

Eradicating Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh: National Strategies and Activities

Nayma Qayum
Mrinmoy Samadder

April 2013

Research Monograph Series No. 58

Research and Evaluation Division (RED), BRAC, 75 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Telephone: 88-02-9881265, 8824180-7 (PABX) Fax: 88-02-8823542
Website: www.brac.net/research

Copyright © 2013 BRAC

April 2013

Page makeup and composition
Altamas Pasha

Cover design
Sajedur Rahman

Design and Layout
Md. Akram Hossain

Published by:

Research and Evaluation Division
BRAC
BRAC Centre
75 Mohakhali
Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Telephone: (88-02) 9881265, 8824180-87
Fax: (88-02) 8823542
Website: www.brac.net/research

BRAC/RED publishes research reports, scientific papers, monographs, working papers, research compendium in Bangla (*Nirjash*), proceedings, manuals, and other publications on subjects relating to poverty, social development and human rights, health and nutrition, education, gender, environment, and governance.

Printed by BRAC Printers, 87-88 (old) 41 (new), Block C, Tongi Industrial Area, Gazipur, Bangladesh

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vi
Executive summary	vii
I. Introduction	1
II. Research methods	4
III. Who are the extreme poor?	8
IV. Government strategies and programmes	15
V. Non-government development activities	32
VI. Searching for ultra-poverty in the media: newspaper coverage	37
VII. Conclusion and policy implications	41
References	45
Annex	48

ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADP	Annual Development Plan
AU	Advocacy Unit
CFPR/TUP	Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/Targeting the Ultra poor
CLP	<i>Char</i> Livelihood Project
EU	European Union
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MFI	Microfinance Institutions
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non-government Organization
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RED	Research and Evaluation Division
WB	World Bank

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is made possible with generous support from Advocacy for Social Change of BRAC. We are particularly grateful to Dr. Mohammad Rafi, Head of Research (SD and HR), Research and Evaluation Division (RED) for his deliberate guideline and valuable comments to this study. We express our heartiest gratitude to professors of anthropology, sociology and economics departments of Dhaka University, policymakers, heads of national and international development organizations for giving their valuable time and cooperation. We are gratified to the staff of newspaper section of Dhaka University for accessing the resources. We also wish to thank all the staff of Advocacy for Social Change programme for providing documents and other support. We would also like to thank to Mr. Hasan Shareef Ahmed and Mr. Altamash Pasha who edited the study attentively. Mr. M. Akram Hossain formatted the report for publication deserves thanks. We are thankful to Dr. WMH Jaim, director of RED for allowing the publication of this research monograph.

RED is supported by BRAC's core fund and funds from donor agencies, organizations and governments worldwide. Current donors of BRAC and RED include Aga Khan Foundation Canada, AusAID, Australian High Commission, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Canadian International Development Agency, CARE-Bangladesh, Department for International Development (DFID) of UK, European Commission, Euro consult Mott Mac Donald, Global Development Network Inc (GDN), The Global Fund, GTZ (GTZ is now GIZ) (Germany), Government of Bangladesh, The Hospital for Sick Children, Institute of Development Studies (Sussex, UK), Inter-cooperation Bangladesh, International Labour Office (ILO), IRRI, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Micro-Nutrient Initiative, NOVIB, Plan Bangladesh Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Swiss Development Cooperation, UN Women, UNHCR, UNICEF, Unilever-UK, University of Leeds, World Bank, World Food Programme, World Fish, Winrock International USA, Save the Children USA, Save the Children UK Safer World, Rockefeller Foundation, BRAC UK, BRAC USA, Oxford University, Karolinska University, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), Emory University, Agricultural Innovation in Dryland Africa Project (AIDA), AED ARTS, United Nations Development Program, United Nations Democracy Fund, Family Health International, The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), Sight Saver (UK), Engender Health (USA), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Yale/Stanford University.

ABSTRACT

Although Bangladesh has achieved fairly steady economic growth, as of 2011, almost half of its population still lived in extreme poverty. As a result, the Government of Bangladesh and its development partners have recently started to target the extreme poor in many development policies and programmes. As part of a BRAC Advocacy Unit project titled National Policy Advocacy for CFPR-TUP, this study maps the current status of national-level policies and programmes that address extreme poverty in Bangladesh. Research methods include analysis of national strategies, project evaluations, academic literature, print media, and interviews with national stakeholders – academics, policymakers, development practitioners, and journalists. The study found existing poverty classifications as dated, and overlapping. Mostly linear in nature, these classifications did not represent categorical sub-groups of the poor. Development actors implemented multiple, overlapping programmes which often failed to distinguish between short-term social protection, and longer-term poverty alleviation. Increased dialogue between stakeholders, sharing organizational experiences, and collaboration on a national strategy can improve the quality of extreme poverty initiatives in Bangladesh.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Bangladesh has progressed remarkably on the development front. And yet, a large percentage of its population lived in extreme poverty. Recently, mainstream development initiatives have started to focus on this group. This study examines the current status of national-level strategies and activities that address extreme poverty in Bangladesh. BRAC's Research and Evaluation Division (RED) conducted this study, and the Advocacy Unit (AU) both proposed, and funded the study as part of a project titled National Policy Advocacy for CFPR-TUP.

Study objective and research methods

This study examines the degree to which national-level strategies and activities highlighted and addressed extreme poverty in Bangladesh. It has four objectives. Firstly, it explores how scholars and practitioners have defined and classified the extreme poor. Secondly, it examines how national strategies address extreme poverty. Third, it explores how major non-government operations target the extreme poor. Finally, it maps the degree to which the print media advocates extreme poverty. Data sources include national policies, existing research, development programmes, media news events and in-depth interviews of key national stakeholders. Stakeholders include academics, policymakers, and development practitioners.

Challenges

BRAC's Advocacy Unit initially proposed this study as a baseline. However, a baseline evaluation can only be conducted prior to programme intervention. As development actors had long implemented extreme poverty programmes even before this study was proposed, a baseline evaluation was not possible. The AU also requested that the study focus on the ultra poor as opposed to the extreme poor. Stakeholders lacked consensus regarding the natures of, and distinctions between extreme and ultra-poverty; many found such distinctions to be superficial and of little use. We thus amended programme objectives to a review of existing endeavours as opposed to a baseline, and focused on the extreme poor as opposed to ultra poor. The study covered a period of two years, from January 2009 to December 2010.

Who are the extreme poor?

Stakeholders lacked consensus on the utility of multiple classifications. Many viewed linear poverty classifications as confusing and superficial. For example, some argued

that the World Bank's dollar-a-day standard, popularized by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), were better suited for cross-national comparison than national-level development planning and programming. Such classifications were also misleading. They not only homogenised poverty, they also overlooked poverty's temporal and structural dimensions. They presented the extreme poor as a homogenous group. Stakeholders understood most categories the poorest to uniformly constitute the bottom 10-15 per cent of society.

Past strategies and programmes

Historically, Bangladesh's development plans aimed to both increase national growth and alleviate poverty. However, the plans only addressed the extreme poor through short-term social protection initiatives. Generally, the plans assumed that the extreme poor would benefit from both economic growth and mainstream poverty programming. However, neoliberal policies marginalized the extreme poor, in spite of the plans carving out space for rural development. Much of the country's development budget in the area of social welfare remained unspent due to mismanagement. From 1999 onwards, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) guided Bangladesh's development. These plans, too, advocated social protection, but failed to provide a concrete strategy to help the most disadvantaged. Little coordination existed between various stakeholders involved in policy planning. In addition, insufficient conducting and dissemination of research challenged informed decision making, and development of forward thinking strategies. Finally, the plans rarely adopted a preventive mechanism; rather, they overlooked problems unless blown up to endemic proportions.

Existing strategies, policies and programmes

The 2008 AL government adopted poverty eradication as a key component of its national strategy, with particular focus on extremely vulnerable areas. They also undertook several measures to establish open and inclusive decision-making processes for poverty programming. Bangladesh, for example, had a history of closed budget processes that protected various interests groups. Recently, however, national level dialogues and workshops have received increasing coverage in the media.

Projects under various ministries of the Government of Bangladesh now address the needs of particular extreme poor groups. However, the disaggregated nature of these initiatives makes it difficult to track targeted beneficiaries – that is, who receives what – and the effectiveness of targeting methods. Support for extreme poor groups mostly appeared under the ministry of social welfare. The ministry provided different vulnerable groups with stipends, employment and food aid.¹ However, stakeholders raised a number of issues concerning social welfare programmes. Firstly, questions

¹ The extreme poor, orphaned and destitute children, individuals coming into contact with the legal system, cash and in kind grants for widows, deserted women, distressed and disabled people, destitute patients and persons with disabilities, and vulnerable women and girls.

came up regarding the relevance of these programs – for example, does the government actually need these programmes, and if so, how much should be spent on them? Secondly, what was their purpose? Who were these programs for, and what did they hope to achieve? Should social protection programmes provide a safety net, or attempt to uplift the extreme poor? In the area of programme implementation, the diverse and disaggregated nature of projects raised concerns. Programmes also faced serious targeting deficiencies. Decentralized targeting granted complete authority to local elected leaders, who distributed services through patronage networks, or in exchange for benefits. Food aid programmes also suffered from leakages and management inefficiencies and thus, only a small percentage of benefits actually reached recipients.

Non-government development activities

Non-government endeavours addressed the extreme poor in four ways: (i) As part of the Millennium Development Goals in donor strategies, (ii) Asset transfer or asset transfer-plus programmes, (iii) Microfinance and microfinance plus programmes, and (iv) Research and advocacy.

Many government partners emphasized extreme poverty in their country strategies through a focus on MDG1, Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Donors developed asset transfer programs for those rural poor who did not qualify for microfinance schemes. They provided targeted recipients with an asset and multiple services to help him or her build an asset base. Successful asset transfer programmes owed their high graduation rates to a number of factors – larger support packages, efficient targeting, and close supervision. Some stakeholders doubted the ability of asset transfer programme to permanently lift the extreme poor out of poverty. A number of organizations implemented tailored microfinance programmes for the poorest. However, the expensive nature of both asset transfer, and microfinance for the extreme poor challenged these programmes' long-term sustainability. In order to capture the degree of advocacy, this study tracked news coverage of extreme poverty issues. Bengali newspapers had a greater tendency to publish extreme poverty related news, although the English newspaper, *The Daily Star* gave extreme poverty-related articles the greatest visibility with maximum front page coverage (16.15 per cent of its extreme poverty coverage). Newspapers covered ultra poor issues across various themes, with economic and social and social welfare related issues receiving maximum coverage.

Conclusion

Poverty alleviation endeavors have historically marginalized the extreme poor in Bangladesh. Of late, both the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and its partners have started to emphasize their importance. Recently, the GoB has diversified the nature of targeted support to this group. In addition, donors and NGOs have been experimenting with various projects, many centered on asset-transfer, providing the extreme poor with an asset, and the required additional support to help them create an asset base. The diversity of on-going programmes provides an opportunity to

look deeper into both the lives and livelihoods of these groups, and identify factors that increase chances for programme success. Scholars and practitioners should come together to explore the nature of extreme poverty, identify the factors that breed programme success, and establish a comprehensive strategy for extreme poverty alleviation in Bangladesh.

I. INTRODUCTION

Extreme poverty in Bangladesh

In 1971, Bangladesh was born a war-ravaged, disaster prone state. Forty years later, the country has achieved both steady economic growth, and human development. Its GDP grew from 4.4% in 2002, to 6.6% in 2006, and 6.7% in 2011.² Bangladesh's economic growth matched – if not exceeded - that of its neighbours, for example, Nepal at 3.9%, and Pakistan at 4.8%, and Sri Lanka at 5.9% in 2003.³ On the human development front, it's Human Development Index (HDI) score climbed from 0.303 in 1980, to 0.5 in 2011.

And yet, as of 2005, almost half of the country's population fell below the World Bank's (WB) dollar-a-day (\$1.25 PPP) standard of extreme poverty⁴ Economic development did not automatically trickle down to this group. The extreme poor lacked access to basic needs - shelter, adequate nutritional intake, safe drinking water, sanitation, a livelihood, and the ability to ensure education for their children. They had no access to healthcare during illness or emergencies (Sachs 2005a, 2005b). They could not maintain regular employment due to regular ill-health, insufficient skills and lack of education. In addition, they lack the capital and market access for entrepreneurial activities. Due to their lack of an asset base, microfinance institutions (MFIs), too, found them unfit clients. Often, such dire economic conditions transcend generations. As a result, children from extreme poor families took up labour work, leaving little time for formal schooling.

Even as a region, South Asia has not been able to address this vulnerability. South Asia is poorer than Sub-Saharan Africa, with increasing absolute numbers of the poor.⁵ Bangladesh had the biggest increase, from 40 million people below the \$1.25 poverty line in 1981, to 77 million in 2005 (Bauer et al. 2008). And yet, until recently, Bangladesh's development strategies suggested that poverty need not occupy a substantial place on the national agenda. Economic growth, however, does not automatically trickle down to the poor. The poorest could not access economic, social and political institutions to the same degree as other groups. The average

² World Bank Development Indicators, Online:
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?page=1>, Accessed 8/3/12 Accessed:

³ World Bank Development Indicators, Online:
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?page=1> Accessed 8/1/2012

⁴ International Human Development Indicators, United Nations Development Programme, Online:
<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/tables/>; accessed 08/01/2012

⁵ Given that most poverty reduction initiatives measure success in absolute numbers of the poor, thus its important to capture this at the regional level.

income in a Bangladeshi village amounted to \$3, higher than the \$1.25 poverty line.⁶ In rural areas, therefore, the lowest income families were at a great disadvantage in accessing scarce resources – employment, skills, and capital, among others.

Of late, various government and non-government actors have started to address the specific needs of this group. Stakeholders have taken up the extreme poverty issue very seriously, as reflected, for example, in rigorous debates undertaken during the 2011 national budget process. One stakeholder interviewed for this study argued, “There is too much poverty and it is creating a social nuisance. Stakeholders feel the need for a cohesive attack on poverty. Patron-client relationships do exist and create a social obstruction, but opportunities have increased manifold compared to before.” Given the infancy of this subject and the absence of a comprehensive strategy, many initiatives are disjointed and overlapping. To this end the BRAC Advocacy Unit (AU) undertook the National Advocacy for CFPR/TUP project to highlight extreme poverty in national strategies, dialogues and programmes. BRAC’s Research and Evaluation Division (RED) undertook this research as part of AU’s initiative.

This study examines the degree to which national-level strategies and activities highlight extreme poverty in Bangladesh, and the future potential of existing initiatives. The research is important and timely for three reasons. Firstly, the extreme poor pose a burden on any nation’s economy, and society. A renowned scholar mentioned during a recent seminar, that every country will experience some poverty. However, an empirical question arises from this statement – how big a group of poor, and what degree of poverty, can a country tolerate before it takes a toll on development? The poor not only strain a country’s resources, but also challenge democracy, and political stability. Even assuming the existence of some poverty, countries should aim to minimize the size of this group.

Secondly, in order to uplift impoverished groups scholars must first uncover the deeper causes of extreme poverty. In-depth, qualitative studies may add to existing macro-economic scholarship explaining why some people are deeply, and chronically poor. This study adopts a new approach to understanding a topic that is still in its infancy. We draw on the experience of stakeholders, those most directly involved with the extreme poor, to understand the needs of this group, and identify strategies and initiatives most relevant to these needs. Finally, this study is both pertinent and timely given the state of extreme poverty initiatives in Bangladesh. For at least the last five years, government and non-government initiatives have implemented diverse programmes for Bangladesh’s poorest. And yet, extreme poverty has not only sustained, it has increased in the recent past. Thus, we take a deeper look at its nature, by capturing the experiences of those working most closely with this group.

This study has a number of academic and policy implications. It is a first step towards consolidating the experiences of Bangladesh’s many new extreme poverty initiatives. Secondly, it hopes to create a platform for discussions on extreme poverty

⁶ Stakeholder interview.

at the national level. Increased discussions will encourage policymakers to highlight extreme poverty at the national-level. For practitioners, it will provide opportunities to coordinate, and collaborate on these diverse and widespread activities. Finally, this study can provide a benchmark for both policymakers and practitioners, practitioners to map Bangladesh's progress in prioritizing, and addressing extreme poverty.

National policy advocacy for CFPR-TUP

The BRAC Advocacy Unit (AU) has been working with the poorest since 2002, under the "Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra Poor" programme. The unit's past activities included social communication and media mobilization that initiated social change through participation, interaction and mobilization. At the time of this study, the AU was initiating a project titled National Policy Advocacy for CFPR/TUP, which sought to highlight the plight of the poorest (for the purpose of this project, the ultra poor) at the national-level. The project embraced four specific objectives, namely to

- Motivate and mobilize national stakeholders to ensure services for the ultra poor
- Build media partnerships to increase advocacy for the ultra poor
- Highlight the experience of CFPR/TUP
- Develop national and international alliances and networks to create an enabling environment highlighting the rights of the poor.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

Study objectives

Broad objective: This study mapped the extent to which national strategies and activities highlighted extreme poverty between 2009 and 2010
Specific objectives were to:⁷

1. Explore existing definitions and classifications of extreme poverty
2. Capture the Bangladesh Government's strategic thinking on extreme poverty
3. Track and review non-government development activities for the extreme and ultra poor
4. Map the print media's advocacy of extreme poverty

Challenges

Defining extreme and ultra-poverty

The study initially sought to capture ultra-poverty in national strategies and activities, as opposed to extreme poverty. However, researchers later changed the topic of this study to address extreme poverty. Initial stakeholder interviews revealed that many stakeholders viewed ultra poor as a donor-induced term, and preferred other terms, such as hardcore poor, extreme poor and *hoto doridro*, to refer to societies' poorest. In addition, stakeholders exhibited a lack of consensus regarding definitions and classifications of poverty. Most respondents claimed that existing poverty classifications to be superficial, and confusing. Thus, we decided to include the issue of definition and identification as a component of this study.

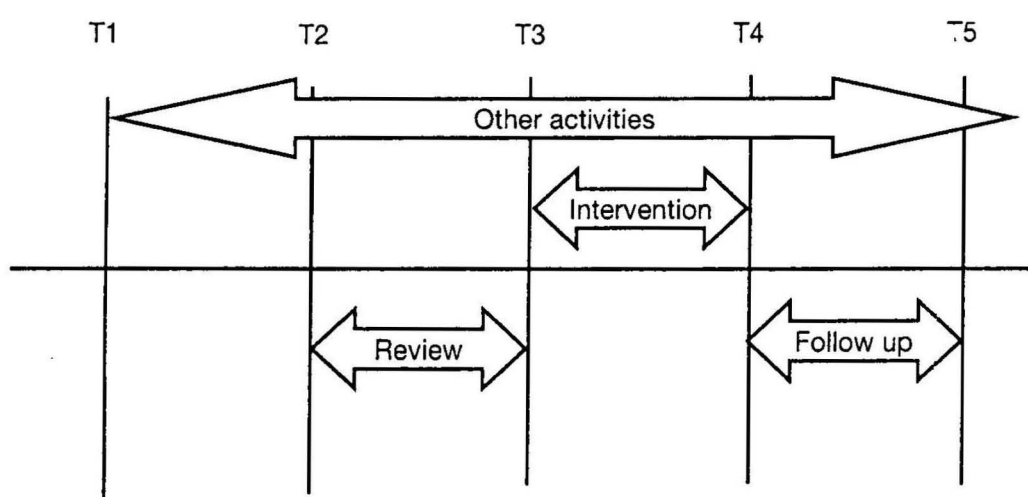
The problem with a baseline

The AU project, which this paper caters to, aimed to mobilize national level support for ultra-poverty through various events including workshops, round tables, field visits and talk shows. AU requested RED to conduct a baseline study for the above project, tracking ultra-poverty in national policies and development activities, and the relevant stakeholders' perceptions of ultra-poverty as reflected the above. Thus, proposed study would ideally map stakeholder knowledge of extreme poverty. However, a number of issues made an actual baseline assessment difficult. Firstly, a baseline study is conducted prior to programme intervention. However, most

⁷ Initially, we had adopted a third objective – mapping knowledge of CFPR at the national level. However, most stakeholders were familiar with CFPR and in fact, many had partnered with BRAC on many levels. As a result, this objective was discarded, and CFPR was analyzed through its various evaluations.

stakeholders were already BRAC partners and thus, familiar with the term both conceptually, and through its developmental endeavours. Many others were involved with extreme poverty projects to some degree. Given stakeholders' prior exposure to this issue, a baseline was not possible. Initial research confirmed a significant volume of activity on ultra poor issues at the national level. A baseline would have to be conducted at a 'zero point', where activity has not begun. If programme intervention occurred between times T3 and T4, non BRAC advocacy endeavours on extreme poverty had begun much earlier at time T1 (see Figure 1). As a baseline was not possible, therefore, we decided to conduct a review to establish a point of comparison for a later study. Instead of tracking stakeholder knowledge we tracked stakeholder perceptions along key issues.

Figure1. Study timeline



Defining a timeline

In Bangladesh, national mandates and policies typically vary with changing governments. Therefore, any selected timeline would have to hold the governing regime constant. We confined the study to activities dated January 2009-December 2010, from when the new AL government took office, to the period when the study began.

Research dimensions

The AU proposed that the study explore the following dimensions: the concept of extreme poverty, policies and government services for the extreme poor, and views on the lack of budgetary provisions for the extreme poor, existing services for the extreme poor, access to existing mainstream government services and poverty as a right.

The AU also suggested a list of questions to be explored. They were:

- What are the mainstream poverty reduction policies in Bangladesh?
- What are the gaps of such policies to address all the dimensions of poverty, specially the extreme poor?
- Do you think that present policies are enough for addressing the ultra poor? If not, what are the gaps?
- How can existing services be further developed?
- What are the barriers to attaining those services?
- What programme and activities can be designed for the livelihood development of the extreme poor?

The above questions provided an overall framework for this study.

Research strategy and techniques

Study tools included in-depth interviews, document reviews and content analysis of print media. To map stakeholder perceptions of extreme poverty we interviewed national stakeholders including academics, donor organizations, NGO organizations and the media. To capture the Bangladesh government's strategic thinking on extreme poverty, we study Bangladesh's major development plans. To track and review development activities addressing extreme poverty we take a closer look at development activities of the GoB and major development partners. And finally, to explore levels of advocacy we study the degree and nature of print media's portrayal of extreme poverty over a one year period (Table 1).

Table 1. Research design

Objective	Instrument
Stakeholder perceptions	In-depth interview
National strategies	Document review
Development activities	In-depth interview
	Document review
Print media	In-depth interview
	Content analysis
Data sources	
Stakeholders	Academics, journalists and development practitioners
Documents	Five-year plans, national policies, and existing research

Research area and sampling

- Objective 1: Key stakeholders included representatives from the parliament, academia, government agencies, donor organizations, implementing agencies (NGOs), and the media. We purposively selected respondents based on

potential engagement with the AU's national level advocacy workshops, and their availability and willingness to meet with researchers, ensuring sufficient variation. Initially we targeted 8% of 250 proposed stakeholders resulting in a final list of 20 interviewees.

- Objective 2 involved analysis of Bangladesh's major development plans. The study also targeted six ministries based on their engagement with extreme poverty alleviation. The ministries included: The Ministry of Agriculture, The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, The Ministry of Health, The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, The Ministry of Social Welfare, The Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs
- Objectives 3 and 4 involved organizations and media outlets selected in consultation with the AU during the study's initial proposal presentation. In order to accurately capture development activities outside of the government we conducted a broader analysis of the GoB's major development partners – ADB, the World Bank, DFID and EU. In addition we took a closer look at DFID given their prioritization of extreme poverty alleviation. Chosen organizations and agencies were major national partners working on extreme poverty issues. They also reflected a wide range of activities.
- To understand the coverage pattern of extreme poverty news in the Bangladeshi newspapers, selected four newspapers. They were *Prothom Alo*, *Jugantar*, *The Daily Star* and *The Independent*, selected according to availability and circulation. *Prothom Alo* was the highest circulated followed by *Juganatar*. *The Daily Star* was selected as the highest circulated English daily and followed by *The Daily independent*.⁸ Only the main newspapers were used; we excluded supplementary issues. The time frame for this analysis was from January to December 2010.

⁸ According to the report of Department of Film and Publications (DFP) published on 31 December 2010, the circulation of *Prothom Alo* was 3,40,250 which was followed by *Juganatar* (1,37313). *The Daily Star* was highest circulated English daily with the circulation 38,960 whereas *The Independent* hold second position.

III. WHO ARE THE EXTREME POOR?

According to aggregate measures, Bangladesh has made significant strides in poverty reduction. From 2000 to 2005, national incidence of poverty has decreased from 34%, to 25% (Narayan *et al.* 2009).⁹ The rate of poverty reduction has also improved over time, for example, with greater progress during the nineties when compared to the eighties. Even when income poverty failed to improve, Bangladesh made strides in human development. However, large pockets of extreme poverty still exist in Bangladesh. While aggregate numbers represent poverty at the national level, they say little about the causes and dynamics of extreme poverty. They pay “little attention to what has happened to the relative access by various groups of the poor and the non-poor” (Sen and Hulme 2004). Two persisting problems contribute to these deep inequalities of access – one, the poorest continually get left behind and secondly, more households are likely to slide into the poor category over time (Sen and Hulme 2004). These households may fall into the extreme poor category at one time, but not necessarily at others. The extreme poor are constantly vulnerable to external shocks.¹⁰ Predominant classifications of poverty, mostly linear, fail to capture their multifaceted vulnerabilities. And yet, popular linear, hierarchical poverty scales continue to dominate studies of poverty in Bangladesh, as elsewhere.

The World Bank dollar-a-day standard – the most popular linear scale - holds the universal standard of extreme poverty at \$1.25 a day. On the one hand, this linear classification provides economists with a universal standard for cross-national analysis and global target-setting¹¹. Such a classification, however, poses problems, both due to its universal and linear nature. Some countries do indeed offset the dollar-a-day standard with national poverty lines in order to accommodate contextual differences, for example, cross-national variation in the cost of living (Bauer *et al.* 2008). And yet, many donor organizations use the universal dollar-a-day standard in their poverty alleviation strategies. Much of Bangladesh's poverty research, for example, continues to use two popular linear poverty classification methods, the Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) and Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) methods.

⁹ These estimates draw on poverty lines developed jointly by the World Bank and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), using a Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach.

¹⁰ A CARE study associates vulnerability with the risks people face, and the severity of the impact of adverse events on their lives CARE 2006. Literature review on chronic and extreme poverty in Bangladesh, Dhaka: CARE Bangladesh rural livelihoods program. They draw on the definition of vulnerability by Chambers, as “exposure to contingencies and stress, [...] which is defencelessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss.” Chambers R 1989. Editorial introduction: vulnerability, coping and policy. *IDS Bulletin*, 20, 1-7.

¹¹ See, for example, Bauer A, Hasan R, Magsombol R and Wan G 2008. The World Bank's new poverty data: Implications for the Asian Development Bank. ADB Sustainable Development Working Paper Series.

Bangladesh is not new to the concept of extreme poverty. In 1977 Professor AR Khan classified the absolutely and extremely poor as those who were unable to meet 90% and 80% of their required calorie intakes. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) later drew two poverty lines, at 1805, and 1600 calories, which respectively reflected 85%, and 75% of the absolute poverty line of 2,122 calories (Sen and Begum 2004). However, although the Direct Calorie Intake (DCI) method measured the amount of food intake, it failed to capture its quality. Poor households not only consumed fewer calories, they also suffered from chronic malnutrition. Some newer work advocated adding nutritional status to existing measures of poverty. However, organizations found such detailed monitoring to be expensive. Development practitioners preferred to devote such funds towards actual programmes, where they felt that their money was better spent. In conjunction with the World Bank, BBS later used a Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach to identify the extreme poor. This method based extreme poverty on the household expenditure per capita that allowed each household member to meet their food intake needs based on a food basket of 11 items (2,122 calories per person per day).¹²

These multiple linear classifications, though evolving, confused the various stakeholders that we interviewed for this study. A 2006 CARE study highlighted this problem, suggesting a lack of conceptual clarity in the use of various terms of classification within the extreme poverty literature (CARE 2006). Insufficient coordination between academics, NGOs, and government organizations kept many stakeholders in the dark regarding newer and innovative definitions and classifications – especially junior and mid-level development practitioners, and journalists. In the absence of coordinated dialogue, stakeholders' views diverged substantially on the nature and relevance of poverty definitions. Generally, stakeholders used multiple terms to address the poorest groups in society: hard core poverty, chronic poverty, extreme poverty and ultra-poverty. They were most familiar with the World Bank's linear classification, which set the standard for Millennium Goal 1 (Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger), which informed most national, donor, and organizational strategies in Bangladesh. Although aware of, and often working with this standard, however, many stakeholders found this standard to be superficial, and of little practical use. Given its linear nature, most stakeholders viewed the extreme poor as a homogenous group. They generally classified the 'poorest' as the bottom 10-15% of society

Linear classifications also failed to acknowledge the temporal, and structural dimensions of poverty. In the mid-1990s the term *hardcore poverty* emerged in reference to those who suffered from chronic food deficits, were illiterate, owned no agricultural land, and survived in endemic insecurity (Rahman and Hossain 1995).¹³ The poorest didn't just have low incomes; their incomes fluctuated on a regular basis with deep lapses (Matin and Hulme 2003). They frequently slid in and out of poverty

¹² Measuring by income inequalities, Ahmed *et al.* classify the ultra-poor as those living on less than \$0.50 a day. See AHMED, A. U., HILL, R. V., SMITH, L. C., FRANKENBERGER, T., GULATI, K., WIESMANN, D. M., QUABILI, W. & YOHANNES, Y. 2007. The world's most deprived: Characteristics and causes of extreme poverty and hunger, International Food Policy Research Institute.

¹³ From henceforth, this paper uses the term extreme poverty to refer to the poorest groups in society.

frequently, given various attempts to overcome their impoverished status. As a result, many households qualified as extreme poor at one time, but not at another. The term *chronically poor* addressed this temporal dimension, incorporating groups who remained in poverty for a long period of time – five years and more - and were likely to pass on poverty to subsequent generations (Hulme 2003). One of chronic poverty's key characteristics, was that it was intergenerationally transmitted (IGT), "which is likely to be relatively intractable and therefore, likely to escape current poverty reduction efforts. In this way," wrote Hulme *et al.* "IGT poverty is both a characteristic and a cause of poverty" (Hulme *et al.* 2001). The Programme for Research on Chronic Poverty (PRCP) at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) expanded this conceptualization of chronic poverty, to include, along with duration, the severity of poverty (Table 2).

Table 2. Defining extreme poverty

Category	Source	Characteristic
Absolutely poor	AR Khan (1977)	Those who could not take more than 90 per cent of the recommended calorie intake
Hardcore poor	Rahman and Hossain (1995)	Those who suffer from chronic food deficits, are illiterate, own no agricultural land and survive in a situation of endemic insecurity.
	UNDP	Direct Calorie Intake (DCI): below 80% of daily recommended calories
	BBS	Direct Calorie Intake (DCI): below 1805 calories
Chronically poor	Hulme 2003; Sen and Hulme 2004	Long-term poverty: 5 yrs or more; Vulnerabilities not easily overcome
	Programme for research on chronic poverty, BIDS	Length and severity of poverty
Extreme poor	AR Khan (1977)	Those who could not take more than 80% of their required calorie intake
	PRSP, BBS	Cost of basic needs (CBN): Those living below lower poverty line
	World Bank, ADB and donors	Income of below \$1 a day
Extreme dependent poor	EEP/Shiree	The elderly, disabled or chronically ill requiring long-term support
Ultra poor	Lipton 1983, CFPR/TUP	Those who spend 80% of their income on food but fail to reach 80% of their recommended calorie intake
	World Food Programme	Those who spend 70% of their household income on food; have no assets; consume less than 1,800 calories per day and suffer from chronic food insecurity and severe malnutrition.
	DFID	Tk. 22 daily income. Programmes including BRAC's CFPR/TUP use diverse criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Much of Bangladesh's poverty research acknowledged the importance of chronic poverty as a concept. Many questions still remained. For example, how was one to measure chronic poverty, if groups were poor at one time but not at another? Should poverty be measured by monetary indicators such as income, or non-monetary indicators? Income and expenditure-based measures showed different results those using non-monetary indicators such as land ownership, health status, nutritional status, female headship and other structural factors. For example, a study of Vietnam in the 1990s showed that not only was monetary poverty less persistent than other kinds of poverty – for example, school enrolment, malnutrition – but measures of poverty didn't correlate with each other. In other words, monetary measures may highly understate the degree of poverty (Baulch and Masset 2003, UNDP 2001, Sahn and Stifel 2000).

Linear poverty classifications also failed to capture poverty's multiple dimensions. The extreme poor experienced multiple vulnerabilities, for example, based on gender, location, environment among others. And in fact, the more the dimensions that deprived an individual, the lower their likelihood was of escaping poverty (Wood 2003, CARE 2006). Hulme and Moore mentioned in reference to the ultra poor, that they "are not a distinct group, but a heterogeneous assemblage of different people usually experiencing multiple deprivations (Hulme and Moore 2001). Many studies identified this phenomenon, but failed to classify the poor along these multiple dimensions. Thus they conceptualized the poor as a single homogenous group.

Newer research needs to address how various subgroups of the extreme poor suffered from different types of constraints. For example, those experiencing regional marginalization lacked access to markets and resources, and often had no permanent home. Families from the southern coastal belts had difficulty retaining assets, and growing food due to seasonal sea level rise, storms and cyclones, and residual saline waters. Disabled and elderly populations were completely unfit to engage in any kind of income generating activity. Orphans and distressed children faced a different challenge – they were homeless, insecure and lacked access to basic schooling. Professor Rehman Sobhan encapsulated these groups within a framework, highlighting structural dimensions of poverty. He redefined poverty as "a process which excludes significant segments of the population from opportunities to participate on equitable terms in the opportunities for development and decision-making in society". He labeled as *excluded*, those who were denied opportunities for participation, and argued that poverty eradication should be measured through the changes in the opportunity structures for the excluded. Exclusion does not derive from market forces, but from the "structural arrangements of society which determine the working of market forces, as well as the design and functioning of its institutions" (Sobhan 2010).

Some stakeholders – primarily academics and senior practitioners working very closely with the extreme poor – loosely identified the poorest by categorical indicators. However, practitioners, especially those at the mid-level, mainly 'read off' various organizational definitions, often unable to explain what the various definitions and classifications meant. Some others had started to visualize poverty as structural,

but had trouble consolidating its structural dimensions with previous definitions. It is indeed difficult to understand the relationship, for example, between chronic and severe poverty – what if some families were severely and chronically poor at one time, but well-off during other times? Also, given the lack of coordination and dialogue, organizations differed when it came to identifying which categories were most important. For the most part, each of the above terms defined the above group in ways that applied to their particular context and purpose. Implementing agencies, for example, defined extreme poverty in ways that ensured efficient targeting of their particular product. This derived from practitioners needs for cost-efficient targeting methods that minimized inclusion and exclusion errors. One way to achieve consensus would be to commission research projects. However, in a resource constrained setting such as Bangladesh, stakeholders preferred to spend money on actual programmes. As one stakeholder mentioned, a major research project can work for six months, surveying each household in a large community to determine who is poor and why. He added, however, that such a study would be inefficient and costly. Practitioners would much rather spend the money for programming purposes.

So, what *do* we know about various categories of the poor? Essentially, each sub group of the extreme poor faced different structural problems. For example, first generation extreme poor differed greatly from fourth generation extreme poor, the latter experiencing greater inherited malnutrition, no property or landholding, no social or political networks and possibly family debt.¹⁴ From an academic perspective, poverty lines were not so useful at the national level. Where poverty was chronic, people shifted above and below lines based on slight changes in where one drew the poverty line. For example, in India, moving the line from \$1 to \$1.25 a day moved millions below the poverty line.¹⁵ Poverty lines were most useful for cross-national comparisons. However, at the national level, poverty programmes would most benefit from targeting, not based on income or calorie intake, but rather, the structural conditions underlying poverty. Researchers must, then, take a deeper look at the dynamics of the process that puts certain families in the corner of the market. For example, what skills and resources did they possess? What structural constraints did they face? For example, was the problem logistical? Were they disabled? Were they located in a *char* without regular market access? Did they lack the education and skills for successful entrepreneurship? In other words, for maximum success, programmes must target not in terms of income, or even other categorical distinctions, but rather, the specific disability or disadvantage that the particular group faces at any given time.¹⁶ Classifying households based on factors that marginalize them from mainstream economic life, would help overcome the confusion of overlapping characteristics – for example, a household may be female-headed, chronically poor, and environmentally marginalized. Such a classification may also be more effective for poverty alleviation than linear or temporal dimensions.

¹⁴ Stakeholder interview

¹⁵ Interview with Professor Rehman Sobhan. For more details, see SOBHAN R 2010. Challenging the injustice of poverty: Agendas for inclusive development in South Asia, Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Not all households are equally capable of overcoming these inequalities. Mr. Mamunur Rashid, Professor and Director, BRAC Business School, described the extreme poor as society's 'passenger population'. One subgroup of passengers included beggars, disabled and elderly persons, and those physically and mentally incapable of working; these groups required lifelong support, for example, through social safety programmes. For the others, he argued, "we need to think differently. We need to think of how to graduate them to a higher level – beyond their 'passenger' status." As for those we cannot lift up, he added, "we must ease their suffering."

Existing programmes, both government and non-government, do not always consider this distinction. The government typically hands down safety nets to all categories of the rural poor. For proper allocation and targeting, scholars have yet to understand how larger development processes affect these groups. This study, therefore, advocates further research into the nature of their marginalization, and the dynamics of access for various sub-categories of the extreme poor. Classifying and exploring the economic lives of these subgroups may be a daunting task. However, it is now both possible, and timely given an extensive knowledge base, that current development programmes offer. Also, local government officials used their judgment, and often patronage to disburse services. These programs also provided temporary protection and should, therefore, target those groups that can most benefit from short-term support. They should not be misunderstood as a permanent solution for extreme poverty. Programmes that do aim to 'uplift' the poor essentially have little provision specifically for the extreme poor.

Development practitioners mostly used the term *ultra poor* to identify this group. This term gained popularity as it was popularly viewed as a 'BRAC' term, but the definition was conceptually problematic. The definition emerged from the need to identify those who were unfit for microfinance support, for a particular BRAC programme.¹⁷ For this purpose, BRAC drew on Michael Lipton's definition of ultra poor as those, who spent over 80% of their income on food but could meet only 80% of their calorie needs (Lipton 1983). Thus, the term ultra poor emerged from linear calorie measurements.

Most non-government development programmes did, however, use categorical inclusion and exclusion criteria to identify the ultra poor for targeting. These criteria included, female headship, land ownership, and children of school-going age being engaged in labour work.¹⁸ BRAC's CFPR/TUP used the above selection criteria to identify households within selected geographical pockets, through community-based

¹⁷ Interview with Dr. Hashemi, BRAC University.

¹⁸ Inclusion criteria included: female domestic work or begging as income sources; land ownership of less than 10 decimals; no male active member in household; children engaged in paid work; lack of productive assets. However, households with adult women who are able to work, participating in microfinance or benefit from government/NGO projects were excluded. A final selection was made through local Public Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Public Wealth Ranking (PWR) processes. Similarly, different programmes used different inclusion and exclusion criteria to address this group; they will be discussed in later chapters.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Wealth Ranking (PWR) methods. Though still fairly new, the targeting criteria for these programmes encapsulate multiple dimensions of peoples' lives. Newer studies may look further into these programmes and their strategies in order to better understand the dynamics of poverty, beyond rigid, linear distinctions.

IV. GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES

The following sections explore how Bangladesh's national development strategies and activities cater to the extreme poor. The study firstly looks at the country's national development strategies, namely its Five Year Plans (FYP) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). We then explore specific ministry policies and activities. We identified six ministries whose work falls directly in line with extreme poverty initiatives – the Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Disaster Management, Health and Family Welfare, Primary and Mass Education, Social Welfare and Women's and Children's Affairs. Given this study's focus on the 2008 Awami League government, the study only addressed policies adopted or implemented during this government's rule. This section asks three questions: a) did these policies and activities cater to the extreme poor? b) what kind of support did they provide for these groups? c) what kinds of gaps remained?

Extreme poverty in Bangladesh's development strategies

Five-year plans

Bangladesh's first development plans aimed to strengthen its economy through GDP growth and poverty reduction. Ravaged by violent conflict and debilitating natural disasters, the country had much to achieve, such as a stable economy, reduction of foreign aid, solid infrastructure, and economic rehabilitation. These strategies, therefore, minimally addressed the poorest, through social welfare. All FYPs showed an underlying assumption that economic growth would trickle down to all groups, and mainstream poverty alleviation programmes would benefit all categories of the poor. These plans reflected a global move towards an integrated capitalist system. However, this growth has been far from equitable. In Bangladesh, economic growth has only benefitted certain groups in society and increased the marginalization of others, increasing the burden of poverty on the nation's economy and society.

Bangladesh's First Five Year Plan (1973-1978) prioritized poverty reduction through planned development, and a focus on labour-intensive sectors. Hard work was to pave the way towards greater agricultural output, and development would reconcile democratic institutions with radically transformed techniques and patterns of capital accumulation (GoB 1973b). The plan, however, stressed removal of the capitalist system, and thus redirected profit from the private sector to state dominated enterprises (Ahamed 1978). It proposed a Social Welfare Policy for the rural poor, where previous Pakistani governments only provided welfare in urban areas. The plan proposed social welfare support for a number of disadvantaged groups including women and children, disabled and old persons, beggars and delinquents (Annex Table 1). Welfare programmes were mostly to target the country's war-ravaged infrastructure – for example, build orphanages, centres for delinquents, and

strengthening existing community organizations (GoB 1973a) (See Annex, Table 1). However, the plan also highlighted the issue of land reform, which the GoB has not successfully addressed to this day. The First FYP “spelt out an investment strategy including land reforms, extension of cooperatives, assistance to small farmers and landless labourers, and ascendancy of public sector in area of industrial activities” (Ahamed 1978).

The following Two-Year Plan (1978-1980) placed top priority on growth rate over poverty reduction, as political instability, and mainly Sheikh Mujib’s assassination in 1975 caused national growth to plummet. It addressed poverty through rural development across the board, promoting GDP growth through increased agricultural output. It provided for the poorest through a social welfare policy, and proposed educational, medical and cultural support for children, community development, and services for youth, the physically handicapped, and women (GoB 1978). The Third Five-Year Plan (1980-1985) reverted national strategic focus back to poverty alleviation through rural development, but also specifically included comprehensive, and targeted group development beyond social welfare. This plan promoted comprehensive rural development programmes, which aimed to motivate, organize and involve the poorest men and women towards skills development and activities to develop their socioeconomic potential (See Annex Table 1). The plan expanded the list of disadvantaged groups to include landless families and out of school children (GoB 1980).

The Fourth and Fifth Five-Year Plans adopted sector based development strategies. Social welfare strategies in the Fifth plan (1995-2000) further increased target groups to include, for example, families affected by natural calamities, female headed households, sex workers, ethnic groups and tribal peoples. The Fifth FYP moved away from Bangladesh’s charitable approach towards the extreme poor. It specifically targeted a number of groups under its development strategy, thus recognizing them as distinct from those requiring permanent hand holding through social protection - the old, disabled, widowed and unemployed. It also established the need for disadvantage peoples to seek gainful employment (GoB 1990, GoB 1995) (Annex Table 1).

Bangladesh’s national strategies historically prioritized national growth. Also, mainstream poverty alleviation programmes supported all segments of the rural poor, with the underlying assumption that the extreme poor would indirectly benefit. However, these plans not only assumed that economic growth would trickle-down to all groups they also failed to realize that poverty alleviation programmes may not equally benefit all categories of the poor. Most five-year plans have also been overly ambitious, pursuing a wealth of objectives – for example, growth, rural development, increased employment, low population growth, high food production, equitable income distribution, etc.

Social welfare, the only initiative addressing the extreme poor, received little attention in these plans. Although later plans devoted substantial funds to social welfare, activities addressed all categories of the poorest as a homogenous group and

assumed that each group was equally eligible for social protection services. Also, donors and policymakers either excluded national stakeholders from the decision-making process, or the lack of coordination led policymakers to overlook – or purposefully neglect – their perspectives. The resulting strategies, therefore, hardly reflected Bangladesh's real development needs. In addition, weak institutions and the lack of implementation guidelines hampered policy implementation. For example, only 66.3% of the social welfare budget for the Second Five Year Plan (1980-1985), and only 85% of that for the Third Five-Year Plan (1985-1990) were actually spent. Also, local governments distributed welfare services based on personal judgment in the absence of instructions, or guidelines. No monitoring mechanism existed to ensure that local government officials targeted resources to appropriate groups.

Poverty reduction strategy papers

In 1999 the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) declared that poverty reduction strategies would form the basis for all their lending and eligibility for debt relief to low income countries. Bangladesh Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (GoB 2003) adopted a pro-poor growth strategy that involved rural development, technological development and employment generation, with microcredit as an integral component. The strategy also emphasized human development through expanded health support, nutritional support, education. Essentially, the IPRSP of GoB, too, addressed the extreme poor under the rubric of social protection. The paper advocated social protection schemes for all income shocks, addressing the issue of vulnerability. It proposed four sets of policies to help citizen's better cope with income shocks – social safety nets such as works and income transfer programmes, increasing social solidarity, and risks insurance such as credit in times of crisis, ensuring good public health and strengthening disaster prevention and mitigation (GoB 2003).

The PRSP of 2005 advocated recognizing the existence of extremely disadvantaged poor people with distinct characteristics. The list of most disadvantaged, thus, was expanded to include those belonging to specific occupations, isolated communities and disconnect from mainstream population. These communities have been living a segregated life and live in totally sub-human physical and social environments.¹⁹ Other stigmatized groups included sex-workers, children and adolescents who came in contact with crime, and the geographically displaced (GoB 2005).

The strategy identified employment as the basic route out of poverty. However, it did not specify a strategy to tackle the inequity that resulted from growth. The strategy identified four possible ways to address growth-related inequalities – creating an enabling environment for employment, increased skill and education for citizens to

¹⁹ The document compared these groups to untouchables in the caste system, namely the *Bawalies* (those who live of the resources of the Sunderban forest areas) and *mawalies* (honey collectors in Sunderban areas) *Bede* or river gypsy (engaged in snake charming and small trade in the rural areas); *Methor*, *Dalich* (sweepers, sewerage cleaners and scavengers); *Mymal* (fisherman on the big water bodies); *Muchis* (cobbler and shoe makers); *Nagarchi* (Traditional folk singers); *Kulies* (tea garden worker originally brought to Bangladesh from various parts of India).

engage in profitable activities, better infrastructure to increase poor people's incomes and increased asset base for the poor to access public services and market opportunities. The extreme poor would ideally benefit from at least two of the above strategies, as they most often lack the skills, and infrastructure to engage in gainful income generation activities. However, the paper did not specify how any of these efforts would together help alleviate poverty and particularly, uplift the poorest. The PRSP proposed to reach the extreme poor by combining innovative microcredit approaches with social welfare, such as VGF, health and education support, demand driven training, food for work, etc. How these initiatives would cater to various groups of the extreme poor was unclear.

Stakeholders identified a number of problems with Bangladesh's PRSPs. Firstly, the PRSP process was far from inclusive, and therefore, it hardly reflected national ownership. In theory, the PRSPs were nationally owned, prepared by respective countries and forms the basis of all social, macroeconomic and structural development of a nation. Following the Fifth Five-Year Plan therefore, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) set up a National Poverty Focal Point (NPFP) under a National Steering Committee and a National Poverty Reduction Council to initiate the PRSP. The WB and IMF approved an interim PRSP in 2003. Essentially, the PRSPs were donor driven and required participatory consultations. The GoB (2003) consultation process was far from inclusive.²⁰ During the final PRSP process (2005), the absence of effective record keeping prevented full reflection of the voices of many groups (Ahamed and Ehsan 2005). In addition, Bangladesh's development was large donor-driven. Therefore, donor representatives form an integral part of national-level consultations. In fact, civil society in Bangladesh mostly consisted of elite research institutions, government officials, and donor representatives.

The PRSP process not only failed to represent the common people, many stakeholders also questioned the degree to which the policies were based on actual development challenges. Little coordination existed between academics and policy makers during the strategy development process. Policymakers tended to overlook problems unless blown up to endemic proportions. Thus national strategies firstly lacked a clear conceptualization of national problems as they actually existed. They also failed to clearly outline how the proposed activities would help achieve projected goals.

Strategies of the Awami League (AL) Government (2008)

The AL government (2008) adopted poverty eradication as a key component of its national strategy, with particular focus on vulnerable regions. Much of this occurred

²⁰ Firstly, the participatory process was initiated through formulating a bureaucratic institutional structure. An 11-member bureaucrat dominated taskforce was convened by the MoF which excluded civil society and NGOs. Secondly, *NGOs later participated by invitationnto by right*, leading to one NGO actually selecting a participant for consultation. Third, only six *upazilas* from six divisions were selected where BRAC had regional offices, compromising representativeness. Fourth, no poor people were consulted at the *upazila* and divisional levels. See Ahamed S and Ehsan M 2005. Bangladesh's Poverty Reduction Strategy: An Analysis from the Labour Market Perspective. Asian Affairs, 27, 51-66.

due to increasing pressure by the development partners, particularly the WB, for poverty eradication and reduced donor dependency. Development partners' implemented massive interventions – for example, training, programmes, microfinance – in order to make this possible. Stakeholders, too, took up this issue with utmost rigor during the budget process, emphasizing the need for a cohesive plan to attack poverty.

Typically, during each elected government the General Economic Division of the Planning Commission develops national plans based on the particular government's development philosophy. Often, plans are based on the election manifesto, which governments must adhere to for credibility. The AL government's strategy grew from the Vision 2021 document, operationalized through an Outline Perspective Plan (OPP). The OPP provides a development plan for 2010-2021, implemented through the 6th and 7th 5-year plans. Vision 2021 aimed to increase productivity through technology, in addition to capital and labour. Bangladesh has proven track record of achieving this objective. For the last decade and half the country has escaped food shortage due to massive population growth, by tripling its grain production. Research and development, training, vocational education and health support have together made this possible.²¹ The plan aimed to achieve income generation and poverty eradication for the poor, disabled and indigenous by creating employment generating linkages through micro, small and medium enterprises. In addition, socioeconomic and cultural social safety nets including targeting programmes will ensure an equitable society. However, its primary goals saw no special provision for eliminating extreme poverty.

Beyond the OPP, the AL government emphasized the development of *monga* ridden areas. According to one respondent at the Planning Commission, massive amounts of social safety net resources had been assigned to these areas. However, increased public spending on social welfare generated some debate on prioritizing targeted support over mainstream programmes such as health and education. Stakeholders disagreed on whether the government should spend more on uplifting marginalized populations at the expense of mainstream programmes. One solution would be to increase both, but cut down on other unnecessary costs. On the issue of implementation, four key challenges existed – the need for extensive coverage, targeting, leakages and disparity in regional distribution. National dialogues have also increasingly focused on the need to improve infrastructure, particularly for marginalized areas. Better infrastructure could connect entire regions marginalized regions to markets and business centres, as well as small impoverished pockets.

According to interviewed stakeholders, the current government adopted to several measures to ensure inclusion decision-making during strategy formulation. Bangladesh, for example, had a history of closed budget processes that protected various interests groups. In 2011, however, the government provided some opportunity on dialogue. The nature of discussions too, has changed. While earlier discussions focused on tax issues, and the promotion of private enterprises, recent

²¹ Interview with government official at ERD, Planning Commission.

conversations have increasingly taken up poverty alleviation as a key objective. During pre-budget dialogues, civil society members highlighted that while Bangladesh relied on donors for development activities the government was unable to spend all of its Annual Development Plan (ADP) allocation. In addition, much of the ADP budget was not being spent for the poor. Thus there was talk of creating a budget for the poor, based on people's demands, and on regional priorities. The 2011 budget process saw some changes, particularly advocacy for increased poverty alleviation funds. National thinking focused on both regional poverty, as well as particular pockets – for example, one deep poverty pocket existed in Rangpur. Earlier talks on budget implementation also illustrated an interest in local implementation – that is, involving the Union *Parishad*. National level dialogues and workshops have also received increasing coverage in the media and therefore, Bangladeshis remained informed of the budget process. However, stakeholders felt that the budget and its subsequent implementation did not reflect these discussions.

The draft Sixth Five-Year Plan, did, however, pay much attention to extreme poverty than its predecessors. It had evolved from earlier, market-driven strategies. Interviewed stakeholders claimed that the sixth plan reflected an AL bias towards agricultural development as a growth strategy. Extending from 2011 to 2015, the plan hoped to generate employment, address regional variation and target deep poverty pockets in poorer regions. It did however rely on market-driven growth, with some government intervention. The plan aimed to reduce the incidence of poverty by 2% ever year, and increase GDP growth to an unprecedented 8% per year through private sector growth. The government would strictly enforce policy rules and regulations, picking on areas that the private sector was alone unable to address.

On social protection – the primary area of targeted support for the poorest – the draft plan adopted four types of programmes. These were, cash transfers, conditional cash transfers, in kind transfers or public works programmes, and emergency or seasonal relief. Initiatives targeted the following groups: elderly, widowed and distressed women, disabled persons, disadvantaged and female secondary students, economically vulnerable families and those subject to income shocks due to environmental hazards (Table 2). Additional social protection programmes implemented by various ministries covered the livestock sector, housing for the homeless, employment for unemployed youth, mitigating disaster risks and economic shocks, etc. Diverse programmes were also implemented by the ministry of women's and children's affairs and various specialized institutions (Table 3).

Table 3. Social protection initiatives outlined by the draft Sixth Five-Year Plan (Source: Draft Sixth Five-Year Plan, p. 164).

Four types of social protection programmes	Additional social protection programmes managed by various ministries	Specialized institutions handling these programmes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfers (old age allowance, widowed and distressed women allowance, disabled allowance); • Conditional cash transfers (primary education stipend programme, stipends for female secondary students); • Public works or training based cash or in kind transfer (rural maintenance programme, food for work, vulnerable group development (VGD), employment generation programme (EGP)); • Emergency or seasonal relief (Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), Gratuitous Relief (GR); Test Relief (TR); Open Market Sale (OMS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes under Livestock sector to alleviate poverty • Fund for Housing the Homeless • Programme for Generating Employment for the Unemployed Youth by the <i>Karmashanghstan</i> Bank • <i>Abashan</i> (Poverty Reduction and Rehabilitation) Project • Fund for Mitigating Risks due to natural Disasters • Programme for Mitigating Economic Shocks • Programmes for Reducing Poverty and Generating Employment under the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for Poverty Alleviation • Rural Infrastructure Development Programme • Palli Daridrya Bimochan Foundation (PDBF) • Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) • Rural Development Academy (BOGRA) • Department of Social Service • Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) • Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

The draft plan was, still, overly ambitious, both in its high targeted growth rate as well as the three-pronged objective of achieving growth, poverty reduction and income equality. It only addressed income inequality as a residual problem, not the enormous challenge it posed to development. It aimed to address inequalities through specific services, for example, reducing access gap of the poor to education and training facilities, addressing land constraints that harm small and marginal farmers via electronic surveys and computerizing land records, addressing spatial inequalities through increased expenditure in infrastructure and human development. In addition, the plan aimed to increase access of the poor to assets and means of production, and strengthen the delivery of human development services to the poor (GoB 2011: 23-31). However, these initiatives may address the symptoms of inequality, but not their cause. Bangladesh primarily owed its economic growth to the Ready Made Garments' (RMG) industry, which mostly benefitted a wealthy upper class, and to some degree one subset of skilled labourers. The plan focused on employment and labour productivity, which would not help those lacking the skills for productive employment. Essentially, government initiatives may disburse some benefits to the extreme poor, but given the nature of Bangladesh's economic growth, they would not integrate this group into mainstream economic life.

Table 4. Extreme poverty in the policies and activities of six ministries

Ministry	Ministry policies		Ministry activities	
	Policy	Targeted groups	Targeted groups	Activities
Agriculture	National Agricultural Policy 2010 (Final Draft)	Ecologically vulnerable populations; small, marginal and female farmers	Farmers: small and marginal, extension areas, environmentally vulnerable areas	Training, irrigation, land and soil classification, motivation, nutritional habits, technology
	National Food Policy 2006	Disaster affected populations, ultra poor, vulnerable and underprivileged, women and disabled persons	Food: target recipients of Social Safety Nets Disaster Management: disaster prone areas	Food distribution system, Food for Work, disaster preparedness and recovery
	Food Policy Plan of Action 2008-2015	Ultra poor, vulnerable groups including those suffering from regional vulnerability		
	National Plan for Disaster Management 2008-2015	Groups vulnerable to flood, cyclones and storm surges, tornadoes, river bank erosion, earthquakes, drought, arsenic contamination, salinity intrusion, tsunami, fire, infrastructure collapse and landslide		
Food and Disaster Management	Health Policy	Maternal and child health, those suffering from malnutrition, disabled persons, coverage expansion to all areas	Impoverished mothers, infants, pregnant women, senior citizens, remote areas, those suffering from communicable diseases, areas vulnerable to medical waste	Support for pregnant women and mothers (vouchers, health education), nutrition programmes, drugs, alternate medical care, and medical waste management.
	National Education Policy 2011	Education for all, provision for street children, ultra-deprived children and disabled children	Deprived and ultra poor students	Stipends, protein biscuits and target programmes such as allowance, grants, dress and education kits
Health and Family Welfare				
Primary and Mass Education				

(Table 4 continued...)

(...continued Table 4)

	National NFE Policy 2006	Children, youth and adults including those with special needs		
Social welfare	National Social Welfare Policy	Poor, disabled, helpless poor, destitute children, orphans and delinquents	Disadvantaged population, orphans, destitute and helpless children, disabled persons, vagrants and juvenile delinquents. elderly, widows, deserted women, freedom fighters	Infrastructure, cash and in kind grants, education stipends, vocational training, loans, healthcare, informal education
Women and Children's Affairs	Women's Development policy	Extreme poor (<i>hoto doridro</i>)	Lactating mothers, vulnerable women	Cash and food assistance, production inputs
	National Plan of Action for Children 2004	Ultra poor (the food insecure)		

Secondly, the plan did not address structural barriers such as weak rule of law, environmental constraints, ineffective institutions and unequal access to economic life. For example, it overlooks rule of law constraints which severely hamper the land administration issues, as well as access to various socioeconomic resources for the most impoverished. Although the plan highlights the need to uplift extreme poor groups, therefore, it does not tell us how this would be achieved. Essentially, the Draft Sixth Five-Year Plan adopts a macro-economic view towards poverty alleviation, one that academics and policymakers must now start to look beyond.

Extreme poverty in ministry policies

Who the government helps and how

The six studied ministries addressed a variety of extreme poor groups in their development policies. For example, the agriculture and food and disaster policies targeted the geographically marginalized – ecologically vulnerable populations, the disaster prone, and the disaster-affected. The health and education policies proposed expansion to all geographical areas, which would target isolated pockets of poverty (Table 4). However, some ambiguities remained, mostly due to confusion in classifying various categories of the poor. For example, the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs specifically targeted the extreme poor in its new Women's Development Policy, and the National Social Welfare Policy targeted the poor, disabled, helpless poor, destitute children, orphans and delinquents, all under one rubric. The policies provide little indication of who each of these categories included and whether they referred to similar groups.

The policies also provide no way ensure that groups received the type of support they most needed. A comprehensive strategy for extreme poverty eradication would

help overcome these discrepancies as these ministries translate these policies into specific activities. In order to examine how the government assists these groups, the following sections examine the policies and activities of the six ministries most involved with poverty alleviation.

The Ministry of Agriculture

Bangladesh's development strategies have historically emphasized rural development. Earlier agricultural policies targeted government support to all farmers, without emphasis on the most vulnerable.²² The National Agricultural Policy 2010, however, addressed two particular categories of the extreme poor. Firstly, it aimed to remove regional imbalances, and proposed special programmes for hilly areas, drought-prone areas, *chars*, *monga*-prone areas, *haor* and the coastal belts. Programmes included land resource management programmes, research to increase crop production in vulnerable areas, and agricultural and infrastructural extension programmes for vulnerable areas. The policy also targeted farmers needing greater support than others. Various training, production activities and microcredit initiatives targeted small, marginal and female farmers (Table 3, Annex Table 2).

The policy illustrates a step forward for Bangladesh; however, it fails to address some key structural barriers to extreme poverty alleviation. It proposed various initiatives for the extreme poor. Research extension systems can help transfer technology and extension to poor and isolated communities, agricultural input providers' networks can reach out to the poorest farmers, and labour intensive agricultural production strategies can utilize Bangladesh's vast human resource base (MoA 2010). However, additional support can target the poorest farmers. The lack of capital and institutional credit most hurts those with an insufficient security base to take out and repay loans. Even if sufficient microcredit were available, extreme poor groups would be unlikely candidates for Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) due to their lack of an asset base. The poorest farmers may most benefit from comprehensive and appropriately designed packages that reached out to small groups at a time, but provided all required support to ensure productivity. They also required social protection in the form of agricultural financial services like risk insurance for crop failure or damaged output.

The individual nature of loans also led entrepreneurs to compete with each other as producers. The absence of local organizations created further divides, as farmers lacked peer support and the ability to establish group endeavours, for example, to access to markets, finances and group initiatives. Inadequate supply of quality inputs most deprived the poorest and those least integrated into production networks. However, if local institutions could be strengthened, for example, through corporate enterprises such as cooperatives, so that they can together set up a system that

²² The Ministry of Agriculture has four policies, namely the national seed policy (NSP), the integrated pest management policy (IPMP), the agricultural extension policy (NAEP) and the new National Agricultural Policy 2010.

works. Through cooperatives, farmers could also collaborate on the best use for limited available land.²³

In addition, land administration reforms were particularly important for landless farmers. The government had two policies for distribution of agricultural and non-agricultural *khas* lands, and about 93,196 acres of *khas* land had been distributed among 1,81,495 families since 1997. However, often the landless were not organized and thus incapable of retaining their allocated land (GoB 2005). In addition, local power holders frequently took possession of *khas* land, though documentation remained with its original beneficiary. Land allocation in Bangladesh required more than surveys, monitoring and reallocation. Land rights laws have to be implemented more rigorously in order to protect the landless extreme poor.

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management

Bangladesh's burgeoning population and vulnerability to natural disasters makes food insecurity the biggest threat for the extreme poor. The Food Division of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management addressed these food insecurities by procuring and storing food for social welfare programmes. The Division also ensures stable prices and aims to avert food crises, especially in disaster-prone areas.²⁴

At the policy level, Bangladesh historically focused on ensuring food supply based on the country's total supply. However, the country lacked a comprehensive food security policy that considered actual levels, periodicity and access of food, its nutritional dimensions, administration of the food distribution system and a monitoring mechanism (GoB 2005).²⁵ A National Food Policy adopted in 2006 emphasized direct food aid distribution to households for emergency relief, and expansion an effective implementation of the social safety net for the ultra poor and the underprivileged, and supporting women and the disabled in income generating activities. The policy also advocated the supply of nutritional foods to vulnerable groups, which needed to be identified, and increase such groups' income generation abilities through skill enhancing education facilities and development projects. The following US funded Plan of Action 2008-2015 aimed to improve effectiveness of social safety nets, particularly through ensuring coverage for ultra poor and other vulnerable groups. The plan also highly prioritized increasing access to balanced and nutritional food at minimal cost for vulnerable groups including the rural ultra poor, through self-production with the help of microfinance programmes and adequate

²³ Interview with Professor Rehman Sobhan

²⁴ The food division's function is to conduct the country's overall food management, planning and operation; implement the national food policy-strategy; establish a dependable national food security arrangement; oversee, monitor and research overall food supply situation of the country and procurement, storage, movement, distribution of food grain and taking measures to ensure price stability; and preserve and quality control procured/imported food grains and if necessary taking up appropriate remedial measures.

²⁵ The PRSP 2005 for example, advocated that an older National Food and Nutrition Policy (1997) and subsequent Plan of Action for Nutrition be properly operationalized. See GoB 2005. Bangladesh: Unlocking the Potential. National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction, General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

training. In terms of activities, the Food Division procured and stored food grains that Public Food Distribution System programmes (i.e. social welfare) later distributed. The Food Division also implemented a number of food security programmes in conjunction donor organizations and NGOs, mostly under the rubric of social welfare.²⁶

On the disaster front, much of the Disaster Management and Relief Division's efforts target disaster-prone regions, but their extreme poverty endeavours are primarily integrated with social welfare programmes. National Plan for Disaster Management 2008-2015 (NPDM) proposed a long-term programme with multi agency involvement. The plan provided a disaster reduction framework and strategic vision for all vulnerable areas. Three of its goals aligned with MDG 1, which envisions the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger eradication: strengthening institutional mechanisms, empowering at risk communities and strengthening emergency response system.²⁷ The NPDM was the only policy this study came across, that acknowledged and addressed Bangladesh's institutional weaknesses.

In terms of activities, the Disaster Management and Relief Division addressed Bangladesh's regional vulnerabilities by targeting all disaster affected people in its disaster management and risk reduction activities. They proposed major institution-building activities, such as extending networks and institutions, training stakeholders, creating volunteer forces, procuring and maintaining rescue vehicles, publicizing cyclone warning signals, and infrastructure reconstruction in disaster affected areas (Annex, Table 3). In order to offset the poverty resulting from disaster shock, the division provides emergency aid to affected areas in the form of food, cash, and other basic necessities. The division also specifically targeted the ultra poor in these areas with access to employment through public works, and food aid programmes.²⁸

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

During the GoB (2005) process, a thematic report commissioned by the National Steering Committee (NSC) and drafted by a thematic group identified deprivation in health and nutrition as two most important causes and consequences of poverty. Bangladesh experienced three principal health problems: overpopulation, malnutrition and communicable diseases (GoB 2005). Families afflicted by

²⁶ Ongoing projects included the following programmes: Food Security for the Ultra Poor in the *Haor* Region implemented by CARE UK (Budget 13.86 million euros; Period: Dec 2008- Dec 2013), Food Security for the Ultra Poor implemented by WFP and local NGOs (Budget 14.86 million euros; Period: Jan 2009- Dec 2012), Gaibandha food security project for ultra poor women implemented by ICCO and Local NGOs (Budget 11.47 million euros, Period: Dec 2008-Dec 2013), and Micro-finance Support Intervention for FSVG and Ultra Poor Beneficiaries implemented by PKSF and partners (Budget 3.70 euros; Period: Jan 2007-Dec 2010).

²⁷ The plan identified particular geographical regions vulnerable to a number of hazards, including flood, cyclones and storm surges, tornadoes, river bank erosion, earthquakes, drought, arsenic contamination, salinity intrusion, tsunami, fire, infrastructure collapse and landslide.

²⁸ For example, the disaster management and relief division, for example, implemented the comprehensive disaster management programme funded by UNDP, DFID, EU, Norway, SIDA, AusAID and GoB (Budget: 69.5 million USD, Period: Jan 2010-Dec 2014) which aimed to institutionalize disaster risk reduction approaches across the government.

malnutrition and communicable disease more often than not fell into the extreme poor category. At the time of the PRSP process, the report claimed the sector's major objectives as reducing morbidity and mortality and improving nutritional status, particularly of women, children, the elderly and the poor. Regardless, the Health sector failed to keep up with Bangladesh's burgeoning healthcare needs emerging with its growing population. While globally, healthcare is dominated by the private sector, Bangladesh's healthcare system is largely controlled by the government. Operational weaknesses, inappropriate organizational makeup and mismanagement hamper healthcare services to the poorest areas. Nutritional and population control projects are not coordinated, and do not reach the poorest – those who have most to gain from such initiatives.²⁹

The Health Policy adopted in 2011 aimed to reach medical support to all strata of society. If implemented properly, it would reach out to large isolated and impoverished pockets, many without access to healthcare. Accordingly, ministry activities aimed to expand the coverage of health services, increase health awareness and ensure nutritional status and food safety through collaboration with various NGOs. Ministry objectives and activities addressed some vulnerable groups – for example, those suffering from communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS – including sex workers - Leprosy and TB, typically marginalized due to social stigma. Programmes, especially those addressing diseases, and nutrition and food safety, aimed to bring poorer communities their coverage. In addition, health education programmes would specifically target ultra poor male and female populations.

Ministry activities particularly emphasized maternal and neonatal health, as Bangladesh lagged in meeting this particular MDG. Activities aimed to reduce infant mortality, and expand the Maternal Health Voucher Scheme, to ensure healthcare for poor pregnant women. As with many other ministry strategies and activities, however, existing documents provide little insight on how these efforts would be expanded – for example, which impoverished groups would be prioritized, which areas would be targeted, and how beneficiaries would be selected.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

At 91.9% net enrolment in primary education, Bangladesh appears well on track to reaching one of the three sub-objectives under MDG 2, universal primary education by 2015. Increasing from 60.5% in 1990/1991, primary school attendance owes much to government initiatives in the past two decades (GoB, 2009). However, it was the poorest children who did not make it to school. In their study of 14 countries, including Bangladesh, Ahmed *et al.* discovered that children from fewer families living on less than \$1 a day per capita were likely to enroll in primary school compared to families living on greater resources. Of this number, a substantially fewer number of ultra poor children (from households, living under \$0.50 a day per capita) enrolled in primary school, compared to children of the subjacent poor (those living on \$0.50-\$0.75 a day) (Ahmed *et al.* 2007). In Bangladesh, a report submitted

²⁹ For further details see MoHFW 2011. Health Policy. Dhaka: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

by the education thematic group during the PRSP consultation process identified access to education, quality and relevance of education as key considerations for Bangladesh's poorest (GoB 2005).

The National Education Policy 2011 strived to educate all, and also proposed special provisions for street, ultra-deprived, and disabled children. The policy and ministry activities provided ultra poor and street children with special incentives for school attendance – free admission, education materials, food and stipends. Physically and mentally challenged students availed special trainers, and lavatory facilities. Indigenous teachers provided a comfortable learning environment for marginalized indigenous children, along with special schools in remote areas (Table 4, Annex Table 5).

However, achieving universal primary enrolment may not be sufficient in securing the future of Bangladesh's most impoverished children. Bangladesh lagged in meeting two other sub-objectives of Goal 2 – *retaining* students in school once enrolled (only increasing from 43% in 1990/91 to 54.9% in 2008) and achieving adult literacy (increasing from 36.9% in 1990/91 to 58.3% in 2007). Incentives that encourage enrolment may not ensure continued participation. Children from the poorest families typically work to support their families. The high opportunity cost of schooling likely to influence greater dropout among extreme poor children, as immediate concerns with food insecurity possibly override the possibility of longer-term gains from formal education.

To tackle this problem, the National Education policy emphasized pre-vocational, vocational and technical education and was stressed to develop skilled manpower in keeping up with rapidly expanding technologies. The promise of immediate, visible, and long-term rewards through gainful employment is likely to provide a greater incentive for continuing education, than short-term material incentives, especially considering the prolonged completion-time of formal schooling. Introducing non-formal education section at an early age can also create an exportable, skilled human resource base, which can also help employ Bangladesh's growing population.³⁰ Bangladesh's Non-Formal Education Policy (NFE) – 2006, which proposes education for all, may help tackle this problem. The NFE currently targets all children, youth and adults –including those with special needs – who had missed out on formal education. It could be revised to accommodate post-primary technical training, particularly for extreme-poor children.

The Ministry of Social Welfare

Most government support for extreme poor groups was provided under the *ministry of social welfare*. The National Social Welfare Policy 2005 focused solely on the extreme poor, addressing their socioeconomic development and rehabilitation. For distressed, orphaned and delinquent children the policy aimed to provide education, training, development and rehabilitation into society. It policy advocated a number of

³⁰ Interview with policymaker

initiatives for distressed families, including food aid and nutrition, training and education, healthcare training, family planning, environmental protection, hygiene awareness, microfinance and savings programmes, and social development. Accordingly, ministry activities provided a host of vulnerable groups with stipends, employment and food aid.³¹ Key target groups included the extreme poor, orphaned and destitute children, individuals coming into contact with the legal system, cash and in kind grants for widows, deserted women, distressed and disabled people, destitute patients and persons with disabilities, and vulnerable women and girls. The ministry also supported voluntary organizations working with the destitute (Table 4, Annex Table 6).³²

Social welfare programmes, however, suffered from a number of concerns. Stakeholders identified three major controversies. The first set of concerns addressed their relevance - why do we need them and how much should we spend on them? There was a common understanding that the Annual Development Budget allocated more to social welfare than on health and education. Those advocating further increases in social welfare spending were in fact suggesting a cut on health and education support. This raised the question of mainstreamed versus targeted support. Is Bangladesh in greater need of ensuring access to health and education for all, or access to protection schemes for the poorest? One set of respondents advocated higher spending, towards longer and more intensive support but only for the dependent extreme poor who required lifelong care. Others, however, felt that social protection programmes should be foregone in favour of mainstream programmes for all, all of which should have a special focus on the extreme poor. A third group felt that both expenditures could be increased by cutting down on many other budgetary provisions – for example overhead costs – which typically lead to enormous wasted resources. A trade-off, therefore, may not be entirely necessary.

The second set of concerns addressed the purpose of programmes – who were they for, and what did they hope to achieve? Social safety net programmes such as Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) and Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) were not comprehensive poverty eradication schemes. They did not aim to uplift recipients, only temporarily sustain these groups. Social welfare programmes provided food, stipends or employment as a temporary safety net against shocks. Presently social welfare features prominently in extreme poverty eradication strategies, representing a host of services. NGOs have recently invested substantial resources to this purpose, creating tailored packages for extreme poor families. As a result, an enormous body of programmatic literature traces targeting effectiveness and programme impact. However, research needs to take a step back and explore the nature, and purpose

³¹ The extreme poor, orphaned and destitute children, individuals coming into contact with the legal system, cash and in kind grants for widows, deserted women, distressed and disabled people, destitute patients and persons with disabilities, and vulnerable women and girls

³² Functions of the MoSW include: to formulate and implement policies relating to social welfare; improve the standard of living of the disadvantaged segments of the population; provide registration and assistance to voluntary social service organizations; raise and educate, train and rehabilitate orphans, destitute and helpless children; Educate, train and rehabilitate disabled persons; development of vagrants, juvenile delinquents and those prone to commit social crime and the implementation of probation and other after care services.

of social welfare. First of all, Bangladesh's development policies and activities do not provide a comprehensive list of all target groups. Nor do they outline clear objectives, and strategies to achieve these goals – that is, whether programmes aim to sustain the impoverished, or uplift them out of poverty. Projects undertaken by the Ministry of Social Welfare were diverse and disaggregated. One stakeholder's research revealed that the GoB implemented over 80 social safety programmes, many overlapping and outdated. Social welfare policies need to clarify which programmes aim to provide temporary support to specific groups, and for how long. They should also explain how existing social safety nets will help these groups overcome their marginalization, so that they can move forward, and participate in mainstream poverty eradication endeavours.

Programme implementation also suffered due to weak strategies, the lack of synergy between actors, and an absence of detailed guidelines. Programmes, for example, faced serious targeting inefficiencies. Typically, local elected leaders held complete authority over the allocation of benefits. Without allocation criteria and accountability mechanisms, they distributed services at will, often through client networks or in exchange for kickbacks. For example, the Sixth Five Year Plan claimed that 27% of VGD beneficiaries were not poor, and 11% of the PESP beneficiaries met none of the eligibility criteria; in fact, almost 47% were non-poor.

Third, food aid programmes suffered from serious leakages and management inefficiencies, the causes of which were complex. The Sixth Five-Year Plan estimated leakages in the Food for Work programme at 26% (p. 166).³³ The plan proposed to address the above problems through a number of endeavours. Firstly, it would increase public expenditure on this area from 2% to 3% of the national budget. Secondly, it would draw on good international practices such as the National Pension Plan. A coherent and integrated national social protection strategy would be written, based on comprehensive mapping of existing and emerging vulnerabilities (p. 167).

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs

The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs mostly catered to women and children across all groups.³⁴ For example, the National Children Policy, 1994 (NCP) seeks to "ensure the rights of safe birth and survival to all children" through prenatal and postnatal healthcare, essential obstetric services, and extended maternity leave for working mothers. Ministry activities and programmes mostly addressed needs of

³³ For details on implementation see KABEER, N., HUQ, T. Y. & KABIR, A. H. Quantifying the Impact of Social Mobilisation in Rural Bangladesh: An Analysis of Nijera Kori. Working Paper, Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, 2007.

³⁴ The ministry aims to formulate women and children's development policies, initiate programmes for their development and welfare, establish and preserve their legal rights, programmes to empower and create employment for women, and coordinate and monitor activities of different ministries related to women's advancement. Mainstream programmes include formulation of women and children's policies, establishment and preservation of legal and social rights, programmes for women's empowerment including the creation of employment opportunities for women; eradication of violence against women and children; and coordinating/monitoring activities of different ministries related to women's advancement.

impoverished women and children: ensuring full participation in mainstream economic activities, eradicating and responding to violence, political empowerment, and strengthening children's education programmes.

Newer policies did focus on the poorest, -in accordance with the 2008 Awami League government's focus on extreme poverty. The Plan of Action for Children 2004-2009 endorsed a number of strategies to ensure nutrition and food security for insecure households, including SSN, FFW and school feeding programmes and community nutrition initiatives for ultra poor households. The National Women's Development Policy 2011 mentioned the need to support extreme poor women, but its specific objectives catered to women on the whole as a vulnerable group.

Whether newer women and children's policies would help the extreme poor, depends on whether they take special provisions for the extreme poor during implementation. Ultra poor families lack access to resources that allow participation in mainstream poverty alleviation initiatives. For example, the poorest families cannot afford televisions or radios, where children's education programmes would be televised. The ministry adopted a number of assistance programmes under the SSN scheme, such as allowance for lactating mothers, food assistance to vulnerable women under the VGD programme, and cash assistance and production inputs under the VGD-UP programme. The latter provided financial support and training to 8,30,000 beneficiaries each year. Across all strategies and activities, however, little is mentioned regarding the relevance and effectiveness of targeting mechanisms. Therefore, implementation required closer oversight.

V. NON-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Non-Government actors, including bilateral donors, addressed extreme poverty in Bangladesh in four ways: (i) as part of the MDGs in donor strategies, (ii) asset transfer or asset transfer plus programmes, (iii) microfinance and microfinance plus programmes, and (iv) research and advocacy. Table 5 lists the major actors in Bangladesh's extreme poverty scene, by the nature of their focus.

Many government partners such as the World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) emphasized extreme poverty in their country strategies through MDG1, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Both WB and ADB worked with the Bangladeshi government in technical partnership, mostly in the area of social protection. WB's lending, for example, focused on disabled and street children, food crisis, safety net for the urban extreme poor in urban areas, and employment generation (World Bank 2010). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) targeted the ultra poor, women and excluded groups, and climate vulnerable social groups in its rural infrastructure and institutional development initiatives (ADB 2009). However, its overarching strategy, the country operations business plan of 2009-2011 mentioned no lending or non-lending projects geared specifically towards extreme or ultra poor groups.

Table 5. Major actors in Bangladesh's extreme poverty scene

Activity	Actor
Strategic focus on MDG1	ADB, AusAid, DFID, World Bank
Asset transfer plus	CIDA, DFID, European Union, USAID, Save the Children UK
Microfinance	Grameen Bank, PKSF
Research and consortiums	BIDS, BRAC, RIB, Unnayan Somannay
Advocacy	BRAC (Advocacy Unit), DFID (Shiree), RIB, Action Aid, Oxfam International

Practitioners catered their earliest extreme poverty initiatives on this group's ineligibility for microfinance. In the 1990s the poorest groups were underrepresented in microcredit schemes. Possibly, the extreme poor avoided loans as a means of risk aversion (Hashemi and Rosenberg, 2006). However, microfinance institutions (MFIs) also found them unqualified for loans, as they lacked an asset base. When extreme poor groups did qualify for microcredit, they could often not repay loans (Matin *et al.* 2008). Group-based microfinance programmes hoped to counter some of these challenges, by providing a peer support network and creating social insurance against loan defaults. In practice, however, most group-based programmes operated on an individual basis. As groups failed to meet regularly, many microfinance clients lacked the peer networks that would help them access markets, inputs and other resources. In the absence of group activity, microfinance clients also competed with

each other as producers in the market.³⁵ Some stakeholders felt that the success story one sees in the media is of one person who made microfinance work for him. However, the average story is of the poorest who manage to barely sustain themselves based on loans.³⁶

At the programming level, a major debate existed regarding the success of microfinance versus asset transfer programmes in addressing extreme poverty. Several major donors including AusAid, CIDA, DFID and the EU funded asset transfer programmes. Such programmes provided impoverished families with an asset and multiple services to help him or her build an asset base and increase productivity. Programmes also supplied additional support – for example health, training and stipends – to compensate for the opportunity cost of time invested. Such programmes have made tremendous strides and achieved outcomes where national programmes have failed.

In Bangladesh, DFID leads donors' asset transfer initiatives. Three of the four projects in its extreme poverty portfolio – namely CFPR/TUP, CLP and EEP/Shiree – adopt an asset plus approach. The larger programmes, CFPR and Shiree supported 400,000 households each to date. The *Chars* Livelihoods Project supported 67,000 households in hard-to-reach *char* areas, and owed its success to large support packages and constant monitoring. Table 6 details DFID's asset transfer programmes.

Successful asset transfer programmes owed their high graduation rates to multiple factors. According to the experience of the European Union's Food Security for Ultra Poor (FSUP) programme, ultra poor households were more likely to build an asset base if they were able to replace their otherwise permanent hopelessness with an entrepreneurial mindset. CLP attributed its success to large support packages and close supervision, both of which helped participants prepare for, and react to income shocks. A smaller package size, for example, cannot protect against hazards such as natural disaster or disease.

BRAC's CFPR/TUP programme owed its success, among other factors, to its rigorous targeting method. Most stakeholders identified CFPR as one of the leading asset transfer models. Compared to Shiree's bottom up, NGO-centric model CFPR adopted a uniform top down approach. However, the programme went through various steps to ensure accuracy, including local Participatory Wealth Ranking (PWR) methods to correctly identify the bottom poorest in selected areas. This not only ensured proper targeting, it also instilled ownership within the beneficiary selection process. CFPR also owed its success to one particular exclusion criteria. To participate, households had to include one active female member to undertake entrepreneurial activities. Active households were more likely to transform an asset into an asset base as opposed to losing or trading their assets in times of income,

³⁵ Stakeholder Interview. For more information, see Sobhan R 2010. Challenging the injustice of poverty: Agendas for inclusive development in South Asia, Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd.

³⁶ Stakeholder Interview

health or environmental shocks. In contrast, another studied programme did not exclude households with predominantly elderly, disabled or otherwise inactive members due to moral reasons. Their failed cases mostly involved these 'inactive' households.

Table 6. DFID asset transfer programmes

Programme and donor	Implementing agencies	Beneficiaries (# households)	Package
<i>Chars</i> Livelihoods Programme (DFID, AusAid)	CLP and local NGOs	67,000	Asset, training and inputs, stipend, raised homestead, access to improved water and sanitation, social development, health vouchers
Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/Targeting the Ultra Poor (AusAid, DFID, CIDA, Oxfam Novib)	BRAC	Phase 1: 100,000 in 15 districts Phase 2: 300,000 in 30 districts	Asset transfer, training, enterprise management assistance, health support, stipend, social networking support. Varied asset size and level of supervision based on district level poverty density
The Economic Empowerment of the Poorest Fund (EEP)/shiree (Stimulating Household Improvements Resulting in Economic Empowerment) challenge fund (DFID)	CARE, DSK, NETZ, PAB, SCF, Uttaran, Aid Comilla, CNRS, Green Hill, HKI, IC (Sunamganj), Rangpur), Shushilan, MJKS, MDP, PUAMDO, SKS	Total target: 399,010	Multiple

Regardless, many stakeholders felt this success as temporary, and that extreme and ultra poor families were unlikely to build an asset base from such programmes. Indeed, these programmes have operated for a limited time and therefore, their long-term impact remains to be seen. Skeptics felt that prior to receiving assets, the extreme or ultra poor would require social protection, more than the minimal stipends they received from these programmes. In other words, programmes should place greater emphasis on sustenance. However, many national stakeholders also lacked knowledge regarding the experience of these initiatives. CLP, for example, has received very little attention at the national level, despite implementing a rigorous programme in the *chars*, one of Bangladesh's most vulnerable areas. CLP members, for example, shared that *char* inhabitants often failed to graduate as sudden health shocks prompted many families to sell their assets. Many men also gambled. Households dominated by women or the elderly were vulnerable to theft and robbery. Local government officials often imposed their power on programme staff, even if CLP enforces a zero tolerance policy for corruption and mismanagement.

Asset transfer also suffered from other drawbacks. Most programmes were donor regulated and therefore, implementing agencies had little say on programme design. Also, grant based programmes were expensive. The extreme poor required constant monitoring and large support packages as beneficiaries were at constant risk of sliding back. Thus donors were concerned about programme sustainability. Finally, donor funded programmes only covered a percentage of Bangladesh's extreme poor. Extended coverage was necessary for national level impact. However, the management of large-scale asset transfer programmes required enormous institutional capacity that NGOs did not possess. The government, though having the institutional capacity, was not experienced in implementing such complicated programmes. The World Bank, claimed one respondent, was against asset transfer as the approach was expensive and complicated. Grant based programmes also had the potential to reduce participants' eagerness for upward mobility, as it increased their dependence on free goods. Economically inactive populations were in greater need of motivators to encourage their ongoing economic activity. The landless, for example, could be given access to government *khas* land, and the geographically marginalized rehabilitated.

A second approach blends microcredit with social safety net programmes to best help the poorest microfinance clients. Hashemi and Rosenberg, for example, illustrated the success of CARE's Rural Maintenance Programme, a public works programme that provided employment in conjunction with training, and a savings plan to destitute women. Three years after programme completion, around 79% of graduates were successfully established microenterprise activities (Hashemi and Rosenberg 2006).

Two other organizations, the Grameen Bank and PKSF have adopted tailored microfinance programmes for the poorest. These programmes challenge the very premise of ultra-poverty as a concept, and of BRAC asset-transfer programmes, which deemed the poorest as unfit for microfinance. PKSF's PRIME endeavour took a flexible loan repayment strategy for borrowers residing in *monga* prone areas. Their experience showed that flexible loan repayment strategies and a holistic microfinance-plus approach including health, training and additional services increases chances of programme success. However, given the small size of loans and high operations cost, microfinance for the ultra poor too, was expensive.

Finally, several organizations were involved in advocacy and research on extreme poverty. DFID has initiated the Local Consultative Group on poverty (LCG) and Extreme Poverty Research Group (EPRG), both research consortiums. EPRG was an umbrella group bringing together DFID's extreme poverty endeavours. This group met quarterly to bring together research on all areas relevant to extreme poverty. Organizations such as BIDS, RIB and CPD conduct research focused on the extreme poor. Research areas include poverty monitoring, focus on chronic, extreme and ultra-poverty, determinants of poverty, programmatic research and studies that advocate policy changes. The Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies (BIDS) worked on three broad issues that address extreme poverty. Poverty monitoring studies evaluate poverty trends over time. BIDS's work also focuses on the chronic

nature of poverty, which scholars evaluate over time. BIDS studies both the determinants of chronic poverty, as well as its interface with policy and targeted programmes. Finally, the organization also conducts forward looking analysis on programme characteristics that implementing agencies could adopt. Given the lack of discussion on extreme poverty in national forums, both SHIREE and BRAC have taken up advocacy as a key focus. SHIREE's central advocacy message was to make the invisible, visible.

VI. SEARCHING FOR ULTRA POVERTY IN THE MEDIA: NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

Newspapers have the potential to educate, raise consciousness, and shape public attitudes (Kinder 1998). Print media can develop and alter a nation's understanding of socio-political, economic, and environmental circumstances. In Bangladesh the news media is the most important source of information on national and current events. Previous research has shown that the print media plays an important role in frequent coverage of news regarding environmental preservation and degradation (Fatima and Haq 2011). Newspapers are thus important, if not instrumental to advocating extreme poverty issues.

Poverty issues have recently received greater space and attention in Bangladeshi newspapers. News events related to extreme and ultra-poverty have shown increasing government and NGO activities. Newspapers did not, however, consistently report on ultra-poverty. This section evaluates how Bangladeshi newspapers present extreme and ultra-poverty news. The research method used, is content analysis of ultra-poverty news in selected Bangladeshi newspapers. We chose four daily newspapers for this purpose, over one year. This study does not look at the depth of poverty reporting; rather, it portrays the extent of coverage using quantitative data.

The titles of news events did not typically contain the terms ultra poor or extreme poor, though the words appeared within the text of articles in both Bengali and English dailies. Bengali newspapers addressed this group as *Hoto/Ati Doridro* whereas English newspapers used extreme poor, hardcore poor and ultra poor. Results indicated substantial media coverage of extreme poverty issues. This increased focus was the likely result of ongoing national and international campaigns, increasing government commitment to extreme poverty and a social resistance from the media on behalf of the extreme poor.

Number of news events

The degree, nature and intensity of news coverage are all important measures of the media's attention to a particular issue. This study examined all issues of each newspaper in one-year span. Bengali newspapers covered the highest number of extreme poverty news events, *Jugantor* leading with 209 total events, and an average of 0.57 events per day. *Prothom Alo* came in a close second, with 0.52 extreme poverty news events per day. The two English dailies came in third, publishing the same amount of news per day (0.36), although they focused on different types of issues (Table 7).

Table 7. Number of poverty news in selected newspapers (January to December 2010)

Newspaper	Total news events (year)	News events per day
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	191	0.52
<i>Jugantar</i>	209	0.57
<i>The Daily Star</i>	130	0.36
<i>The Independent</i>	132	0.36

Placement of the news

News placement is very important as it signifies the treatment of news by the gatekeepers. Front page news differs substantially from news published in the inside pages. We examined where newspapers published extreme poverty news events as a measure of how these gatekeepers prioritized extreme poverty.

Table 8. Placement of poverty news in selected newspapers (January to December 2010)

Page	<i>Prothom Alo</i>		<i>Jugantar</i>		<i>The Daily Star</i>		<i>The Independent</i>	
	Number of News	%	Number of News	%	Number of News	%	Number of News	%
First Page	24	12.56	16	7.65	21	16.15	13	9.85
Inside Page	140	73.29	165	78.94	86	66.15	99	75
Back Page	27	14.13	28	13.39	23	17.69	20	15.15
Total	191	100	209	100	130	100	132	100

Table 8 shows, most poverty related news were published on the inside pages. *Jugantar* published the highest percentage of news 79% in the inside pages whereas *The Daily Star* published the lowest percentage of news 66% in the inside pages. *The Independent* and *The Prothom Alo* published 75 and 73 % of inside news respectively. Poverty pieces are treated better in *The Daily Star* than other newspapers. *The Daily Star* published the highest number of news (16.15%) in the first page.

Size of the news

Size signifies the importance of the news. Readers perceive larger news events as having greater importance than smaller ones. Table 9 shows newspapers in Bangladesh mostly published double-column extreme poverty news events, followed by three-column news events. The newspapers also published single and four-column events in substantial numbers. In addition, they published a few banner headlines. Extreme poverty news events, therefore, were of moderately good size. Between one third and one-fourth of the published news events were in bigger columns, that is, four-column to banner. *The Daily star* published the highest percentage of larger news events (43.85%), followed by *the Independent* (33.34%), *Prothom Alo* (29.84%) and *Jugantar* (27%). English newspapers, therefore, published

fewer, but larger events. However, *Prothom Alo* published the highest percentage of banner headlines, a total of 7 in this one year period.

Table 9. Size of news in the selected newspapers. (January to December 2010)

Column	<i>Prothom Alo</i>		<i>Jugantar</i>		<i>The Daily Star</i>		<i>The Independent</i>	
	Number of News	%	Number of News	%	Number of News	%	Number of news	%
S/C	27	14.14	48	22.97	17	13.08	17	12.88
D/C	62	32.46	67	32.06	26	20	48	36.36
3/C	45	23.56	37	17.70	30	23.08	23	17.42
4/C	28	14.66	33	15.79	40	30.77	21	15.91
5/C	19	9.95	17	8.13	14	10.77	13	9.85
6/C	3	1.57	5	2.39	-	-	7	5.30
7/C	7	3.66	2	.96	3	2.31	3	2.28
Total	191	100	209	100	130	100	132	100

Subject of news

The newspapers covered a wide range of extreme poverty issues. Most articles were related to social issues and social welfare (Table 10). In both areas, *The Independent* and *Prothom Alo* published the highest percentage of news at 37.87 and 32.98 respectively. Conversely, the Daily Star most covered environmental issues, and *The Independent* covered health-related news. Education received the least attention in both Bengali and English dailies, at just over six percentage in the Daily Star, where it received the most attention.

Table 10. Subject of news on Ultra poor/Extreme poor (January to December 2010)

Subject	<i>Prothom Alo</i>		<i>Jugantar</i>		<i>The Daily Star</i>		<i>The Independent</i>	
	Number of News	%	Number of News	%	Number of News	%	Number of News	%
Economic	68	35.60	76	36.37	41	31.54	50	37.87
Health	13	6.81	8	3.82	7	5.39	16	12.12
Social and Social welfare	63	32.98	61	29.18	34	26.16	36	27.3
Education	6	3.14	7	3.36	8	6.15	1	.75
Environment	41	21.47	57	27.27	40	30.76	29	21.96
Total		100		100		100		100

Regional news on extreme poverty

Extreme poverty in Bangladesh encompasses a large regional dimension. The government during the period of this study, placed particular focus on targeting extreme poverty in particularly vulnerable regions, for example, those affected by *monga*-affected Northeast. Within news events having a regional focus, the poverty-

stricken South received the most attention. Of all news with a regional focus, approximately 38.04% of those in *Prothom Alo* focused on the south, followed by 37.71% and 36.69% in *Jugantar* and *The Daily Star* respectively. The Northern region followed, receiving most attention from *the Independent* (38.3%), followed by *Jugantar* (34.29%) and *Prothom Alo* (31.9%) (Table 11). The western and eastern regions received the least attention in extreme poverty news events.

Table 11. Regional focus of news events on extreme poverty (January to December 2010)

Region	South		North		West		East		Total
	Number of news	%	Number of news	%	Number of news	%	Number of news	%	
<i>Prothom Alo</i>	62	8.04	52	31.90	32	19.64	17	10.42	163 (100)
<i>Jugantar</i>	66	37.71	60	34.29	30	17.14	19	10.86	175 (100)
<i>The Daily Star</i>	40	36.69	31	28.44	25	22.93	13	11.94	109 (100)
<i>The Independent</i>	32	29.91	41	38.31	18	16.82	16	14.96	109 (100)

VII. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This study mapped Bangladesh's extreme poverty initiatives in three areas – national strategies and programmes, non-government activities, and print media. Study methods combined stakeholder interviews with document review, and content analysis of newspapers. Essentially, stakeholders perspectives served to both inform us of the degree to which national efforts target and assist the extreme poor, as well as identify issues relevant to existing policies and programmes. We focused on two particular issues – namely, how these efforts define, classify and target the poorest in Bangladeshi society, and whether they are appropriate measures for eradicating extreme poverty. The study concluded that although newer initiatives post 2008 adopted extreme poverty as a key challenge to development, this group requires substantial attention. Our knowledge of extreme poverty is still in its infancy and therefore, greater focus on research, dialogue informed policy making and collaborative programming can substantially improve efforts.

Stakeholders' views diverged substantially on definitions, and classifications of extreme poverty. They used a myriad of terms to identify those who could be uplifted – for example, the passenger population, the non-dependent ultra poor and vulnerable extreme poor. Multiple measures confused many actors, especially those working on the periphery. Resulting from this confusion, some viewed the poor as a homogenous group. Many initiatives, particularly scholarly research, also adopted linear classifications of poverty which may be useful for cross-national analysis, but have little utility when it comes to policymaking and programming. Linear classifications overlooked the temporal and structural dimensions of poverty. Many groups frequently slid in and out of extreme poverty. While they could be poor at one time but not at another, the marginalization of these *chronically poor* is long term, often intergenerational.

Newer research had begun to advocate poverty classifications as categorical as opposed to linear. Various extreme poor groups are marginalized from mainstream society, often for different reasons. Therefore, further research must focus on identifying the structural barriers that different groups face when it comes to accessing mainstream economic and social life. In addition, scholars and practitioners must stop arguing when it comes to identifying the most useful classifications, as different measures can be useful for different purposes. Linear measures, for example, best inform cross-national studies but categorical variables may better help practitioners identify proper target groups for their extreme poverty programmes. It is, however, certain that further research needs to address the complex and multiple sources of inequality in Bangladesh.

In terms of strategy, Bangladesh's development plans promoted growth and poverty alleviation, assuming that both would equally benefit all groups. Over the years, development strategies shifted focus from poverty alleviation to eradication. However, most addressed some symptoms of extreme poverty, as opposed to the structural barriers that marginalized these groups. The plans, for example, aimed to increase employment and opportunities for agricultural growth without first ensuring that the extreme poor were capable of obtaining and retaining employment, or owned sufficient land to gain from agricultural development. Secondly, although the strategies moved from poverty alleviation to eradication, the neo-liberal basis for growth remained the same. This failed to benefit the bottom poorest who were ineligible for resulting increases in employment. The PRSPs adopted employment as a basic strategy for poverty alleviation. However, the extreme poor – ineligible for employment resulting from growth – failed to benefit from this strategy. Any attempts to reduce inequality did not address the extreme poor. A comprehensive strategy for extreme poverty eradication can address how to best prepare these groups for participation in mainstream poverty programmes.

Past development plans were also weak, as they did not grow out of a coordinated, inclusive and informed policymaking process. Policymakers tended to overlook national problems until they blew up to endemic proportions. Thus national strategies lacked a clear conceptualization of national problems as they actually existed. Strategies also failed to detail how certain goals would be achieved. The Awami League government elected in 2008 adopted a specific mandate targeting the extreme poor. National level dialogues and workshops have received increasing coverage in the media. Various government ministries implement numerous projects targeting the poor and extreme poor. However, such endeavours are disaggregated and target different groups in different ways. A comprehensive and informed strategy for the extreme poor can help consolidate these programmes and help target the right support to the right group.

The extreme poor in Bangladesh have most benefitted from non-government development endeavours. These programmes owed their success, among other things, to proper targeting (for example, through categorical distinctions), comprehensive support packages, and constant monitoring. However, most initiatives targeting this group were expensive given the cost of assets and constant programme monitoring. Also, the extreme poor had trouble building an asset base without a significant volume of assets. They tended to slip back into poverty as their impoverished status prevented them from withstanding health and income shocks.

In the area of advocacy this study aimed to track prevailing coverage trends of poverty issues in Bangladeshi newspapers. Approximately 700 news events published in the last year covered extreme poverty issues. Most poverty related news events appeared in Bengali newspapers, although English dailies printed larger articles. However, poverty-related news mostly appeared on inside pages as opposed to the more visible cover pages. Most newspapers covered social issues such as human rights violations, and social welfare but focused little on education and health. In addition, extreme-poverty related news events did not appear in the editorial pages, which addressed the highest priority news events.

This paper hopes to serve as a reference for academics, policy makers, and development practitioners in generating effective research, policies and programmes. Its unique contribution lies in the research method, drawing on numerous stakeholder interviews to tap into undocumented institutional memories and experiences. In doing so, we step beyond the facts and figures documented in the enormous scope and volume of programme evaluations.

Study conclusions suggest a number of policy recommendations that can substantially contribute to reducing extreme poverty in Bangladesh.

- **Research:** Emerging research and newer dialogues have both emphasized the structural nature of poverty, which future research needs to address. Linear classifications are most useful for cross-national analysis and yet, they remain popular in poverty programming due to their simplicity. Despite much discussion on poverty's multiple dimensions, no existing study to the best of our knowledge, classifies the extreme poor into different groups based on the structural barriers they face. Such a classification would best help practitioners uplift these groups out of extreme poverty, so that they become eligible for mainstream poverty alleviation programmes, and eventually access mainstream economic and social life. Many development organizations are already conducting relevant research in order to improve their targeting methods (for example, CFPR/TUP and CLP). Future academic work may draw on the experience of these programmes and particularly, their extensive programme evaluations. Studies will benefit from collaboration across disciplines – economics, anthropology, sociology and political science.
- **Strategies:** A new policy for extreme poverty eradication in Bangladesh is both pertinent and timely. A comprehensive and informed strategy can firstly help the GoB consolidate its numerous, disaggregated programmes and tailor the right kind of support to the right group. This strategy should draw on the experience and perspectives of stakeholders working with the extreme poor on all levels, from central policymaking to the periphery. This policy should explore initiatives that are both sustainable, and affordable. It should be followed by a plan that identifies the specific nature of future activities, and detail how each would benefit the target group. The strategy should involve national-level actors including donors and NGOs, in order to prevent overlap in activities.
- **Government activities:** The plan should also explore innovative initiatives. Infrastructure development and public works programmes, for example, have much potential in this area if linked to asset transfer and savings initiatives. Group-based initiatives could be promoted to ensure self-supervision and build market linkages, reducing the need for constant monitoring. The GoB must also strengthen existing programmes, such as the distribution of *khas* land, with particular focus on enforcing property rights. In terms of programme implementation, programmes must ensure proper targeting through monitoring and accountability mechanisms. At the field level, there is little indication of who gets resources and why. Given that monitoring programmes can be expensive, the government can mobilize community members, particularly local groups, to

maintain records of allocated services. The government must also devise specific guidelines for local government officials, so that services are properly targeted.

- **Non-Government actors:** Bilateral donors and NGOs currently play an instrumental role in extreme poverty programming. Their experiences and studies provide invaluable information on various issues – effective targeting, what causes certain families to slide back into poverty, and which initiatives have greater potential for long-term success. Practitioners need to frequently share experiences and study results, and develop joint ventures that can be easily scaled-up. Existing programmes are costly and therefore, limited to small pockets. Future programmes must be sustainable to ensure that participants don't slide back into poverty after programme completion, and affordable enough to implement across Bangladesh.
- **Advocacy:** Newspapers can play an instrumental role in advocating national efforts to alleviate extreme poverty. Through informed and well-researched articles, newspapers can highlight areas where extreme poverty exists, and report how poverty becomes acute in various regions. They should place greater emphasis on environmental challenges such as cyclones, river erosion, flood, water-logging, etc. Newspapers can best illustrate the heterogeneity of extreme poverty by equally emphasizing its various dimensions – at present, certain issues receive greater attention than others. In addition, newspapers tended to pick up on sensational elements of extreme poverty news – for example, cases of extreme success or failure. They may publishing general reflections on extreme poverty, or explore the daily lives of the extreme poor in order to generate public awareness on these issues.

REFERENCES

- ADB (2009). Country partnership strategy midterm review: Bangladesh 2006-2010. Dhaka: Asian Development Bank.
- Ahamed E (1978). Development strategy in Bangladesh: probable political consequences. *Asian Survey*; 18: 1168-80.
- Ahamed S and Ehsan M (2005). Bangladesh's poverty reduction strategy: an analysis from the labour market perspective. *Asian Affairs*; 27: 51-66.
- Ahmed AU, Hill RV, Smith LC, Frankenberger T, Gulati K, Wiesmann DM, Quabili W and Yohannes Y (2007). The world's most deprived: characteristics and causes of extreme poverty and hunger. Washington D.C. Intl Food Policy Res Inst.
- Bauer A, Hasan R, Magsombol R and Wan G (2008). The World Bank's new poverty data: implications for the Asian Development Bank. ADB Sustainable Development Working Paper Series.
- Baulch B and Masset E (2003). Do monetary and nonmonetary indicators tell the same story about chronic poverty? A study of Vietnam in the 1990s. *World development*; 31: 441-53.
- CARE (2006). Literature review on chronic and extreme poverty in Bangladesh. Dhaka: CARE Bangladesh Rural Livelihoods Programme.
- Chambers R (1989). Editorial introduction: vulnerability, coping and policy. *IDS Bulletin*; 20: 1-7.
- Fatima R and Haq F (2011). Environment reporting in Bangladesh: a content analysis of selected newspapers. *J of Soc Stud*.
- GoB (1973a). The first five year plan 1973-78. Dhaka: Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- GoB (1973b). The first five year plan 1973-78, Dhaka, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- GoB (1978). The two year plan 1978-1980. Dhaka: Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- GoB (1980). The second five year plan 1980-1985. Dhaka: Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- GoB (1990). The fourth five year plan 1990-95. Dhaka: Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB (1995). The fifth five year plan 1995-2000. Dhaka: Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB (2003). National strategy for economic growth, poverty reduction and social development. Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB (2005). Bangladesh: Unlocking the potential. National strategy for accelerated poverty reduction. General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Dhaka: Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB (2009). The millennium development goals: Bangladesh progress report 2009. Dhaka: General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

GoB (2011). Draft sixth five year plan. Dhaka: Planning commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Hashemi S and Rosenberg R (2006). Graduating the poorest into microfinance: linking safety nets and financial services. *Focus note*, 34: 1-8.

Hulme AD (2003). Conceptualizing chronic poverty. *World development*, 31: 403-423.

Hulme D and Moore K (2008). Assisting the poorest in Bangladesh: learning from BRAC's 'Targeting the Ultra Poor' Programme. *Social Protection for the Poor and the Poorest*. London: Palgrave.

Hulme D, Moore K and Shepherd A (2001). Chronic poverty: meanings and analytical frameworks. Working Paper 2. UK: Chronic Poverty Research Center.

Kinder DR (1998). Opinion and action in the realm of politics. In: FISKE, S. T., GILBERT, D. T. & LINDZEY, G. (eds.) *Handbook of social psychology*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Lipton M (1983). *Poverty, under nutrition and hunger*; *Poverty, under nutrition and hunger*, World Bank, Washington D.C.

Matin I and Hulme AD (2003). Programmes for the poorest: learning from the IGVDG Program in Bangladesh. *World development*; 31: 647-65.

Matin I, Sulaiman M and Rabbani M (2008). *Crafting a graduation pathway for the ultra poor: lessons and evidence from a BRAC programme*. Dhaka: BRAC.

MoA (2010). *National agricultural policy 2010 (Final draft)*. Dhaka: Ministry of Agriculture, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

MoFDM (2006). *National food policy 2006*. Dhaka: Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

MoHFW (2011). *Health policy*. Dhaka: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Narayan A, Yoshida N and Zaman H (2009). Trends and patterns of poverty in Bangladesh in recent years. *In: Narayan A and Zaman H (Editors.) Breaking down poverty in Bangladesh.* Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Rahman HZ and Hossain M (1995). Rethinking rural poverty: Bangladesh as a case study, India: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd.

Sachs J (2005a). The end of poverty, New York: USA. Penguin Books.

Sachs J (2005b). RE: The end of poverty: economic possibilities for our time. Type to affairs, R. A. T. C. C. F. E. A. I.

Sahn DE and Stifel DC (2000). Poverty comparisons over time and across countries in Africa. *World development*, 28: 2123-55.

Sen B and Begum S (2004). Identifying and targeting the extreme poor: a methodology for rural Bangladesh. Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre, IDPM, Manchester: University of Manchester. (Unpublished manuscript).

Sen B and Hulme D (Eds) (2004). Chronic poverty in Bangladesh: Tales of Ascent, Decent, Marginality and persistence, the state of the poorest 2004/2005. Bangladesh and UK. BIDS, CPRC, IDPM, University of Manchester.

Sobhan R (2010). Challenging the injustice of poverty: Agendas for inclusive development in South Asia, India: Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd.

UNDP (2001). Human development report, New York: USA. United Nations Development Programme.

World Bank (2010). Draft Country Assistance Strategy FY 2010-FY2014. World Bank.

WOOD G (2003). Staying secure, staying poor: *World development*, 31, 455-471.

ANNEX

Table 1. Poverty reduction in Bangladesh Government's Strategic Planning

General		Serving the poorest: Social Welfare	
Strategies and priorities	Objectives	Objectives and strategies	Implementation
The first five year plan 1973-1978			
Poverty reduction through planned development, investment in labour-intensive sectors requiring less capital	Poverty reduction, Economic rehabilitation, Increase GDP growth to 5.5% per annum, Expand output of consumption items, Reduce dependence on foreign aid, Transform institutional and technological base of agriculture, accelerate rate of development expenditure, ensure wide and equitable diffusion of income	Previous programmes limited to urban areas, slow fund utilization, need to develop Social Welfare Policy. Programmes targeted destitute women and children (including orphans), the physically handicapped, beggars, delinquents and the old and infirm. In addition, social welfare training was proposed for the capable, particularly youth volunteers. <i>Allocation: 12.28crores (100% utilized)</i>	Projects in the areas of child welfare, community development, rural social services, youth services, welfare for the physically handicapped, medical social work and assisting voluntary organizations.
The two year plan (1978-1980)			
To prepare a good second five year plan; focus on economic growth through re-orientation of industrial policy towards private investment	Higher rate of growth of economy than achieved in first five year plan, rural development through increased productivity and employment, greater reliance on domestic resources, expand employment opportunities, income distribution, self sufficiency in food grains, reduce population growth, improve provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, drinking water, health services and education	Educational, medical and cultural facilities to children and particularly orphans and disadvantaged children; expanding community development activities in rural areas; expand youth welfare services; aid physically handicapped people; assist private philanthropic organizations and advance women through realizing rights and responsibilities, technical and vocational training <i>Allocation: 13.6 crores (83.0% utilized)</i>	88% of the allocation for the first year spent; funds for second year expected to be fully utilized.

(Annex Table 1 continued...)

(...Continued Annex Table 1)

Strategies and priorities	General		Serving the poorest: Social Welfare	
	Objectives	Objectives and strategies	Implementation	
Second five year plan (1980-1985)				
Poverty reduction priority through rural development. Ultimate purpose of the plan is to improve the quality of life of the common man. Rural development will constitute the core of the plan. Rural development will be all comprehensive of economic, social and cultural development and will include actions in education and healthcare.	Adequate supply of basic needs to improve standards of living; improve quality of life in rural areas through greater participation of the mass in development activities; expand opportunities for gainful employment; eliminate illiteracy, reduce rate of pop growth; attain higher degree of self reliance; equitable distribution of income and better social justice; accelerate food production, accelerate pace of economic development	Help physically, socially and economically handicapped persons become self reliant and productive; comprehensive rural development through helping landless families, out of school children and destitute women; community development activities among urban poor, care protection and education to children; institutional care to delinquents and retarded children; training for rehabilitation of beggars, financial services to volunteer social service organizations. <i>Allocation: 59 crore (66.3% utilized)</i>	Rural community development programmes successfully promoted comprehensive rural social development emphasizing disadvantaged groups like drop outs, youth, women and the landless through education and skills training to improve technical, managerial and organizing capabilities of the disadvantaged and provision of more basic services.	
Third five year plan (1985-1990)				
Poverty alleviation through rural development framework. Strategy focused on higher production and employment, improved quality of life, target group development and technological advancement and skill development to rural population.	Reduction of population growth, expansion of productive employment, universal primary education, human resource development, development of technological base for bringing about long term structural change, food self sufficiency, satisfaction of basic minimum needs of people, accelerated economic growth, promotion of self reliance.	Productive employment opportunities for rural citizens living below subsistence level; reduce population growth by engaging poor households in IGA, motivating the sharing of responsibilities to help the disadvantaged, promote and improve institutional programmes, help creation of family environment in institutions dealing with orphans and destitute children <i>Allocation: 75 crore (84% spent)</i>	Programmes emphasized provision of institutional services for rehabilitation of orphans and physically handicapped in addition to motivate, organize and involve the poorest men and women in activities towards development of their socioeconomic potentials and learning new skills	

(Annex Table 1 continued...)

(...Continued Annex Table 1)

General		Serving the poorest: Social Welfare	
Strategies and priorities	Objectives	Objectives and strategies	Implementation
Fourth five year plan (1990-1995)			
Overcome existing constraints to economic growth, group based planning, sector based planning, inter-sectoral balance, efficiency culture in economy, including women, restructuring fiscal, monetary and commercial policies, administrative restructuring.	Accelerating economic growth, Poverty alleviation and employment generation through human resource development, Increased self reliance	Opportunities for gainful employment of the distressed, promote rehabilitation of physically disabled elderly persons, group formation and participation towards capacity building of the poorest, care and education for orphans, destitute and shelterless children, institutional facilities for delinquents, education for the disabled, support to voluntary organizations, motivate citizens to assist the socially disabled <i>Allocation: 133 crore</i>	The Rural Social Service programme served 1.5 million people. A programme for welfare of children in urban areas benefitted 15,000 children. Eleven projects benefitted 4,000 orphans, 400 disabled, 150 juvenile delinquents, 2700 vagrants. Eight projects by NGOs served 1.00 million people.
Fifth five year plan:			
Accelerated agricultural production, local level institutions for participatory rural development, population control, human resource development, education, making private sector dominant player, export led industrialization, microcredit and good governance.	Poverty alleviation through economic growth, employment generation, increased productivity through optimal labour use, self sufficient food production, promotion and diversification of high value added products, human resource and infrastructure development, lower population growth rate, strengthen scientific and technology base, environment preservation, close gender gap, better social justice.	Gainful activities for disadvantaged people, capacity building through group formation, medical care, education and skill development for orphan, destitute and shelter less children, facilities for delinquents, education for the disabled, rehabilitation programmes for vagrants, promote gender balance through programmes for poor women, rehabilitate families affected by natural calamities, centres for helpless old women, special programmes for female headed households, prevent prostitution and provide rehabilitation mechanisms, programmes for socioeconomic development of ethnic groups and tribal peoples, social security programmes for people in difficult circumstances due to old age, unemployment, disability and widowhood <i>Allocation: 69.6 crores</i>	

Table 2. Ministry of Agriculture – Selected objectives, activities and impact relevant for the extreme poor

Source: Medium-Term Budget Framework, Fiscal Year 2011

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Activities	Impact
1. Ensure food security through increasing food production and increase in crop sector productivity and profitability	Provide training to extension workers and farmers	Overall, 60% of agricultural workers will benefit from objective 1, which will also include extreme poor.
2. Increase the production of high value and economic crops	Various	Targeted beneficiaries of these activities are small and marginal farmers (30% to 60%) and also women farmers in specific cases. Scope has been created to increase the income of marginal farmers through their involvement in increasing cash crops (jute, sugar cane, cotton, betel leaves) production activities with microcredit assistance.
3. Appropriate agricultural land resource base management, development and conservation	Identification of soil and land resources through soil survey and classification of land and soil resources on the basis of their productivity	Reduced cost of conservation of soil productivity throughout the country, particularly those small and marginal farmers from drought, "Monga" and flood affected areas
Agricultural Research Programme	Innovation and development of climate and environment friendly area based HYV and technology on the basis of farmers' demand	Increase crop production appropriate to the poor people of saline, drought, "Monga," and flood affected areas.
Agricultural Extension Programme	Target based agricultural extension and infrastructure extension programmes including training of the extension workers and farmers; motivation programmes to develop modern food and nutrition habits	Agricultural technology expansion programmes appropriate for cultivation in the saline, drought, "Monga," water logging, river erosion and flood prone areas are being taken up on priority basis; Target based development of agricultural extension, infrastructure and extension programmes including training of extension workers and farmers are being strengthened.
Efficient management of water resources to facilitate expansion of the irrigation programme	Training for the farmers and farm workers to increase their skills in optimum use of water and efficient on-farm water management	Efficient management of irrigation and increased use of surface water will help the small and marginal farmers to improve their economic condition.
Development of agricultural marketing Management		Financial affordability will ensure fair price, create new markets and reduce role of middle men. Thus economic conditions of the small and marginal farmers will improve.
Encourage investment in agro-processing and agribusiness development	Assistance to the agricultural entrepreneurs in the area of technology and technical supports; Assistance in the preparation of Business Plan to enhance skill and competition	Priority based credit through PKSF, RKB, RDRS and BRAC to small and marginal farmers from river erosion, drought, and "Monga" affected areas.

Table 3. The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management – Objectives, activities and impact on poverty

Source: Medium-Term Budget Framework, Fiscal Year 2010

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Impact
Food Division		
Distribution of food grain through Public Food Distribution System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply of food grain (rice, wheat) under different distribution programme through Public Food Distribution System 	Employment opportunity for a minimum of 10 lakh rural poor is created generally during lean period through the implementation of TR, FFW, VGF, VGD programme and instant GR programme to absorb disaster shock. Direct supply under food based programme helps beneficiaries to get food instantly.
Disaster Management and Relief Division		
Involving disaster management and disaster risk reduction activities with national policy, institutions and development process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of net work between local, regional, national and international institutions for disaster management Conduct training to all stakeholders on disaster Strengthening disaster warning volunteer forces Increasing awareness and empowerment of field level people about disaster and risk 	Employment opportunities are created in lean period for the ultra poor under employment programme in villages especially in <i>monga</i> prone areas for easing their livelihood.
Employment for the ultra poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of disaster prone and ultra poor from areas which are affected by climate change Creation of employment for ultra poor specially poor destitute women in the identified disaster prone areas 	Employment opportunity for a minimum of 10 lakh rural poor is created generally during lean period through the implementation of TR, FFW, VGF, VGD programme and instant GR programme to absorb disaster shock.
3. Easing food availability for the poor during food crisis and unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Food for Work (FFW) Programme Implementation of Test Relief (TR) Programme Implementation of Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Programme 	In strengthening disaster preparedness among common people in disaster prone area different programmes e.g training, strengthening of volunteer forces, people awareness programmes etc are being implemented. As a result, the poor are getting benefits from qualitative and structural changes in disaster management which helps their increased access to public services with regard to disaster management.

(Annex Table 3 continued...)

(...Continued Annex Table 3)

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Impact
Strengthening disaster management and risk reduction capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity of cyclone warning signals • Distribution of relief items including food and cash money to absorb disaster related shocks • Procurement, maintenance and distribution of rescue vehicles and equipments 	After assessment of damage food grains, cash money, corrugated sheets, blankets, biscuits etc. are distributed among the distress people immediately in disaster-hit areas. This ensures food security and nutrition for the destitute people. This acts as a buffer against the poverty caused by the disaster shock.
Construction of physical infrastructure to mitigate disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of bridges/culverts in rural areas in order to rescue people especially women and children during disaster and make communication easier • Construction, repair and maintenance of Flood and Cyclone Shelters 	With the construction of cyclone shelter the poor people get an opportunity to transfer their belongings to safer place and save their lives. The construction of physical infrastructure improves the standard of life and ease movement of goods.

Table 4. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Source: Medium-Term Budget Framework, Fiscal Year 2010

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Impact
Improvement of mother and child health	<p>Continue the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) and widen its coverage</p> <p>Expansion of services related to Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI), Diarrhoeal disease control and the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide services related to ante-natal, natal and post natal and expand these services • Provide training and expand the service coverage of community based skilled birth attendants • Continue Maternal Health Voucher Scheme and the expansion of its activities 	Programmes will reduce infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate and improve maternal health. The infant mortality rate (IMR) will be: A Maternal Health Voucher Scheme will be extended to 45 <i>upazillas</i> to ensure the necessary healthcare of poor pregnant women.
Provision of general healthcare services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of health services in the private sector using Government grants through Public-Private Partnership • Expansion and strengthening of existing healthcare services available for senior citizens • Conduct and expand the existing specialised healthcare services at different levels • Provide emergency medical treatment to accident victims at a variety of trauma centres 	The expansion and strengthening of healthcare services at district and <i>Upazila</i> level will improve the health of the population of the country which will help to reduce poverty. A more capable workforce will be created and poverty will be reduced.

(Annex Table 4 continued...)

(...Continued Annex Table 4)

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Impact
Control of communicable and non-communicable diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the national AIDS/STD programme and strengthening targeted intervention among the HIV/AIDS high risk population • Implementation of Leprosy, TB, Kalazar, Malaria, Fileria and Dengue control programmes 	Poorer communities will be brought within the coverage of the control of communicable and other through the supply of drugs and through awareness building. As a result the scope of access to healthcare delivery and the improvement of health will be increased for the poor.
Ensure nutritional status and safety of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting standards of quality and creating mass awareness of the quality and safety of food • Strengthening community nutrition programmes and bringing more males, females and children under its service coverage • Distribution of vitamin-A capsules, antihelmenthics and iron tablets • Provide supplementary foods to pregnant women, nursing mothers and children • Encourage breast feeding and create awareness of its benefits • Conduct nutrition awareness programmes with the help of the mass medias and NGOs • Ensure availability of essential drugs at competitive prices • Initiate programmes to enhance efficiency in the drug sector 	Nutrition status has been improved through community nutrition programmes for poor groups at 109 <i>Upazilas</i> through area based nutrition activities and through mass awareness with NGO participation. The National Nutrition Programme (NNP) will be expanded to more <i>Upazilas</i> . Poor communities will be brought within the coverage of the nutrition programme setting food standards and creating mass awareness of the adulteration of food. As a result, poor people will not be required to incur additional expenditure to maintain health.
Increase health awareness among the common people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct adolescent and youth friendly reproductive healthcare campaign • Inclusion of health education in school curriculum • Create mass awareness through NGOs and private organizations 	Health education programmes will increase health awareness among the ultra poor male and female population.
Develop and promote alternative medical care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of alternative medical care in Government health institutions • Ensure quality education in traditional medicine including Homeopathy, Ayurvedic and Unani and effective measures to improve Herbal medicine 	Quality alternative medical care and treatment programmes will improve Homeopathy, Ayurvedic and Unani medicine. This form of medicine and treatment will be easy accessible to the poor community irrespective of gender.
Development of medical waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up an effective waste management system in all Public and Private healthcare Institutions • Inclusion of local government institutions in medical waste management activities 	Unplanned disposal of medical waste is a big problem particularly for low earning men and women. Coordinated waste management will protect the ecology, and as a result the residence of low income people and any adjacent premises will be safe. They will be at lower risk from sickness from medical waste and treatment costs will therefore be reduced.

Table 5. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Implementing departments/agencies
Ensure equality and equity in the field of primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of stipend • Provide education allowance for the employed and deprived, extreme poor and drop out students • Construction of separate toilets for male and female students and installation of tube-wells 	Stipends have been provided to 78.17 lakh male and female students and education allowances have been provided to 5 lakh male and female students
Increase enrolment, school attendance and primary education cycle completion rates of students from poor families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education allowance and stipend for the employed and deprived, ultra poor and drop-out students • Supply of high protein biscuits for male /female students 	The provision of stipend and the distribution of high protein biscuits will attract the children of poor families to attend schools. As a result, the children of poorer families will grow up as educated men and women which will increase their opportunity to gain employment.
Expansion of education opportunities for the ultra poor and inhabitants of remote areas on a pilot basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education allowance and stipend for the employed and deprived, ultra poor and drop-out students • Supply teaching aids 	Target oriented programmes (such as educational allowance, grants, dress, education kits) are offered on a pilot basis for drop-out and deprived 5 lakh students of the ultra poor families and inhabitants of remote areas. Life skill based training will be provided to 2 lakh urban working adolescents.
Ensure gender equality in primary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of separate toilets for male and female students and installation of tube-wells. • Recruitment of teachers and preservation of 60% quota for women at the time of recruitment 	As various programmes in the different areas of primary education ensure gender equality (such as recruitment of 60% female teachers), the rate of men/women participation in education from poor families will increase.

Table 6. Ministry of Social Welfare – Objectives, activities and impact on poverty

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Impact on poverty
1.Improvement of the socioeconomic conditions and the standard of living of the poor people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of micro-credit • Vocational and skill development training • Socioeconomic inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness creation among low income (Annual Tk10, 000 or less) group of people and persons with disabilities regarding income generation, skills development, education, social, health and environmental issues • Provision of vocational training and interest free micro-credit (Tk. 5,000-15,000 per person) for 6.05 lakh people on average annually
2.Welfare, development and rehabilitation of orphans, abandoned and destitute children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise and rehabilitate orphan children in Government “Shishu Paribar”.(Children Homes) • Raise and rehabilitate children in “Chotomoni Nibash” (Baby Care Homes) • Training and rehabilitation of distressed children • Protection of endangered and autistic children • Capitation grant to non-government orphanage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation, nutrition, education and medical treatment ensured for 70,000 abandoned orphans and distressed children; allowance of Tk 5,000 per resident for rehabilitation of children above 18 leaving orphanages
3.Development and rehabilitation of children and people who come in contact with the legal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescents development • Probation and after care services • Training and rehabilitation of the vagabonds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On average yearly 10,500 people coming in contact with the legal system are rehabilitated into society through provision of food, residence and medical treatment facilities in various centres.
4.Provide social security to the elderly, widows, deserted by husbands and distressed women and people with disabilities in society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old age allowance • Allowance for widows, deserted by husband and distressed women. • Allowance to people with disabilities • Educational stipend to students with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old age allowance of Tk. 300 per person per month for 22.50 lakh recipients; widow allowance for about 11 lakh recipients and disability allowance is provided to 2.60 lakh recipients.
5.Assistance and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities and destitute patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital social services • Construction of hospital for persons with disabilities and distressed patients • Distribution of income generating and supporting logistics to the persons with disabilities • Providing hostel facilities for working persons with disabilities and Day Care facilities for children with disabilities • Launching of Autism Resource Centre • Free medical service for persons with disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short and long term free medical facilities to 6.00 lakh patients annually. Construction of 20 hospitals in the private sector, it will be ensured that 30% of patients treated are poor, destitute and disabled. • An Assistance for the Disabled Project has in five districts will provide free treatment, therapy are assistive devices for the disabled.

(Annex Table 6 continued...)

(...Continued Annex Table 6)

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activities	Impact on poverty
6. Strengthening of education and development programmes for persons with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and rehabilitation for those with disabilities • Production of artificial limbs and operation of Braille press • Production of mineral water and plastic goods • Education Programme for intellectually disable persons and education for other disable persons • Special education, training and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements have been made for the education of 18,000 children suffering from disabilities, vocational training for 1,800 persons, and the employment of 320 persons on average per year. • Steps to update the Bangladesh Disabled Welfare Law-2001. • Under the "Integrated Special Education Policy 2009 for the Persons with Disability" teachers and staff of the related institutions are receiving 100 percent pay and allowances from government: from February 2010.
7. Prevention of social immoral practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and rehabilitation of women with disabilities • Safe home for vulnerable women and girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and international days, awareness programs, seminars and workshops create public awareness against social maladies such as dowry, child marriage, cruelty, oppression and drug addiction. • On average every year 900 women are provided with training, rehabilitation and other assistance.
8. Strengthening of the activities of voluntary social service organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration, supervision and assistance for voluntary social services organizations • Distribution of Grants • Management training for voluntary social welfare organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to voluntary organizations, assistance for construction of hospitals by voluntary organizations, management training to officers of 361 organizations (including 13 at national level), 80 Urban Social Development Project <i>Parishads</i>, 87 Patient Welfare Committees, 64 Criminal Rehabilitation Committees, 4,891 general and specific voluntary services organizations, 650 income generating organizations and grants to 1,250 poor/helpless persons. • Loan/grants to the non-government organizations working for the welfare of the persons with disabilities. • Preparation of guidelines on distribution of assistive devices.

Table 7. Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs – Objectives, activities and impact on poverty

Medium-Term strategic objectives	Key activity	Impact
1. To ensure the social safety of women and children to protect them from vulnerability and risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide allowances to working lactating mothers to reduce poverty • Provide food assistance to the vulnerable women under VGD Programme and provide cash assistance and production inputs instead of food under VGD-UP Programme • Provide social rehabilitation of the helpless orphan children and the children affected by natural disasters and the children who fall victim to sexual abuse • Create awareness about all the issues related to child rights including violence against children and child trafficking 	<p>Targeted: Providing Maternity Allowance for the Poor Lactating Mothers, the VGD Programme, the Vulnerable Group Development for Ultra Poor (VGD-UP).</p> <p>Providing financial and training related facility to 8,30,000 beneficiaries each year, providing maternity allowance to 80,000 poor mothers and Maternity Allowance for the Poor Lactating Mothers, etc.</p>
2. To develop children and adolescents through social attachment and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training to adolescents on improving the living standard and employment generation 	<p>Training for the school dropout children will help improve their livelihood. Mainstream: Awareness raising training will be provided to 15,000 children. The awareness of the adolescent girls about society and gender issues is being raised through providing specific module-based training on life-skills and empowerment.</p>