

## Human Development and Disproportional Impact on Minority Ethnic Groups in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** Human development is a multi-dimensional process leading towards acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. The HDI is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. Bangladesh's HDI value for 2015 is 0.62 which is in the medium human development category positioning the country at 142 out of 187 countries. Between 1980 and 2013, Bangladesh's HDI value increased from 0.336 to 0.62, an increase of 66.0 percent or an average annual increase of about 1.55 percent. When HDI value is lowest then it is called disadvantaged community. In this research work some disadvantaged communities are found. These communities are minority ethnic communities. The HDI value of these communities is very low. The HDI values are calculated and finally the situation of disadvantaged communities is explained on the basis of primary and secondary sources. The results represent that the life expectancy of minority ethnic groups is good. Gross primary enrollment and access to safe water is not good. But GDP per capita is extremely poor. Thus the level of Human Development of minority ethnic groups is very low than overall Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Minority Ethnic Groups, Human Development Index (HDI), Socio-political Inequity.

### Introduction

Human development means a positive change in social, economic, and political structure which in turn eases the level of poverty and improves the living standard of a group of people. It is somewhat easier to say which countries are richer and which are poorer; but defining 'human development is absolutely a daunting task (Kovacevic, 2010). In a broader sense it is the end product of economic growth and the notion of human development incorporates all aspects of individual's well-being, from their health status to economic and political freedom. Center for Development Studies, (1995) defined human development as 'those processes of social, economic, and political changes involved in the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of the living standards of the population of the developing countries'. However, human development must be conceived as multi-dimensional process involving major change in social structures, population attitudes and national institution as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty. At the heart of this concept are three essential components: equality of opportunity for all people in society, sustainability of such opportunities from one generation to the next and empowerment of people, so that they participate in and benefit from development

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processes. The status of human development in developing countries like Bangladesh is very low. An ample variation in the status of human development among different communities is more developed compared to their rural counterpart. Again there are different ethnic and linguistic communities living in Bangladesh who are also suffering a lot in terms of their human development. These communities are often classified as a minority.

The main objective of this research is to explore the status of disproportional human development due to social inequity and to measure the Human Development Index of the minority ethnic communities of Bangladesh. Bangladesh, a country of 146.1 million people living on 14.84 million hectares of land, (BBS, 2011). In Bangladesh there are more than hundred minority groups of people and their condition is measurable with the proportion of majority group of people. The status of Human Development condition can be measured with Human Development Index (HDI), World Bank Development Indicators, United Nation (UN) Development Indices, and Economic Indicators etc. In this study the socio political inequity and instable human development of the minority ethnic groups of people in Bangladesh are discussed. For the measurement of development it has used UN indices of human development that is Human Development Index (HDI).

### **The Question of Equity for Minority Ethnic Groups**

Different studies have described the lifestyle of the ethnic groups, analyzed poor level of human development status, socio-political inequity and disproportional human development of the minority ethnic groups of people in Bangladesh. Inequity mainly indicates livelihood condition, floor space, socio-economic condition, ability of taking food etc. So development is also related with the progressive demands, ability, technology and a better environment.

According to Shahjahan (2005) inequity of what, and how much, people eat is a response to their socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural environment. Good nutrition is central to good health. Globally, health has improved for many but not for everyone equally. In his view if food and nutrition-related health is unequally distributed it is a marker of societal failure. For some individuals, communities and even nations, it is a matter of not having enough food, of being unable to afford food and little nutritious food readily available. For others there is an abundance of food but its nutritional quality is compromised, access to healthy food is poor and cost of food is high relative to other commodities. Human development and poverty reduction in the Asia Pacific region cannot be achieved without improving nutrition in an equitable way. There is no biological reason for the scale of difference in health, including diet-related health that is observed in the Asia Pacific region. That it exists is unethical and inequitable. Thereby it is important to include inequality of various people while discussing human development.

Another study conducted by Bagchi *et al* (2007), mentioned that the study of asymmetric economic growth, unequal improvements in daily living conditions, unequal distribution of technical developments and suppression of human rights have seen health inequities to

perpetuate and worsen, over the last three decades. Addressing diet-related health inequities requires attention to the underlying structural drivers and inequities in conditions of daily living that disempower individuals, social groups and even nations from the pursuit of good nutrition and health. He also documented that these are matters of economic and social policy at the global, regional and national levels. Cardozo *et al* (2008) mentioned conflict, education within the context of the changing geo-political situation that emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. This is followed by explaining what we understand by a critical research agenda and why we think it necessary. Thirdly, he explores a series of potentially interesting areas of inquiry that are currently absent or undeveloped within the field and which relate particularly to its 'global' dimension. Finally, he concludes by making some more reflective comments on the approach, its potential for making a positive contribution to both theory and practice within the field of Education and Conflict, and the need for more critically informed, but policy relevant research in this emerging area of inquiry. Rahman (2011) mentioned that the status of human development in Bangladesh varies among different communities in urban and rural context. The urban communities are more developed compared to their rural counterpart and different ethnic and linguistic communities are less developed.

Barua (2010) makes a critical analysis of conventional assumptions about development that dislocated minority ethnic communities, local knowledge and their livelihoods in the south eastern part of Bangladesh. It has been argued that development policies and programs are market driven and centrally controlled. For example dams, deforestation, plantation schemes have not contributed to poverty alleviation and upliftment of the livelihoods of the minority ethnic communities. The development interventions follow the approach to economic growth and progress which create deterioration and discrimination of the ethnic minority groups in the name of development.

Existing literature focuses on the socio-economic condition and environment of the ethnic minority groups. They emphasize the impact on the environmental and socio-economic conditions. For clear understanding it is necessary to discuss their lack of education, unemployment, low income, unhealthy environment, lack of proper knowledge; which makes their life miserable. From the analysis of the data it is found that identity crisis is present among the minority ethnic groups which is caused by social exclusion. These problems make them depressed and vulnerable in the society (Sen and Ali 2015)

### **Definition of Human Development**

The definition of human development given by Todaro (1995) refers to increase in living conditions, improvement of the citizen's self-esteem fulfilling needs and to build free and just society. He suggests that the most accurate method of measuring human development is the Human Development Index which takes into account the literacy rates & life expectancy which in-turn has an outright impact on productivity and can lead

to economic growth. However, economic development can also be measured by taking into account the GDI (gender related index).

According to Barth (1995), human development leads to improvements in many sectors of a nation. There are a variety of indicators that economists use to measure the level of economic development in a country. The indicators are: declining poverty rates, increasing literacy rates, declining infant morbidity and increasing life expectancy. Economic development has to be supported by the whole nation. Thus it can be concluded that, economic development leads to the creation of more opportunities in the sectors of education, health sector, research, human development and environmental conservation. It equally implies an increase in the per capita income of every citizen.

According to the Dauvergne (2000) Human Development Index can also measured by the Gender Development Index (GDI) and it is based on the sex-disaggregated Human Development Index, defined as a ratio of the female to the male HDI. The GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development—health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years for adults aged 25 years and older); and command over economic resources (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita).

The Human Development Report has consistently defined the basic objective of development as enlarging people's choices. At the heart of this concept are three essential components: i) Equality of opportunity for all people in society. ii) Sustainability of such opportunities from one generation to the next. iii) Empowerment of people so that they participate in-and benefit from-development processes. Equal enjoyment of human rights by women and men is a universally accepted principle, reaffirmed by the Vienna declaration, adopted by 171 states at the World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993.

According to Mansell (1998) Human Development was borne out of an extension to economics that focused entirely on national product, or the aggregate output of goods and services. Human Development was concerned in the expansion of people's entitlements and their corresponding capabilities, morbidity, nourishment, literacy, education, and other socio-economic indicators. Borne out of the backdrop of Keynesian economics, advocating government intervention, and neoclassical economics, stressing reduced intervention, with rise of high-growth countries and planned government economic development emerged amidst these mid-20th century theoretical interpretations of how economies prosper.

Human development is an important aspect of measuring development. The HDI for Bangladesh is 0.547 with a rank of 140 among 177 countries and so this is not satisfactory. The index is not a comprehensive measure of human development. It does not include gender and income inequality and it does not include the difficult measurements like respect for human life and political freedom. It actually provides a broadened prism for viewing human progress and the complex relationship between income and well-being.

### **Social Justice and Disadvantaged Community**

According to the social justice theory “social justice is a concept that originates in philosophical discourse but is widely used in both ordinary language and social science, often without being clearly defined. By synthesizing the common elements of various philosophical treatment, it is possible to offer a general definition of social justice as a state of affairs in which (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation principles (b) procedures, norms to preserve the basic rights, liberties and entitlements of individuals and groups (c) human beings (and perhaps other species) are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social factors including all citizens. Thus human development is the sustained, concerted actions of policy for communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a specific area. There are three scales of human Development-

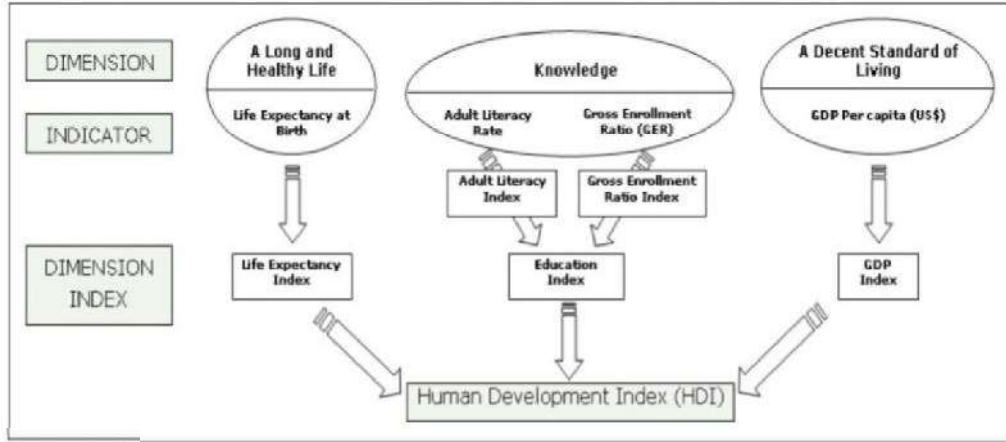
- 1) Living a long healthy life (measured by life expectancy)
- 2) Being educated (measured by adult education and enrolment at primary, secondary and tertiary level)
- 3) Having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power and parity)

A community can be defined as a group of people living in a particular geographical space having common attitudes, interests, and goals. As a result of sharing common issues, community members possess feeling of fellowship with one another. A disadvantaged community can be defined as a community without having access to basic human needs. As a result of inaccessibility to human needs the levels of human development is also poor among the disadvantaged groups. According to the Planning Commission report (2015) ‘The minority ethnic communities in Bangladesh are the most deprived of economic, social, cultural and political rights, mainly due to their ethnic status. Ethnic identities are creating barriers to ethnic minority people’s inclusion in wider social networks’.

### **Measurement of Human Development**

There are several measures of Human Development. Different formulas and equations are given by different national and international agencies. UNDP (Fig. 1) and World Bank are two notable international organizations who provide some sorts of equation to quantitatively calculate the level of human development in different parts of the world. Each of the individual formulas is based on different indicator variables to calculate the level of human development.

**Figure 1: United Nations Human Development Index**



The formula of calculating HDI is,

$$HDI = \frac{1}{3}(\text{Life expectancy index}) + \frac{1}{3}(\text{Education index}) + \frac{1}{3}(\text{GDP index})$$

$$X\text{-index} = \frac{x - \min(x)}{\max(x) - \min(x)}$$

Where,

$\max(x)$  = Highest value that the variable 'x' can attain

$\min(x)$  = Lowest value that the variable 'x' can attain

$$\text{Life Expectancy Index} = \frac{LE - 25}{85 - 25}$$

$$\text{Education Index} = \frac{2}{3}ADI + \frac{1}{3}GDI$$

Where,

$$\text{Adult Literacy Index (ADI)} = \frac{\text{Adult Literacy Rate} - 0}{100 - 0}$$

$$\text{Gross Enrollment Index (GEI)} = \frac{\text{Combined Gross Enrollment} - 0}{100 - 0}$$

$$\text{GDP Index} = \frac{\log(\text{GDP per capita}) - \log(100)}{\log(4000) - \log(100)}$$

### Calculating the HDI for the Minority Ethnic groups

$$\text{Life Expectancy Index} = \frac{LE - 25}{85 - 25}$$

$$\frac{80 - 25}{85 - 25}$$

$$= 0.92$$

$$\text{Adult Literacy Index (ADI)} = \frac{\text{Adult Literacy Rate} - 0}{100 - 0}$$

$$= \frac{45.5 - 0}{100 - 0}$$

$$= 0.46$$

$$\text{Gross Enrollment Index (GEI)} = \frac{\text{Combined Gross Enrolment} - 0}{100 - 0}$$

$$= \frac{80 - 0}{100 - 0}$$

$$= 0.85$$

$$\text{Education Index} = \frac{2}{3}\text{ADI} + \frac{1}{3}\text{GEI}$$

$$= \frac{2}{3}0.46 + \frac{1}{3}0.85$$

$$= 0.59$$

$$\text{GDP Index} = \frac{\text{Log(GDP per capita)} - \text{Log}(100)}{\text{Log}(4000) - \text{Log}(100)}$$

$$= \frac{\text{Log}(55) - \text{Log}(100)}{\text{Log}(4000) - \text{Log}(100)}$$

$$= -0.11$$

$$\text{HDI} = \frac{1}{3}(\text{Life expectancy index}) + \frac{1}{3}(\text{Education index}) + \frac{1}{3}(\text{GDP index})$$

$$= \frac{1}{3}0.92 + \frac{1}{3}0.59 + \frac{1}{3}(-0.11)$$

$$= 0.50$$

### Life expectancy index

The life expectancy index measures the relative achievement of a community in life expectancy at birth. The index shows that life expectancy of minority ethnic communities is 0.92. So the life expectancy index of minority ethnic communities is not so bad.

### Education index

The education index measures the relative achievement in both adult literacy and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment. The education index shows that condition of minority ethnic communities is 0.59. So the education index of minority ethnic communities is poor.

### Human Development Index

In 2014 HDI Value of Bangladesh was 0.62 and HDI of Dhaka was 0.76. But minority ethnic communities HDI value is only 0.50. It can be said that these communities are far

behind the Bangladesh human development index and the level of human development of minority ethnic groups is poor.

### **Disparity in socio-economic status of minority ethnic groups**

The term minority refers to the number of people less than one third of the total population in a country where they are dominated by the majority regarding socio-economic and political affairs in the society where they live (Yetman and Steele 1975). It is difficult to find accurate information about minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh. There are over 54 indigenous groups of people in Bangladesh who live in different regions across the country and speak at least 25 languages. About 11 indigenous groups of people live in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and 43 indigenous groups of people live in the plain land. These areas are North West part of the country in Dinajpur, North-East part in Sylhet, Central North in Mymensingh, South and South-East part in Barisal. According to 2011 Census their number is 1,587, 141 which is 1.87% of total population. But other sources claim that the number of indigenous people is about 5 million.

Bangladesh has achieved success with regard to reducing extreme poverty. However this success is only partly shared with minority ethnic groups. Data from Governmental sources on ethnicity and poverty are very scarce. Researchers identify an achievement gap between national poverty reduction and experiences of minority ethnic groups. Most of the studies identify disparity such as low income, lack of opportunities, particular geographic location, exclusion by majority groups, deprivation by advantaged groups, dispossession of land as the main driving forces for the poverty of minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh. Barakat (2009) found that among 10 plain land minority ethnic communities in Sylhet and Mymensingh 60% of the people are absolute poor compared to 39.5% of rural poverty in Bangladesh. Hard core poverty of minority ethnic groups is also higher which is 24.6% compared to hard core poverty in rural areas in Bangladesh which is 17.9%.

Disparity in socio-economic status of minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh needs to be addressed. Human Development Index (HDI) suggests that people not only occupy certain socio-economic position but also acquire through it some privileges by which they meet human needs and solve problems faced in a particular society. Socio-economic status is a cyclical process in which low educational attainment leads to low job opportunities resulting in low income earnings. Socio-economic status is defined mainly as assessment of ethnic community's education, occupation and income position within a particular society (Micreh and Hauser 2000). Disparity refers to achievement gaps in socio-economic status of the minority ethnic groups and disadvantaged socio-economic status along with enhanced poverty. Different studies reported that dominant group achieves higher socio-economic status than minority, ethnic groups (Ali 1998). Disparity in socio-economic status creates differentiated access to resources and control over power in society and state.

Disproportional development results in food scarcity for minority ethnic groups. One method of measuring poverty is by using food intake or direct caloric intake. A daily



intake of less than 2,122 calories equates to absolute poverty and food intake less than 1805 calories a day equates to hardcore poor. Barakat (2009) found in CHT .67% households live below the absolute poverty line. (Below 2,122 kcal) which 36% are hardcore poor (below 1805 kcal). It is also found that poverty status of women in CHT is higher as 94% of them live below absolute poverty line and 85% below the hardcore poverty line. UNDP (2013) has conducted studies on minority ethnic groups in CHT and plain lands. It is found that in all over Bangladesh highest percentage of minority ethnic groups live below the national upper poverty line defined as 2,127 kcal. Poverty is acute in CHT as in Khagrachhari 50.5%, Bandarban 41.1% Rangamati 33.2% people live below poverty line where as the national average of poverty is 31.5%. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS 2013) rural CHT poverty is 1.6 times higher than other parts of rural Bangladesh.

Ali (1998) and Das (2011) have reported that most of the ethnic minority groups are poorest of the poor because they have no land property and even no settlement of land. Adnan and Dastidar (2011) have reported that relative impoverishment of minority ethnic groups in CHT and plain land are caused by land dispossession. In CHT minority ethnic groups lost land for Government development projects, military camps and by settlers from the dominant group. In the plain land minority ethnic groups lost land to local people of the majority group. Plain land minority ethnic groups are also affected by Government policy like Eco-park in Garo, Mandi inhabited areas of Madhupur forest, National park in Khasi inhabited Maulavibazar, social forestry in Santal inhabited Dinajpur district (Roy 2012). According to Adnan and Dastidar (2011) access to land by minority ethnic groups has become problematic due to a combination of factors like declaration of Government reserve forest, encroachment of land by elites, commercial cultivation in CHT, acquisition of land by security forces.

Family income depends on ownership of land, educational and occupational attainment and access to resources. Researchers have found that most of the minority ethnic groups compared to major groups earn below the living standard in Bangladesh (Hossain 2011). Most of the minority ethnic groups lack in educational attainment which is a basic criterion for getting jobs in formal sector. It is found that employment as agricultural labourer for Santals is 63.33%, Oraon 53.36%, Mahali 32%, Pahan 54.02%, Baman 70%. Employment in service for them is for Santals 4.3%, Oraon 7.77%, Mahali 6%, Pahan 3.44%, Baman 5% (Toppo and Rahman 2016). Rahman (2004) has revealed that men and women of minority ethnic groups mostly take part in agricultural and other fields of manual labour because of their low education, proper skill, landlessness and mass poverty. Minority ethnic groups in the plain land depend on agricultural labour because they do not have sufficient land for cultivation and not enough land for homestead. Their position in the labour market is vulnerable as Kamal (2006) and Kispotta (1997) have explained that agricultural wages are discriminated. Being minority they cannot negotiate for higher wage and are compelled to accept minimum wage for the sake of survival. Some minority ethnic groups like Khasis are victims of eviction which uproot them from their ancestral land, devastate their life, livelihood and culture. The extension of tea estate is destroying traditional forest land where Khasis cultivate their main source of livelihood

the betel leaf (Costa and Datta 2007). Besides minority ethnic groups have limited access to market because of remoteness and lack of transportation facilities. Rasul (2009) mentioned that lack of favourable avenues force the extreme poor ethnic groups to sell products at low price. Lack of business skill and cultural differences make communication difficult for the minority ethnic groups. It is observed that market expansion also causes poverty and hardship for the underprivileged ethnic minority groups due to labour exploitation and monopoly dominance of the majority group over the market. This situation is found in remote areas in CHT which creates sharp differences and discrimination between minority ethnic groups and settlers belonging to the majority group Adnan 2014).

Although educational attainment is a basic criterion for entering formal labour force and increasing money for improved livelihood, minority ethnic groups fail to attain this because of vulnerable livelihood condition. According to Barakat (2009) high illiteracy rate is found in CHT compared to national average. The BBS (2011) data also show that average literacy rate in CHT is 43.9% compared to 51.9% national average. Bandarban shows lowest literacy rate 35.9% compared to Rangamati which is 49.7% and Khagrachari 41.1%. One reason is that schools are far away from the villages. Another problem is that although children get enrolled in schools, their dropout rate is high. Barakat (2009) mentioned that children in CHT in the age group of 5-16 years get enrolment in schools which is 82% but their dropout rate is 65%. Because of remoteness of the location of schools and lack of money necessary to continue education parents take away children from school and get them involved in activities to earn money (Nath et al 2005). Compared to CHT access to education for plain land minority ethnic groups is easier and they have access to missionary schools. Human Development Centre (HDC) has mentioned another observation. According to them children from 4-6 years lose interest in the classroom and dropout when they cannot communicate because of language deficiency in Bengali which is the medium of instruction in schools. This is a violation of linguistic human rights (Khubehandani 1995). Bangladesh National Education Policy recommended introducing primary education for minority ethnic groups in their own language but no effective steps toward implementing this initiative is visible.

Low socio-economic status of minority ethnic groups results in reduced livelihood options. Their marginal position creates powerlessness and result in their lack of access to social services. Most of their houses are made of low quality material, kacha houses with no sanitary system, pure water supply and electricity connection. They face discrimination, harassment, deprivation and exclusion in many facets of their lives. These create barrier to equal access to health care. Access to health service is comparatively easier in plain land than hilly land due to non-availability of communication facilities. In remote areas of CHT there are poor health care facilities and most of the people are unable to meet the cost of treatment. Therefore they mostly depend on traditional medicine and natural healing. Researchers have found that in CHT maternal and child mortality is high, many people get sick due to malaria and unavailability of safe drinking water. Ahmed (2001) has studied the health-seeking behaviour and found that minority ethnic groups in CHT mostly suffer from three diseases (92.5% of all illnesses) which are

fever, gastro intestinal illnesses for example diarrhea, dysentery, burning sensation in the chest, indigestion and malaria. Fever is more common among Marmas and Tripuras. Morbidity prevalence is higher among females of all ethnic groups. It is observed that illiteracy, functional landlessness, labour selling and food insecurity are associated with higher prevalence of illness. Regarding health-seeking behaviour it is found that 40% of the people of ethnic minorities are treated by unqualified and traditional healers. Moreover 50% of the ill persons from the Mros and 25% of the ill persons from the Marmsa and Tripuras do not seek any health care at all. It is explained by Hossain (2011) that minority ethnic groups in the plain land also lack in awareness of public health, they are deprived of social safety net as much as they are victims of social discrimination, violence and conflict (Uddin 2011).

### **Conclusion**

The people of minority ethnic groups are neglected and they are deprived from many dimensions – health and sanitation facilities, no access to safe drinking water, high degree of illiteracy, lack of job opportunity, lack of proper orientation of agricultural production, insufficient educational facilities and many more. The HDI measurement shows a clear disparity in human development. The people of these communities are deprived from all basic human needs because of the absence of appropriate policy and effective application of development initiative. Although Bangladesh has a poor level of HDI in the world, within the country the level of HDI among the minority ethnic groups is marginal, which proves a disproportional human development in the country mainly caused by socio-political inequity.

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