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Highlights



Out of 17 SDGs, 16 have direct and indirect connection with the LDC graduation criteria while 94 out of 169 SDG targets support the LDC graduation criteria.



Eighty three SDG targets have potential linkages with goals, targets and selected actions of 8 priority areas of the IPoA.



Forty six SDG targets are either fully or partially overlapping with the Seventh Five Year Plan of Bangladesh while 37 SDG targets ---have some linkages in essence with the plan.



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Bangladesh's Pursuit of the 2030 Agenda: Will It Facilitate Smooth Transition after LDC Graduation?

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Context

Bangladesh will cross a number of milestones during its implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which outlines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), over the 2016–30 period. The first five years of the SDGs coincide with the last five years of implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) for the least developed countries (LDCs) for the 2011–20 period, which aims to halve the number of LDCs by 2020. Bangladesh is expected to become eligible for graduation at the 2018 triennial review of the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations Economic and Social Council given its progress in gross national income (GNI) per capita and the Human Assets Index (HAI).

It has been emphasised that LDCs need to graduate with momentum in order to avoid the pitfalls of the post-graduation phase. Development of productive capacities and structural transformation have been identified as key factors for graduation (UNCTAD, 2016). On the face of it, Bangladesh's efforts towards implementation of the SDGs may facilitate graduation since several objectives of the IPoA and the SDGs have commonalities (UN-OHRLLS, 2016). Many of the SDGs are also similar to Bangladesh's objectives for the medium term outlined in its Seventh Five Year Plan (7FYP) for 2016–20 period. Thus, as Bangladesh works towards fulfilling its objectives through national policies, efforts may also help achieve several SDGs.

This policy brief reviews the linkages between the SDGs and LDC graduation criteria as well as the IPoA. It also examines how Bangladesh's national policies are informed by the SDGs and LDC graduation process and offers policy recommendations for smooth transition.

Exploring Linkages

SDGs and LDC graduation

On the one hand, there are 169 targets under 17 SDGs that consider the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainability. On the other hand, there are three LDC graduation criteria. GNI per capita points to a country's income status and is widely referred to as the 'income criterion', the HAI measures the level of human development, and the EVI indicates a country's structural vulnerabilities to exogenous economic and environmental shocks.

Out of 169 targets, 60 targets under 13 SDGs have clear potential linkages with GNI per capita. Indicators under the HAI mainly measure human development, specifically health and education. In addition to direct connections between HAI indicators and SDG targets, HAI indicators can be connected with SDGs on poverty, hunger and social protection, which are basic needs that must be addressed in the human development process. A total of 17 targets under six SDGs have connections with the HAI that relates to health and education. While SDGs 3 and 4 have explicit indicators on human development, SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 2 (hunger and nutrition), SDG 6 (access to safe water and sanitation) and SDG 10 (inequality) also have some

linkages with the HAI. For example, SDG target 2.1, which refers to ending hunger and ensuring access to nutritious food, has a linkage with HAI indicator ‘percentage of population undernourished’.

EVI indicators are mainly related to natural disaster, climate change, export concentration and instability, agricultural output and instability, population and remoteness. SDG target 2.3, which refers to doubling agricultural productivity, has linkages with the EVI indicators ‘share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in GDP’ and ‘instability of agricultural production’. The income criterion also has linkages with SDG target 2.3. Indicators under the EVI are not directly linked to the SDGs, but 31 targets under 12 SDGs are indirectly linked with the EVI. Thus, it is expected that implementation of these SDGs will support progress on the EVI as well.

The connecting lines in Figure 1 indicates the number of SDG targets linked to an LDC graduation criterion. The thicker lines indicate higher strength of linkages between two sets of global objectives – LDC graduation and the SDGs. The strongest link is between SDG 17 and GNI per capita since 17 targets under SDG 17 have links with the income criterion. SDGs 8 and 9 also have strong links with GNI per capita, as 11 targets under SDG 8 and eight targets under SDG 9 have links with the income criterion. Understandably, there are strong connections between the HAI and SDGs 3 and 4 as

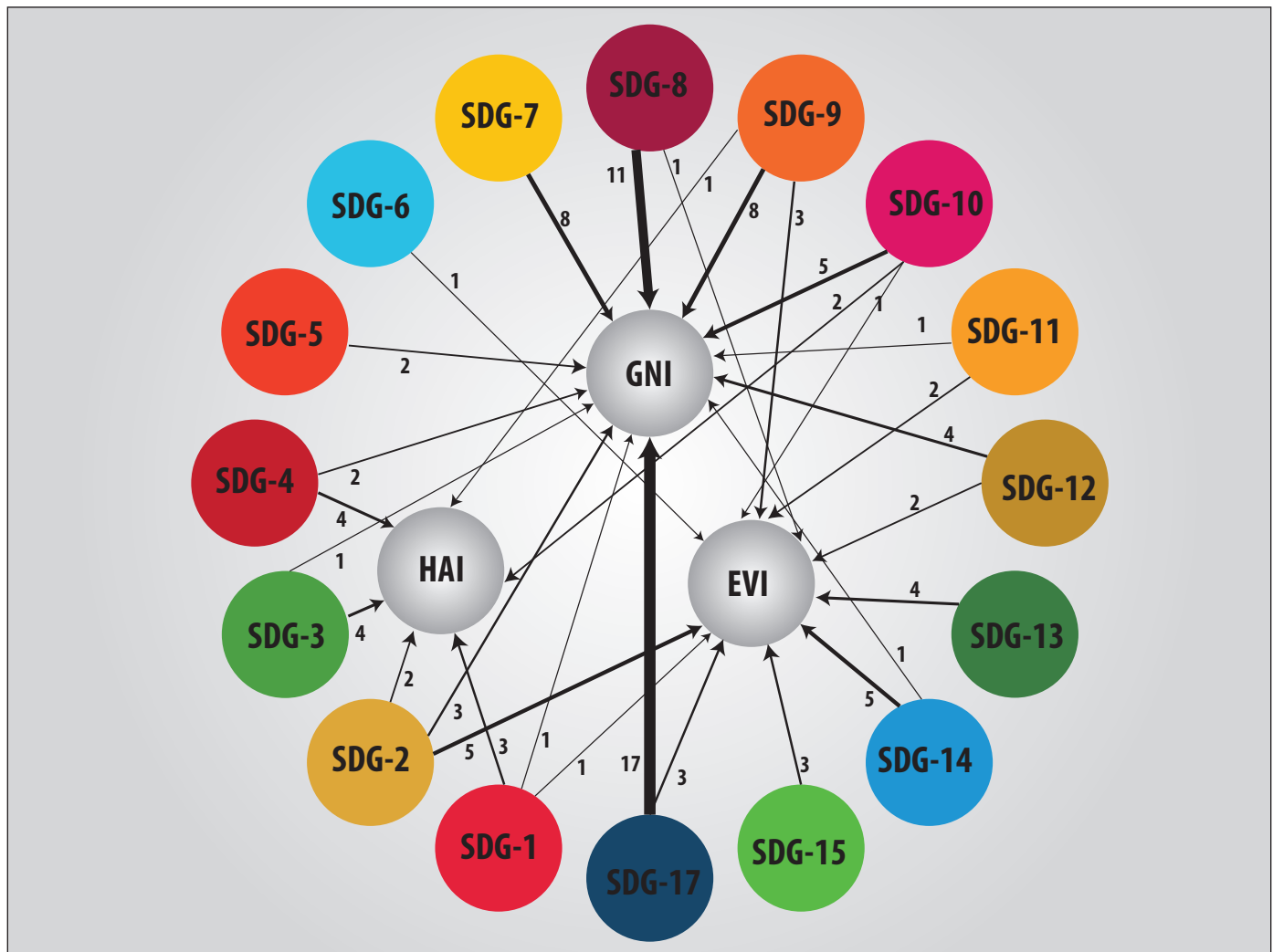
they are all related to health and education. SDGs 2, 13 and 14, which consider economic and environmental vulnerabilities, have strong connections with the EVI criterion.

UNCTAD (2016) outlined a number of policies that a country needs to pursue to graduate with momentum from the LDC category, with the justification being that graduation should be seen as a long-term development process rather than a narrow objective in a statistical sense. It identified six broad areas for action and highlighted gender as a cross-cutting issue for continuing development beyond the graduation milestone: rural transformation; industrial policy; science, technology and innovation (STI) policy; development finance; macroeconomic policies; and employment generation. Commonalities between these seven areas and the SDGs are evident. A total of 50 SDG targets were found to be related with the seven key areas of UNCTAD’s “graduation-plus” strategies for graduation with momentum. The network of SDG targets and those key areas is presented in Figure 2.

SDGs and IPoA

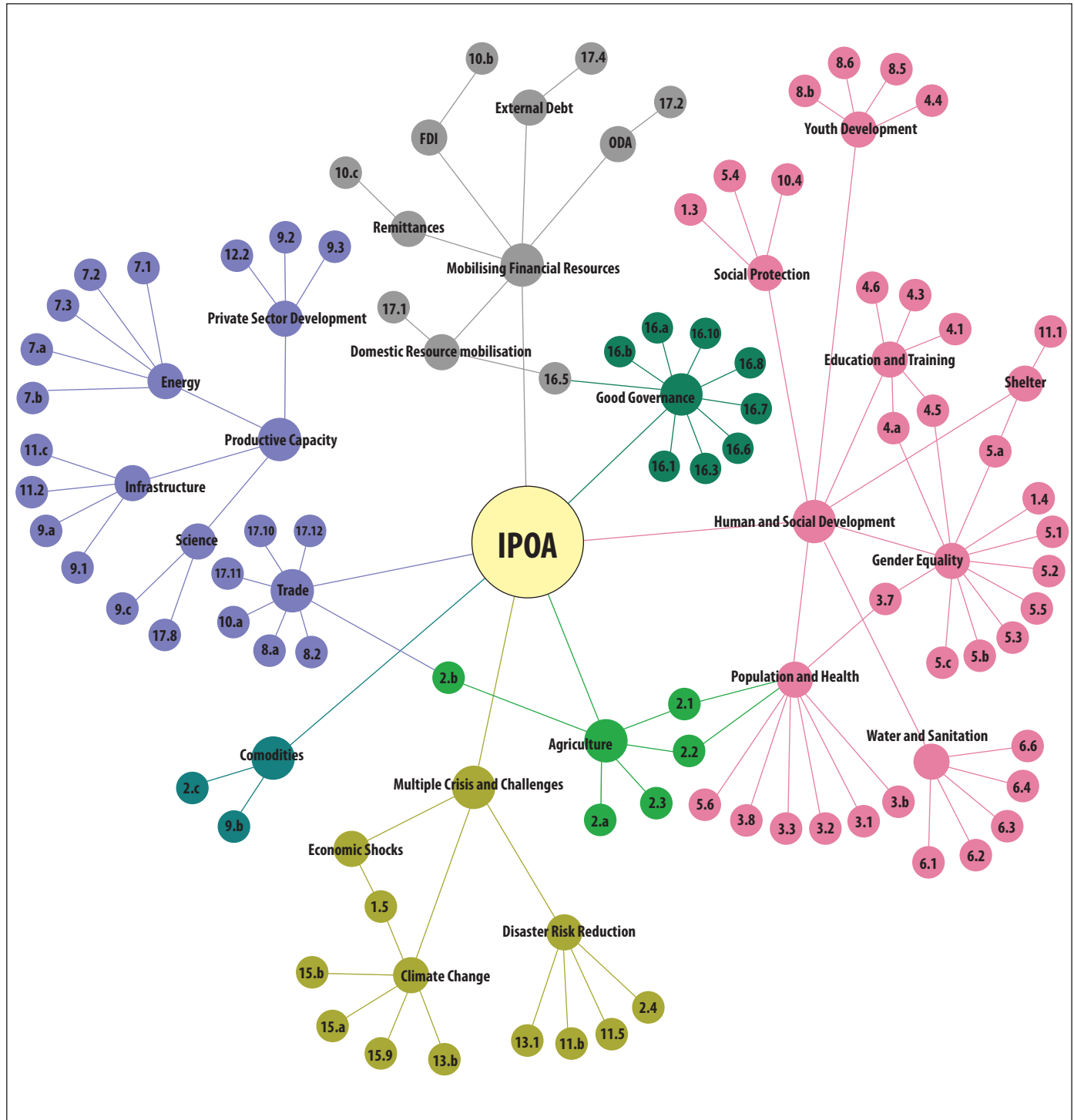
A detailed matching exercise comparing the IPoA priority areas and SDGs indicates that all areas covered by the IPoA are also included in the SDGs (UN-OHRLLS, 2016). While the SDG framework includes

Figure 1: Number of SDG Targets under Each Graduation Criterion



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Figure 2: Network of IPoA Priority Areas and SDG Targets



Sources: Authors' elaboration based on UN (2015) and UN-OHRLLS (2016).

goals, targets and indicators, the IPoA has goals, targets and actions. The priority areas of the IPoA include: productive capacity; agriculture, food security and rural development; trade; commodities; human and social development; multiple crises and other emerging challenges; mobilising financial resources for development and capacity-building; and good governance at all levels. The actions for implementing the IPoA goals and targets are categorised into three groups: joint actions for LDCs and developed countries, actions by LDCs and actions by development partners (UN, 2011).

There are 47 goals and targets, 16 joint actions for LDCs and developed countries, 126 actions for LDCs and 109 actions for development partners under eight IPoA priority areas. Despite differences in terms of approach, coverage, targets and indicators, both the IPoA and SDGs have the common objective to eradicate poverty. Linkages between SDG targets and IPoA goals, targets and selected actions are represented as a network in Figure 2, which shows that 83 SDG targets have connections with the IPoA.

SDGs and National Policies

Following a similar approach that of Bhattacharya, Khan and Sabbih (2016), the matching exercise between SDGs and national policies, it is found that six SDG targets match completely with national policies and fall in the 'fully overlapping' category, 40 SDG targets are 'partially overlapping', 37 targets do not match directly with national policies but 'overlap in essence', 21 SDG targets are in the 'no target in 7FYP' category and another 26 targets are 'global in nature' category whose implementation requires global initiatives. The non-aligned 21 SDG targets have been searched for in other national and sectoral policies, and 12 specific policies are found to be similar with those policies in essence.

Policy Recommendations

Two key recommendations for Bangladesh can be drawn from the network analysis.

First, Bangladesh should pursue global and national objectives simultaneously due to the various linkages between and among many of the indicators of various global and national goals. While the achievement of a few objectives in one framework may help achieve some in another framework, equal efforts should be put into all global and national commitments.

Second, Bangladesh must pay attention to SDG targets that are not reflected in its national and sectoral policies for smooth transition

after LDC graduation. Relevant targets include: maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species (SDG 2.5); facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people (SDG 10.7); support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas (SDG 11.a); substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change (SDG 11.b); significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere (SDG 16.1); significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime (SDG 16.4); ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (SDG 16.7); strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime (SDG 16.a); and promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development (SDG 16.b).

Concluding Remarks

The network analysis demonstrates that the SDGs are linked to the LDC graduation criteria, the IPoA and Bangladesh's national and sectoral policies. Overall, the SDGs support the LDC graduation process while LDC graduation helps in achieving the SDGs.

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