

Poverty eradication in Bangladesh and recent concern over context Covid-19: A sociological analysis

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Abstract. Poverty in Bangladesh, like in many other developing countries, has been a serious social concern for a long time. Approximately 90% of the population lived in poverty shortly after the country's independence. Bangladesh has made significant progress since early 1990s economic reforms and trade liberalization, as well as increased economic growth during the early 2000s. The remarkable progress has been recognized by international institution. Bangladesh's per capita has increased almost threefold between 2010 and 2020. Bangladesh is projected to eliminate extreme poverty by 2021, the first country in South Asia to do so. But the unfortunate intrusion of COVID19 has disturbed the whole plan in Bangladesh. Strategic and effective planing in this regard is required. This paper is a discussion of the scenerio using various secondary data and Sociological insight.

Keywords. Sociology, Sociology of Poverty, Covid-19, poverty eradication, Bangladesh

Introduction:

Poverty is described as a lack of a certain amount of money or material possessions that is considered normal or socially appropriate. When people lack the resources to meet their basic needs, they are said to be poor. In this case, determining what constitutes basic needs is the first step in identifying vulnerable people. This may be as specific as "those required for survival" or as general as "those expressing the community's prevailing standard of living." The first criterion would apply only to those on the threshold of malnutrition or death from exposure; the second would apply to those whose nutrition, accommodation, and clothes, though sufficient for survival, fall short of those of the general population.

Definition:

Poverty is an economic state where people are experiencing scarcity or the lack of certain commodities that are required for the lives of human beings like money and material things. Therefore, poverty is a multifaceted concept inclusive of social, economic and political elements. Poverty is described as a lack of sufficient resources to meet basic human needs such as food, clean water, shelter, and clothing. However, in today's world, access to health care, education, and even transportation are included.

The word poverty comes from French word “**poverté**” which means **poor**.

There are several definitions of poverty depending on the context of the situation it is placed in, and usually references a state or condition in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and essentials for a certain standard of living.

1. United Nations:

Fundamentally, poverty is the inability of having choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

2. World Bank:

Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many [dimensions](#). It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for [survival](#) with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.

On the basis of **social, economic and political** aspects, there are different ways to identify the **type of poverty**:

- 1) Absolute poverty
- 2) Relative poverty
- 3) Situational poverty
- 4) Generational poverty
- 5) Rural poverty
- 6) Urban poverty

1. Absolute poverty:

Extreme poverty, also known as abject poverty, is characterized by a lack of basic necessities such as food, safe drinking water, health, shelter, education, and knowledge. Many who live in absolute poverty struggle to survive, and many children die as a result of preventable diseases such as malaria, cholera, and diseases caused by contaminated water. In developing countries, absolute poverty is relatively rare.

2. Relative poverty:

It is characterized from a social standpoint as the standard of living in comparison to the economic standards of the surrounding population. As a result, it's an indicator for evaluating wealth disparity. A family can be considered poor if it cannot afford holidays, Christmas gifts, or sending its children to university.

3. Situational poverty:

It is a form of poverty that occurs as a result of a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a job loss, or a serious health problem. Since poverty is the result of an unfortunate occurrence, people can support themselves even with a small amount of help.

4. Generational poverty:

It is passed down over the generations to individuals and families. This is made more difficult by the fact that there is no way out because the people are stuck in the cause and lack access to the resources needed to escape.

5. Rural Poverty:

It only exists in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000 people. It is an environment with less employment opportunities, limited access to care, limited resources for people with disabilities, and limited access to high-quality education. People prefer to rely on farming and other menial labor available in the area to support a family.

6. Urban poverty:

It occurs in the metropolitan areas with population over 50,000. These are some major challenges faced by the urban poor:

1. Limited access to health and education
2. inadequate housing and services
3. Violent and unhealthy environment because of overcrowding.
4. Little or no social protection mechanics.

Measuring poverty:

In 2017, an estimated 9.2 percent of the worldwide population lived below the \$1.90 per day international poverty threshold, which is based on poverty levels in some of the world's poorest economies. This brings the total number of extremely poor people to 689 million, down 52 million from 2015.

For the first time in a generation, the COVID-19 (corona virus) pandemic has reversed worldwide poverty gains. As a result of the epidemic, an additional 120 million people are living in poverty, with the number anticipated to reach 150 million by the end of 2021.

The main poverty line used by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union is based on "economic distance," a level of income usually set at 60% of the median household income. The United States, in contrast, uses an absolute poverty measure.

Both absolute and relative poverty metrics are commonly based on a person's annual income and ignore total wealth. Some believe that this overlooks an important aspect of economic well-being. Major breakthroughs and research in this area imply that traditional one-dimensional poverty measurements focused primarily on wealth or calorie intake are severely flawed. This is due to the fact that poverty often entails being deprived on multiple levels, which do not always correlate well with income.

Poverty is defined by the World Bank in absolute terms. Extreme poverty, according to the bank, is defined as living on less than \$1.90 per day, while moderate poverty is defined as living on less than \$3.10 per day.

Differences in the estimates of global poverty occur as a result of the following:

1. The use of different poverty lines;
2. The use of different purchasing power parity (PPP) exchange rates to convert incomes in local currencies into a common international currency, which has been particularly problematic;

3. Different approaches to estimating within country distributions of income; and
4. Different calculations of mean incomes within countries.

Disagreements regarding the proper approach to measure poverty have resulted in these divisions. In different countries, the cost of sufficient food and other necessities varies, resulting in varying absolute poverty levels. To compare poverty around the world, they must be converted. PPP exchange rates should be used to develop a single currency. In Kenya, India, or the United States, for example, one PPP dollar should buy the same basket of products.

Poverty in Bangladesh and its future by 2030:

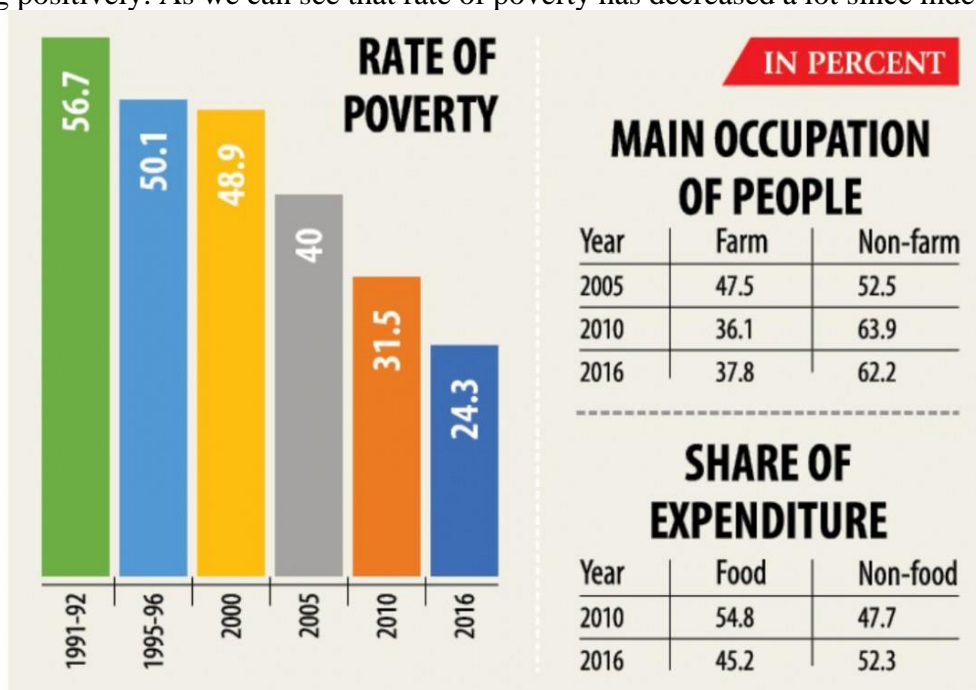
Poverty in Bangladesh, like in many other developing countries, has been a serious social concern for a long time. Approximately 90% of the population lived in poverty shortly after the country's independence. Bangladesh has made significant progress since early 1990s economic reforms and trade liberalization, as well as increased economic growth during the early 2000s. The remarkable progress has been recognized by international institution. Bangladesh's per capita has increased almost threefold between 2010 and 2020. Bangladesh is projected to eliminate extreme poverty by 2021, the first country in South Asia to do so.

a. Past Situations:

Bangladesh has made significant progress in terms of poverty reduction since independence. According to the nationwide "Household Income and Expenditure Surveys (HIES)," the proportion of people living in poverty reached 71% in 1973/74, the first survey year after the country's independence.

b. Recent Situations:

We can see here how in recent years the nature of poverty and the rate of poverty is changing positively. As we can see that rate of poverty has decreased a lot since independence.

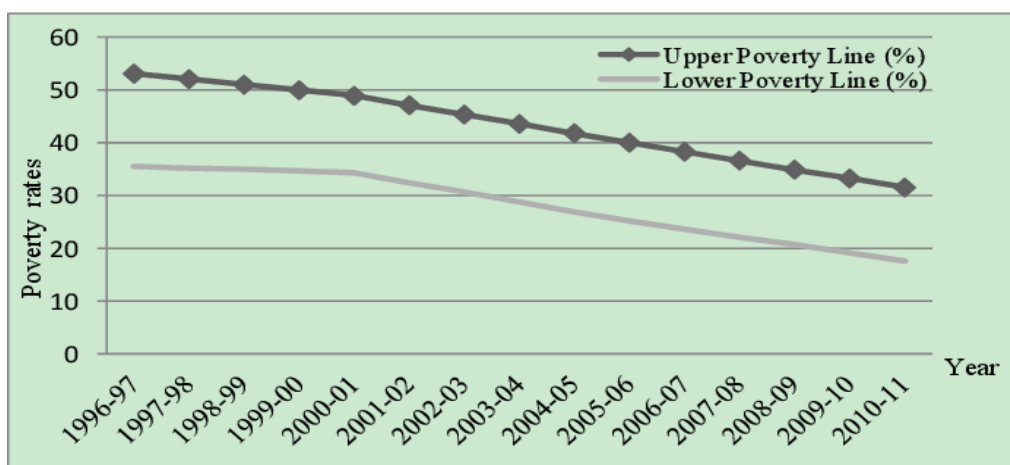


Source: <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/poverty-declining-slower-pace-1743196>

Decline in poverty has made changes in the life style of the people too. People got interested more in non farming job as opportunity in education both in primary and secondary level has increased. Moreover, industrial sector contributed in increasing GNP.

c. Future Probable Situations:

According to the way the bellow graph shows us we can easily predict the future of poverty in Bangladesh. The graph shows a declining rate of poverty. So if every plan and policy works nicely and in a fair way, then within 2030 we are expecting really low percentages of population living in poverty.



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Trend-of-poverty-rates-in-Bangladesh_fig1_269683691

d. COVID 19 : A poverty reduction plan spoiler:

If we see the above discussion and statistics we would feel comfortable that we are on the right direction to eradicate poverty within our target time period. But the unaccepted arrival of COVID 19 has somewhat affected the poor people differently and severely. People are losing their job in this pandemic which has adverse impact on economic growth. The GDP has decelerated and poverty increased. The rate of poverty has been declined doubled from 21 percent to 41 percent. We need to consider this fact while thinking ahead about future plan.

e. Strategies to be Taken to Eradicate Poverty within 2030:

I would suggest that the existing strategies both by government and NGOs are well enough to reduce poverty in the future. My recommendation here is to emphasize on the fair and corruption free implementation of those strategies. Besides that we need to focus on a new phenomenon too. That is COVID 19. It has hampered the path of poverty alleviation drastically. The government has to focus on long term structural challenge for post COVID-19 recovery. SO, for our future strategy we need to add few more incentive based policies.

Earlier Bangladesh Government has taken significant policies for people. For example,

- a. Establishing supportive macroeconomic for rapid growth with focusing of stable macroeconomic
- b. Safety net measures to protect the poor.
- c. Human development program for the poor to raise their capability by education, safe drink, sanitation, nutrition and social interventions

- d. Maximize pro poor economic growth
- e. Participation and empowerment of the poor especially women in every sector.
- f. Promoting good governance
- g. Service delivery of areas for basic needs
- h. Caring for environment and its sustainability.

So, these were few strategies taken by government which made Bangladesh reach in Lower Middle Income in 2015 and are on track to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list in 2026. At the same time the government in the light of Sustainable Development goal has prepared its 7th five year plan and undertaken several initiatives. The SDGs are bold commitment to end poverty in all forms and dimensions by 2030. But the present situation of COVID -19 has made our life unpredictable and reshaped our life. According to World Bank, the goal of ending poverty by 2030 will be beyond reach without swift, significant and substantial policy action. It is also estimated that by 2030 the global poverty rate could be 7%.

- f. **Strategies to recover post COVID situation**
 - a. Improving urbanization.
 - b. The ready- made garments (RMG) can increase GDP by exporting.
 - c. Sustainable poverty needs to reduce vulnerability and build resilience of people
 - d. Pivoting towards green growth could support sustainability of development
 - e. Ensure job security for the jobless
 - f. Job aspirant candidates to be recruited within short interval of time. The process should not be lengthy

We hope that with the right policies and timely action, Bangladesh can accelerate its recovery from the economic downturn and continue to progress towards upper-middle income status. We are looking forward to witnessing a poverty free nation.

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