

## **Sustainable Development Goals: Land Use, Food Security and Changing Pattern of Agriculture in Bangladesh**, Comilla: BARD, Proceedings of the National Level Training Workshop.

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The United Nations and its member countries recently agreed for post-2015 agenda for sustainable development commonly known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This agenda was launched at United Nations Summit in September 2015. The proposed SDGs include 17 agenda combining human development and environmental objectives targeted to be achieved by 2030.

Bangladesh being the 'very good performer' on MDGs in South Asia and Least Developed Countries has important responsibility to provide inputs to new global initiatives like SDGs. Bangladeshi success stories on achieving the MDGs have been discussed over and over again. However, that does not mean we should sit back and relax, because the work to sustain the developments that have already been achieved is going to be much harder. The Government of Bangladesh has already made some comments on SDGs. Other than providing inputs, the county needs to prepare itself for SDGs.

The Sustainable Development Goals have important relevancy with the condition of country like Bangladesh, particularly when Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable country of climate change. Besides, Bangladesh is most populated country in the world. The impact of both climate change and over population has direct impact on land use, food security and agriculture of the country. Both have direct impact on the reduction of the land. Therefore, preparation for the proposed Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture) could be an important initiative for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla as pioneering rural development policy solution hub of the country understands its responsibility toward SDGs. Therefore with the support from Africa Asia Rural Development Organization (AARDO), the Academy initiated the National Level Training Workshop on Sustainable Development Goals: Land Use, Food Security, and Changing Pattern of Agriculture in Bangladesh to produce initial policy recommendation and develop conceptual framework for new development initiative for the rural development. The workshop was held in 29 November to 03 December 2015. The workshop directly focused on Sustainable Development Goal 2 because of the direct connection with rural and agricultural development. Therefore, the general objective of the training workshop was to initiate discussion and framework for future initiative to achieve SDGs particularly Goal 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture).

The main focus of the workshop was to recommend policy measures and new initiatives to the government and development partners based on discussion in workshop. Therefore the methods adopted in this workshop were highly participatory and interactive. The five day training workshop was divided into three parts: a) Keynote Paper Presentation; 2) Focus Group Discussion and 3) Outcome of the Focus Group Discussion. The five keynote papers were presented by five renowned personnel of the country who are directly working on the SDGs with government and doing advocacy in the international forum. The keynote paper was presented on (1) Sustainable Development Goals:

Opportunities and Challenges, (2) Land Use and Agriculture Production in Bangladesh: Changing Pattern of Agriculture for Sustainability, (3) Food Security and Common Challenges for Sustainable Development, (4) Women in Agriculture: Present Situation and Policy Support for Sustainable Future, and (5) Climate Change and Sustainable Development: Common Threats for Agriculture Production and Food Security.

These papers clarify the issue related to SDGs, particularly Goal 2. The presentations on keynote papers started after the formal inauguration of the training workshop and ended with the presentations of all five key note papers before the lunch time of the second day. The keynote speeches also helped the participants to develop checklist for focus group discussions with the second group of participants (mainly acted as respondents) who represents bottom citizens; selected chairmen of Upazila (subdistrict level) and Union (lowest tier of local government); farmers' representatives and co-operators; and field level land administration. The first group of participants were treated as principal participants that included the officials from relevant ministries, departments, non-government organizations and academia. The reasons for selection of this group: 1) they are directly working at the policy level of relevant thematic area, 2) they have roles and authorities over implementation process and 3) they are familiar with existing policies and programmes.

### **Outcome of the Workshop:**

The workshop was successful in regards to policy recommendation. The workshop was initiated to design a participatory method for national level workshop on SDGs which will be replicable in other similar countries and recommend necessary policy for Goal 2 implementation in the country. One of the important learning of the workshop is that Bangladesh will need this kind of national level workshop on each goal for two reason at least: (1) to indentify replicable and participatory projects, and (2) dissemination of government commitment towards SDGs. It was observed that this kind of workshop can ensure ownership of the implementer of policy and projects. The five day workshop was successful in all regards. The participants identified some important policy issues for recommendation. Some of them are as follows:

- ▶ Leadership of the Prime Minister's Office and an inter-ministerial body may be constituted for improving the coordination and monitoring – evaluation of policies and initiatives.
- ▶ This body may incorporate issues like Central-Local Government and GO-NGO-Private partnership issues. This may reduce duplication and ensure proper utilization of resources.
- ▶ National resource mobilization, planned resource allocation and efficient use of local resources will be a major issue. The Success of SDGs will be dependent on sector-wise resource allocation.
- ▶ National Strategy for the Development of data base is crucially important. It is true Bureau of Statistics is producing data but those are not sufficient for measuring development. Therefore, ministries and departments need to focus on producing quality data.
- ▶ National plan for crop Diversification, changing food habit and promote PPP in agriculture sector to manage the climate change threats can produce good outcomes. Increase peoples' awareness regarding agricultural land use through co-operative approach will be one of the essential inputs for development.

- ▶ Therefore, reform of laws regarding regulation of char lands and water bodies to relevant agricultural departments from district administration and department of forest may be considered.
- ▶ Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) must be integrated in the National Five Year Plan.
- ▶ More funding on research and development is needed. Government and different GOs and NGOs must come forward with developing R & D fund for SDGs initiatives. More emphasis on Research and Knowledge Management will add important values in achieving SDGs.
- ▶ Partnership on Adaptation & Mitigation (AdMit) means Adaptation.
- ▶ Ensure good governance and public sector reforms, particularly government must focus on public sector re-engineering issue.
- ▶ Regional cooperation on climate change issues. Regional organization can work as watch dog on regional trade and investment-related cooperation mechanisms for addressing climate change.