had 22,000 listed injured individuals. ([South Asia times, 2024](#)).

Ahead of the 2024 elections, journalists and independent bloggers faced increasing attacks for exercising their right to freely criticize government policies and practices. Newsrooms were further driven toward self-censorship, with government authorities demanding they remove news articles from their websites and increasing judicial targeting of major outlets. In 2023, authorities arrested correspondents for tarnishing the image of the nation and editors, journalists and activists were sued under the Digital Security Act.¹²⁰ Workers involved in trade unions, or simply advocating for improved working environments, often face threats, retaliation, or attacks, and one union leader was in June 2023 beaten to death after he visited a factory to secure unpaid wages for the factory's workers.¹²¹

Religious and ethnic minorities face more threats of being violently harassed by religious groups as well as by security forces. In Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), indigenous peoples and religious and ethnic minorities have reportedly been persecuted, threatened, assaulted, tortured and displaced by security forces and Bengali settlers.¹²² The violent crisis over autonomy and subnational predominance of the CHT between indigenous Jumma, Chakma, Kuki-Chin and Marma, and the government as well as Bengali settlers

¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch, (2024). [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch, (2024). [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹²² The Asia Foundation, 2021. [The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia](#) p 68

continues.¹²³ Indigenous Jumma and Chakma reinforced their demand to implement the 1997 CHT Peace Accord while Kuki-Chin and Marma demanded an autonomous state. Various indigenous groups demand the withdrawal of military rule in CHT and an end to the alleged human rights violations against indigenous community.¹²⁴

Extensive land grabbing targeting Hindus and Christians, often accompanied by violent attacks, has also been reported, with continued tensions over land rights between the eleven indigenous groups of CHT. Predominantly Buddhist indigenous communities in the CHT also continue to be vulnerable to targeted attacks, sexual violence, and land appropriation.¹²⁵ It is sometimes difficult to establish whether minorities are targeted due to their faith, their vulnerability, or the value of their property. The apathy, and at times complicity, of local officials for discrimination and attacks against minorities has created a culture of impunity for non-state actors to continue to resort to violence, especially with regard to land grabs or personal disputes. Anti-minority bias and corruption among local officials is compounded by issues of low capacity that continue to plague law enforcement institutions in many parts of the country.¹²⁶ Beyond the CHT, land conflicts are a nationwide concern. As the most common cause of legal problems, land disputes are estimated to affect around eight million Bangladeshis every year.¹²⁷ Lack of access to land tenure and rental agreements also leads to rising tensions among host and refugee communities in Cox's Bazar, including evictions, encroachment and forced relocations.¹²⁸

The violent crisis over ideology and religious predominance between various Islamist militant groups and the government and religious minorities (such as Hindus) de-escalated to a non-violent crisis in 2022.¹²⁹ The reason for the de-escalation may have been the government's wish to have control over the nation prior to the January 2024 elections. Attacks and murders of gay rights activists by these Islamic militant groups have nevertheless been reported in recent years¹³⁰ and Bangladesh ranks 32nd-out of 163 countries in the 2024 global terrorism index, a deterioration in score and rank by 14.¹³¹

Conditions in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar are worsening, with a spike in killings, crime and a four-fold rise in abductions compounded by dwindling humanitarian assistance. Many refugees have little hope for the future because safe repatriation seems impossible when Myanmar is ruled by the very military that forced them out in 2017. Banned from working in Bangladesh, more young men are joining armed groups just to get a regular income, while families are risking perilous journeys at sea.¹³² There are increasing cases of murders, abductions/kidnapping, extortion, human and drug trafficking, and recently, recruitments by armed groups to fight in Rakhine State. Children and women are particularly at risk.¹³³

Sexual and gender-based violence, especially violence against women and girls is common and includes widespread and endemic violence at home as well as in public. The type of abuse women suffer includes rape, fatwa-instigated violence, dowry-related violence, acid throwing and sexual harassment. According to the 2015 Violence Against Women survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the abuse rate of women stood at over 80 percent. GBV further increased during the pandemic and is believed to have remained at this high level.¹³⁴ 23 percent of women aged 15-49 years experienced a physical or sexual violence during the last 12 months.¹³⁵ Sexual assault is the most reported source of violence over time,

¹²³ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2022. [Conflict Barometer 2022](#) p 129

¹²⁴ Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, April 2024. [CHTC urges urgent action to address escalating tensions in Bandarban, emphasizes the need for a peaceful resolution, protection of civilians, and calls for action against alleged sponsored proxy conflicts - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs](#)

¹²⁵ Minority Rights Group International, 2018. [World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Bangladesh : Buddhists](#)

¹²⁶ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. [Bangladesh Country Update: Challenges to Religious Freedom in Bangladesh \(uscirf.gov\)](#) (May 2020)

¹²⁷ Hiil, 2018. [Justice Needs and Satisfaction in Bangladesh 2018: Legal Problems in Daily Life](#)

¹²⁸ NRC, January 2024. Briefing note on Collaborative Dispute Resolution. [icla-briefing-note-1---cdr-jan-2024.pdf \(nrc.no\)](#)

¹²⁹ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2022. [Conflict Barometer 2022](#) p 129

¹³⁰ Al Jazeera, 2021. [Six sentenced to death in Bangladesh for killing LGBTQ activists | LGBTQ News | Al Jazeera](#)

¹³¹ Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024. [Global Terrorism Index](#)

¹³² International Crisis Group, December 2023. [Growing Violence, Dwindling Aid: Rohingya Crisis at an Inflection Point | Crisis Group](#)

¹³³ Rohingya Refugee Response, 2024. [Joint Protection Monitoring Report, Q1 2024](#)

¹³⁴ UNDP, 2022. [Gender-based violence: taking stock of Bangladesh's shadow pandemic](#)

¹³⁵ UN Women, 2024. [Country Fact Sheet: Bangladesh](#)

accounting for at least 3 in 5 reported incidents.¹³⁶ In a geographic comparison, Barishal is the most prone district for GBV followed by Barguna, Pirojpur, Cox's Bazar and Bandarban.¹³⁷ An average of only 2.6 percent take legal action following the violence.¹³⁸ Lack of social resistance and implementation of laws are the main reasons why the perpetrators are not punished.¹³⁹

Indigenous, single, divorced, and stateless women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of violence outside the home.¹⁴⁰ Among the Rohingya refugees, physical assault remains the most common type of GBV, accounting for 50 percent, followed by psychological/emotional abuse (23 percent), denial of resources (17 percent) and sexual violence (10 percent). While cases are believed to be severely under-reported, there is also an increase in reported GBV incidents over time. This can be attributed to the fact that GBV is increasing, but also associated with numerous awareness raising sessions and improvements in referral mechanisms in the camps.¹⁴¹

Women commonly experience sexual harassment or violence, including in public. The term 'eve teasing' is commonly used to describe this phenomenon, but this term is reductive as harassment is violent and not 'teasing'. Sexual harassment and assault are also reported in the garment industry, both at factories and on commutes.¹⁴²

Prostitution is legal in Bangladesh since the year 2000. The number of women in prostitution are estimated to approximately 200,000, most being between 15 to 18 years, with many girls entering prostitution before the age of 12 years. Main driving causes of a life in prostitution is poverty, forced labour, trafficking or domestic violence. The social status of persons in prostitution is extremely low, with social exclusion and social stigma.¹⁴³ Although selling of sex is legal, it is not recognised as a profession and associated activities are criminalised, such as keeping a brothel, allowing premises to be used as a brothel, living on the earnings of prostitution and procuring a female for purposes of prostitution. Persons in prostitution are arrested for soliciting in public under public nuisance offences and male prostitutes are charged under sodomy laws.¹⁴⁴

Economic need is the most significant risk factor making people vulnerable to trafficking in persons in Bangladesh.¹⁴⁵ At-risk groups of trafficking include victims of child marriage and GBV, poor and marginalized persons, people who lost jobs due to the pandemic, seasonal labourers recruited from northwest districts for destinations in India, poorly educated and unemployed youth and students, people affected by natural disasters and climate change, Rohingya refugees, and people attempting to reach other countries through irregular migration.¹⁴⁶ Traffickers increasingly rely on social media and mobile messages to lure potential victims, particularly targeting women and girls, for sex and labour trafficking.¹⁴⁷ Climate-induced displacement is increasing the vulnerability of Bangladeshis to trafficking. The Bangladeshi government estimate that 700,000 people were displaced each year on average over the previous decade due to natural disasters.

More than 45 million children below the age of 14 experience violence in the home regularly and more than 20 children die weekly due to extreme forms of abuse and violence.¹⁴⁸ Girls in Bangladesh face the risks of being married and pregnant at young ages. The prevalence of child marriages is staggeringly high and Bangladesh lags in the implementation of its political commitments in this regard. While the legal age of

¹³⁶ UNDP, 2022. [Gender based violence: taking stock of Bangladesh's shadow pandemic](#)

¹³⁷ UNDP, 2022. [Gender based violence: taking stock of Bangladesh's shadow pandemic](#)

¹³⁸ UN Women Bangladesh, November 2019. [bd-Fact-sheet-Formal.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#) Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNFPA, 2015. [Report on Violence against Women Survey 2015](#), p.18.

¹³⁹ UN Women Bangladesh, July 2022. [\[OP-ED\] The 'original pandemic' of violence against women continues unabated | UN Women – Asia-Pacific](#)

¹⁴⁰ Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022. [DFAT country information report - Bangladesh](#)

¹⁴¹ Rohingya Refugee Response, 2024. [GBVIMS factsheet, Q1 2024](#)

¹⁴² Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022. [DFAT country information report - Bangladesh](#)

¹⁴³ Asadul Islam and Russel Smyth, (2016). "Economics of Sex Work in Bangladesh" in Scott Cunningham and Manisha Shah, The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Prostitution., 2016

¹⁴⁴ Global Network of Sex Work Projects, Promoting Health and Human Rights. [Bangladesh | Global Network of Sex Work Projects \(nswp.org\)](#)

¹⁴⁵ UNODC, 2022. [First National Study on Trafficking in Bangladesh](#)

¹⁴⁶ US Department of State, 2023. [Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh](#)

¹⁴⁷ US Department of State, 2023. [Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh](#)

¹⁴⁸ UNICEF, 2019. [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report](#)

marriage in Bangladesh is 18 years for a female and 21 years for a male, a special provision in the law from 2016 allows child marriages under special circumstances, such as rape or ‘accidental’ pregnancy.¹⁴⁹ Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world and is the highest in Asia with 51 percent of the women married before the age of 18 years.¹⁵⁰ 16 percent of women were married before age 15 years.¹⁵¹ Child brides are more likely to drop out of school, suffer poor nutrition, die due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth, and face increased violence in the home compared with women who marry later. Government studies show that child marriage in Bangladesh is increasing.¹⁵² The main drivers include social norms, in which marrying off daughters is perceived as a solution due to concerns about development; safety concerns, stemming from the belief that marrying off daughters at a young age provides security and safeguards their well-being in uncertain circumstances; and poverty, which is particularly prevalent in climate change-affected and remote areas where families see it as one less mouth to feed. A majority of children (89 percent) aged 1-14 years experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers,¹⁵³ and 30 percent of the children in this age span have experienced severe discipline actions.¹⁵⁴ Only 56 percent of children under the age of 5 were registered at birth, which means millions have been denied their right to identity.¹⁵⁵

Who is poor and why?

The analysis of the different dimensions of poverty reveal an overlapping quilt of deprivations that impact the lives of people in Bangladesh. While there are several drivers of poverty that impact the welfare of the people overall, some common characteristics place people in a more disadvantaged position.

The **gender** divide cuts across several dimensions of poverty as women are more deprived in resources in terms of income and education, they face higher discrimination at the labour markets, and have fewer possibilities to raise their voice in the domestic and public domain. Women are also more often subject to violence and harassment than men. Gender interacts with **age** when it comes to discrimination as women of the age of thirty and upwards are considered less productive and thus face difficulties in finding productive employment opportunities. At the same time, children experience deprivations in terms of human security and lack of respect for their rights, in particular when living in urban slums or on the streets. At the other end of the spectrum, the elderly suffers from lack of pension schemes and opportunities to maintain a decent standard of living. Other characteristics that reinforce the overlapping deprivations are belonging to ethnic minorities or have a disability that limits full participation and enjoyment of human rights.

Both women and men living in more **remote areas** face increased levels of deprivations as their access to employment and public services is more limited. They are also often living in areas with higher probability of climate hazards and thus more vulnerable to falling into poverty. Some of the most vulnerable are the nomad groups/floating populations that do not have a permanent place to live and have to deal with a social stigma. Also, people living in **urban slums** face further struggle as they are more vulnerable to security concerns and climate hazards in terms of flooding and poor access to public service and infrastructure in their communities. People who experience injury, accidents and diseases related to chronic and catastrophic expenditure are also at risk of falling into poverty.

While different characteristics interplay to reinforce deprivations among the general population, there are some particularly vulnerable groups whose situation and characteristics of poverty differ from the general population. The **Rohingya** population is a specific example of a highly deprived group whose opportunities to find pathways out of poverty are significantly constrained by the current legislative framework and their living conditions in the enclosed refugee camps. Also, the **LGBTQI** community is vulnerable to

¹⁴⁹ Bangladesh Law Digest, January 2022. [The Clause Of “Special Circumstances” Under Section 19 Of CMRA For Early Stage Marriages In Bangladesh – Bangladesh Law Digest \(BDLD\) 2024 \(bdlawdigest.org\)](https://bdlawdigest.org/)

¹⁵⁰ UNICEF, 2024. [Data: Country Profile Bangladesh](#)

¹⁵¹ UN Women, 2024. [Data: Thematic Area Dashboard](#)

¹⁵² The Daily Star, 2024. [An alarming upswing in child marriage](#)

¹⁵³ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF, 2019. [Multi-indicator Cluster Survey Report](#) p 288

¹⁵⁴ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF, 2019. [Multi-indicator Cluster Survey Report](#) p 288

¹⁵⁵ UNICEF, 2024. [Topic: Child Protection Bangladesh](#)

discrimination due to social stigma, and they have strictly limited opportunities to maintain decent living standards.

Without movement, no action. Civil-society actors, human rights defenders, union leaders, and youth activists have been able to trigger many of the improvements and social changes Bangladesh has witnessed over the past years and months. However, their work often takes place at the expense of their own safety and security.

Box 2: Personas of people living in poverty in Bangladesh today

While conducting this study, several focus group interviews were held to gain further insights into the lived experience of poverty and to validate the emerging trends from the desk-review. During the interviews several stakeholders generously shared their life stories that helped to understand the face of poverty in Bangladesh today. The following stories or personas are not describing any of the individuals met. Instead, they summarize multiple stories that reflect the realities that people face and provide an illustration of how a life of a person living in poverty can look like.

Meet Fatima, a 33-year-old former garments worker, who found herself at a crossroads. She had been let go from the factory where she had worked tirelessly. The factory owner had informed her that her skills and education no longer met their standards. The news hit Fatima hard, especially as she tried to provide for her family—her husband, Tariq, and their two children: Laila, a 15-year-old girl with dreams of finishing school, and Omar, a spirited 12-year-old boy.

With her health deteriorating and high blood pressure becoming a constant companion, she couldn't afford a doctor, so she was left to manage her condition with whatever remedies she could find. Her husband, Tariq, worked in construction, but his earnings were erratic, depending on daily wages and available work.

Fatima took up informal work, preparing meals for other garment workers. Every day, she would cook food, hoping that her modest earnings would stretch far enough to cover their needs. Despite her relentless effort, the future seemed increasingly difficult.

Tariq believed that marrying off their daughter Laila might ease their financial strain. However, Fatima wanted her daughter to stay in school, to have a chance at a better future than what she had endured. The disagreement between them grew into open conflict, and the arguments, sometimes turning into harsh words and domestic violence.

The financial strain wasn't the only threat. Fatima worried endlessly about her children's safety. Laila and Omar faced harassment on their way to and from school. Each day, as she watched them leave, Fatima's heart ached with fear for their well-being, in particular her daughter's personal and physical safety.

Meet Kabir, a 65-year-old disabled man living by a riverbank in Northern Bangladesh. All of their farmland had been grasped by the river Teesta, a very erosion prone river in the area. As he is disabled, elderly and landless, he was entitled to a number of allowances from the government, but every month was a struggle to obtain these. As a result, Kabir and his family survived on the little income his wife and son were able to earn.

Kabir's wife Amina works as a day labourer and struggles to make ends meet. Kabir's 15-year-old son Azad had dropped out of school and moved to a slum in Dhaka where he finds daily work as a construction worker. Azad had recently married a girl who works in a textile factory. Kabir's daughter Esrat also dropped out of school and was married off to a man who lives in a nearby city where she works as a house help. "If I don't work and bring some money to the family, the familial conflicts arise, that's why work is good for me and my family. But men have anger issues so they will be angry sometimes," said Esrat.

Kabir is trying to lease another piece of land in the village but is facing conflicts among his relatives in this regard. The erosion prone land risks being submerged at any time forcing people to move from one place to another place, sometimes 10 times a year. Recently, the political relations with the neighbouring country has worsened and with the sudden opening of the Teesta Gate, Kabir and his family lives under a constant threat of losing their land and home.

Meet Amina, an 8-year-old girl living in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. She fled from Myanmar in 2017, together with her three sisters, mother, and father. Her eldest sister, Samira, recently got engaged with a boy from the host community, Nideesh, who frequently visits the camp. Nideesh has made Amina realize that there is a life outside the camp, on the other side of the fence and barbed wire that keep the Rohingyas confined. She has learned that the world's longest beach is just kilometres away from her home and has heard rumours about children going to school.

Samira's upcoming marriage meant they had to provide a dowry to Nideesh's family, a demand that not only drained their modest savings but also left them indebted to his household. As they are not allowed to take up employment to earn an income, the family was forced to use some of their USD 12.5 per person monthly food ration to pay for the much-needed healthcare of Amina's mother.

Amina can feel the tensions rising. There is no escape from the arguments in the 4x4m shelter where the entire family lives. Their financial distress is compounding, and Amina is starting to become very hungry. She would usually go to the playground when her father beat her mother, but now that refuge is gone. People from the host community have come and put a fence around the playground. She thinks about asking Nideesh if they have any playgrounds outside of the camp next time he comes over.

3. Why are people poor? - The Development Context in Bangladesh

In order to answer why people live in poverty, we now turn to analysing the development context and the underlying causes – or binding constraints – that keep people in poverty. The development context analyses structures and institutions that frame the scope where the people can pursue their goals, but that is usually outside the control of the individual. By changing the development context and creating an enabling environment one can create pathways for people to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

3.1 Political and Institutional Context

The political context is currently undergoing a significant change. At the time of writing, an interim government is holding the power in the country and has promised to present a white paper for reforms within the coming months.

Bangladesh is formally a parliamentary democratic republic with a multi-party system.

However, the existing governance structures reflect insufficient separation of powers, and the limitations to both the

parliamentary supremacy and the judicial independence are areas of concern. Two political parties, the Bangladesh Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party

(BNP) have dominated the political arena since 1990. Three consecutive general elections marred by allegations of irregularities, politically motivated violence, and suppression of dissident voices, have led to Bangladesh being rated an ‘electoral autocracy’.



An empty nail. (The former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's photo was taken off when she resigned and fled). Photo by: Maria Stridsman, Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka, Sept 2024.

In spite of the economic growth, the past decade and a half has seen continuous democratic backsliding amid numerous human rights violations. Governance under the former regime (2009 – August 2024) was characterized by macro-economic gains amid increased income inequality, high level of corruption in the public sector, and curtailment of constitutional and universal freedoms. Freedom of speech and opinion, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, freedom for participating in political movement were heavily restricted within the shrinking space for civil society.

During this period, the former government drafted policies and laws that contradict constitutional rights and human rights standards, which led to fear and self-censorship among the public. There were restrictions and violations of the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, affecting opposition parties, protesters, and social activists. There was a sharp rise in political violence and harassment of opposition forces, human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society leaders.

The country was sliding towards increased authoritarianism and becoming a de facto one-party state under the Awami League.^{156,157} But drastic changes have come about as a result of the youth-led movement that began in July 2024 driven by longstanding dissatisfaction over a quota system to allocate government jobs and soon escalated into a country-wide revolution that culminated in the ousting of the government on 5 August 2024.

With an interim government (currently consisting of 22 advisers responsible for different portfolios) in place, there is now an opportunity to rebuild the nation by bringing about structural reforms with renewed commitment to free the country from exploitation. The country is now passing a very important phase with

¹⁵⁶ Varieties of Democracy, 2024. [Democracy Report 2024](#) p. 17

¹⁵⁷ United States Institute of Peace, 2024 [A Perilous Moment for Bangladesh's Democracy | United States Institute of Peace](#)

the opening of civic space and the increased likelihood of improvement in the overall democratic environment. However, this would probably be a gradual and step by step process.

Weak institutional capacity is an impediment to service delivery

While Bangladesh has made great strides in poverty reduction, poor governance and weak institutions characterized by corrupt practices, a fragmented bureaucracy, high turn-over of staff and poor systems for public resource allocation remain barriers to effective service delivery and equitable human development. Government institutions have insufficient capacity to address negative shocks and arising needs, including those stemming from environmental degradation, climate change and urbanization. The capacity for long term planning is poor and mechanisms for accountability are weak.¹⁵⁸ Despite a recognition of the importance of decentralization, devolution of power and resources are weak and local authorities have limited capacity and means to address poverty and vulnerability in areas under their jurisdiction, partly caused by limited opportunities to effectively increase local revenue mobilization. The situation is further accentuated in geographically remote and poorly connected regions, and governance consequently remains largely subordinated the central government and local party interests.¹⁵⁹

Political and civil rights have persistently been under pressure with constitutionally enshrined fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression being curtailed, limiting the democratic space. In recent years, the introduction of repressive legislation, harassment, and threats against dissidents, in combination with the existence of violent extremism have created a culture of offline and online self-censorship among rights-based civil society, media, intellectuals and political activists, in effect weakening the democratic system of checks and balances. Authorities occasionally restrict the mobile network, including in connection with elections and other political events.¹⁶⁰ This was most recently the case when the internet was completely shut down for more than five days in July 2024, effectively disconnecting Bangladesh from the world.¹⁶¹ Authorities also exert excessive control over civil society organizations that are receiving foreign funds. These legal tools enable systematic judicial harassment of anyone who is perceived as a critic.¹⁶²

Bangladesh was re-elected to the Human Rights Council in 2022 and has been overdue for its reports for seven out of eight treaties that were ratified. In August 2024, Bangladesh signed the Instrument of Accession to the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearances. And with this, the country is now signatory to all nine human rights treaties. While Bangladesh has ratified several human rights instruments, it avoids committing to any optional protocols.

No movement, no change – the role of the civil society and collective action

The internet plays a growing role in the provision of news and information.¹⁶³ At the same time Bangladesh scores low on the global Freedom on the Net index.¹⁶⁴ Censorship of digital content and surveillance of telecommunications and social media is increasingly common with repressive law(s) continuously being used as a tool to curtail digital rights. In 2024, Bangladesh was ranked as 165 of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index.¹⁶⁵ Censorship is used to block news portals and websites critical of government, including Al Jazeera and poriborton.com. The criticised Digital Security Act (DSA) has been used to undermine freedom of expression and suppress dissent. It has criminalised expressed opinions considered critical of the nation or government. In combination with heavier penalties, it has led to self-censorship. In September 2023, the government replaced the Digital Security Act 2018 (DSA) with the Cyber Security Act 2023 (CSA).¹⁶⁶ However, the new law retains many of the DSA's abusive elements.¹⁶⁷

The Bangladesh authorities have yet to amend the labour laws to protect workers' freedom of association and collective bargaining in line with International Labour Organization conventions and

¹⁵⁸ World Bank, 2019. [The World Bank in Bangladesh](#)

¹⁵⁹ Overseas Development Institute, 2018. [Local Governance, Decentralisation and corruption in Bangladesh and Nigeria](#)

¹⁶⁰ Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. [Bangladesh – Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer: situationen per den 31 december 2018](#)

¹⁶¹ Reuters, 26 July 2024. [Bangladesh's internet shutdown isolates citizens, disrupts business | Reuters](#)

¹⁶² OHCHR, 2023. Press Briefing Notes: [Bangladesh legal harassment of HRDs and civil society leaders](#)

¹⁶³ Reporters Without Borders 2024 [Bangladesh | RSF](#), accessed 5 July 2024

¹⁶⁴ Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 [Bangladesh: Country Profile | Freedom House](#), accessed 5 July 2024

¹⁶⁵ Reporters Without Borders, 2024. [2024 World Press Freedom Index](#)

¹⁶⁶ Dhaka Tribune, 2023. [Parliament passes cyber security bill 2023](#)

¹⁶⁷ [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

recommendations.¹⁶⁸ Despite the high prevalence of sexual harassment at work in Bangladesh, the 2006 Labour Act does not define or effectively prevent sexual harassment at work. The authorities also have yet to ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention¹⁶⁹ which requires comprehensive protections to end violence and harassment, including gender-based violence at work.¹⁷⁰

Bangladesh's historically active and vocal civil society has faced increasing regulations of their access to resources and donations which could be used to limit its ability to act and hold duty-bearers to account.¹⁷¹ While service providing NGOs can work freely, rights-based organisations advocating for human rights and voices highlighting inequalities have been particularly at risk. Trade unions remain fragmented and ineffective because of national regulations that prevent effective organizing.¹⁷² Bangladesh scores both among the lowest in the world and has undergone significant and substantial declines in academic freedom in the last decade.¹⁷³ Human rights organizations report an increasing number of serious human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture, often at the hands of politically co-opted law enforcement agencies that largely act with impunity.¹⁷⁴

Weak enforcement of the rule of law leads to human rights violations

Fundamental rights and freedoms are safeguarded in the constitution, including rights to religious freedom.¹⁷⁵ Despite safeguards in the constitution, the discrepancy is growing between constitutional rights and practice. Authorities are failing to sufficiently guarantee the protection of vulnerable groups such as religious minorities, indigenous peoples, LGBTQI persons, and persons with disabilities, thereby making them susceptible to further stigmatization and marginalization. Deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms and beliefs have negative implications for the efficient implementation of laws and policies intended to protect these groups. The legal and policy frameworks guaranteeing women's rights are reasonably strong, but personal law, i.e. the religious laws, govern family law. Discrimination and violence against women and girls remain pervasive. Domestic and family life is subject to religious laws which discriminate against women, e.g. regarding the right of inheritance, divorce and child custody.¹⁷⁶

Legal problems are common among people in Bangladesh. Lack of legal awareness and a sense of hopelessness make less than half of them take active steps to resolve the problems. When doing so they mostly rely on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, including *shalish*, and very few problems are referred to courts of law.¹⁷⁷ The entire justice system is defined by corruption and the judiciary by lack of efficiency and capacity, including legal backlogs. It fails to deliver access to timely and affordable legal services and remains inaccessible to large segments of society. According to human rights organisations, criminal justice institutions commit human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest and detention, ill treatment and torture in custody, extrajudicial executions, and enforced disappearances. Access to justice is particularly insufficient for people living in poverty, women and minorities.¹⁷⁸ The police are implicated in the detention of peaceful protesters, incarceration of prisoners of conscience, unjustified arrests of journalists and bloggers as well as harassment of NGOs promoting human rights.¹⁷⁹ In 2023, Bangladesh rose to 127 out of 142 countries while the overall score dropped to 0.38 compared to 0.41 in 2020 in the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index.¹⁸⁰

¹⁶⁸ [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)

¹⁶⁹ ILO, 2019. [Violence and Harassment Convention \(No. 190\)](#)

¹⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2024. [World Report 2024: Bangladesh](#)

¹⁷¹ International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, 2024. [Civic Freedom Monitor: Bangladesh](#)

¹⁷² Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer: situationen](#)

¹⁷³ Varieties of Democracy Institute and Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Institute of Political Science, 2024 [Academic Freedom Index Update 2024](#)

¹⁷⁴ Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer](#)

¹⁷⁵ While the majority practice Sunni Islam, other religious minorities amount to approximately 10 percent of the population, of which Hindus constitute the largest group.

¹⁷⁶ Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer](#)

¹⁷⁷ The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL), 2018. [Justice needs and satisfaction in Bangladesh](#)

¹⁷⁸ Utrikesdepartementet, 2021. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer](#)

¹⁷⁹ Amnesty International, 2018. [Amnesty International Report 2017/2018](#)

¹⁸⁰ World Justice Project, 2023. [Rule of Law Index](#)

Indicator/index	Bangladesh score
The Political indicator (2024 World Press Freedom Index)	167 out of 180 countries ¹⁸¹ <i>Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal ranked 151, 159, and 147 and 62 respectively</i>
Global Right to Information Rating	109 out of 150 points ¹⁸² <i>Pakistan 105, India 127, Sri Lanka and Nepal scored 105, 127, 131 and 112 respectively</i>
Clean Elections Index of 2023	0.16 ¹⁸³ (highest score is 1.0) <i>India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan scored 0.51, 0.71, 0.71 and 0.86 respectively</i>
Freedom of Expression and Alternative Sources of Information Index of 2023	0.35 ¹⁸⁴ (highest score is 1.0) <i>India, Sri Lanka and Nepal scored 0.42, 0.74, and 0.84 respectively</i>
Participatory Democracy Index 2023	0.12 ¹⁸⁵ (highest score is 1.0) <i>India, Sri Lanka and Nepal scored 0.23, 0.36 and 0.42 respectively</i>
Transparency International's Global Corruption Perception Index 2023	149 out of 180 countries ¹⁸⁶ <i>Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal ranked 133, 93, 108 and 115 respectively</i>
Rule of Law Index 2023	127 out of 142 countries 0.38 (highest score is 1.0) ¹⁸⁷ <i>Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal scored 0.38, 0.49, 0.50 and 0.52 respectively</i>

Corruption hampers development

There has been a noticeable increase in the reporting and awareness of corruption issues in Bangladesh. This heightened awareness is partly driven by active civil society organizations and international pressure. These organizations actively monitor and report on corruption, fostering a more informed and vigilant public that demands accountability from government officials. Despite improvements in the legal and institutional framework, corruption remains endemic and systemic and a significant barrier to development, and the situation is deteriorating compared to other countries. Transparency International's Global Corruption Perception Index is currently placing Bangladesh as 149 out of 180 countries reviewed.¹⁸⁸

Corruption has been worsened by politicized enforcement. It affects all aspects of daily life and permeates the very institutions that should fight corruption, including the police and the judiciary,¹⁸⁹ thus eroding trust in public institutions. There is significant misuse of public funds and resources, with minimal accountability for corrupt practices. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and other regulatory bodies are under increased political and bureaucratic pressure, which undermines their ability to function independently and effectively combat corruption. This has led to a lack of significant actions against high-profile corrupt individuals. In 2021, 71 percent of households experienced corruption whilst in contact with public services, with law enforcement the most common sector (74 percent) to experience corruption.¹⁹⁰ Growing intertwining of business, security and political interests renders it increasingly difficult to bring about the policy changes necessary to efficiently address corruption. According to the Transparency International Government Defence Integrity Index, corruption risk is very high in the defence sector. Owing to limited external oversight, a lack of transparency and weak civilian control, risks are particularly pronounced in procurement, finances, and policymaking.¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ Reporters Without Borders, 2024. [Index: political indicator](#)

¹⁸² Centre for Law and Democracy, 2022. [Global Right to Information Rating](#)

¹⁸³ Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2023. [Interactive Maps : Bangladesh](#)

¹⁸⁴ Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2023. [Interactive Maps : Bangladesh](#)

¹⁸⁵ World Bank, 2023. [Participatory democracy index](#)

¹⁸⁶ Transparency International, 2023. [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

¹⁸⁷ World Justice Project, 2023. [Rule of Law Index](#)

¹⁸⁸ Transparency International, 2023. [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

¹⁸⁹ Transparency International, 2020. [Global Corruption Barometer Asia](#)

¹⁹⁰ Transparency International Bangladesh, 2021. [National Household Survey 2021](#)

¹⁹¹ Transparency International, 2021, [Government Defence Integrity Index](#)

Bangladesh is affected by political developments in neighbouring countries, including in the conflict-affected Myanmar. In Myanmar, Rohingya have been denied citizenship for decades, being subject to persecution and serious human rights violations, by some countries determined as genocide and crimes against humanity.¹⁹² Following an intensification of violence across Myanmar's northern Rakhine State in 2016 and 2017, resulting in grave and systematic violations of human rights, including signs of crimes against humanity, nearly 800,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh¹⁹³ adding to the about 35,000 refugees that were already living in camps in the Cox's Bazar district. As the situation in Myanmar is not allowing for a safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable return, it is expected that the Rohingya refugee population, currently amounting to over 1 million persons, will remain in camps in Bangladesh over an extended period of time.¹⁹⁴

3.2 Economic and Social Contexts

Macroeconomic context, employment and financial flows

From the 1990's onwards, Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been steadily rising by more than 5 percent per year in real terms and increased by close to 6-7 percent per year during the last few years. The services sector is the largest contributor to GDP, accounting for more than half of GDP, followed by industry (30 percent, of which manufacturing 19 percent) and agriculture, fisheries and forestry (13.8 percent).¹⁹⁵ Bangladesh's agricultural production, although climate-sensitive, still makes a significant, but declining, contribution to the economy and to employment and rural income, as well as to the expansion of exports.¹⁹⁶ The economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic left many people without income and pushed them back into poverty.

After almost a decade of stable inflation, the rate increased in 2021 and has remained high since, reaching almost 9.9 percent in May 2024. As the inflationary pressure is increasing food prices, it makes life particularly difficult for people living in poverty. While the debt level has increased in recent years, partly driven by investments in infrastructure, but at 35 percent of GDP in FY23, it is still significantly lower than other countries in the region. At the same time, Bangladesh's revenue to GDP ratio remains one of the lowest in the world, at 8.2 percent of GDP in FY23,¹⁹⁷ compared to 9.4 in FY2021. Consequently, the debt service eats up a significant share of the tax revenue and constitutes a significantly higher expenditure post than the current spending on core social sectors such as health and education. Tax revenue has consistently been lower in Bangladesh compared to countries of similar economic development during the last two decades. Low levels of tax collection reduce the government's ability to invest in essential services such as social safety nets, education, healthcare, and infrastructure, all of which are particularly important for improving living standards and reducing poverty.

While foreign aid has played an important role in Bangladesh's growth story, Bangladesh is no longer dependent on aid, which has declined to less than 2 percent of GDP.¹⁹⁸ With a large migrant workforce, remittances are high, but the large discrepancy between the formal and informal inflows result in low revenues. Bangladesh is on track to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list in 2026,¹⁹⁹ deferred two years due to COVID-19 and a request from the Bangladeshi government. However, this also means losing access to preferential trade agreements which could significantly affect Bangladesh's export competitiveness and thereby economic growth. To which extent depends on the success of the country's efforts to differentiate its economy and to reach international standards in terms of labour rights, financial stability, as well as to qualify for and strike new trade deals such as the GSP+. Unfortunately,

¹⁹² U.S. Department of State, 2022, [Burma Genocide - United States Department of State](#)

¹⁹³ United States Institute of Peace, 2024, [Rohingya Face Fresh Uncertainty in Myanmar](#)

¹⁹⁴ UNHCR, 2024, [Rohingya Refugee Crisis Explained](#)

¹⁹⁵ World Trade Organization, 2019, Trade Policy Review, Bangladesh, Report by the Secretariat, document no. WT/TPR/S/385/Rev.1

¹⁹⁶ World Trade Organization, 2019, Trade Policy Review, Bangladesh, Report by the Secretariat, document no. WT/TPR/S/385/Rev.1

¹⁹⁷ World Bank, April 2024, [Bangladesh Development Update Spring 2024](#)

¹⁹⁸ World Bank [Net ODA received \(percent of GNI\) - Bangladesh | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)

¹⁹⁹ United Nations LDC Portal, 11th July 2024, [Bangladesh graduation status | LDC Portal - International Support Measures for Least Developed Countries](#)

Bangladesh has a very low ranking, even within the East Asian region when it comes to how easy it is to do business in the country.²⁰⁰ A high level of informal employment affects social safety and vulnerability. Corruption, access to finance and electricity are cited by businesses as the top three business environment constraints.²⁰¹ The current political turbulence and insecurity about the upcoming economic policies is likely to deter further investment as companies are waiting for further clarity on the investment opportunities going forward. The challenges in the economy in general, and for businesses in particular, are also likely to constitute obstacles to the just and green transition.

Exports continue to be heavily dominated by Bangladesh's RMG industry, a leading global apparel sourcing hub which employs more than 4 million workers and contributes 10.35 percent to the GDP, with a 7 percent annual growth.²⁰² Despite being the second-largest garment exporter globally, the industry faced a significant setback during the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing a USD 3.16 billion loss in orders and supply chain disruptions, partly due to a reliance on China for 67 percent of its raw materials.²⁰³ While recovering from the pandemic's impact, the industry now grapples with challenges stemming from global inflation linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, affecting key export markets such as the USA, UK, and EU. On a positive note, the sector has seen a promising 32.19 percent growth in exports to non-traditional markets, including to Japan, South Korea, and India, offering a glimmer of hope for recovery.²⁰⁴ Bangladesh's RMG sector relies on the lowest minimum wages in the industry. However, this strategy poses a threat to workers' well-being. The government's wage board recently increased the minimum wage for RMG workers to BDT 12,500, but this is still short of the ambitious call for BDT 23,000. This has led to further protests by workers. Despite being at the forefront in labour costs, Bangladesh has been lagging behind in productivity compared to competitors. In 2019, Bangladeshi RMG workers had the lowest per hour labour productivity. Labour and capital productivity improvements are crucial as Bangladesh enters the Fourth Industrial Revolution.²⁰⁵

The recent violence and political unrest following the peaceful protests of the student-led movement resulted in large economic losses. The shutdown of internet and major transportation channels such as the Chittagong port is estimated to have costed the economy USD 10 BN and led to a downgrade in the country's S&P credit rating from BB- to B+.²⁰⁶

Challenges persist in the equity and quality of education

Education in Bangladesh shows both progress and ongoing challenges. Only 2 percent of GDP is allocated to education, which is insufficient to improve educational outcomes. While access to education has increased, quality and equity gaps persist, necessitating urgent policy interventions. The education budget allocation for FY2025 is 11.88 percent of the total budget and 1.69 percent of GDP, showing a 7 percent increase from the previous year's proposed budget.²⁰⁷ In 2021, 34 percent of households reported experiencing corruption in their interactions with the education sector, an improvement from 43 percent in 2017.²⁰⁸

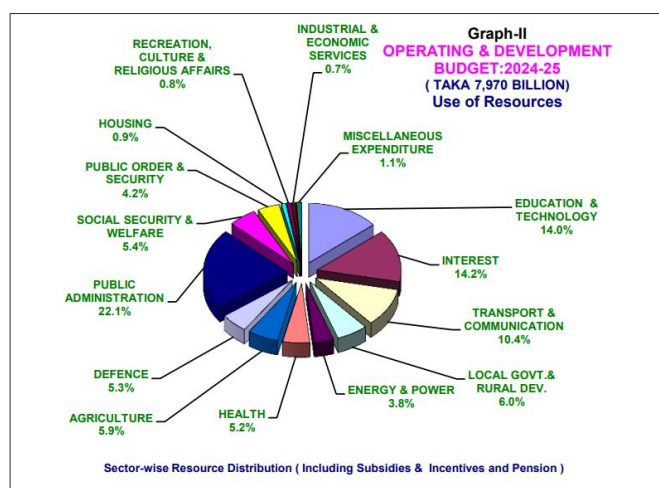


Figure 2. Operating & development budget 2024-25
Source: Transparency International Bangladesh, 2021.

²⁰⁰ World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index, benchmarked at 2019, accessed on 27 May 2024: [Rankings \(doingbusiness.org\)](https://www.doingbusiness.org)

²⁰¹ World Bank, 2022, Enterprise Surveys- [Bangladesh Country Profile 2022](https://www.enterprisesurveys.org)

²⁰² Bangladesh Bank, Research Dept., 2023 “Quarterly Review on Readymade Garments (RMG): April-June of FY23” and LightCastle, 29 November 2023, “Enhancing the Lives of RMG Workers in Bangladesh: A Path to Progress”

²⁰³ RMG Bangladesh, 2023 [Enhancing the Lives of RMG Workers in Bangladesh: A Path to Progress \(lightcastlebd.com\)](https://lightcastlebd.com)

²⁰⁴ Mirdha, R. U. (2023). Economy. Retrieved from The Daily [RMG export growth slows in US, EU for global uncertainty | The Daily Star](https://www.dailystar.com)

²⁰⁵ [Enhancing the Lives of RMG Workers in Bangladesh: A Path to Progress \(lightcastlebd.com\)](https://lightcastlebd.com)

²⁰⁶ The Business Standard, 2024. [Bangladesh faces \\$10b setback, image crisis: Biz leaders](https://www.thebusinessstandard.com)

²⁰⁷ Policy-Brief: Education Budget of Bangladesh-CPD, 2024, [Policy-Brief Education-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Investing-Resources-for-Improved-Learning-Outcomes.pdf \(cpd.org.bd\)](https://cpd.org.bd)

²⁰⁸ Transparency International Bangladesh, 2021 [National Household Survey 2021](https://www.transparency.org)

Moreover, although the Myanmar curriculum has recently been approved for use in the Rohingya camps, it is not considered formal education as it is not certified and does not allow for them to continue after completing Grade 10. Universities are also facing shrinking civic space, impacting academic freedom and innovation. Following the peaceful student protests, the majority of universities and higher educational institutions were closed until 18 August 2024.

Underfunded health sector leads to high out-of-pocket expenditure and poor service delivery

Bangladesh's healthcare sector is critically underfunded, with GDP allocation to health being less than one percent per year for the past 20 years.²⁰⁹ This under-investment leads to significant challenges in achieving universal healthcare, with high out-of-pocket expenses both for services and medicines, pushing many into poverty. Despite these challenges, there has been significant improvements in the past decade as further described in the resource chapter. Overall, however, healthcare quality and access remain major concerns, highlighting the need for increased investment and comprehensive healthcare reforms to ensure equitable access across the country.

Bangladesh is a significant contributor to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) due to its poor healthcare standards and the misuse and overuse of antibiotics. For example, a study shows that 63 percent of antibiotics are prescribed by unqualified health care providers, and patient non-compliance is the main cause of antibiotic resistance in the country (68.8 percent). AMR is one of the widely recognized neglected public health challenges in Bangladesh and leads not only to higher medical costs, prolonged hospital stays, and increased mortality but also raises the costs of the overall health care services system.²¹⁰

The most common form of corruption is when using public services, and the health sector is one of the worst affected.²¹¹ This affects people living in poverty the most, as they rarely have the possibility to resort to private alternatives. The main function of these bribes is to facilitate access to healthcare services and medicines.²¹² Examples can be brokers who move patients from government hospitals to private hospitals, patients paying for medication that is free, and healthcare workers overcharging for expensive medicines or over prescribing to make a profit.

An estimated 5,200 women in Bangladesh die as a result of pregnancy or childbirth complications every year.²¹³ Largely this occurs because of half of the women in Bangladesh, especially the poor, give birth at home, most without skilled health care providers.²¹⁴ However, health facility births are increasing but 45 % of these involve caesarean sections, compared with 18 % in 2011.²¹⁵

Modern contraceptive use has remained relatively stable during the last decade (over 60 percent),²¹⁶ while safe abortion care is low. Adolescent fertility remains high mainly due to the high rate of child marriage despite the law setting the age of marriage at 18 years. Even though the Government of Bangladesh allows “menstrual regulation” (MR) as an “interim method of establishing non-pregnancy”, the latest nationwide study on availability of MR services from 2014 showed that 42 percent of the public and private health facilities expected to provide MR service are not doing so due to social stigma, lack of training, religious

²⁰⁹ Policy-Brief_Health Budget of Bangladesh-CPD, 2024, [Policy-Brief_Health-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Optimising-Resources-for-Improved-Health-Outcomes.pdf \(cpd.org.bd\)](https://cpd.org.bd/PDF/Policy-Brief_Health-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Optimising-Resources-for-Improved-Health-Outcomes.pdf)

²¹⁰ [International Journal of Surgery Open 49 \(2022\) 100581](https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0049-100581). Antibiotic resistance: An increasingly threatening but neglected public health challenge in Bangladesh

²¹¹ Rahman, K. 2021. [Bangladesh: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption: Focus on ready-made garments \(RMG\), health, environment, and anti-corruption actors](#). U4 helpdesk answer 2021:13. U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute.

²¹² SOAS. 2018. [ACE Irregularities, informal practices, and the motivation of frontline healthcare providers in Bangladesh: Current scenario and future perspectives towards achieving universal health coverage by 2030](#).

²¹³ UNFPA 2024 [UNFPA Bangladesh | Midwifery](#)

²¹⁴ El Arifeen, S., Hill, K., Ahsan, K. Z., Jamil, K., Nahar, Q., & Streatfield, P. K. (2014). Maternal mortality in Bangladesh: a Countdown to 2015 country case study. *The Lancet*, 384(9951), 1366-1374.

²¹⁵ National Institute of Population Research and Training, MoHFW, 2023. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey: Key Indicators Report.

²¹⁶ <https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/en/news/2023-state-world-population-report-8-billion-question-too-many-or-too-fewpercentE2percent80percent9D?page=0>

concerns and lack of support for staff.²¹⁷ In addition, many women are unaware of access to MR. Sexual rights, including comprehensive sexuality education and adolescent access to quality and confidential SRH services are still sensitive issues which are subject to strong opposition, and issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity are not adequately addressed in health programs.

Women and people with disabilities are especially at risk of experience corruption when accessing healthcare services. For example, pregnant women experience having to pay “gratitude”²¹⁸ to be discharged from the hospital, and to pay bribes²¹⁹ to access deliver and C-section services. These forms of corruption are directly gendered and show that due to reproductive health needs women are placed in a more vulnerable position to experience corruption, in the form of bribes and informal payments, in the health sector.²²⁰

Pollution and climate changes cause over 272,000 premature deaths and 5.2 billion days of illness annually.²²¹ Improving the resilience of health systems including provision of universal health coverage is the key to mitigate the impacts of pollution and climate change impacts on health including SRHR. A climate change resilient health care system needs to be developed along with improved accessibility for vulnerable people.

The border areas, including CHT and Cox’s Bazar, are the scene of both human and drug trafficking, with increasing levels of methamphetamine flowing into Bangladesh from Myanmar. According to the World Drug Report 2023, South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, have witnessed an upward trend in the quantities of seizures of heroin and morphine.²²² Of particular concern is the influx of methamphetamine pills from the neighbouring South-East Asia region, presenting significant health and security risks to Bangladesh. In recent years, authorities have reported seizures of crystalline methamphetamine, a substance more potent than methamphetamine pills. Seizure data suggests that Bangladesh is the largest methamphetamine market in South Asia, underscoring the urgent need for effective countermeasures.²²³

Corruption hinders the efficiency of Social Protection programs to alleviate poverty

Bangladesh has prioritized social security as a key strategy to tackle poverty, vulnerability, and marginalization. Financial commitment and a vast portfolio of safety nets are in place. The government has developed a comprehensive strategy, the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), to coordinate and consolidate existing safety net programmes for improved efficiency. The Government implements over 100 safety net programmes, largely focused on social assistance. A few NGOs have small-scale economic inclusion interventions; however, this has generally occurred in the absence of solid coordination efforts. In 2021, 59 percent of people under the poverty line and 19 percent vulnerable were covered by social protection system. Around 3 percent of the country’s population were living with disability (PWD) and 7 percent with functional difficulty.²²⁴ Out of the total population of PWDs, 44 percent collect disability social protection benefits.²²⁵

However, the social protection schemes are inadequate and plagued by corruption, resulting in significant inequalities and mismanagement of funds. Although new safety net programmes have been introduced to support the poorest segments of society, many programmes remain poorly designed and implemented, leading to limited coverage and efficiency. Initiatives to expand social protection programmes, leveraging

²¹⁷ Altaf Hossain, Isaac Maddow-Zimet, Meghan Ingerick, Hedayat Ullah Bhuiyan, Michael Vlassoff and Susheela Singh, 2014. Access to and Quality of Menstrual Regulation and Post-abortion Care in Bangladesh: Evidence from a Survey of Health Facilities; and Susheela Singh, Altaf Hossain, Isaac Maddow-Zimet, Michael Vlassoff, Hedayat Ullah Bhuiyan and Meghan Ingerick, 2014. The incidence of menstrual regulation procedures and abortion in Bangladesh.

²¹⁸ SOAS. 2018. [ACE Irregularities, informal practices, and the motivation of frontline healthcare providers in Bangladesh: Current scenario and future perspectives towards achieving universal health coverage by 2030.](#)

²¹⁹ Transparency International Bangladesh. 2021. [Corruption in Service Sectors. National Household Survey 2021: Extended Executive summary.](#)

²²⁰ UNODC. 2020. [The time is now: Addressing the gender dimensions of corruption.](#)

²²¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/03/28/addressing-environmental-pollution-is-critical-for-bangladesh-s-growth-and-development>

²²² UNODC, 2023. [World Drug Report 2023](#) p 30

²²³ UNODC, 2023. [Bangladesh: UNODC's cutting-edge tools boost law enforcement capacities and frontline resilience to counter the drug problem](#)

²²⁴ National Survey persons with disabilities 2021, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/report-national-survey-persons-disabilities-nsdp-2021-december-2022-enb>

²²⁵ ILO, 2024. [Statistics: SDG 1.3.1](#)

digital platforms, have improved programme efficiency, but coverage gaps remain, especially among informal workers and vulnerable populations.²²⁶ Enhancing the comprehensiveness and inclusivity of social protection measures is essential for reducing poverty and promoting social equity across the country.

Corruption often prevents benefits from reaching those most in need, exacerbating vulnerabilities and leaving many without an adequate safety net. While there has been some progress in expanding social protection initiatives, substantial reforms and anti-corruption measures are necessary to improve their reach and effectiveness, ensuring meaningful support for vulnerable populations. The social safety net allocation as a share of GDP increased from 1.7 percent in RBFY2016 to 2.4 percent in BFY2025,²²⁷ reflecting an overall growth in the allocation dedicated to social protection programmes. While there have been increases in the budget, the actual effectiveness of these funds remains uncertain due to issues such as poor targeting, wasted resources, and a lack of comprehensive information. The inclusion and exclusion errors, coupled with the challenges in beneficiary selection, continue to hinder the effectiveness of social safety nets. The inclusion of pensions for retired government officials, interest payments on national savings certificates, and agricultural subsidies has artificially inflated the social safety net budget. These components account for 46 percent of the total budget allocation for social protection in FY2025, which detracts from the actual funds available for the poor and vulnerable.

A young population and an above average rate of urbanization

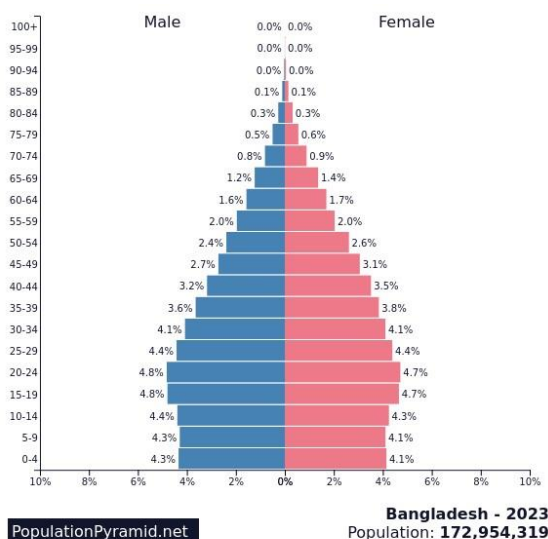


Figure 3. Population pyramid of Bangladesh

Source: Population pyramids, 2023.

With 2 percent of the world's population and more than 170 million inhabitants,²²⁸ Bangladesh is the eighth-most populated country in the world and has one of the highest population densities.²²⁹ Over a period of three decades, the previously high rate of population growth dropped from almost 7 to 1 in 2005–2023.²³⁰ At this total fertility rate, and without migration, Bangladesh's population is expected to soon reach a stage where it neither grows nor shrinks. Meanwhile, the urban population amounts to 37 percent of total population (2019 est.) and is growing at a rate which is above average in Asia.

The population pyramid to the left²³¹ indicates a young population (even younger than India), with a particularly large group of youth 15 – 24 years.

However, with an increase in life expectancy (52 years in 1980, 66 years in 2000 and 72 years in 2020),²³² the population pyramid will transform over time with an increasing adult and old population. Bangladesh has a relatively narrow window of opportunity over the next 15 years to take advantage of the demographic dividend, with an increasing share of the population entering their working age, to drive growth, poverty reduction, sustainable development, and increased resilience. However, the demographic dividend comes with both opportunities and challenges. Youth, comprising a significant portion of the workforce, often find

²²⁶ World Bank Group, 2021. Bangladesh Systematic Country Diagnostic 2021 Update World Bank Document

²²⁷ Policy-Brief_Social Safety Net-Budget of Bangladesh-CPD, 2024, [Policy-Brief_Social-Safety-Net-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Catching-Some-Missing-Many.pdf](https://cpd.org.bd/Catching-Some-Missing-Many.pdf) (cpd.org.bd)

²²⁸ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. Population and Housing Census 2022 Preliminary Report [sid.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/sid.portal.gov.bd/publications/01ad1ffe_cfef_4811_af97_594b6c64d7c3/PHC_Preliminary_Report_\(English\)_August_2022.pdf](https://sid.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/sid.portal.gov.bd/publications/01ad1ffe_cfef_4811_af97_594b6c64d7c3/PHC_Preliminary_Report_(English)_August_2022.pdf)

²²⁹ World Population Review, 2024. [Bangladesh Population 2024](https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/bangladesh-population-growth/).

²³⁰ Macrotrends, 2024. [Bangladesh Population Growth Rate 1950-2025](https://macrotrends.net/population-growth-rate/150/Bangladesh) (accessed 1/14/2025)

²³¹ Population Pyramids, 2023. [Population of Bangladesh 2050](https://populationpyramids.com/country/bangladesh/)

²³² Macrotrends, 2024. [Bangladesh Life Expectancy 1950-2024](https://macrotrends.net/life-expectancy/150/Bangladesh)

employment in the informal sector without adequate job security or benefits. Efforts to formalize the labour market and improve conditions for informal workers are underway but face obstacles such as low minimum wages and insufficient social protection measures.²³³ Promoting gender equality in employment and ensuring equitable access to formal job opportunities are critical for inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

Limited climate-resilient infrastructure

Part of a country's constructed infrastructure is particularly important for people living in poverty. Infrastructure indicators do not clearly point in one direction in Bangladesh. While the country has a similar quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure as comparable countries,²³⁴ passengers including vulnerable groups experience low availability, accessibility, accommodation, acceptability and affordability of public transportation in Dhaka city.²³⁵ Bangladesh faces formidable challenges from climate change, including natural disasters and rising sea levels that threaten infrastructure resilience and exacerbate vulnerabilities in rural communities. Limited investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and inadequate disaster preparedness exacerbates these challenges, necessitating comprehensive strategies to enhance climate resilience, mitigate risks, and protect vulnerable populations from climate impacts.

The picture is also mixed when it comes to access to water. Despite improved water coverage, access to safe water for all remains a challenge. Some 40 percent of the population lack access to safe water, and almost 70 percent lack access to a safe toilet. Only about 3 percent of the poorest quantile has access to piped water and 86 percent of the water the poorest households use is contaminated.²³⁶ Moreover, the renewable internal freshwater resources per capita have rapidly decreased²³⁷ and the amount of terrestrial protected areas only amount to 4.6 percent of the total land area.²³⁸ When it comes to health care facilities (HCF) only 38 percent have basic hygiene services. However, there are significant differences between government and non-government facilities (32 percent of government facilities have basic hygiene services, compared to 69 percent of non-government facilities). There are also geographical disparities; access to safe water sources in health care facilities is more common in urban areas (90 percent) than in rural areas (67 percent).²³⁹ Inadequate access to WASH in HCF heighten the risk for infectious diseases, waterborne illnesses, and AMR.

The country's mostly public sector-driven infrastructure development is constrained by the resource availability as well as implementation capacities. The budget deficit was 5.5 percent of GDP in 2019, limiting further increases in infrastructure investments.

3.3 The Environmental Context

Bangladesh is located in the subtropical monsoon climate-regime, which is characterized by high temperatures and abundant rainfall. While being rich in biodiversity, all ecosystems, terrestrial as well as aquatic, are degrading at various levels. The country is gradually losing its forests, mainly found in the north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the country. Wetland ecosystems that are filled in, and/or losing connectivity, encroachment of wetland areas and flood flow zones, combined with inadequate waste management and maintenance of drainage canals, have increased vulnerability to flooding and reduced climate resilience, particularly in cities.²⁴⁰ On 30 January 2019, the High Court of Bangladesh recognized the river Turag as a living entity with legal rights and held that the same would apply to all rivers in

²³³ Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2024. [Bangladesh Labour Market Profile – 2024/2025](#)

²³⁴ World Bank, 2022. [Data: logistics performance index: Quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure \(1=low to 5=high\) - Bangladesh](#)

²³⁵ Rahman et al., 2023. [Access to Inclusive Urban Public Transport System in Bangladesh: The Case of Dhaka City](#). Volume 5, Issue 3

²³⁶ WaterAid Bangladesh, 2024. [The Crisis - Water](#)

²³⁷ World Bank, 2020. [Data - renewable internal freshwater resources per capita \(cubic meters\) - Bangladesh](#)

²³⁸ World Bank, 2022. [Terrestrial protected areas \(percent of total land area\)](#)

²³⁹ Progress on WASH in health care facilities 2000–2021, Special focus on WASH and infection prevention and control, UNICEF/WHO joint monitoring programme

²⁴⁰ Smith, A. C. et al. 2021. "Nature-based Solutions in Bangladesh: Evidence of Effectiveness for Addressing Climate Change and Other Sustainable Development Goals." *Front. Environ. Sci.* 9:737659.

Bangladesh. Following the recognition, efforts are made to reclaim the encroached lands including canals, rivers, and riverbanks.²⁴¹

Government corruption has exacerbated environmental disasters and relief efforts in Bangladesh. For example, years of land grabbing, forest degradation and land settlements in the name of economic development have increased environmental disaster vulnerabilities in hilly areas such as Bandarban, Chittagong, Khagrachari, and Rangamati.²⁴² The Bangladeshi climate finance landscape is highly complex and fragmented, complicating attempts at keeping track of financial flows to understand who should be held accountable for decisions and results related to climate finance policy, allocation, disbursement, and participation.²⁴³ Various studies on climate finance management over a sustained period (2013, 2015, and 2017) have revealed lack of good governance, irregularities and corruption.²⁴⁴

Environmental pollution limits the country's human capital formation and retention and affects city attractiveness and competitiveness by reducing liveability and productivity. Environmental impacts pose a disproportional burden on the poorest and most vulnerable groups, such as women, elders, and children under five years old, who suffer long-lasting health effects (including impacts on their cognitive development and productivity).²⁴⁵ These groups have limited resources to cope with the impacts of pollution on their livelihoods. Additionally, internal climate and rural-urban migration is adding pressure on cities, with increased traffic, noise and air pollution, and higher demand for essential services such as water supply and sanitation, solid waste management, energy provision, and health services, which are already constrained, especially for the most disadvantaged groups and during extreme climate events.²⁴⁶ The urban environmental pollution is already imposing a significant cost on Bangladesh's economy and the health of its inhabitants. According to estimates by the World Bank, Bangladesh loses about USD 6.5 billion a year (about 3.4 percent of GDP of 2015) due to pollution and environmental degradation in urban areas.²⁴⁷

Sea level rise affects the low-lying coastal zone in several ways including inundation, land erosion and saltwater intrusion into the soil and water table. These impacts increase vulnerability of already exposed populations in the coastal areas.²⁴⁸ The land area critically affected by saltwater intrusion (5–10 ppt) is projected to increase 68 percent by 2050, mostly in the southwest, which further threatens water supplies and livelihoods.²⁴⁹ A one-meter rise in the sea level would submerge almost 20 percent of the country and displace more than 30 million people, and the actual rise by 2100 could be significantly higher.²⁵⁰ Estimates suggest that cyclones and flooding already incur a financial impact of about USD 3.2 billion on average/year on Bangladesh, or about 2.2 percent of gross domestic product, potentially rising to 9 percent of GDP by the end of the century without further mitigation.²⁵¹ One-third of agricultural GDP may be lost due to climate variability and extreme events by 2050.²⁵² By 2035–2044, researchers calculate a potential increase of 6–12 million people affected by extreme floods, or a 40 percent increase in population exposed to river flooding by mid-century.²⁵³ Women are particularly vulnerable to climate change induced disasters as losses of drinking water and sanitation facilities increase the burden and time consumed by household

²⁴¹ ClientEarth, 2019. [Legal rights of rivers – an international trend?](#)

²⁴² U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 16 August 2021. [bangladesh-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf \(u4.no\)](#)

²⁴³ Khan et al. 2013 [The Political Settlement, Growth and Technical Progress in Bangladesh \(ethz.ch\)](#)

²⁴⁴ Transparency International Bangladesh, 2020 [bangladesh-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf \(u4.no\)](#)

²⁴⁵ World Bank, 2023. Building Back a Greener Bangladesh: Country Environment Analysis

²⁴⁶ 2023. Building Back a Greener Bangladesh: Country Environment Analysis
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099032624044525190/pdf/P1759081e3a5d909a18d3f17f5402e40eba.pdf>

²⁴⁷ World Bank, 2018. Enhancing opportunities for clean and resilient growth in urban Bangladesh.
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/585301536851966118/Enhancing-Opportunities-for-Clean-and-Resilient-Growth-in-Urban-Bangladesh-Country-Environmental-Analysis-2018>

²⁴⁸ Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2016. Assessment of Sea Level Rise on Bangladesh Coast through Trend Analysis

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319881270_Assessment_of_Sea_Level_Rise_on_Bangladesh_Coast_through_Trend_Analysis_Department_of_Environment_Ministry_of_Environment_and_Forests

²⁴⁹ World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Risk Profile: Bangladesh](#), p 26

²⁵⁰ Glennon R. The Unfolding Tragedy of Climate Change in Bangladesh, Scientific American, 2017

²⁵¹ ADB Working Paper Series, 2016. [Disaster Risk Financing in Bangladesh](#),

²⁵² World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Risk Profile: Bangladesh](#), p 26

²⁵³ World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Risk Profile: Bangladesh](#), p 27

tasks.²⁵⁴ For many families living in poor and disaster-prone areas, marrying off young daughters is used as a survival strategy for parents who feel unable to care for their children e.g. after heavy cyclones.²⁵⁵ Climate-related events, such as cyclones, drought, and riverbank erosion trigger migration towards urban areas. As a consequence of riverbank erosion alone, up to 200,000 persons are estimated to be migrating annually in Bangladesh.²⁵⁶

2020 analysis by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) of four projects related to the construction, renovation, and maintenance of coastal infrastructures for disaster prevention found that corruption siphoned off between 14 and 76 per cent of allocated funds.²⁵⁷

The national government estimates droughts of different intensities affect three to four million hectares of arable land each year.²⁵⁸ Agricultural droughts, influenced by precipitation deficits or hydrological deficits, typically occur during the pre-monsoon season in the northwest (Rangpur, Rajshahi) and pose ongoing threats to food security. The World Bank calculates the probability of agricultural drought will remain elevated over the 2041–2060 period compared to its 1995–2014 baseline. Western divisions (Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna) with a historically large number of consecutive dry days each year will also experience more short-term dry episodes under higher emission scenario.²⁵⁹ The effect of the recurrent El Niño and the surface to air temperature of the Ganges River basin (longer monsoon, droughts, heat waves, extreme weather events) will prompt particular attention for agriculture, water resources, and health sector. Since almost 70 percent of the health care is paid for by out-of-pocket expenditure, the climate risk which affects health will put a financial strain on the already economic poor and vulnerable.²⁶⁰

An average of 300 lightning-related fatalities annually are recorded in Bangladesh, where the farmers are the most vulnerable. The number of reported deaths due to lightning has risen steeply from just dozens per year in the 1990s. NASA, the UN and the government of Bangladesh cite increased storminess due to climate change as a reason for the increase in deadly strikes.^{261,262}

Climate variability exacerbates medium-level seismic risks across Bangladesh, including the eastern divisions and dense urban areas which is home to 5.3 million slum dwellers.^{263,264} The high population density of about 1,240 people per km² puts pressure on Bangladesh's natural resources.²⁶⁵ Industrialization and urbanization are some of the factors behind a 0.56 percent annual conversion rate of farm land for primarily the construction of houses, roads and establishment of businesses.²⁶⁶ The consequent annual loss of rice production is estimated to be between 0.86 and 1.16 percent.²⁶⁷ Pollution, over-harvesting and destruction of natural habitats are causing loss of biodiversity and people's livelihoods. In the 2022 Environmental Performance Index, a review of 32 performance indicators related to environmental health, ecosystem vitality etc., Bangladesh has fallen from 168 in 2020 to 177 in 2022.

The annual exposure to fine particle air pollution in Bangladesh is among the highest in the world, and continuously increasing, and the entire population live in areas with fine particle pollution concentrations

²⁵⁴ Bangladesh Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2019. Comprehensive National Review Report, for Beijing + 25 Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, p 9

²⁵⁵ IUCN, 2020. Gender Based Violence and Environment Linkages, p 141 [Gender-based violence and environment linkages | IUCN Library System](#)

²⁵⁶ Martin, Kang, Billah, Siddiqui, Black, Kniveton (2013). "Policy analysis: Climate Change and Migration Bangladesh", Working Paper 4. <http://www.migratingoutofpoverty.org/files/file.php?name=wp4-ccrm-b-policy.pdf&site=354>

²⁵⁷ Haque, M., Moula, N., Abusaleh, K. and Khan, M. (2020). Governance challenges in disaster response and way forward: Cyclone Amphan and recent experiences

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350616725_Governance_challenges_in_disaster_response_and_way_forward_Cyclone_Amphan_and_recent_experiences

²⁵⁸ UNFCC, 2019. [Third National Communication of Bangladesh to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)

²⁵⁹ World Bank, 2022. [Country Climate and Development Report: Bangladesh](#).

²⁶⁰ ADB, 2012. [The Impact of Out-of-Pocket Expenditures on Poverty and Inequalities in Use of Maternal and Child Health Services in Bangladesh: Evidence from the Household Income and Expenditure Surveys 2000-2010](#)

²⁶¹ BBC, 2023. [Bangladesh sees dramatic rise in lightning deaths linked to climate change \(bbc.com\)](#)

²⁶² UNCDF, 2023. [Lightning sheds provide a refuge as deadly storms increase in Bangladesh - UN Capital Development Fund](#)

²⁶³ World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Profile: Bangladesh](#), page 28

²⁶⁴ Hossain, 2020. [Slum of Bangladesh: An Overview](#)

²⁶⁵ World Bank Country Profile, 2018. Based on [World Development Indicators database](#)

²⁶⁶ Md Abdul Quasem, 2011. Conversion of Agricultural Land to Non-agricultural Uses in Bangladesh: Extent and Determinants, Bangladesh Development Studies

²⁶⁷ Md Abdul Quasem, 2011. *i to Non-agricultural Uses in Bangladesh: Extent and Determinants*

exceeding the WHO Air Quality Guideline for healthy air (10µg/m³).²⁶⁸ For the past several years, Bangladesh has been classified as the most polluted country in the world²⁶⁹ and Dhaka is often ranked the most polluted city in the world.²⁷⁰ Air pollution, both ambient and indoor pollution, is a major health risk in Bangladesh, estimated to cause 21 percent of all deaths.²⁷¹ An estimated 87–95 thousand people died from ambient PM_{2.5} air pollution in Bangladesh in 2019, with a central estimate of 91 thousand. About 63 percent of the deaths were from IHD and stroke; 28 percent from pulmonary diseases (COPD, lung cancer, and ALRI); 5 percent from type 2 diabetes; and 4 percent from neonatal disorders. Ambient PM_{2.5} also caused an estimated 245–266 thousand disability adjusted years of life lived with illness, corresponding to 1.1–1.2 billion days lived with illness.²⁷² The cost of health effects of ambient PM_{2.5} in 2019 is estimated at 4.4–4.8 percent of Bangladesh's GDP.²⁷³ Noise pollution has also become a significant problem in Bangladesh.²⁷⁴ In Dhaka, the average sound level is almost twice the maximum noise level that can be tolerated by humans without suffering a gradual loss of hearing according to the World Health Organization. Bangladesh also appears among the top ten polluters when it comes to mismanaged plastic waste ending up as marine plastic debris in the world's oceans.²⁷⁵

Although more than 97 percent of the population has access to improved water sources, only 48 percent of the population in Bangladesh had safely managed drinking water in 2019.²⁷⁶ Urban dwellers with limited education are at the highest risk.²⁷⁷ Ground water levels in Dhaka have fallen by 50 meters in the past four decades²⁷⁸ and continue to fall at an alarming rate due to extraction for drinking water and industrial use. Nearly 80 percent of the drinking water is supplied from ground water sources. However, nearly 17 percent of households spent from 30 to 60 minutes per day collecting water, and over 6 percent of households spent more than one hour per day collecting water according to the MICS survey.²⁷⁹ Access to improved sanitation facilities varied from 67 percent among the poorest quintile of households to 97 percent among the richest quintiles.²⁸⁰ A little over 15 percent had unimproved sanitation including 1.5 percent practicing open defecation. An estimated 72–95 percent of diarrheal disease morbidity and mortality is due to inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene in Bangladesh.²⁸¹ Inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene also caused an estimated 0.8–1.1 billion days lived with illness in 2019 which ultimately primarily affects the poor with limited WASH access.²⁸²

Bangladesh's electricity production is heavily dependent on fossil fuels, with approximately 68 percent of the total power generation from natural gas, 19 percent from liquid fuel, 2 percent from coal, 1 percent from hydro and 10 percent imported electricity. The present share of renewable energy (grid) is only 0.05 percent, excluding hydro.²⁸³

²⁶⁸ Health Effects Institute, 2020. State of Global Air 2020. Special Report. Boston, MA

²⁶⁹ IQ Air, historical rankings 2018–2023. [World's Most Polluted Countries in 2023 - PM2.5 Ranking | IQAir](#)

²⁷⁰ IQ Air, live rankings, when accessed on 2025-01-14, Dhaka was ranked as the most polluted city in the world. [World Air Quality Index \(AQI\) Ranking | IQAir](#)

²⁷¹ World Bank, 2018. Enhancing opportunities for clean and resilient growth in urban Bangladesh, p 8

²⁷² [World Bank, 2023. Building Back a Greener Bangladesh. Country Environmental Analysis](#), p 8

²⁷³ [World Bank, 2023. Building Back a Greener Bangladesh. Country Environmental Analysis](#), p 8

²⁷⁴ World Bank, 2018. Enhancing opportunities for clean and resilient growth in urban Bangladesh <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/585301536851966118/Enhancing-Opportunities-for-Clean-and-Resilient-Growth-in-Urban-Bangladesh-Country-Environmental-Analysis-2018>

²⁷⁵ Statista, 2019. The Countries Polluting The Oceans The Most <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1270819/ocean-plastic-pollution-worldwide-by-country/#:~:text=An%20estimated%20percent2036%20percent20of,through%20the%20capital%20city%20Manila>.

²⁷⁶ BBS/UNICEF, 2019. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/media/3281/file/Bangladesh_percent202019_percent20MICS_percent20Report_English.pdf

²⁷⁷ UNICEF & Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2015. [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#)

²⁷⁸ The Independent BD, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/57286>

²⁷⁹ BBS/UNICEF, 2019. Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey [Progotir Pathey, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019. Survey Findings Report, p.44](#).

²⁸⁰ World Bank, 2023. [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh. Country Environmental Analysis](#), p 25

²⁸¹ World Bank, 2023. [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh. Country Environmental Analysis](#), p 25

²⁸² World Bank, 2023. [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh. Country Environmental Analysis](#), p 25

²⁸³ Bangladesh Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources, 2020. Power Thematic Paper, Bangladesh Development Forum 2020

The Government and people of Bangladesh have prepared themselves for climate change by developing responses comprising technical and financial capacity, including early warning systems. However, considering the predicted adverse effects of climate change, the level of preparedness is unlikely to be sufficient. Bangladesh submitted an interim National Determined Contribution (NDC) update under the Paris agreement on 31 December 2020.²⁸⁴ The original NDC from 2015 includes three sectors; power, transport and industry and the overall pledge in terms of reducing total emissions of greenhouse gases was 5 percent by 2030 up to 15 percent if Bangladesh receives additional finance and technology from the global community. The updated interim NDC includes two additional sectors; solid waste and land use, and states that Bangladesh will further strengthen its mitigation actions to tackle its growing emissions and to play its role in global efforts to limit temperature rise despite contributing less than 0.35 percent of global emissions. The precise emission reduction targets will be set when the mitigation action studies are concluded and the final NDC is submitted to UNFCCC in beginning of 2021.²⁸⁵

Both the policy regime and environmental management have improved during the last decade. The Government of Bangladesh has for instance taken measures to enhance the protection of the environment by framing new rules and regulations and declaring new protected areas.²⁸⁶ The current Environmental Policy contains a requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) of economic zones and certain larger industry projects to be undertaken before their construction is allowed.²⁸⁷ However, the environmental degradation described above continues, being accentuated by inadequate rules and regulations, insufficiently skilled and empowered human resources with adequate power to enforce regulatory measures, as well as a lack of genuine political commitment.

The uncontrolled urbanization and industrial growth in a context of poor management of natural resources, inadequate pollution control and rising threats from climate change come with high costs that increasingly threaten Bangladesh's prospects for continued economic progress.

3.4 Peace and security context

Bangladesh has experienced a complex history of peace, conflict, and violence influenced by various social, political, and economic factors. The roots of contemporary conflict and violence in Bangladesh can be traced back to its struggle for identity and self-determination.²⁸⁸ The impact of British colonial rule and their divide-and-rule policy laid the groundwork for various social divisions and political tensions in the region.²⁸⁹ The partition of India in 1947, which created Pakistan, further exacerbated ethnic and linguistic differences, especially between East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan.²⁹⁰

The struggle for independence from Pakistan was marked by significant violence and human rights abuses, including widespread atrocities during the war.²⁹¹ This traumatic experience has had lasting effects on national identity and political discourse in Bangladesh.²⁹² After independence, the country has experienced numerous political crises, including coups, assassinations, and fraudulent elections, which have contributed to tensions between major parties, primarily the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).²⁹³

This has often resulted in street protests, strikes, and violence as different groups vying for power clash.²⁹⁴ Electoral politics in Bangladesh has been associated with violence, including intimidation, ballot rigging, and post-election riots.²⁹⁵ The 2014, 2018, and 2024 elections were particularly marked by violence and allegations of unfair practices. Ahead of national elections in January 2024, there was a sharp rise in

²⁸⁴ UNFCCC, 2021. [Nationally Determined Contributions](#)

²⁸⁵ UNFCCC, 2021. [Nationally Determined Contributions](#), p 1&13

²⁸⁶ Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2015. Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity

²⁸⁷ Bangladesh Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2018. [National Environmental Policy](#)

²⁸⁸ Schendel, 2009. A History of Bangladesh. Cambridge University Press

²⁸⁹ Ali, 1993. Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood. Dhaka: University Press Limited

²⁹⁰ Jahan, 1972. Pakistan: Failure in National Integration. Columbia University Press

²⁹¹ Bass, 2013. The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide. Knopf

²⁹² Riaz, 2016. Bangladesh: A Political History Since Independence. I.B. Tauris

²⁹³ Jahan, 2005. Bangladesh: Promise and Performance. Zed Books

²⁹⁴ Ahmed, 2004. Democracy and Political Party Competition in Bangladesh. Pacific Affairs, 77(1), 55-80.

²⁹⁵ Kumar, 2016. Electoral Violence in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis. Sage.

political violence, arrests of senior opposition leaders, mass arbitrary detention of thousands of political activists, use of excessive force by the authorities, and internet shutdowns to disrupt protests.²⁹⁶ There are numerous reports from human rights organizations of arbitrary detentions by civilian police and disappearances in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi authorities do not provide uniform statistics on the deaths that occur in the context of police interventions, including crossfire incidents. Police officers are rarely held accountable for their actions, even though there are exceptions.²⁹⁷ The government states that it has “zero tolerance” against violence by the police and security forces and does not share the picture of commonly occurring violations.²⁹⁸ The recent conflict landscape in Bangladesh has been marked by increasing instability and violence. According to the HIIK Conflict Barometer, Bangladesh has seen a rise in the intensity and number of violent conflicts compared to previous years²⁹⁹ since Bangladesh is a positive peace deficit country where small disturbances can lead to radically different peace trajectories.³⁰⁰

Another important driver of conflict in Bangladesh is social inequality and unemployment. Bangladesh has sustained a downward trend in poverty levels. Despite this progress, inequality has remained relatively stable³⁰¹ and unemployment remains stagnant.³⁰² In parallel, limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities has led to frustration and unrest. In July 2024, the student movement demanding

Figures at a Glance: Trends in Drivers of Conflict

The global peace index of Bangladesh remains the same. The General Peace Index ranking is 86, and the positive peace index is 125, indicating a positive peace deficit of 39 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023).

Attacks by militants and extremists declined (Global Terrorism Index, 2023).

Fragile States Index improved (Fund for Peace, 2023).

Attacks on political opponents increased (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

The Human Freedom Index score is below the South Asian regional average (Cato Institute, 2023).

the restructuring of discriminatory traditional and quota-based systems for government job recruitment, was met with police violence. Hundreds of people are believed to have been killed and thousands injured.³⁰³ At least 10,372 people, including many political opposition leaders, have been arrested since the protests began, and the authorities are accused of arbitrarily detaining many others without charge.³⁰⁴ The movement reflects broader frustrations over unemployment, corruption, inflation, and political violence conducted by the student wing of the government.³⁰⁵ Student movements have shaped the political landscape in Bengal since early twentieth century.

Practically, Bangladesh was a one-party state with politicization of judiciary, executive and constitutional bodies including anti-corruption institutions and the human rights commission before 5 August 2024, when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled the country. An interim government was formed led by Dr. Yunus and the parliament was dissolved. Following the

student-led uprising, a new wave of conflict and tensions was on the rise in the first few weeks, highlighting underlying uncertainties in the political and social landscape. Bangladesh faced a series of significant violent events, including attacks on minorities, conflicts between Bengali and indigenous communities, workers, and industrial police. Muslim minority communities like the Qadiani community faced threats, and local Awami League leaders and activists also became targets. Multiple shrines, sculptures and

²⁹⁶ Amnesty International, Bangladesh 2023; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/report-bangladesh>

²⁹⁷ Amnesty International, Bangladesh 2023; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/report-bangladesh>

²⁹⁸ Government of Bangladesh, 2023. Official Statement on Police and Security Forces.

²⁹⁹ HIIK, 2023. Conflict Barometer.

³⁰⁰ Positive Peace Report 204 page 52; Institute for Economics & Peace, <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>

³⁰¹ World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief, 2024. pip.worldbank.org/country-profiles/BGD

³⁰² Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2024. Quarterly Labour Force Survey.

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/youth-workforce-slides-unemployment-climbs>

³⁰³ OHCHR, August 2024. [OHCHR-Preliminary-Analysis-of-Recent-Protests-and-Unrest-in-Bangladesh-16082024](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/08/ohchr-preliminary-analysis-of-recent-protests-and-unrest-in-bangladesh-16082024) 2.pdf

³⁰⁴ The Guardian, 2024. [Bangladesh arrests thousands in protest crackdown](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jul/24/bangladesh-arrests-thousands-in-protest-crackdown).

³⁰⁵ Dhaka Tribune, 2023. Quota Reform Movement: Timeline of Protests.

historical monuments were attacked and vandalized. The tension between secular and religious groups was heightened. A significant number of police officers were observed refusing to go back to work considering their safety and security. In the absence of law enforcement, petty crime and mob justice incidents increased, contributing to a climate of instability and violence. Despite efforts by the government and law enforcement agencies, the situation remained volatile.

Religious tensions also play a significant role in driving conflict in Bangladesh. The country is predominantly Muslim, but there are also significant minority communities, including Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. Since 2013, extremist groups have targeted secular bloggers and activists, leading to a climate of fear and intimidation.³⁰⁶

Ethnic tensions are another driver of conflict in Bangladesh. The country is home to numerous ethnic communities, each with its own distinct culture and traditions. Armed conflict and insurgency in the ethnically diverse Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) lasted for 20 years until the signing of the CHT Peace Accord in 1997. The CHT conflict erupted after independence as the demand from eleven indigenous groups for greater autonomy and protection of traditional lands was rejected by the government, which instead adopted a constitution that emphasized a homogenous national identity built around distinctive Bengali cultural, language, and religious features.³⁰⁷ Over 400,000 Bengali settlers, accompanied by around one-third of the Bangladeshi armed forces, were transferred to the area – the latter for counter-insurgency purposes.³⁰⁸ While the conflict came to a formal end in 1997, the human rights situation remains dire and the lack of implementation of the peace accord could potentially spark renewed armed conflict. Tensions between different ethnic groups have sometimes led to violence, with clashes over land, resources, and political representation. Examples of human rights violations are forced eviction, trumped-up charges, arbitrary arrest, temporary detention, torture, sexual assault and killing.³⁰⁹ The CHT region has seen a surge in violent activities by the Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA) and other insurgent groups. These groups have carried out coordinated attacks on government installations and have been involved in extortion and violent confrontations with security forces. The complex interplay of ethnic tensions and insurgent activities has led to a severe security crisis in the region.

The ongoing civil war in Myanmar has spilled over into Bangladesh, particularly affecting border areas like Cox's Bazar and Bandarban. The Rohingya crisis, in which hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees in 2017 fled to Bangladesh from neighbouring Myanmar, has also exacerbated ethnic tensions in the country. The influx of Rohingya refugees and cross-border violence have created significant security challenges for Bangladesh. The situation has been exacerbated by military actions and insurgent activities from Myanmar, leading to frequent clashes and instability along the border.³¹⁰ While the Bangladeshi government maintains that the border is closed, contrary to the principle of non-refoulement, which guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, there is an imminent risk of influx of those fleeing violence and conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Intensification of fighting between Myanmar armed forces and the Arakan Army has in 2024 had an impact in the refugee camps where organized groups are recruiting adults, youth and children to join the ongoing conflict in Myanmar.³¹¹

The 2023 and 2024 Joint Response Plans for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis received less than two-thirds of the US\$876 million and US\$852 million sought in donor contributions.³¹² The 2023 funding shortfall forced the World Food Programme (WFP) to reduce Rohingya food rations by a third, leading to a sharp deterioration in the food and nutrition situation in the camps. Over 15 percent of children were suffering from malnutrition, the highest ever recorded in the camps.³¹³ The scarcity of livelihoods prospects leaves Rohingya refugees almost entirely reliant on humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs.

³⁰⁶ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/blogging-bangladesh-caught-between-rock-and-hard-place-3235271>

³⁰⁷ Chowdhury, 2002. Bangladesh: The Tension Between National Identity and Multiculturalism. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(3), 267-281.

³⁰⁸ Mohsin, 2003. *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

³⁰⁹ International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2023. [The Indigenous World 2023: Bangladesh](#)

³¹⁰ <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/why-bangladeshs-kuki-national-front-is-cause-for-concern/>

³¹¹ [PS-Joint-Protection-Monitoring-Report-2024-Quarter-1.pdf \(rohingyaresponse.org\)](#)

³¹² [Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan 2024 | Financial Tracking Service \(unocha.org\)](#).

³¹³ [WFP increases food rations again for Rohingya in Cox's Bazar – will reach full ration by August | World Food Programme](#)

While the food ration was increased in 2024, violence, insecurity and human trafficking are increasing concerns in the refugee camps. Protection monitoring reports reveal alarming surges in serious protection incidents over the years.³¹⁴ The smuggling of drugs and human trafficking remain critical challenges in the district.³¹⁵ Amidst fires, cyclones and floods, 2023 and 2024 also saw the highest number of Rohingya embarking on dangerous boat journeys.

Crime and violence are a risk in bigger cities such as Dhaka, affecting the poor and slum areas. In the slum areas, children are at serious risk of being incited by their peers to become involved in crime. The children of slum areas are also more affected by various types of crime than other people in society.³¹⁶

The slide towards autocracy and increasing suppression of dissident voices erode trust in the state and may exacerbate existing tensions and disenfranchise larger segments of society.³¹⁷ The growing political polarization has been accompanied by a rise in violent extremism and terrorism.³¹⁸ At the end of 2020, with the changes in the leadership, Hefazat e Islam, a coalition of Islamist organizations, became strongly tied to political parties and engaged in controversies regarding the installation of statues representing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.³¹⁹ However, since 2021, there have not been any cases of fatality related to Islamist terrorist groups, and Bangladesh experienced few instances of terrorist violence as authorities continued to pursue militants.³²⁰

In Bangladesh, conflict comes in many forms. In its more visible guise, it can mean armed battles between protesters and security forces on the streets of Dhaka, political assassination, and military uprising.³²¹ Less routinely reported is low-level endemic violence linked to organized crime and regional, tribal, and cross-border disputes.³²² The most hidden form of conflict takes place within the home.³²³ The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 and its Rules 2013 aim to prevent and protect women and children from domestic violence, which was earlier considered as a private matter. Highly visible, violent conflict is often cyclical.³²⁴ The danger from the other latent, simmering, and entrenched forms of unrest deserves equal attention.³²⁵

While gender-based violence and violence against women and girls are endemic problems in Bangladeshi society, conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence against women and men, and boys and girls, have been a particular concern for the Rohingya refugees, as this was part of the efforts by the Myanmar security forces to ethnically cleanse the Rakhine state of Rohingyas.³²⁶

Amidst pressing demands of protests across the country for rape law reforms, the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Act was enacted by the Parliament in 2020. The Amendment most notably introduces the death penalty as a punishment for rape and has received mixed reactions as many rights organizations raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of the death sentence as a deterrent to rape.³²⁷

According to a study commissioned by Action Aid Bangladesh, a total of 63.51 percent of women respondents reported facing online harassment and violence.³²⁸ Despite several positive measures and

³¹⁴ [PS-Joint-Protection-Monitoring-Report-2023-Quarter-4-Final.pdf \(rohingyaresponse.org\)](#)

³¹⁵ Asia Foundation, 2022. Cox's Bazar: Security Risks and Human Trafficking. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/X-Border_Emerging-Marketplace-Dynamics-in-the-Rohingya-Refugee-Camps-of-Coxs-Bazar-Bangladesh.pdf

³¹⁶ Asian Development Bank, 2020. [Bangladesh: Economy](#).

³¹⁷ Muller, 2020. Autocracy and Dissidence: Erosion of State Trust. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³¹⁸ Jones, 2021. Political Polarization and Terrorism: Bangladesh. New York: Routledge.

³¹⁹ BBC, 2020. [Hefazat-e-Islam's changing dynamics in Bangladesh politics](#).

³²⁰ Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Bangladesh. US state department of State [Bangladesh - United States Department of State](#)

³²¹ Islam & Zaman, 2022. Conflict and Security in Dhaka: An Overview. South Asian Journal of Policy and Governance, 41(2), 213-229.

³²² Siddiqui, 2022. Organized Crime and Violence in Bangladesh. Crime and Society, 58(4), 444-466.

³²³ Khan, 2021. Domestic Violence in the Shadows: Bangladesh. International Journal of Social Research, 12(3), 123-145.

³²⁴ Ahmed, 2022. Democracy and Political Party Competition in Bangladesh. Pacific Affairs, 77(1), 55-80.

³²⁵ Barkat, 2020. Political Economy of Violence in Bangladesh. New York: Springer.

³²⁶ UNHCR, 2023. [Rohingya Refugee Crisis](#).

³²⁷ Amnesty International, 2020. [Bangladesh: Death penalty introduced for rape](#).

³²⁸ Action Aid, 2022. [Research Findings Online Violence Against Women.pdf \(actionaidbd.org\)](#)

investments made by the government, development partners and CSOs, violence against women and girls is still resurgent and issues of capacity, accountability and political commitment remain erratic.

3. Conclusions

4.1 Binding constraints

The analysis of the development contexts brings out multiple challenges – but also opportunities to drive change and to create pathways out of poverty. In order to prioritise action towards development, this chapter suggests tackling a number of “binding constraints” for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. Binding constraints are defined here as factors that severely restrict the potential for long term poverty reduction, and if relieved, they would produce the largest gains in poverty reduction.

Weak institutions that lack the capacity to establish and enforce regulations as well as mobilize domestic resources, coupled with low public investment in social sectors leads to poor State capacity to deliver basic social services

Lack of institutional capacity continue to impede social and economic development. Weak performance of State institutions results in failure to reform State structures and inability to progress on policy decisions. This, together with lack of leadership at different levels of government has left democratic governance far from being fulfilled. Bangladesh continuously ranks low in international comparisons, eg in IDEAs 2024 Democracy tracker where Bangladesh performs low in the three categories Representation, Rights and Rule of Law.

The interim government has created several reform commissions to address governance-related challenges, eg corruption, the election system, the judiciary, police, and constitution. The mandate of these commissions is to make recommendations for reforms to create a more conducive environment for democratic governance.

Tax revenue collection in Bangladesh is among the lowest in the world, and much below the level of comparable peers. As a consequence, the public budget to finance and capacity to deliver basic services and to invest in welfare especially in education and health is severely restricted. People living in poverty do not get access to public services such as quality education, affordable health care, infrastructure and social protection causing a constraint for poverty reduction.

Reasons for the low level of tax revenue include widespread informality, lack of awareness of the benefits and trust in the tax system, a complicated tax collection system for the taxpayer, complexity of tax laws and policies and non-transparency enabling tax evasion, and a dominance of cash-based payments. The weak public financial management is due to vested political interest with private sector, lack of political priority, populism favouring infrastructure and more “visible” investments, debt service eating up the budget, and a poorly functioning accounting system and data collection.

It is particularly a binding constraint for low-income and vulnerable households and individuals without the alternative of substituting public services by private alternatives, school-age children, and working-aged adults in need of reskilling, people in need of health care or suffering from chronic disease, and climate-vulnerable individuals and households.

To address the binding constraint, democratic governance needs to be improved by strengthened institutions and increased public spending in sectors such as health and education. There also needs to be an enforcement and simplification of the tax collection system, a broadening of the tax base (e.g. by formalization of job sectors), improvement of data quality, transparency and accounting/public procurement systems, as well as improvements in transparency of the budget allocation process. Policy makers, government institutes and private sectors will need to make the change happen and it can be financed through public domestic financing, ODA grants, innovative financing mechanisms and loans/bonds.

Lack of resilience to climate impacts and environmental degradation, as well as mitigation measures, at the national level is severely affecting both life and livelihoods at household level

Bangladesh is one of the most affected countries when it comes to climate hazards. While the country can do little to impact the rate of change that is only projected to accelerate, it is of urgent priority to prepare for the change and strengthen the resilience of the nation and its people. In particular, lack of climate resilient infrastructure is causing larger damage than would have been necessary if the existing and new infrastructure was built to resist the most common forms of climate hazards that regularly hit the country.

A lack of implementation of policies and enforcement of protection measures lead to increased exposure to environmental and climate hazards. These climate hazards increase the risk of poor health, WASH & nutrition, leading to high out-of-pocket expenditures for healthcare, indebtedness and consequently poverty. The lack of social protection schemes hinders the adaptation at household level leading to the use of destructive coping mechanisms. There is further a lack of incentives, competence, and capital to invest in mitigation measures.

It is particularly a binding constraint for individuals living in areas vulnerable to climate change, e.g. coastal areas, river basins, chars/islands, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Rohingya refugees and slum dwellers. Women, children, and elderly are especially vulnerable.

Increasing investment in green infrastructure both through public and private means is urgently needed. This can be financed through improved tax collection and external support through large loss and damage funds and agreements, e.g., UNFCCC accords. The mobilisation of green finance from private sources can be increased through green bond issuance or public-private partnerships.

Furthermore, increasing the resilience of the households when the risks materialise would prevent people from falling into poverty. The government has already prioritised the building of social protection systems, but they are chronically underfunded and insufficient. The government needs to implement the national adaptation plan, mobilizing resources from not only taxes but also international sources and development partners. The capacity of responsible authorities needs to be strengthened as they are currently plagued by corruption and lack of human resources.

Lack of economic diversification and just transition is limiting competitiveness and creation of work with decent working conditions

While Bangladesh is graduating from the Least Developed Country category, its economic structure is still similar to a low-income country relying on agriculture as an important source of employment but where productivity is low. Industrialization has started but is environmentally and socially unsustainable and narrowly focused.

The increased demands on compliance with environmental regulations is a requirement for maintaining access to the world market and increasing productivity. However, there is still a lack of investment in a green and just transition due to weak political will and insufficient mobilization of investment.

The historically large focus on developing and benefitting the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector has led to high dependence on garments for exports while other sectors are lacking behind. The workforce lacks skills to adopt to higher-productivity jobs in the industrial sector. Awareness of returns to education is low and the options for re-skilling are scarce.

This is a binding constraint for the young entrants to the labour market (especially school drop-outs), uneducated workers (especially women above the age of 35) and climate-vulnerable farmers.

To address this binding constraint, there need to be policies and investments to support a market diversification and green/just transition, as well as to support employability of workers in the labour market of tomorrow. Women's opportunities need special attention as they face higher barriers due to social norms.

There further needs to be increased participation of trade unions and other parts of civil society representing people affected by the Just Green Transition in decision making and policy. Improving an enabling environment for FDI as foreign investors can import technical skills and know-how. Creating awareness of the benefits of education and allocating more funds to relevant education that is adapted to market need is further needed.

While the government has the primary responsibility of forming the industrial policy for Bangladesh, large actors in the private sector can drive the technological change and innovation and enforce the branch standards. This can be funded through public and private funds, FDI and ODA.

A widespread culture of corruption, lack of accountability as well as weak capacity of institutions in controlling and sanctioning corruption is a major obstacle to development

There is widespread corruption in both public and private sectors in Bangladesh. In the public sector, this leads to unequal access to infrastructure and services, including unaffordability as well as poor quality. Consequently, corruption weakens the social contract i.e., the trust and sense of mutual obligation between the citizens and the state. Corruptive practices exacerbate existing inequalities as they hit disproportionately hard on households with limited resources and lack of alternatives. The corruption in the health sector is particular and is affecting poverty in multiple ways. Corrupt drug pricing mechanisms, for example, increases the out-of-pocket expenditure for health which is among the highest in the world.

This is particularly a binding constraint for marginalized and underserved community and people already living in poverty, as well as people in need of welfare such as the sick, elderly, children, students, mothers and victims of crime.

To address this a multipronged approach is required, encompassing both systemic changes, including decentralization of responsibilities, capacities and resources to deliver services. It also requires stronger social accountability, which in turn entails more transparent and inclusive governance and markets. Strengthening legal frameworks, enforcement of laws and regulations and promoting equal and transparent access to justice will also be necessary. Efforts to address the vulnerabilities and poverty manifestations that push some people in to corrupt practices also creates better preconditions for social accountability, as it separates those trying to live decent lives from those who are not.

Many actors have a role in addressing this binding constraint, including the national public administration, parliament, civil society and media, private sector, development partners and an independent and transparent national anti-corruption commission.

Conservative social norms are impacting gender roles and limiting the opportunities and choice of individuals

Gender norms lead to inequality between men and women through discrimination of women by limiting their access to social services, employment, political participation and overall restricting their decision-making power. Girls and women are considered a burden and of lesser value in society. There are deep rooted cultural norms that prioritize males over females in all sectors. Women and girls are more prone to face sexual violence, harassment, and human trafficking. They are also more likely to be excluded from economic opportunities, further entrenching poverty. The LGBTQI communities also lack support networks, which exacerbates their socio-economic challenges. Limited visibility and representation in policy-making also mean that their specific needs are often overlooked.

To address this binding constraint requires the strengthening of existing institutions and implementation and enforcement of existing gender sensitive laws, policies and budgets. Women and LGBTGI need to be included in decision-making and have access to informed financial services. Disparities in access to education, skills and vocational training needs to be addressed. It also requires an enhancement of the

public service delivery and social welfare system with a focus on the specific needs of women and LGBTQI.

Public institutions, civil society, religious and community leaders, youth and private sector will need to be involved in addressing this binding constraint. It will need to be financed through the government budgets and through the enforcement of laws, strengthening accountability of concerned institutions, engaging men and boys and encouraging women's participation in political decision making.

Political polarization and radical narratives incite communal divides that pose a threat to democracy, impact conflict dynamics and have human security implications for minority groups

Bangladesh has a long history of intergroup religious and ethnic conflict. Recent years' communal violence incidents are believed to have been orchestrated by politically motivated groups, rather than spontaneous religiously motivated acts of violence. Local politics and power relations as well as intermeddling of extremist elements are seen as underlying factors.

Radical narratives are feeding into generalized public scepticism towards the political establishment and is presented as the only moral alternative. In the aftermath of the ousting of the Awami League government in August 2024, an alerting rise in extremist content, disinformation and communal polarization has been noted, particularly in the digital sphere of social media. Violent extremist groups have shown a sophisticated ability to adapt to the digital landscape where existing regulations are inadequate for countering the spread of disinformation and hate-speech that instigate violence and political division.

Islamist groups have framed government-led reforms and international actor engagement, or so called "Western interference", as existential threats to Islam and national sovereignty. On the other hand, Hindu radicals, and political party-affiliated actors, are seen to instrumentalize the destabilizing factor of fears among the countries' ethnic and religious minorities to further strain communal tensions as well as delegitimize the interim government efforts.

These polarized narratives exacerbate an already fragile political context. Coupled with the inability of law enforcement actors and a generalized culture of impunity, the risk of conflict escalation and increased violence in the country put marginalised groups and communities at further risk.

To address this binding constraint, social cohesion programmes that address interfaith and political tensions, and disinformation that undermine trust in governance, are needed. Social media oversight and regulation in compliance with human rights due diligence principles, public awareness campaigns restoring societal relations could mitigate the role of disinformation and mitigate the risks posed by extremism.

Law enforcement agencies, civil society and human rights defenders, private sector – particularly tech companies and social media platforms, regular media actors, as well as law-making ministries will need to be involved in addressing this binding constraint.

Lack of rights and opportunities are pushing Rohingya refugees into poverty traps

Rohingya refugees are forbidden the right to work and earn an income, making them entirely reliant on humanitarian assistance for their survival. Decreasing levels of humanitarian funding is making them vulnerable to exploitation by criminal groups operating in the camps and raises the risks of engaging in negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage, trafficking, and criminal activities, further deteriorating the security environment. The protraction of the crisis, inability to access natural resources due to the refugee camps, some Rohingyas' involvement in various unlawful activities, and disruption in local labour market and trade have also contributed to widespread and growing tensions between the host community and Rohingya refugees.

The entire Rohingya population in Bangladesh is stuck in this poverty trap, including those who are here since the 1990s, those who arrived in 2017 and recent arrivals due to the deteriorating situation in neighbouring Rakhine State in Myanmar. The population currently exceeds one million individuals.

Enabling Rohingya refugees' engagement in skills development, income generation and livelihood activities would make them more self-reliant and provide opportunities to lead more dignified lives in the camps, while preparing for their eventual repatriation to Myanmar. An expanded use of mobile financial services would also mitigate the inherent security risks associated with cash.

Addressing this binding constraint is dependent on the Government lifting the restrictions on Rohingya refugees engaging in income generation and livelihood activities while living in the camps. Once these restrictions are lifted, national, local, civil society, UN and NGOs will be able to increase livelihood opportunities for Rohingya refugees and eventually the private sector can become more engaged.

4.2 The way forward: scenarios for tomorrow

As noted in the beginning, Bangladesh is at a critical crossroads. What road the country will choose to embark on will define its development path and form the future of the people. In a positive scenario, the energy mobilised by the youth movement and the commitments of increased transparency and more efficient governance by the interim regime will turn into real changes in the political landscape. With support of the development partners and different stakeholders in the society, South Asia's third most populous nation is embarking on a journey towards political stability.

An alternative scenario is that the high expectations are not realised, and the frustration will turn into further violence and increased tensions in the society. Lack of trust and prolonged uncertainty risk alienating foreign and domestic investors and worsening the already inadequate state provision of social services.

The analysis presented in this paper can form a basis for the upcoming discussions on the strategic choices and can help to formulate a common development narrative for different actors – public and private, domestic and international – to engage and contribute to the development. Placing the priorities of people living in poverty at the centre of these considerations provides a good starting point for focused action that create conditions for people living in poverty to improve their standards of living.

List of references

- Action Aid, 2022. [Research Findings Online Violence Against Women.pdf \(actionaidbd.org\)](#)
- ADB Working Paper Series, 2016. [Disaster Risk Financing in Bangladesh](#),
- ADB, 2012. [The Impact of Out-of-Pocket Expenditures on Poverty and Inequalities in Use of Maternal and Child Health Services in Bangladesh: Evidence from the Household Income and Expenditure Surveys 2000-2010](#)
- Ahmed, 2004. Democracy and Political Party Competition in Bangladesh. *Pacific Affairs*, 77(1), 55-80.
- Ahmed, 2022. Democracy and Political Party Competition in Bangladesh. *Pacific Affairs*, 77(1), 55-80.
- Ahmed, Shahidul. "Why Bangladesh's Kuki National Front is Cause for Concern." *The Diplomat*, Apr. 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/why-bangladeshs-kuki-national-front-is-cause-for-concern/>.
- Akter et al., 2021. [Contribution of fish to animal protein consumption in daily diet. International Journal of Natural and Social Sciences.](#)
- [Al Jazeera, 2021. Six sentenced to death in Bangladesh for killing LGBTQ activists | LGBTQ News | Al Jazeera](#)
- Al Jazeera, Nov 2023. [Bangladesh PM stands firm on pay rise amid deadly garment worker protests | Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera](#)
- Ali, 1993. *Bangladesh: A Legacy of Blood*. Dhaka: University Press Limited
- Altaf Hossain, Isaac Maddow-Zimet, Meghan Ingerick, Hadayeat Ullah Bhuiyan, Michael Vlassoff and Susheela Singh, 2014. Access to and Quality of Menstrual Regulation and Post-abortion Care in Bangladesh: Evidence from a Survey of Health Facilities; and Susheela Singh, Altaf Hossain, Isaac Maddow-Zimet, Michael Vlassoff, Hadayeat Ullah Bhuiyan and
- Amnesty International, 2018. [Amnesty International Report 2017/2018](#)
- Amnesty International, 2020. [Bangladesh: Death penalty introduced for rape.](#)
- Amnesty International, 2024. [The State of the World's Human Rights](#)
- Amnesty International, Bangladesh 2023; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/report-bangladesh>
- Amnesty International, Bangladesh 2023; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/bangladesh/report-bangladesh>
- Asadul Islam and Russel Smyth, (2016). "Economics of Sex Work in Bangladesh" in Scott Cunningham and Manisha Shah, *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Prostitution.*, 2016
- Asia Foundation, 2022. Cox's Bazar: Security Risks and Human Trafficking. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/X-Border_Emerging-Marketplace-Dynamics-in-the-Rohingya-Refugee-Camps-of-Coxs-Bazar-Bangladesh.pdf
- Asian Development Bank, 2020. [Bangladesh: Economy.](#)
- Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022. [DFAT country information report - Bangladesh](#)
- Background paper on URBANISATION IN BANGLADESH: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD. [ASEFSU23-Background-Paper Sustainable-Urbanisation-in-Bangladesh-Dhaka.pdf](#)
- Bangladesh Bank, Research Dept., 2023 ["Quarterly Review on Readymade Garments \(RMG\): April-June of FY23"](#)
- Bangladesh Bank's Yearly data of wage earner's remittance. [Bangladesh Bank \(bb.org.bd\)](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, 2024. [Foreign Employment and Remittances from 1976 to 2023.](#)

- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF, 2019. [Multi-indicator Cluster Survey Report](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, 2019. [Progotir Pathey, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019. Survey Findings Report, p.44.](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. [National Child Labour Survey](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. [Population and Housing Census, preliminary report](#)
- [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022. Sample Vital Statistics 2022](#)
- [Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023 Sample Vital Statistics](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023, [Quarterly Labour Force Survey](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Consumer Price Index \(CPI\), Inflation Rate and Wage Rate Index \(WRI\) in Bangladesh](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2023. [Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2022.](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2024. [Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics-2023 \(BSVS-2023\)](#)
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2024. Quarterly Labour Force Survey.
- Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2022, Page 49, [Bangladesh DHS 2022 - Key Indicators Report \[PR148\] \(dhsprogram.com\)](#)
- [Bangladesh Education Statistics 2023 \(1\).pdf \(portal.gov.bd\)](#)
- Bangladesh Health Economics Unit, Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Expenditure Tracking by Diseases, 2020, Final Report, 9 November 2023, page IV and 21 [2024-02-13-05-48-0bc55b04d4b84d1713644939e31311d4.pdf \(portal.gov.bd\)](#)
- Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 2023. Urban Poverty Dynamics during Covid-19 Anatomy of Resilience <https://businesspostbd.com/front/covid-created-51-new-poor-in-cities-bids-2023-05-18>
- Bangladesh Law Digest, January 2022. [The Clause Of “Special Circumstances” Under Section 19 Of CMRA For Early Stage Marriages In Bangladesh – Bangladesh Law Digest \(BDLD\) 2024 \(bdlawdigest.org\)](#)
- Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2015. Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2016. Assessment of Sea Level Rise on Bangladesh Coast through Trend Analysis
- Bangladesh Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2018. [National Environmental Policy](#)
- Bangladesh Ministry of Power, Energy & Mineral Resources, 2020. Power Thematic Paper, Bangladesh Development Forum 2020
- Bangladesh Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2019. Comprehensive National Review Report, for Beijing + 25 Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995
- Barkat, 2020. Political Economy of Violence in Bangladesh. New York: Springer.
- Bass, 2013. The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide. Knopf
- BBC, 2020. [Hefazat-e-Islam's changing dynamics in Bangladesh politics.](#)
- BBC, 2023. [Bangladesh sees dramatic rise in lightning deaths linked to climate change \(bbc.com\)](#)
- BBS/UNICEF, 2019. Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey [Progotir Pathey, Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019. Survey Findings Report, p.44.](#)

- BBS/UNICEF, 2019. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/media/3281/file/Bangladesh_percent202019_percent20MICS_percent20Report_English.pdf
- [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh: Country Environmental Analysis 2023 by The World Bank](#)¹
- Centre for Law and Democracy, 2022. [Global Right to Information Rating](#)
- Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2023. Living Wage Estimates for Bangladesh and [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)
- Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, April 2024. [CHTC urges urgent action to address escalating tensions in Bandarban, emphasizes the need for a peaceful resolution, protection of civilians, and calls for action against alleged sponsored proxy conflicts - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs](#)
- Chowdhury, 2002. Bangladesh: The Tension Between National Identity and Multiculturalism. Journal of South Asian Studies, 38(3), 267-281.
- [CHTC urges urgent action to address escalating tensions in Bandarban, emphasizes the need for a peaceful resolution, protection of civilians, and calls for action against alleged sponsored proxy conflicts - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs](#)
- ClientEarth, 2019. [Legal rights of rivers – an international trend?](#)
- CNN, 2024. [Bangladesh floods: Nearly 2 million people stranded as second wave of devastating floods hits Bangladesh in less than a month.](#)
- Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021, by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB). [Transparency International Bangladesh \(TIB\) \(ti-bangladesh.org\)](#)
- Country Reports on Terrorism 2023: Bangladesh. US state department of State [Bangladesh - United States Department of State](#)
- Cultural Survival, 2021. [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Alternative Report Submission: Violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Bangladesh](#)
- Danish Trade Union Development Agency, 2024. [Bangladesh Labour Market Profile – 2024/2025](#)
- Development Policy Centre, 2019 [Inheritance rights of women and Shariah law: the case of Bangladesh - Devpolicy Blog from the Development Policy Centre](#)
- Dhaka Tribune, 2023. [Parliament passes cyber security bill 2023](#)
- Dhaka Tribune, 2023. Quota Reform Movement: Timeline of Protests.
- Dhaka Tribune, 2024. [Promoting women's rights through access to information \(dhakatribune.com\)](#)
- East Asia Forum, 2021. [Minority rights at stake in Bangladesh | East Asia Forum](#)
- El Arifeen, S., Hill, K., Ahsan, K. Z., Jamil, K., Nahar, Q., & Streatfield, P. K. (2014). Maternal mortality in Bangladesh: a Countdown to 2015 country case study. The Lancet, 384(9951), 1366-1374.
- Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024 [Bangladesh: Country Profile | Freedom House](#), accessed 5 July 2024
- German Development Cooperation, 2023. [Study on the Decline of Women Workers in the Textile Industry in Bangladesh.](#)
- GermanWatch, 2021. [Global Climate Risk Index 2021](#)
- Girls Not Brides – Child marriage atlas – Bangladesh. [Child marriage atlas - Girls Not Brides](#)
- Glennon R. The Unfolding Tragedy of Climate Change in Bangladesh, Scientific American, 2017
- Global Network of Sex Work Projects, Promoting Health and Human Rights. [Bangladesh | Global Network of Sex Work Projects \(nswp.org\)](#)

- Government of Bangladesh, 2023. Official Statement on Police and Security Forces.
- Government of Sweden, 2021. [Country report on human rights, democracy and the rule of law: Bangladesh](#)
- Haque, M., Moula, N., Abusaleh, K. and Khan, M. (2020). Governance challenges in disaster response and way forward: Cyclone Amphan and recent experiences
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350616725_Governance_challenges_in_disaster_response_and_way_forward_Cyclone_Amphan_and_recent_experiences
- Hayward, D., 2023. “[Bangladesh - Context and Land Governance](#)”
- Health Effects Institute, 2020. State of Global Air 2020. Special Report. Boston, MA
- Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2022. [Conflict Barometer 2022](#)
- HIIK, 2023. Conflict Barometer.
- HiiL, 2018. [Justice Needs and Satisfaction in Bangladesh 2018: Legal Problems in Daily Life](#)
- Hossain, 2020. [Slum of Bangladesh: An Overview](#)
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319881270_Assessment_of_Sea_Level_Rise_on_Bangladesh_Coast_through_Trend_Analysis_Department_of_Environment_Ministry_of_Environment_and_Forests.
- <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/blogging-bangladesh-caught-between-rock-and-hard-place-3235271>.
- Human Rights Watch, (2024). [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 2024. [World Report 2024: Bangladesh](#)
- Human Rights Watch, 2024. [World Report 2024: events of 2023](#)
- icddr. Slum Health in Bangladesh: Coping with Ill Health in Urban Slums-Health Seeking and Healthcare Expenditure. Dhaka, Bangladesh; 2019
- ILGA World, 2024. [LGBTI Rights in Bangladesh](#)
- ILO, 2019. [Violence and Harassment Convention \(No. 190\)](#)
- ILO, 2024. [Statistics: SDG 1.3.1](#)
- Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024. [Global Terrorism Index](#)
- International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, 2024. [Civic Freedom Monitor: Bangladesh](#)
- International Crisis Group, December 2023. [Growing Violence, Dwindling Aid: Rohingya Crisis at an Inflection Point | Crisis Group](#)
- International Crisis Group, October 2023. [Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Limiting the Damage of a Protracted Crisis | Crisis Group](#)
- International Growth Centre, 2022. [Progressing female labour force participation in Bangladesh | International Growth Centre \(theigc.org\)](#)
- International IDEA, 2024. [The Global State of Democracy, Democracy Tracker: Bangladesh](#)
- [International Journal of Surgery Open 49 \(2022\) 100581. Antibiotic resistance: An increasingly threatening but neglected public health challenge in Bangladesh](#)
- International Labour Organisation, 2024. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/bangladesh-ratifies-minimum-age-convention>
- International Trade Union Confederation, 2024. [Legal Profile: Bangladesh](#)
- International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2023. [The Indigenous World 2023: Bangladesh](#)
- IPC, 2024. [Acute Food Insecurity Analysis report](#)

- IQ Air, historical rankings 2018-2023. [World's Most Polluted Countries in 2023 - PM2.5 Ranking | IQAir](#)
- IQ Air, live rankings, when accessed on 2025-01-14, Dhaka was ranked as the most polluted city in the world. [World Air Quality Index \(AQI\) Ranking | IQAir](#)
- Islam & Zaman, 2022. Conflict and Security in Dhaka: An Overview. South Asian Journal of Policy and Governance, 41(2), 213-229.
- Islam et al., 2018. [Heavy Metal and Metalloid Pollution of Soil, Water and Foods in Bangladesh: A Critical Review, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#)
- Islam, M. R., and S. S. Morsalin. "Assessment of Sea Level Rise on Bangladesh Coast through Trend Analysis." *ResearchGate*, Department of Environment, Ministry of Environment and Forests, 2016,
- IUCN, 2020. Gender Based Violence and Environment Linkages, p 141 [Gender-based violence and environment linkages | IUCN Library System](#)
- Jahan, 1972. Pakistan: Failure in National Integration. Columbia University Press
- Jahan, 2005. Bangladesh: Promise and Performance. Zed Books
- Jones, 2021. Political Polarization and Terrorism: Bangladesh. New York: Routledge.
- Karim et al., 2015. [Labour in Fishing Sector of Bangladesh: Mapping, Status and Awareness about Rights. Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.](#)
- Khan et al. 2013 [The Political Settlement, Growth and Technical Progress in Bangladesh \(ethz.ch\)](#)
- Khan, 2021. Domestic Violence in the Shadows: Bangladesh. International Journal of Social Research, 12(3), 123-145.
- Kumar, 2016. Electoral Violence in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis. Sage.
- LightCastle Analytics Wing, 2019. [Need for Affordable Housing in the Real Estate Industry](#)
- LightCastle, 29 November 2023, "[Enhancing the Lives of RMG Workers in Bangladesh: A Path to Progress](#)"
- MacroTrends, 2024. [Bangladesh Infant Mortality Rate 1950-2024](#)
- Macrotrends, 2024. [Bangladesh Life Expectancy 1950-2024](#)
- Macrotrends, 2024. [Bangladesh Population Growth Rate 1950-2025](#) (accessed 1/14/2025)
- Martin, Kang, Billah, Siddiqui, Black, Kniveton (2013). "Policy analysis: Climate Change and Migration Bangladesh", Working Paper 4. <http://www.migratingoutofpoverty.org/files/file.php?name=wp4-ccrm-b-policy.pdf&site=354>
- Md Abdul Quasem, 2011. Conversion of Agricultural Land to Non-agricultural Uses in Bangladesh: Extent and Determinants, Bangladesh Development Studies
- Meghan Ingerick, 2014. The incidence of menstrual regulation procedures and abortion in Bangladesh.
- Migration Policy Institute, 2024. [Bangladesh's Economic Vitality Owes in Part to Migration and Remittances.](#)
- Minority Rights Group International, 2018. [World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Bangladesh : Buddhists](#)
- Minority Rights Group, 2024. [Bangladesh: Protect Indigenous Peoples' rights in Chittagong Hill Tracts](#)
- Mirdha, R. U. (2023). Economy. Retrieved from The Daily [RMG export growth slows in US, EU for global uncertainty | The Daily Star](#)
- Mixed Migration Centre, 2024. [Beyond dichotomies: Bangladesh's complex migration landscape.](#)
- Mohsin, 2003. The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

- Morsalin, S. S., & Islam, M. R. 2023. [Landlessness as the key challenge to climate change adaptation of the rural poor in Bangladesh: an empirical study](#). Asian Geographer, 40(2), 121–143.
- Muller, 2020. Autocracy and Dissidence: Erosion of State Trust. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- National Institute of Population Research and Training, MoHFW, 2023. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey: Key Indicators Report.
- National Survey persons with disabilities 2021, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/report-national-survey-persons-disabilities-nspd-2021-december-2022-enbn>
- NRC, January 2024. Briefing note on Collaborative Dispute Resolution. [icla-briefing-note-1---cdr-jan-2024.pdf \(nrc.no\)](#)
- OHCHR, 2023. Press Briefing Notes: [Bangladesh legal harassment of HRDs and civil society leaders](#)
- OHCHR, August 2024. [OHCHR-Preliminary-Analysis-of-Recent-Protests-and-Unrest-in-Bangladesh-16082024_2.pdf](#)
- OHCRC, 2021. [UPR Stakeholder Report on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Minorities in Bangladesh](#)
- Overseas Development Institute, 2018. [Local Governance, Decentralisation and corruption in Bangladesh and Nigeria](#)
- Oxford Internet Institute, 2017.
- Policy-Brief: Education Budget of Bangladesh-CPD, 2024, [Policy-Brief_Education-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Investing-Resources-for-Improved-Learning-Outcomes.pdf \(cpd.org.bd\)](#)
- Policy-Brief_Health Budget of Bangladesh-CPD, 2024, [Policy-Brief_Health-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Optimising-Resources-for-Improved-Health-Outcomes.pdf \(cpd.org.bd\)](#)
- Policy-Brief_Social Safety Net-Budget of Bangladesh-CPD, 2024, [Policy-Brief_Social-Safety-Net-Budget-of-Bangladesh-Catching-Some-Missing-Many.pdf \(cpd.org.bd\)](#)
- Population Pyramids, 2023. [Population of Bangladesh 2050](#)
- Positive Peace Report 204 page 52; Institute for Economics & Peace, <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>
- [Poverty headcount ratio at \\$3.65 a day \(2017 PPP\) \(percent of population\) - Bangladesh | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#).
- Progress on WASH in health care facilities 2000–2021, Special focus on WASH and infection prevention and control, UNICEF/WHO joint monitoring programme
- [PS-Joint-Protection-Monitoring-Report-2023-Quarter-4-Final.pdf \(rohingyaresponse.org\)](#)
- [PS-Joint-Protection-Monitoring-Report-2024-Quarter-1.pdf \(rohingyaresponse.org\)](#)
- Rahman et al., 2023. [Access to Inclusive Urban Public Transport System in Bangladesh: The Case of Dhaka City](#). Volume 5, Issue 3
- Rahman, K. 2021. [Bangladesh: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption: Focus on ready-made garments \(RMG\), health, environment, and anti-corruption actors](#). U4 helpdesk answer 2021:13. U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Refugees International, December 2022. [Hope amid Despair: Finding Solutions for Rohingya in Bangladesh - Refugees International](#)
- Reliefweb, 2024. [Bangladesh: Eastern Flash Floods 2024 Situation Report No. 02 \(As of 30 August 2024\) - Bangladesh | ReliefWeb](#)

- ReliefWeb, 2024. [Heat-stricken Bangladesh extends school closures.](#)
- Report on Agriculture and Rural Statistics, BBS, 2018, [2020-02-02-10-36-84ecf771aa4c2e480f245fb79538ce14.pdf \(portal.gov.bd\)](#)
- Reporters Without Borders 2024 [Bangladesh | RSF](#), accessed 5 July 2024
- Reporters Without Borders, 2024. [2024 World Press Freedom Index](#)
- Reporters Without Borders, 2024. [Country report: Bangladesh](#)
- Reporters Without Borders, 2024. [Index: political indicator](#)
- Reuters, 26 July 2024. [Bangladesh's internet shutdown isolates citizens, disrupts business | Reuters](#)
- Riaz, 2016. Bangladesh: A Political History Since Independence. I.B. Tauris
- RMG Bangladesh, 2023 [Enhancing the Lives of RMG Workers in Bangladesh: A Path to Progress \(lightcastlepartners.com\)](#)
- [Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Joint Response Plan 2024 | Financial Tracking Service \(unocha.org\).](#)
- Rohingya Refugee Response, 2024. [GBVIMS factsheet, Q1 2024](#)
- Rohingya Refugee Response, 2024. [Joint Protection Monitoring Report, Q1 2024](#)
- Sarker, Asad. "Blogging Bangladesh: Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place." *The Daily Star*, 2023,
- Save the Children, 2023. [Child Friendly Local Governance \(CFLG\) Approach for Education Sector in Bangladesh: Evidence and Opinions | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)
- Schendel, 2009. A History of Bangladesh. Cambridge University Press
- Siddiqui, 2022. Organized Crime and Violence in Bangladesh. *Crime and Society*, 58(4), 444-466.
- Smith, A. C. et al. 2021. "Nature-based Solutions in Bangladesh: Evidence of Effectiveness for Addressing Climate Change and Other Sustainable Development Goals." *Front. Environ. Sci.* 9:737659.
- SOAS. 2018. [ACE Irregularities, informal practices, and the motivation of frontline healthcare providers in Bangladesh: Current scenario and future perspectives towards achieving universal health coverage by 2030.](#)
- Statista, 2019. The Countries Polluting The Oceans The Most <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1270819/ocean-plastic-pollution-worldwide-by-country/#:~:text=An percent20estimated percent2036 percent20percent percent20of,through percent20the percent20capital percent20city percent20Manila.>
- Statista, 2024. [Bangladesh - inflation rate 1987-2029](#)
- Statista, 2024. [Bangladesh: Distribution of employment by economic sector from 2012 to 2022.](#)
- The Asia Foundation, 2021. [The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia](#)
- The Business Standard, 2024. [Bangladesh faces \\$10b setback, image crisis: Biz leaders](#)
- The Daily Star, 2021. [Banshkhali Power Plant Site: 5 workers killed as cops open fire](#)
- The Daily Star, 2022. [Bangladeshi activists join Global Climate Strike](#)
- The Daily Star, 2024. [An alarming upswing in child marriage](#)
- The Daily Star, 2024. [Challenging tradition: women's inheritance laws in Bangladesh | The Daily Star](#)
- The Guardian, 2024. [Bangladesh arrests thousands in protest crackdown.](#)
- The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL), 2018. [Justice needs and satisfaction in Bangladesh](#)
- The Independent BD, <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/57286>
- The World Bank Group. Population living in slums (percent of urban population)—Bangladesh. 2020. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.SLUM.UR.ZS?locations=BD>
- TI Bangladesh, 2022. [Corruption in Service Sectors: National Household Survey 2021](#)

- Tisdall, EKM & Cuevas-Parra, P 2020, [Challenges for children's participation: Child activism for ending child marriage](#), Children and Youth Services Review, vol. 108.
- Transparency International Bangladesh, 2020 [bangladesh-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf \(u4.no\)](#)
- Transparency International Bangladesh, 2021 [National Household Survey 2021](#)
- Transparency International Bangladesh. 2021. [Corruption in Service Sectors. National Household Survey 2021: Extended Executive summary.](#)
- Transparency International, 2020. [Global Corruption Barometer Asia](#)
- Transparency International, 2021, [Government Defence Integrity Index](#)
- Transparency International, 2023. [Corruption Perceptions Index](#)
- U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. [Bangladesh Country Update: Challenges to Religious Freedom in Bangladesh \(uscirf.gov\)](#) (May 2020)
- U.S. Department of State, 2022. [Burma Genocide - United States Department of State](#)
- U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, 16 August 2021. [bangladesh-overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption.pdf \(u4.no\)](#)
- UN Women Bangladesh, July 2022. [\[OP-ED\] The 'original pandemic' of violence against women continues unabated | UN Women – Asia-Pacific](#)
- UN Women Bangladesh, November 2019. [bd-Fact-sheet-Formal.pdf \(unwomen.org\)](#) Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNFPA, 2015. [Report on Violence against Women Survey 2015](#),
- UN Women, 2022. [Advocacy Brief: Women's effective participation and decision-making in public life, elimination of violence, for achieving empowerment of all women and girls](#)
- UN Women, 2024. [Country Fact Sheet: Bangladesh](#)
- UN Women, 2024. [Data: Thematic Area Dashboard](#)
- UN Women, 2024. [Local Government Country Profile: Bangladesh](#)
- UNCDF, 2023. [Lightning sheds provide a refuge as deadly storms increase in Bangladesh - UN Capital Development Fund](#)
- UNDP, 2022. [Gender-based violence: taking stock of Bangladesh's shadow pandemic](#)
- UNDP, 2024. [Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World. Human Development Report 2023/2024.](#)
- UNFCCC, 2019. [Third National Communication of Bangladesh to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)
- UNFCCC, 2021. [Nationally Determined Contributions](#)
- UNFPA 2024 [UNFPA Bangladesh | Midwifery](#)
- UNFPA. "2023 State of World Population Report: '8 Billion: A Question of Too Many or Too Few?'" *UNFPA Bangladesh*, 2023, <https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/en/news/2023-state-world-population-report-8-billion-question-too-many-or-too-fewpercentE2percent80percent9D?page=0>.
- UNHCR, 2023. [Rohingya Refugee Crisis.](#)
- UNHCR, 2024. [Rohingya Refugee Crisis Explained](#)
- UNICEF & Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 2015. [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey](#)
- Unicef press release, 03 May 2023. [Global polycrisis creating uphill battle to end child marriage – UNICEF](#)
- UNICEF, 2019. [Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report](#)

- UNICEF, 2021. Programme Strategy Note 2022-2026 Child Protection, Bangladesh Country Office
- UNICEF, 2024. [Data: Country Profile Bangladesh](#)
- UNICEF, 2024. [Topic: Child Protection Bangladesh](#)
- UNICEF, March 2024, "A qualitative study on children living in street situations in Bangladesh 2024" [Street Situation in Bangladesh 2014.pdf .pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)
- UNICEF. Children in cities. 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/children-cities>
- United Nations LDC Portal, 11th July 2024, [Bangladesh graduation status | LDC Portal - International Support Measures for Least Developed Countries](#)
- United States Institute of Peace, 2024 [A Perilous Moment for Bangladesh's Democracy | United States Institute of Peace](#)
- United States Institute of Peace, 2024. [Rohingya Face Fresh Uncertainty in Myanmar](#)
- UNODC, 2022. [First National Study on Trafficking in Bangladesh](#)
- UNODC, 2023. [Bangladesh: UNODC's cutting-edge tools boost law enforcement capacities and frontline resilience to counter the drug problem](#)
- UNODC, 2023. [World Drug Report 2023](#)
- UNODC, 2020. [The time is now: Addressing the gender dimensions of corruption.](#)
- US Department of State, 2023. [Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh](#)
- USAID, 2022. [Final Report: Assessment of Rule of Law and Justice Sector in Bangladesh.](#)
- Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. [Bangladesh – Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer: situationen per den 31 december 2018](#)
- Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer: situationen](#)
- Utrikesdepartementet, 2019. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer](#)
- Utrikesdepartementet, 2021. Bangladesh – [Mänskliga rättigheter, demokrati och rättstatens principer](#)
- Varieties of Democracy Institute and Friedrich-Alexander-Universität, Institute of Political Science, 2024 [Academic Freedom Index Update 2024](#)
- Varieties of Democracy Institute, 2023. [Interactive Maps : Bangladesh](#)
- Varieties of Democracy, 2024. [Democracy Report 2024](#)
- WaterAid Bangladesh, 2024. [The Crisis - Water](#)
- WB report on Bangladesh's progress in poverty reduction based on the recent Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) data: [Bangladesh-Development-Update-October-2023.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](#) and World Bank Poverty and Inequality
- [WFP increases food rations again for Rohingya in Cox's Bazar – will reach full ration by August | World Food Programme](#)
- WHO, 2024. [Health data overview for the People's Republic of Bangladesh](#)
- World Bank Country Profile, 2018. Based on [World Development Indicators database](#)
- World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index, benchmarked at 2019, accessed on 27 May 2024: [Rankings \(doingbusiness.org\)](#)
- World Bank Group, 2021. Bangladesh Systematic Country Diagnostic 2021 Update World Bank Document
- World Bank Group, 2022. [Bangladesh - Systematic Country Diagnostic: 2021 Update.](#)
- World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Profile: Bangladesh,](#)

- World Bank Group, 2024. [Country Risk Profile: Bangladesh](#),
- World Bank [Net ODA received \(percent of GNI\) - Bangladesh | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#)
- World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief, 2024. pip.worldbank.org/country-profiles/BGD
- World Bank, 2017. [How Dialogue is Shifting Bangladesh's Textile Industry from Pollution Problem to Pollution Solution](#)
- World Bank, 2018. Enhancing opportunities for clean and resilient growth in urban Bangladesh <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/585301536851966118/Enhancing-Opportunities-for-Clean-and-Resilient-Growth-in-Urban-Bangladesh-Country-Environmental-Analysis-2018>
- World Bank, 2018. [The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution](#).
- World Bank, 2019. [The World Bank in Bangladesh](#)
- World Bank, 2020. [Data - renewable internal freshwater resources per capita \(cubic meters\) - Bangladesh](#)
- World Bank, 2021. [Bangladesh Rural Income Diagnostic: Enabling Faster and More Equal Income Growth in Rural Bangladesh](#).
- World Bank, 2021. [Global Findex Database: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resiliency in the Age of Covid-19, p.41](#).
- World Bank, 2022, Enterprise Surveys- [Bangladesh Country Profile 2022](#)
- [World Bank, 2022. Bangladesh Learning Poverty Brief](#)
- World Bank, 2022. [Country Climate and Development Report: Bangladesh](#).
- World Bank, 2022. [Data: logistics performance index: Quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure \(1=low to 5=high\) - Bangladesh](#)
- World Bank, 2022. [Data: mobile cellular subscriptions \(per 100 people\)](#).
- World Bank, 2022. [Terrestrial protected areas \(percent of total land area\)](#)
- World Bank, 2023. [Building Back a Greener Bangladesh: Country Environment Analysis](#)
- World Bank, 2023. [Participatory democracy index](#)
- World Bank, 2023. [The World Bank in Bangladesh 2024](#).
- World Bank, 2024. [Adolescent fertility rate \(births per 1,000 women ages 15-19\)](#)
- World Bank, 2024. [Labor force participation rate, female \(percent of female population ages 15+\)](#)
- World Bank, 2024. [Out-of-Pocket expenditure \(percent of current health expenditure\) – Bangladesh, Least developed countries: Un Classification, World](#).
- World Bank, 2024. [People Using Safely Managed Drinking Water Services \(percent of population\) – Bangladesh](#).
- World Bank, 2024. [People with basic handwashing facilities including soap and water \(percent of population\)](#)
- World Bank, 2024. [Unemployment, total \(percent of total labor force\) \(national estimate\) – Bangladesh](#).
- World Bank, 2024. [What do gender data reveal about the economic struggles of women in Bangladesh?](#)
- World Bank, April 2017, “[Implications of Minimum Wage Increases on Labor Market Dynamics Lessons for Emerging Economies](#)”, Policy Research Working Paper 8030 by Ximena V. Del Carpio and Laura M. Pabon
- World Bank, April 2024, [Bangladesh Development Update Spring 2024](#)
- World Bank, Jobs Diagnostics: Bangladesh.([link](#))

- World Bank. "Addressing Environmental Pollution Is Critical for Bangladesh's Growth and Development." *World Bank*, 28 Mar. 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/03/28/addressing-environmental-pollution-is-critical-for-bangladesh-s-growth-and-development>.
- World Bank Poverty and Inequality Toolbox: [Poverty headcount ratio at \\$2.15 a day \(2017 PPP\) \(percent of population\) - Bangladesh | Data \(worldbank.org\)](#).
- World Economic Forum, 2024. [Global Gender Gap Report 2024](#)
- World Food Program, Jan 2024. [Bangladesh Food Security Monitoring](#)
- World Health Organization Data, 2021. [Medical Doctors, Density of Physicians \(per 10 000 population\), Bangladesh.](#)
- World Justice Project, 2023. [Rule of Law Index](#)
- World Population Review, 2024. [Bangladesh Population 2024](#).
- [World Report 2024: Bangladesh | Human Rights Watch \(hrw.org\)](#)
- World Trade Organization, 2019, Trade Policy Review, Bangladesh, Report by the Secretariat, document no. WT/TPR/S/385/Rev.1
- "Youth Workforce Slides, Unemployment Climbs." *The Financial Express*, 2024, <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/economy/bangladesh/youth-workforce-slides-unemployment-climbs>