

Main Message of Bangladesh Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2025

Bangladesh's Voluntary National Review of SDGs in 2025 comes at a critical juncture, in the aftermath of a transformative youth-led mass uprising of July-August 2024, that culminated in the fall of a repressive regime. This marked a significant political turning point, ushering in a renewed national commitment to democratic values, institutional transparency, and inclusive development. Amid this backdrop of transformation, Bangladesh is redefining its development trajectory—with stronger civic engagement, bolder policy ambitions, and a clearer focus on leaving no one behind.

Despite deep-rooted challenges, Bangladesh's achievements across several SDGs are noteworthy. Income poverty is now below 19%, extreme poverty at around 6% while multidimensional poverty is below 10%. Primary school completion rate increased to 87%. Access to safe drinking water is over 70%. Electricity coverage is at 99%. However, food insecurity remains a concern, particularly among vulnerable and marginalized communities. Climate change exacerbates such existing vulnerabilities by jeopardizing food systems, displacing communities, and threatening biodiversity.

The country has been facing macroeconomic instability since COVID-19. Excessive economic mismanagement resulted in higher inflation, depleted reserves and increased financial vulnerability. Inequalities—across income, gender, and geography—have widened, limiting opportunities for many. Several factors are inhibiting inclusive progress, including the dominance of the informal sector (accounts for 84.1% of the employed population), high youth unemployment with 18.9% of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), and persistent systemic barriers for women in education, employment, and entrepreneurship roles. These structural challenges are intensified by low fiscal-space, which continue to limit public investment in health, education, and social protection.

Mobilizing adequate financing for SDG implementation remains a persistent challenge. Weak institutional governance, corruption, and fragmented coordination—alongside data quality and limited private-sector engagement—hinder the execution of SDG focused interventions.

The Rohingya crisis remains a monumental humanitarian and development challenge. Hosting over one million forcefully displaced Rohingya has placed substantial economic, social, and environmental stress on Bangladesh. Declining international support worsens the burden. In response, Bangladesh has demonstrated resilience and a commitment to international solidarity—embodying the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

To reaffirm its adherence to the SDGs, Bangladesh is pursuing a comprehensive reform agenda focused on governance, transparency, and accountability. The interim government has prioritised restoring institutional integrity, safeguarding judicial independence, upholding press freedom and ensuring preparations for free-and-fair elections. Multiple Task Forces along with a White Paper on the state of the economy were initiated to provide the basis for further remedial actions necessary to revitalize the economy. Eleven Reform Commissions were formed to achieve meaningful progress when addressing the Constitution, Judiciary, Electoral

System, Public Administration, Police, Mass Media, Anti-corruption, Health, Workers' Rights, Women's Affairs and Local Government.

Alongside these governance efforts, the national development strategy is receiving renewed focus on investments in digital infrastructure, green transition, technical and entrepreneurship skills development, bottom-up job creation—particularly targeting youth, women, and underrepresented communities by fostering SMEs. The country aims to champion a whole-of-society approach, fostering public-private partnerships while engaging civil society, community organisations, academia and the youth in co-creating solutions.

Bangladesh is preparing to graduate from its Least Developed Country (LDC) status and position itself as a constructive and credible development partner. It is calling for a renewed spirit of multilateralism—anchored in fair trade, climate finance, debt relief, and technology transfer—to achieve a shared prosperity. Bangladesh's transition, navigating from a political upheaval to a reformative ambition is a clear signal to its people that it is proactively engaging in the global effort to realize the SDGs. Our journey ahead is rooted in the conviction that no one, in Bangladesh or globally, should be left behind.