Press Release

For Immediate Release

Bangladesh Presents First National SDGs Communications Strategy and Action Plan

Dhaka, 27 June 2024: In a landmark event held at The Westin Dhaka on 27 June 2024, the SDG Affairs Unit of the Prime Minister’s Office, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), presented the First National SDGs Communications Strategy and Action Plan (NSCSAP) for 2024-2030. In presenting the final draft of this pioneering strategy to key stakeholders, Bangladesh reaffirmed its commitment to enhance awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and foster localization, fulfilling Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s 78th UN General Assembly pledge in September 2023.

The NSCSAP is a comprehensive strategy to support awareness raising and progress on the SDGs nationwide. It targets all societal segments, focusing on marginalised communities, youth, and residents of rural, urban, and coastal regions. It is built on four core objectives: promoting inclusivity, educating and empowering citizens, fostering multidimensional human development, and strengthening governance and social systems. Developed through extensive consultations involving over 2,000 participants nationwide, the strategy implements a 4C Action Model: Collaboration, Communication, Campaigns, and Coordination. It leverages various methods, including social marketing, behaviour change communications, and edutainment campaigns like ‘Start Doing Good’ to drive mass awareness and behavioural change.

The strategy sharing event, titled "United in Progress: Sharing the National SDGs Communications Strategy and Action Plan," was graced by the Honourable State Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Mr. Mohammad Ali Arafat MP, as Chief Guest. Special Guests included Mr. Md Akhter Hossain, Principal Coordinator for SDG Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office; Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed, Member (Secretary) of the General Economics Division at the Bangladesh Planning Commission; and Ms. Gwyn Lewis, the UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh.

Following the introductory remarks by UNOPS Country Manager Mr. Sudhir Muralidharan, the final draft of the strategy was presented by Mohd. Monirul Islam, Additional Secretary (SDGs Affairs) at the Prime Minister's Office, and Nusrat Amin, Communications Senior Officer at UNOPS. Invited participants contributed insights and recommendations to help finalize the strategy and action plan.

In the speech as the Chief Guest, Honourable State Minister of Information and Broadcasting stated, "Under the visionary leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, we have integrated the SDGs into our national planning frameworks, including the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). This integration is not merely a policy decision; it underscores our nation’s commitment to sustainable and inclusive development. In addition to all the stakeholders, I urge all media houses, journalists, and communicators to join hands with us in this noble endeavor. Your role is very important in shaping public perception, raising awareness, and fostering a culture of informed civic engagement. Let us leverage information, communication, and collective action to realize the Sustainable Development Goals and
transform the vision of a Smart Bangladesh by 2041 into reality.” SDGs Principal Coordinator Mr. Akhter Hossain emphasised the importance of the strategy, saying, "We want to make the strategy a functional one, and along with the Government, the support from the private sector, development partners, academia, NGOs and CSOs will be crucial to make it happen. Thanks to the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Bangladesh for providing technical assistance to the government in developing an action-oriented national SDGs communications strategy.”

Expressing the UN’s steadfast commitment to supporting Bangladesh in its transformative journey, UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Gwyn Lewis remarked, "Our collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, civil society, and all stakeholders is enduring. We recognise the immense potential of the National SDGs Communications Strategy and Action Plan (NSCSAP) 2024-2030 to drive sustainable development and inclusivity nationwide and to leave no one behind as we look towards the year 2030. The UN stands ready to provide ongoing technical assistance, capacity building, and resources to ensure the successful implementation of this strategy." Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed echoed these sentiments in his closing remarks, stating, "Our commitment to the NSCSAP is rooted in our firm belief that effective communication and public awareness are crucial drivers of sustainable development. This strategy represents a paradigm shift in our engagement with citizens, stakeholders, and partners, ensuring inclusivity, transparency, and accountability are integral to our development efforts. The General Economics Division and the Planning Commission are fully committed to the finalisation and successful implementation of this strategy."

The NSCSAP aligns closely with the goals of Smart Bangladesh and Vision 2041, emphasising education, gender equality, and technological progress to build an empowered and inclusive society. It is set to catalyse social movements, foster nationwide discussions, and drive action across various sectors, from climate activism to educational reform. The strategy represents a paradigm shift in Bangladesh’s engagement with citizens, stakeholders, and partners. It ensures inclusivity, transparency, and accountability are integral to the country’s development efforts. As it unfolds, it is poised to reshape mindsets and pave the way for a modern, inclusive, and sustainable Bangladesh.

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Attachment: Executive Summary of the National SDGs Communications Strategy and Action Plan (NSCSAP) for 2024-2030.
United in Progress: National SDGs Communications Strategy and Action Plan (NSCSAP)

2024-2030
Bangladesh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the heart of Bangladesh beats the spirit of progress, echoing the aspirations of its people and the visionary leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The country has undergone a significant economic transformation since its independence in 1971, emerging as one of the fastest-growing economies globally and demonstrated remarkable progress in its pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The country has integrated the SDGs into its national planning frameworks, particularly the Eighth Five Year Plan (2021-2025), aligning 66 of its 104 monitoring indicators directly with the SDGs. This commitment has propelled Bangladesh from 120th to 101st in the global SDG rankings within just seven years. Since the inception of Agenda 2030 in 2015, Bangladesh has steadfastly pursued its achievement, underlining the country’s commitment to sustainable and inclusive development.

Despite facing formidable challenges, from the specter of climate emergencies, Covid-19 and global conflicts, Bangladesh remains undeterred in its mission. Guided by a 'whole-of-society' ethos, the government has enshrined the SDGs within its national agenda, weaving them into the fabric of its development plans. Under the leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister, the "Digital Bangladesh" vision has laid the foundation for a technologically advanced nation, aiming for a "Smart Bangladesh" by 2041. This vision aspires to revolutionize the nation through cutting-edge technology, fostering a smart economy, empowered citizens, and state of the art yet sustainable infrastructure, all while prioritizing resilience and environmental stewardship. The government’s dedication is further evident in its substantial investments in climate change adaptation and gender initiatives, aiming to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

Recognizing the intrinsic link between the nation's prosperity and the well-being of its citizens, Bangladesh has wholeheartedly embraced strategies to localize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The government understands the critical importance of reaching the remotest corners of the country with SDG messages, ensuring that every citizen is aware and engaged in the development process. From this commitment arose the need for a National SDG Communications Strategy, placing strategic communication and campaigns at its core. This dynamic force is set to drive engagement and empowerment across the nation, making sure that the benefits of sustainable development touch every life, no matter how far from the urban centers. Through this strategy, Bangladesh aims to foster a deeply connected and informed society, where every individual plays an active role in the country’s journey towards prosperity and sustainable growth.
At the SDG Summit 2023, Bangladesh took immense pride in reaffirming its unwavering commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 39+1 National Priority Indicators. Emphasizing the crucial need for awareness and the localization of the SDGs, the country's commitment unveiled the initiative of developing an action-oriented National SDG Communications Strategy. This will not only amplify the reach of the SDGs but also ensure that the voices and needs of all communities are heard and addressed.

**First National SDG Communications Strategy and Action Plan (NSCSAP) 2024-2030**

The National SDG Communications Strategy and Action Plan (NSCSAP) 2024-2030 is a pioneering roadmap towards the localization of SDGs. This visionary strategy marks the dawn of a more inclusive form of governance, leveraging the transformative potential of communication to engage every citizen in the pursuit of sustainable development. The NSCSAP targets all societal sectors, emphasizing the most underserved communities, and is guided by principles of societal engagement, credibility, inclusivity, fairness and timeliness.

The strategy development is rooted in extensive consultations engaging more than 2000 people across six divisions and nine districts of Bangladesh. This included 50 moderated Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), 40 Key In-Depth Interviews (KIIIs) and community consultations engaging people from diverse backgrounds such as academicians, students, teachers, youth, journalists, business persons, development professionals, entrepreneurs, behavioral science specialists, doctors, nutritionists, anthropologists, religious leaders, cultural artists, local leaders, freedom fighters, climate activists, women rights activists, NGO and INGO representatives, UN agencies, sportspersons, banking professionals, engineers, law enforcement agencies as well as plus one (+1) groups- transgender, dalit, slum dwellers, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, tea-garden workers etc.

At the local government level FGDs and KIIIs were conducted with the SDG Coordination Committees, Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, Local Government officials, City Corporations and municipality officials, Union Parishad Members, Civil Society Organizations in areas including Dhaka, Rangpur, Kurigram, Khulna, Satkhira, Barishal, Patuakhali, Sylhet and Cox's Bazar, aimed to assess stakeholders’ perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes towards social issues and the SDGs. Following the local government and community level consultations, a national level consultation session was conducted engaging the SDG Focal Persons of 19 Ministries.

The findings highlighted information gaps, cultural, social, and economic factors influencing views, and pinpointed priority areas for communication interventions to support SDG progress. Key challenges identified include high poverty rates, educational dropouts, child marriage, and climate change impacts, particularly in flood-prone and disaster-affected districts. Along with the field findings, the Sample Vital Statistics 2023 data provided by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) built a strong baseline for the strategy. This comprehensive approach aimed to drive sustainable development through strategic, inclusive communication and stakeholder engagement.
Addressing the findings and envisioning Bangladesh as a people-centered, inclusive, and modern nation by 2030, the NSCSAP 2024-2030 crafted the strategic communications and campaign approaches to achieve its National SDG Commitment. The strategy is driven by four core objectives designed to uplift every citizen of Bangladesh. First, to commit to leaving no one behind by reaching out and engaging with the most underserved communities, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs addressed. Second, to educate and empower people, preparing them for a seamless transition to a middle-income nation by providing the knowledge and skills necessary for future readiness. Third, to strive to promote multidimensional human development, accelerating progress across all sectors and enhancing the quality of life for all. Finally, to strengthen governance and social systems, foster greater efficiency and accountability in institutions, thus laying the foundation for sustained national growth and prosperity. Together, these objectives form the cornerstones of the government's vision to build a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient Bangladesh. Targeting all citizens, especially women, girls, children, youth, and marginalized groups, the strategy employs the 3P Promotional Model (Prevention, Preservation, and Preparedness) to enhance health, environmental, and climatic resilience. The plan is built on five strategic pillars: THRIVE (promoting preventive health), CONSERVE (educating responsible environmental behavior), LEARN (upskilling for a knowledge-based economy), PREPARE (raising gender equality awareness), and TRANSFORM (creating a new cultural narrative). Guided by principles of inclusivity, credibility, timeliness, and actionable insights, the strategy promotes 4C Action Model (Collaboration, Communication, Campaigns, and Coordination) for communications across government, businesses, development actors, civil society, and the diaspora. Utilizing diverse communication methods such as social marketing, behavior change communications, and interpersonal communication, nationwide 360-degree edutainment campaigns like ‘Start Doing Good’ aim to foster mass awareness and behavioral change. By 2030, this comprehensive approach aspires to make inclusive and sustainable growth a tangible reality for all, especially the underserved.

The communication and campaign activities will sweep across the nation, igniting hearts and minds with the vision of sustainable development. From the bustling streets of the cities to the tranquil corners of rural villages, these campaigns will weave a narrative of empowerment, guiding millions towards a sustainable tomorrow. As the campaigns unfold, they will do more than just inform; they will ignite social movements, sparking conversations and catalyzing action across the nation. From climate activism to educational reform, each initiative will serve as a catalyst for change, reshaping mindsets and paving the way for a more modern and inclusive Bangladesh. The strategy advocates for tailored communication solutions that reflect the cultural and contextual realities of each division. Therefore, the NSCSAP stands as a testament to the collective aspirations of a thousand stakeholders, marking a historic milestone in Bangladesh's journey towards inclusivity. Every citizen is called upon to join hands in this noble endeavor to pave the way towards a prosperous and sustainable future together.

The implementation of the NSCSAP 2024-2030 will significantly advance the broader goals of Smart Bangladesh and Vision 2041. By emphasizing education, gender equality, and technological progress, the strategy aligns with Vision 2041’s objectives for a technologically empowered and inclusive society. Bangladesh’s commitment to the SDGs, backed by robust
national policies and strategic communication, is paving the way for a sustainable and inclusive future. The NSCSAP is a catalyst for transformative change, raising awareness, promoting inclusivity, enhancing local implementation, fostering partnerships, mobilizing youth, addressing environmental challenges, driving behavioral change, and monitoring progress. This comprehensive approach will help Bangladesh achieve higher middle-income status by 2031 and become a developed nation by 2041, ensuring a prosperous, inclusive, and technologically advanced future.