

EMPLOYMENT GENERATION OPPORTUNITY IN RANGPUR DIVISION

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Introduction

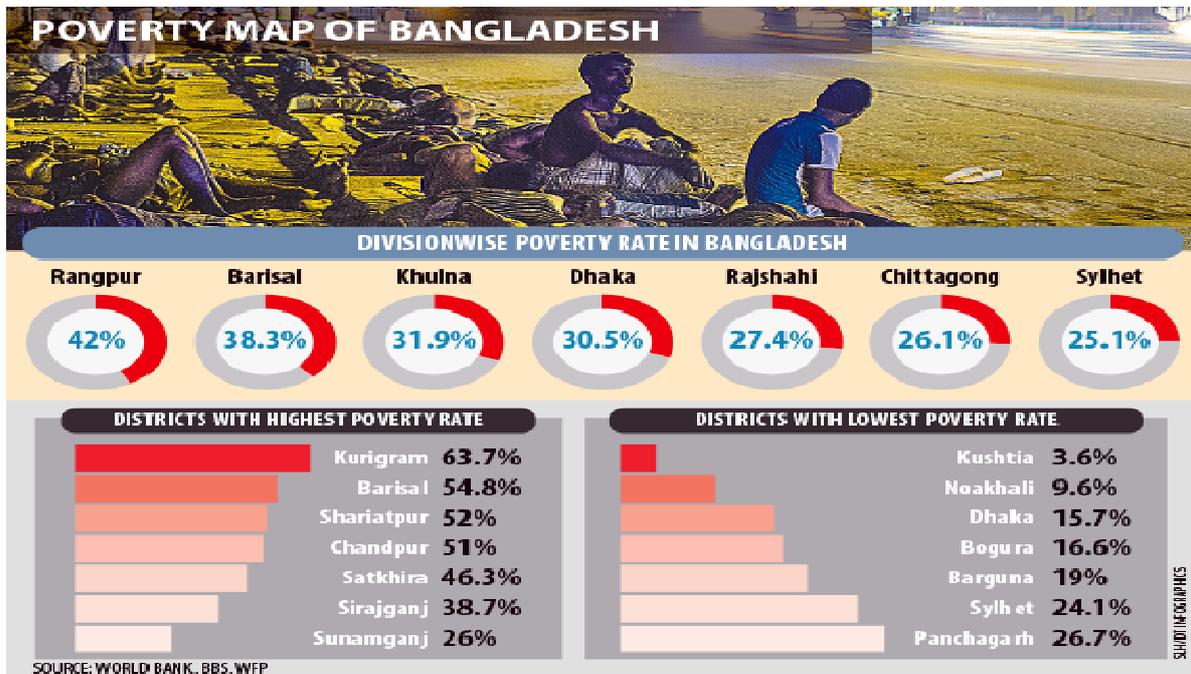
Bangladesh have made tremendous progresses in different sectors. The country have achieved some of the largest reductions in early deaths of infants, children and women in childbirth in the world. However, in spite of many remarkable achievements in human development, women empowerment, education and employment, Bangladesh still faces many hurdles in ensuring sustainable socio-economic development for its vast population. Recent trends in pro-poor development activities indicate that, in the near future, the country must put adequate emphasis on areas like agriculture, health, human resource development through technical and education, food security, environmental conservation and women and child rights for creating a just and equitable society. Both government and non-government organizations, therefore, have an important role to play in this regard.

The Rangpur Division: A Short Socio-economic Scenario

Greater Dinajpur and Rangpur region of Bangladesh is always called by people 'Land of *Vaoia* (Popular Local Song) and paddy'.

This region ensures a surplus in food-production, but unfortunately the poor villagers of this region always face food- insecurity.

Due to unequal land-tenure system, the poor and hardcore people regularly lose their assets and that make them more vulnerable.



The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the World Bank and the United Nations World Food Programme jointly developed the maps by applying a small area estimation technique on data from the household income and expenditure survey 2010 and the population census 2011. The average poverty rate in the division is 42% followed by Barisal with a poverty rate of 38.3%, Khulna 31.9%, Dhaka 30.5%, Rajshahi 27.4%, Chittagong 26.1% and Sylhet 25.1%, according to the Bangladesh Poverty Maps 2010 released yesterday. In terms of districts, Kurigram have the highest poverty rate of 63.7% followed by Barisal 54.8%, Shariatpur 52%, Chandpur 51%, Satkhira 46.3%, Sirajganj 38.7% and Sunamganj 26%, according to the study.

The maps show that the northern districts, have a high prevalence of poverty and low primary school completion rates.

Similarly, poverty appears to be high in chronic disaster-prone areas such as the districts along the Jamuna River where the communities are repeatedly affected by river erosion and flooding.

Rangpur Division: Some Success indicator on Moving out of Low Productivity

Rangpur Division have recorded highest increase in total economic units: Economic census 2013 reported a significant finding given the fact that during the early years of the last decade, these two divisions suffered from acute seasonal unemployment in the form of *Monga*. This happened during the agricultural lean month of *Kartik* due to lack of alternative non-farm employment opportunities. However, targeted public investment and special credit programme facilitated growth of non-farm activities in these areas, which have eased the problem of *Monga* quite significantly in recent years. Thus, targeted policy for expansion of non-farm activities appears as an effective tool for fighting seasonal unemployment.

Rural Economy have boosted up with Higher Growth in Rangpur Division

Economic Census 2013 depicts that the growth in 2013 over 2001 & 03 in rural areas is significantly higher(150.6%) compared to urban areas (62.9%).It is encouraging to mention that once Rangpur Division Rangpur Division have experienced substantial growth at micro level economic activities. The total number of economic units in this division was 208135 in 1986 which have increased to 405583 in 2001 & 03 and further increased to 1088255 in 2013.

Major Achievement through GO-NGO Interventions

- ❖ Significantly graduated ultra poor households through different appropriate GO-NGO interventions.
- ❖ Significant empowerment process and women empowerment have already achieved in terms of access to services, family decision making process and social acceptance.
- ❖ Level of confidence tremendously improved (*We must be able* instead of *my bad luck what can I do*)
- ❖ Food and Nutritional Status significantly increased as a result severe malnourished scenario have decreased (In both pregnant and lactating mother and child.
- ❖ Improved social bondage and family peace.
- ❖ Migrations have significantly reduced due to creation of diversified employment opportunity.
- ❖ Students' enrolments have remarkably increased.
- ❖ Advance labor sale, skipping of food on lean season have reduced and rarely happened.
- ❖ Significantly reduced asset erosion on lean period.
- ❖ Strong local level alliances have developed for appropriate service delivery mechanism (vaccination for poultry & livestock, quality seed & fertilizer etc.)
- ❖ Grass roots people have enough confident and capable to operate their own business.
- ❖ Technology-transfer to small and marginal farmers for HYV technologies and new agricultural technologies
- ❖ ICT plays a significant contribution in all aspect.
- ❖ Establishing cottage industries based on local raw materials, expanding skill-training, providing loan and ensuring marketing facilities for products creates a new window for under privileged people.
- ❖ Effective coordination in-between government, NGOs and private sector.

Challenges

- Natural disaster and diseases: the major threat for the people of Rangpur division.
- Due to unavailability of natural gas industrial investment is very poor.
- Geographical dislocation is a common challenge specially in terms of marketing & livelihood issue (missing from basic services health, education etc)

Long term strategies

- Ensuring employment opportunities;
- Setting-up of export-oriented industries for permanent employment opportunities;
- Protection from and restriction of dowry;
- Improved road infrastructure and electricity connection;
- Dredging of rivers and construction of barrages for protection from flood;

- taking up of long-term programs for mitigation of *monga*;
- Expanding foreign employment opportunities;
- Establishing labor-intensive industry;
- Reducing corruption;
- Ensuring good coordination in-between government, NGOs and private sector regarding *monga* reduction activities;

Recommendation

Targeting

Government and NGOs are to implement an improved targeting strategy to ensure the inclusion of the poorest and most food-insecure households. Although geographic targeting identifies appropriate and accurate targeting at the Rangpur Division, safety-net programs currently reach a disproportionate number of vulnerable and 'on the edge' households. The invisible poor have frequently been bypassed. Targeted households do not get sufficient skill, livelihood resource or social capital.

Tracking Vulnerability

Vulnerability monitoring systems need to be established to track changes in the Rangpur Divisions' food-security status. Information generated from such systems would then be available to inform resource-allocation through safety-net programs, and whether resources should be scaled up or scaled down.

Promotion of Rural Non-Farm Activities

A very popular and effective medium to long-term approach may be promotion of rural non-farm economic activities consisting of rural industries, livestock, trade, services, construction etc. for creating income-generating employment opportunities especially for the Rangpur Division. In Rangpur Division, *Sotoronji Palli*, Tea State, Handloom, *Benarashi* are most promoting rural Non-farm activities.

Overseas Employment

Studies have shown that household assets and remittances received by households from abroad have statistically significant positive influence on its expenditure level. In the above perspective, the government is thinking of formulating a mechanism that would ensure equal number of workers from Rangpur Division districts of the country migrating abroad. The government should give special focus on the northwestern region for eradication of poverty.

Location Dispersion of Industries and Creation of Regional Growth Centers

Locational dispersion of industries and creation of regional growth centers is also an approach towards mitigating *poverty in* the northwestern region. The under-employment situation in the labor market of Bangladesh makes it clear that the prevailing magnitude of surplus labor is such that the formal sector may not be able to attract a large supply of laborers from the rural areas. An expansion of sub-contracting system can utilize the entrepreneurial ability of small enterprises in these areas and can provide a useful substitute for a wage-labor-based industrialization.

Training and Skill Generation

The deficiencies of skill and inadequacies of educational attainment are major factors behind under-employment and low earnings in Rangpur Division. Well-designed policies to improve the quality of labor force and policies to create matching employment opportunities can provide effective stimulus for a skill-based growth of secondary and tertiary sectors.

Diversifying Incomes

Enhancing livelihood resilience and reducing vulnerability of households from Rangpur Division will require greater diversification of household income sources. The invisible poor cited income diversity as the most crucial variable of potential income increase. The donors and Government should consider supporting targeted vocational training in communities identified through a participatory appraisal process. The support should also include entrepreneurial and micro-business financial management training.

Expansion of Flexible Micro-Credit

Expansion of flexible micro-credit, especially consumption loan and flexible loan have proven protection weapon for asset erosion of disaster-affected families. NGOs should draw their attention to expansion-flexible micro-credit in Rangpur Division in ensuring proper timing.

Marketing

Marketing is a very important issue in Rangpur Division. Many problems observed in Rangpur Division in marketing products, it would have been better if presence of marketing linkage, storage and transportation facilities, backward-forward linkage through progressive entrepreneur for successful marketing of products could be ensured. If needed, joint initiatives can be taken. A good example in the neighboring country of India, 'Amul' is an excellent initiative of proper marketing and good benefiting to the ultra-poor.