



**Citizen's Review of SDG Progress in Bangladesh: Contribution to
VNR Process**

Theme: Climate Vulnerability

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Contents

Context:	1
Review of SDGs Progress and Challenges	2
SDG-3: Good health and well-being	2
Progress:	2
Challenges:.....	2
T3.9: Reduce death from CC and pollution:.....	2
T3.3: CC and fighting vector-borne diseases:	3
T3.4: Promote mental health:.....	3
T3.9: Environmental safeguarding of health:	3
T3.b: Support research and development in addressing health risks associated with CC:	3
T3.c: Build capacity of relevant actors:.....	3
T3.d: Enhance systems of early warning and early action:.....	4
SDG-5: Gender Equality.....	4
Progress:	4
Challenges:.....	4
T5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls:	4
T5.2: Eliminate violence and exploitation against women and girls:	4
T5.3: Eliminate child, early and forced marriage:.....	5
T5.4: Value unpaid care and promote shared responsibilities:.....	5
T5.5: Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making:.....	5
T5.6: Access to reproductive health and rights:	5
T5.b: Empowerment of women:.....	5
T5.c: Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality:.....	6
SDG-8: Economic Growth and Decent Work.....	6
Progress:	6
Challenges:.....	6
T8.1: Sustainable economic growth:.....	6
T8.2: Diversify, innovate and upgrade to raise economic productivity:.....	6
T8.3: Integrated policy approach for job creation and growing enterprises:.....	7
T8.6: Youth employment, education and training:.....	7
T8.7: Child labour:.....	7

T8.8: Work environment:.....	8
SDG-14: Life below water	8
Progress:	8
Challenges:.....	8
T14.1: Reduce marine pollution:.....	8
T14.2: Protect and restore ecosystems:	8
T14.4: Sustainable fishing:	9
T14.7: Sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism:.....	9
SDG-17: Partnerships for goals	9
Progress:	9
Challenges:.....	9
T17.3: Mobilise financial resources for developing countries:.....	9
T17.9: Enhance SDG capacity in developing countries such as Bangladesh:.....	10
T17.6: Knowledge sharing & cooperation for access to science, technology and innovation:	10
T17.18: Enhance availability of reliable data:	10
Policy Challenges	10
Way Forward.....	11
References	13

List of Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Form
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BCCSAP	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
BCCTF	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund
BIGD	BRAC Institute of Governance and Development
CDD	Centre for Disability in Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DYDF	Dhrubotara Youth Development Foundation
Educo	Education and Development Foundation
EMT	Executive Management Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FLFP	Female Labour Force Participation
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GII	Global Innovation Index
HEKS	Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MWM	Medical Waste Management
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSNP	Social Safety Net Programme
TIB	Transparency International Bangladesh

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
UNW	UN Women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WVB	World Vision Bangladesh

Key Messages

- About 90 million people in Bangladesh (56 % of the population) live in climate impact exposed areas. Many of them are women, girls, the elderly, youth and persons with disabilities, who face diverse impacts of climate change in a disproportionate way.
- In Bangladesh, undeniably, some progress is discernible in school enrollment, child mortality, and access to water and sanitation, and in terms of building partnerships for climate goals. However, lack of strong institutions and failure to access adequate climate finance to implement time-bound activities for climate-vulnerable groups and areas continue to remain major barriers. This needs to be addressed.
- In recent times, pollution and death from pollution have increased significantly. Waste management has emerged as a major challenge for public health. Uncollected waste in the rural areas and urban peripheries has emerged as an acute health hazard. Measures should be taken to address this.
- Climate-induced vector-borne diseases and deaths have increased. There should be a functional early warning system for climate-induced diseases and pollution in Bangladesh.
- Gender discrimination and child marriage in climate-vulnerable areas have increased with the increase of disasters. Inclusion of women in decision-making for addressing climate change impacts is almost non-existent. These need to be attended to.
- There is lack of social protection programmes for climate-vulnerable groups. Programmes need to be put in place targeting the youth to cope with climate change challenges.
- Sustainable management of coastal resources, including ensuring sustainability of ocean and aquatic ecosystems needs to be prioritised in policymaking.

Context:

Bangladesh is the 7th most climate-vulnerable country in the world (Global Climate Risk Index 2021). Climate change is the single most acute threat to the existence of life, livelihood, and socio-economic development of the citizens of Bangladesh, and it is a barrier to achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). About Ninety million people of Bangladesh (56 % of the country's population) live in climate exposed areas in coastal districts, Barind Tract, haors, and char lands (The Climate Reality Project, 2021), which are vulnerable to cyclones, salinity intrusion, flood, river bank erosion, drought, etc.

The most vulnerable groups to climate change are women, girls, older people, persons with disabilities, low-income families and people living in informal settlements. These groups suffer disproportionately if multiple dimensions of their lives are taken into consideration. For example, 71% of women in Bangladesh experience abuse during climate-induced floods (BIGD, 2024), while 60% of women faced gender-based violence in areas affected by Cyclone Amphan (Talukdar & Hussain, 2024). Besides, approximately 0.1 million climate-induced migrants leave their homes each year, many of whom are youth (Khanom, Tanjeela, & Rutherford, 2022). More than 70% of the migrants in Dhaka, impacted by climate-induced disasters, are from coastal areas (Illius, 2023). Women bear disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, which increases with climate-induced disasters. Women's low socio-economic status is further degraded by climate change; displaced women are often forced to work in the informal labour market and earn less than men (ILO, 2020).

Besides, about 19 million children are affected by climate change, including dropping out of school, many of whom are girls (UNICEF, 2019). Young and older people and those with health issues also suffer due to extreme heat and heatwaves. Air pollution causes more than 0.27 million premature deaths in Bangladesh each year (Lima et al., 2023), which increased from 0.10 million to 0.11 between 2019 and 2020 (Roy, 2023). Climate change is also affecting mental health, contributing to conditions such as anxiety and depression. Overall, the implementation of Bangladesh's SDGs is under challenge.

As part of preparing its VNR exercise Bangladesh is at present reviewing the implementation progress of the targets related to climate-vulnerable groups within the selected five SDGs (3, 5,

8, 14, and 17). The present review covers the progress and policy challenges in implementing selected SDG goals and targets for the climate-vulnerable groups (youth, women, older people, and persons with disability) and outlines the way forward to overcome the challenges. The review was carried out by engaging 22 CSO partners of the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, to collect data on SDGs implementation from July 2020 to June 2024. The review has gone through three phases: (i) developing and finalising concept notes and checklists through organising meetings alongside stocktaking climate-related activities of the organisations; and (ii) collecting data using the checklist and extracting data from secondary literature. Finally, (iii) drafting and sharing the report with associate organisations by organising a validation workshop by engaging climate-vulnerable groups and the associated organisations.

Review of SDGs Progress and Challenges

SDG-3: Good health and well-being

Progress: Life expectancy rate and immunisations have increased in Bangladesh alongside the decrease in open defecation and deaths of children under 5 years per 1,000 live births (Perry & Chowdhury, 2024). The number of deaths from unsafe WASH declined modestly (171/lac in 2020 to 161/lac in 2022) (SDG Tracker, 2024). Both state and non-state actors supported climate-vulnerable groups to prevent diseases associated with climate change by providing relief, WASH facilities, and health services some research and advocacy activities were also carried out.

Challenges: Health and well-being of climate-vulnerable groups are under threat due to increased climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation. COVID-19 has exacerbated the crisis, affecting these groups severely. Cyclone Remal destroyed twenty thousand water points (IFRC, 2024). During a flood in 2022 in Haor areas, about 82.6 % of people had skin problems, alongside diarrhoea, cholera and fever (Nahar, Islam, & Mahiuddin, 2021). Cervical cancer and menstrual problems among women have increased among the groups due to increased salinity. Besides, health services in urban informal settlements are inadequate.

Overall, key challenges in implementing SDG 3 related targets are as follows:

T3.9: Reduce death from CC and pollution: Mortality rates due to air pollution increased from 231/lac in 2021 to 241/lac in 2022 (SDG Tracker, 2024). Only limited measures have been taken

to work with public-private entities to green the economy and control pollution generated by businesses and industries.

T3.3: CC and fighting vector-borne diseases: The spread of dengue and death is higher in climate-vulnerable districts. In 2023, 40 thousand cases of dengue were recorded in the coastal districts, followed by 40 thousand cases in other areas. The immunisation rate among children in Dhaka's slums, which hosts a large number of climate migrants, is only 67.5%, compared to the national rate of 82.2% (Hasan et al., 2024).

T3.4: Promote mental health: Suffering from depression and anxiety due to climate change has increased. In coastal areas such as Satkhira, the prevalence of mental health related problems is very high, people tend to suffer from moderate to extremely severe anxiety (25.07%), depression (22.48%), stress (49.42%), PTSD (20.03%), and poor sleep quality (43.95%).

T3.9: Environmental safeguarding of health: Bangladesh generates about 22.4 million tons of waste per year with an annual growth rate of 1.8%; most of this is uncollected and is not managed and dumped in the rural areas (Rahman & Alam, 2020; and Waste Concern, 2021). Besides, Waste Management is a neglected sector. The absence of authentic data, lack of technical capacity, training, and awareness regarding environmental risk and occupational hazards, are major challenges in this arena. The burden of waste falls on the poor- often under-aged groups and forced migrants living in informal (TIB, 2022a).

T3.b: Support research and development in addressing health risks associated with CC: There is a shortage of research on sustainable health systems that includes work on greening the health system and early warning for detecting climate-induced diseases. There are also data deficits on infectious diseases.

T3.c: Build capacity of relevant actors: There are inadequate healthcare facilities and infrastructures in climate-vulnerable areas. Emergency reliefs at the time of disasters often lack coordination among stakeholders alongside fund and medical equipment shortages. The skills of community health workers are also poor, and there are deficits in view of initiatives to build their capacity.

T3.d: Enhance systems of early warning and early action: The current early warning system for detecting climate-induced vector-borne diseases is not functional in predicting the outbreak and transmission. There is a lack of an integrated approach to address the intersections of gender, health, climate change, and environmental degradation. No mechanisms are there to disseminate early warning for persons with disability, especially for those who are hard of hearing.

SDG-5: Gender Equality

Progress: Bangladesh made some progress in integrating gender perspectives into its climate change policies. The government prepared the Gender Action Plan, 2013 (updated in 2024) and included the gender-responsive budget in the budgeting system (IMF, 2023).

Challenges: Despite some progress in areas of political empowerment, sizable gaps remain in multiple areas, including women's economic empowerment (IMF, 2025). Over 99% of citizens hold at least one bias against women in Bangladesh (UNDP Bangladesh, 2023). On top of this, climate change is an extra threat to achieving gender equality.

T5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls: The rate of girls leaving school in char, haor, and coastal areas has gone up as they are having to manage the increased socio-economic burden of disasters (Khanam, Kabir, Dina, & Islam, 2023). Women prefer to stay home during cyclones and floods, as they feel unsafe in shelters (Ayeb-Karlsson, 2020). About 42% of working-age women participate in the labour force, often earning less than men (UNDP Bangladesh, 2023). There is no authentic data on climate-vulnerable groups regarding the gender payment gap. However, the gap is higher compared to men in climate-vulnerable areas.

T5.2: Eliminate violence and exploitation against women and girls: Women and girls are at risk of violence and exploitation during and after disasters. About 71% of women in climate-vulnerable areas experienced increased abuse during floods, compared to what they faced before, with 52.3% of them enduring physical violence (BIGD, 2024). Gender-based violence surged by 65% in Cyclone Amphan-affected areas (BIGD, 2024). About 80% of people displaced by climate change are women (UNICEF, 2023).

T5.3: Eliminate child, early and forced marriage: Implementation of law to prevent child marriage remains rather weak. About 44.4% of girls get married before age 18, while in coastal areas, this rate is 60% (Jahan, 2024). Child marriage increased within climate-vulnerable groups, particularly in Bhola and Shatkhira. About a 39% increase in child marriage after a disaster is recorded (IRC, 2023). There was a 68% increase of child marriages during the COVID-19 in 2020 compared to 2019 (Nishat et al., 2023). The role of local administration in preventing child marriage is weak. Often they facilitate child marriage.

T5.4: Value unpaid care and promote shared responsibilities: About 60% of women are responsible for collecting drinking water and cooking fuel in disaster-prone areas of Bangladesh (Mitchell et al., 2014). Women also provide care and responsibility in the household, which is not considered "work". Climate-induced disasters make caregiving tasks more time-consuming. Women climate migrants living in informal urban settlements and working in households as domestic aid are not included in the labour laws to get legitimate benefits.

T5.5: Ensure full participation in leadership and decision-making: Limited participation of women in leadership and decision-making on climate change borne out by ground level evidence. About 90% of projects of Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) are formulated without consultation with women and girls and their needs, only 2% of more than a hundred projects are allocated to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Only 20% of members of local disaster management committees are women (UN Women, 2023). There is a lack of initiative to mainstream gender into policies and actions (UN Women & IUCN, 2022).

T5.6: Access to reproductive health and rights: Frequent climate-induced disasters destroy the healthcare infrastructure and services, water and sanitation facilities, limiting vulnerable communities' access to sexual and reproductive health. The rate of child and early marriage among climate-vulnerable groups is high, contributing to a high child pregnancy rate. There are deficits in research and authentic data on reproductive health and the rights of vulnerable groups.

T5.b: Empowerment of women: Women earn less compared to men, with a gender wage gap of about 21%. This scenario is worse within the vulnerable groups. A disproportionately higher

number of women are involved in informal work in the agricultural sector where social insurance is absent. It makes them more exposed to climate change, limiting their income (Eskander et al., 2022).

T5.c: Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality: There are limited initiatives to expand digital literacy for women to remove socio-economic barriers and enhance their access to digital financial services (BRAC University, 2024).

SDG-8: Economic Growth and Decent Work

Progress: Bangladesh reported higher economic growth that rose from 6.12 to 7.10 during 2014-2022 (BBS, 2025). State and non-state actors have provided micro-finance and material assistances and supported their income-generating activities and built capacity for farming and small business development. A number of research and advocacy initiatives have also been taken to formulate policies for decent work.

Challenges: Persistent unemployment, along with a high percentage of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), presents a major challenge. On top of that, the increased negative impact of climate change has been a persistent challenge in poverty eradication and building resilient infrastructure to accelerate economic growth.

T8.1: Sustainable economic growth: Income inequality has increased, which is higher in informal settlements (Asia Europe Foundation, 2021). The purchasing power of young and climate-vulnerable groups in slums and rural areas has suffered erosion (Sato, 2024). Less effort is given to improving their socio-economic condition for creating green jobs, improving energy efficiency, and upgrading technologies for climate-friendly GDP growth.

T8.2: Diversify, innovate and upgrade to raise economic productivity: Scarcely any initiative has been taken for economic diversification (e.g., moving away from climate-vulnerable products, markets, and jobs and moving toward low-emission and more climate-resilient sources of income) considering climate change and vulnerable groups. There is a lack of initiatives to shift away from single-source income to multiple sources and innovate business models in the adaptation sector.

T8.3: Integrated policy approach for job creation and growing enterprises: There are deficits in aligning employment and environmental policies to create and meet the demand for green jobs. There is a lack of support for green skills, including training and financial incentives in business and economy to promote green businesses. There is a dearth of initiatives to support green construction, including support for renewable energy infrastructure. Initiatives to build capacities of national institutions to access climate funds from national and global sources are rather limited (TIB, 2024).

T8.6: Youth employment, education and training: No significant job opportunities are being created for the youth. Unemployment increased to 4.7% in 2023, from 4.3% in 2016. The rate is even higher for the young (10.6% in 2016) compared to the national average (Sato, 2024). Job creation targeting the climate vulnerable groups has not progressed much, resulting in many youth being unemployed or trapped in low-paying jobs in climate vulnerable areas.

Limited initiatives are taken to support local innovations, such as promoting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, targeting the youth, women and persons with disability in vulnerable areas. There is a lack of employment, education and training support to protect youth and their jobs in the sectors that are under the pressure of climate change.

Extreme climate events in 2024 interrupted the education of 30.3 million students (UNICEF, 2024). Overall, 41% of youth in Bangladesh fall into the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), of which 65.5% are female (Karim, 2024). Budgetary support, including for training and equipment for trainers, are very limited as far as vulnerable groups were concerned.

T8.7: Child labour: The country is not on track to eradicate child labour by 2025 (Zohir et al., 2024). COVID-19, alongside climate change, forces children to work under extreme weather (Dhaka Tribune, 2024a). Of these, 1.78 million are engaged in child labour. About 12% of them work in drought-affected areas, followed by 18% in flood-affected areas and 15% in flash-flood-affected areas (U.S. Department of Labor, 2021). During the pandemic, the child labour rate increased by 33% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). The rate is higher in disaster-prone areas, where few jobs are available (Zohir et al., 2024).

T8.8: Work environment: There are wage unpredictability and structural barriers in climate-vulnerable areas. The wage-setting system is often arbitrary and lacks transparency and fairness. Young workers are the most susceptible to unfair wages and work environments. Climate migrant workers, including women and marginalised groups, are most susceptible to the unpredictability of work opportunities and compromised wages.

SDG-14: Life below water

Progress: To ensure safe ship recycling, to reduce ocean habitat loss, and to protect endangered biodiversity and coastal ecosystems, Bangladesh amended the Bangladesh Ship Recycle Act 2018 and set a target in view of compliance with the Hong Kong Convention (The Financial Express, 2022). Relevant actors have been working to reduce water and plastic pollution and using digital technologies for plastic tracking and recycling and its management.

Challenges: Pollution and overfishing are major challenges alongside increased salinity and ocean acidification due to climate change. Some of the challenges are as follows:

T14.1: Reduce marine pollution: Bangladesh ranks as the sixth-most polluted country in the world for water pollution caused by plastic and polythene. Every year, two million tons of plastic enter the Bay of Bengal (Mim, Islam, & Abdullah, 2024). The shipbreaking industry, which employs climate-induced migrants, contributes 20% of marine pollution by releasing heavy metals into the ocean (Bangladesh Shipbreakers Association, 2023). Few initiatives are taken to comply with the Ship Recycle Act and the Hong Kong Convention.

T14.2: Protect and restore ecosystems: The mangrove forest in the Sundarbans has declined by 6% in the last two decades due to shrimp farming and illegal deforestation (FAO, 2021). Heavy industries are constructed close to the ecologically sensitive area of the Reserve Forest (TIB, 2022b), being provided with faulty environmental clearance (The Business Standard, 2019). A large number of climate-vulnerable communities are dependent on its ecosystem services. As ecosystem services of Sundarbans are declining, so are the livelihood opportunities of vulnerable groups. There is a lack of necessary steps to prevent industrialisation around the forest alongside deficits of action against violation of environmental laws (TIB, 2022c).

T14.4: Sustainable fishing: The percentage of sustainable fisheries stocked in oceans and water bodies has reduced from 0.25% in 2020 to 0.24% in 2021 (SDG Tracker, 2024). Increased fishing by using illegal nets and toxins has damaged the fish ecosystem in coastal areas. Poverty and dependence on fishing of climate-vulnerable groups create conflict with conservation goals. There is a lack of initiatives to create alternative livelihoods in vulnerable areas.

T14.7: Sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism: The impact of climate change on fisheries and marine tourism will reach US\$146 billion by 2050 (Barua & Barua, 2024). Due to bureaucratic delays and leaseholder conflicts, community-based small fishing communities cannot access government-leased water bodies which adversely affect their livelihood opportunities. Indiscriminate Rohingya settlements in Chattogram- a hotspot of multiple climate-induced disasters- have damaged the hill and forest ecosystem and caused increased pollution (TIB, 2017). This also affected the potentials of tourism in the areas that support climate-vulnerable groups.

SDG-17: Partnerships for goals

Progress: Partnership for climate change has expanded significantly to facilitate and equip vulnerable people (United Nations, 2023). NGOs and CSOs have formed a large number of advocacy forums for advocacy and knowledge sharing. CSOs initiatives and Government's collaboration with other LDCs and Small Island States have increased for enhanced climate finance to vulnerable countries such as Bangladesh.

Challenges: Despite some progress, there is a large gap remains in areas of partnership, coordination and cooperation between NGOs and private stakeholders in view of working on climate issues, including those that concern vulnerable groups. Some of the key challenges are described below:

T17.3: Mobilise financial resources for developing countries: There is a lack of collaboration among the government, NGOs, civil society, and donors in terms of accessing climate finance. Developed countries promised to provide USD 100 billion/year to developing countries from 2020 which they never met. Bangladesh needed USD 13 billion/year; and only USD 0.71 billion has been delivered since 2010. The amount is insufficient and not time-bound (TIB, 2022b). There

is a significant gap in view of partnerships, collaboration and engagement between the private sector and the NGOs and CSOs to achieve climate-related SDGs.

T17.9: Enhance SDG capacity in developing countries such as Bangladesh: Relevant government agencies and NGOs in developing countries have deficits in technical capacity to implement SDGs. Only 18% of government agencies possess such capacity (UNDP, 2020). There is no effective mechanism to build the capacity of the stakeholders from NGOs and CSOs to monitor the progress.

T17.6: Knowledge sharing & cooperation for access to science, technology and innovation: Advancement in technology has been rather poor. Bangladesh ranked 106th out of 132 countries on the Global Innovation Index (GII) in 2024 (WIPO, 2021). There are few initiatives taken by NGOs and CSOs to achieve the target at local, national and international levels.

T17.18: Enhance availability of reliable data: Data gap exists to track the progress of SDGs. About 50% of SDG indicators cannot be monitored. Challenges exist in measuring the progress due to the unavailability and inadequacy of authentic data (Rahman, 2021). Manipulation and fabrication of government data are also reported (Mustafa, 2024). The government does not acknowledge non-state actors' data. Timeliness of data on climate vulnerability and standard approaches for collecting data are not ensured. There are deficiencies in terms of timely data validation on climate vulnerability (Rahman, 2021).

Policy Challenges

There are various action plans and policies for implementing climate change activities and mainstreaming gender into it. Some of these are the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP, 2009), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), the Bangladesh Climate Change and Gender Action Plans, and others. However, there are inconsistencies in the policies and practices, some of which are:

1. Lack of adequate climate finance, budget and allocation: Less budget allocation in the Local government for gender and climate-responsive action and for locally led adaptation. There are gaps in climate budgeting to promote economic empowerment and sustainable livelihood of vulnerable groups.

- 2. Lack of climate focus in the Social Safety Net Programme (SSNP):** Only 10% of the SSNP allocation is allocated for climate-vulnerable groups. The services provided do not address the needs and priorities of climate-vulnerable groups adequately.
- 3. Gender discrimination in policy implementation:** Implementation of relevant policies falls short due to social norms and local power dynamics. Vulnerable groups are excluded from project-related decision-making process and fail to access benefits from it.
- 4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds:** There is no effective mechanism to channel CSR fund for climate change adaptation and mitigation activities.

Way Forward

The July 2024 uprising by the youth and the fall of the authoritarian regime have created an unprecedented opportunity to reform climate-related policies. Youth is the driving force to bring transformative change in climate action. Therefore, reform agendas should integrate and use youth leadership to bring policy and practice changes in the post uprising context.

- 1. Introduce inclusive climate financing and budgeting:** Engage youth leadership in climate change negotiations. Secure adequate grant-based climate finance. Create a separate budget line for climate and gender in the national budget and budget for local government. Allocate climate finance (e.g., BCCTF) through International NGOs to the local NGOs to implement innovative projects with technical support from International NGOs. Strengthen partnerships among NGOs and business entities. Introduce CSR funds to climate activities.
- 2. Take initiatives towards gender mainstreaming:** Align and formulate plans and policies to ensure youth and women's access to climate finance, decision-making process and its implementation. Ensure proper needs assessment for gender-sensitive activities in climate change areas. Prioritise addressing gender-based violence in disaster-prone areas. Promote gender-sensitive designs in infrastructures. Focus on gender and climate vulnerability in SSNP.
- 3. Promote inclusive governance and strengthen resilience:** Ensure data availability and data transparency related to vulnerable groups. Foster inclusive governance by involving them in planning and implementation. Enhance disaster preparedness, forecasting, and response

systems. Ensure their timely and proper dissemination to vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Treat climate migrants according to their constitutional rights and provide them with safe and affordable housing.

- 4. Develop sustainable livelihoods and economic opportunities:** Provide green job-oriented training to youth and vulnerable groups to move away from climate-vulnerable economic sectors. Align rural housing projects with decentralised industrialisation to reduce migration pressure and create employment opportunities. Promote urban greening, reduce water pollution, and foster sustainable marine and coastal management practices.
- 5. Enhance health and social services:** Establish sustainable healthcare services targeting climate-vulnerable groups. Prioritise climate-induced health risks of vulnerable groups in primary healthcare systems. Develop one-stop service centres in urban areas to facilitate access to safety-net programmes for the low-income communities.
- 6. Raise public awareness and global cooperation:** Mainstream climate-related literature in the textbooks. Raise awareness among citizens and strengthen advocacy works for policymakers as regards disproportionately adverse impact of climate change that afflict particularly the vulnerable groups.

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