

A Bridge between Poverty Reduction and Human Rights: Perspective Bangladesh

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Abstract

As a least developed country our county is also not free from the problem of poverty. Above half of our population are still living their life below poverty line. They are sometimes deprived of their basic necessities of life for which their physical and mental growth can't be flourished according to their needs. Besides these people can't effectively participate in development project and they are also becoming victim of discrimination in distribution of that project's outcome. So that they lag behind in many other sectors also. Recent shocks to the Bangladeshi economy in the form of natural disasters and rising food prices have partially dampened the rapid progress in reducing poverty. The year 2007 saw two natural disasters, floods and a devastating cyclone within a few months of each other. Another significant shock has been the steep rise in food prices, including the main staple, rice, which has revealed the risk posed by global price volatility for a net food-importing country like Bangladesh. Estimates in this report suggest that the impact of the food price shock has likely negated some of the reduction in poverty brought about by economic growth between 2005 and 2008 .Besides that for being a poor country, the incidents of violation of human rights are common features here and no one is too much concerned about that. This flagrant violation of human rights also undermines the standard of life of our people. So it is now a crying need of the time to rethink about poverty reduction in a different but sustainable ways.

This work would be considered as a little contribution in case of establishing a strong link between human rights violation and poverty and at the same time it will try to emphasizing on Right Based Approach (RBA) to development.

Concept of poverty & related issues:

“I am often asked what is the most serious form of Human Rights Violation in the World today and my reply are consistent: Extreme Poverty.”

.....by Marry Robinson

Poverty:

Normally the term “poverty” can be synonym with the words such as “lack”, “deficiency”, “scarcity”, “shortage”, “dearth”, “paveity”, “insufficiency” and “denial” of one or many things.¹

In a broader sense poverty manifests itself primarily in the lack of necessary assets e.g. land on other natural resources, or lack of opportunities to make a living sufficient to ensure for her on himself an adequate living standard. But poverty manifests itself also in the form of personal insecurity, dangerous and unpleasant environment, low level of health, information and knowledge.

The concept of poverty can be defined both from absolute & relative view point

Absolute view –

The absolute concept of poverty is related to the physical need in terms of goods and services and the cost required to meet that need poverty is then defined as insufficiency of income or economic resources to maintain the cost.

Relative view –

The relative concept of poverty is, however, related to the economic resources that a person possesses in relation to the resources of others.

2.3 Scholars views regarding poverty:

Rein (1970) discussed three broad concept of poverty₂
subsistence inequality & externality

Subsistence concept:

The subsistence concept of poverty relates to the minimum dietary needs (calorie cut-off point) to maintain health and working capacity of an individual in the society.

Inequality concept:

Inequality or relative concept of poverty refers to position of one group relative to the resources of others and indicates the relative deprivation of one group in comparison with another primary due to mal distribution resource.

For instance:

Between two individuals on households, one may be considered as poor in comparison with other, both of them are capable of fulfilling the specified minimum need.

Externality concept:

Externality concept of poverty refers to the reflection of poverty through various social consequences created out of it rather than the needs of the poor.

In the word of Rabi Khanbur “Poverty is a Local Concept.”

International Institution’s view regarding poverty: It is observed by IFAD –

Poverty is more than physical deprivation. It has social and psychological affects which prevent people from realizing their potential. (IFAD – 1992)

According to World Bank (2000) –

“Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being.”

Here the well-being means the following things:

- i. Well-being as the command over commodities in general.
- ii. Well-being is to ask whether people are able to obtain a specific type of consumption good? Do they have enough food? or shelter? or health care? or education? According to this approach poverty analysis goes beyond the more traditional monetary measures of poverty.
- iii. The third and most broadest approach to well-being is the one articulated by Amartya Sen (1987), in his view well-being comes from a capability to function in society.

Concept of poverty within capability approach:

By capability approach Amartya Sen ... observed as follows:

The capability approach defines poverty as the absence or in adequate realization of certain basic freedoms, such as the freedoms to avoid hunger, disease illiteracy, and so on. Freedom here is conceived in a broad based, to encompass both positive and negative freedoms.

Concept of poverty under International Human Rights Law:

Poverty is a denial of human rights. Human rights refer to rights that are inherent to the person and belong equally to all human beings.

- From a human rights perspective, poverty exists for those who lack the capability to ensure for her or himself an adequate standard of living, including access to adequate food and housing in particular.
- Extreme poverty exists for those that suffer from outright hunger and/or homelessness.
- Poverty as the non-fulfillment of certain Human Rights.

Why measure poverty:

There must have various important causes behind measuring poverty among them following are mentioned as well –

- i. Keeping poor people on the Agenda.
- ii. Targeting Demotic and Worldwide Interventions.
- iii. Monitoring and Evaluating projects and policy interventions.
- iv. Evaluating and Effectiveness of Institutions.

In the event of evaluating policies, projects and various instruments, our concern is with poverty comparisons, the title of Martin Ravallion's influential monograph. (Ravallion – 1992)

Ravallion (1998) also argues –

A credible measure of poverty can be a powerful instrument for focusing the attention of policy makers on the living conditions of the poor.

Present scenario of poverty in Bangladesh:

Despite having various positive and prospective advancement in various sectors, Bangladesh is still in the higher position in world's poorest countries list.

Bangladesh with a population of 115 million is the 5th largest country in the world. It is also one of the 47 countries categorized as Least Developed Countries (LDC) in per capita income, literacy rate and contribution of manufacture to GNP. According to Human Development Index (HDI) Prepared by UNDP, based on life expectancy, educational attainment, and income indicators, its place is 146 out of total 173 countries, with 78% of its people in poverty during 1980-90 and 93.2 Bangladesh accounted for 7.2% of the world poor.³

Factors responsible for poverty situation in Bangladesh:

It will be much more difficult to establish some common and basic factors that are primarily responsible for poverty in Bangladesh. As poverty is a concept of local context which varies from place to place, time to time, community to community, country to country regarding its nature. Some vitals are-

- 1. Geographically vulnerable country.**
- 2. Higher population growth.**
- 3. Other factors:**

Highly agro-based economy, lower rate of education/literacy, Poor governance, red tapism & corruption, bias judiciary, lack of proper use of resources, low rate of production, lack of expertise and brain drain, political unstable situation, lawlessness & poverty, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, lack of proper public participation, lack of strategic knowledge, reluctance in case of implementation of policies, high dependency on Foreign Aid, grants and loan, various natural calamities, inequality & discrimination, belief in superstitions, low level of Human Rights upholding, lack of proper monitoring, unstable capital market, low access in export market, lack of knowledge about modern technology, lack of proper implementation of various natural resources, child marriage, death & dowry, lack of nutrition, non-prospective foreign Aid policy, environmental degradation, unplanned urbanization & industrialization.

Poverty & Human Rights

Human Rights:

Simply speaking human rights are those rights which people are entitled as a human being irrespective of their race, color, sex and country. Such as – right to food, right to shelter, right to education etc.

Division between pro-human rights concept:

There were divisions between pro-human rights concept such as –

CP rights

ESC rights

Right to speak,

Right to food, right to shelter etc.

Right to association etc.

Poverty:

It was significantly observed by the UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights that – Poverty as a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic political and social rights. Poverty is often a direct or indirect consequence of society's failure to establish equity and fairness that are the basis of its social and economic relations.

Poverty & relevance of all human rights:

Though it is considered that poverty one of the important consequences of grave human rights violation but it may be happened that all forms of human rights violation may not cause always same type of poverty situation.

Principle of individualism & poverty:

The principle of the individualism of H.R does not mean that all social phenomena must be defined by reference to all rights. This principle does not demand that poverty be defined by reference to all the rights set out in the International Bill of Rights, but it does demand an inclusive strategy for addressing poverty. As poverty may be defined by reference to a limited range of human rights –which will vary from one society to another though empirical evidence suggests some rights will be common to all – an effective anti-poverty strategy will certainly have to address a much wider range of human rights. Because human rights can be relevant to poverty in multiple ways.

Human rights & poverty: An active relation between them:

It is useful to distinguish three different ways in which human rights can be relevant to poverty.

⇒ **Constitutive relevance:**

If the non-fulfillment of a certain human rights meets the two conditions mentioned above of can be said to have constitutive relevance to poverty. But even when a right does not have constitutive relevance in this sense it may still be relevant to poverty for the other two reasons.

⇒ **Instrumental relevance:**

Instrumental relevance refers to the ability of certain human rights to promote the cause of poverty reduction. Two different types of instrumental relevance may be distinguished. Causative & evaluative

⇒ **The causative relevance:**

The causative relevance of some human rights is illustrated by the well-known example provided by **Amartya Sen** in his pioneering work on famines. His analysis points to the empirical regularity that famines never occur in a functioning

democracy with a reasonable degree of civil and political freedom, especially with a relatively free media that is allowed to openly criticize the powers of the day.

⇒ **Evaluative relevance:**

The idea of evaluative relevance stems from the observation that the analysis of poverty requires social evaluation of various kinds. The final way in which human rights can be relevant to poverty, even if they are not part of the definition of poverty is to act as a constraint on the types of action that are permissible in the quest for reducing poverty.

Poverty is a human rights violation or as a human rights violation:

Poverty is a result of the lack of or violation of basic human rights, but it is not in and of itself a violation of human rights. While global poverty is a byproduct of many global societal functions today the removal of poverty will not come about through the rhetoric of whether or not it is a violation of human rights, but rather through focusing on perpetuating the human rights which bring about “a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [one] self and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights §25). Thomas **Pogge** in his work “Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties” poses the question of whether “present citizens of the affluent countries, in collusion with the ruling elites of most poor countries, are harming the global poor”; for which he responds with a resounding affirmative.

However, **Pogge** responds to the question of poverty as a violation of human rights from the angle of the present global social order perpetuating and causing global poverty through its unjust system and an “imaginary” global social order as the comparison showing the depth of the affluent countries injustice. I opine that poverty is not a violation of human rights because a “violation” implies and requires a violator. While there are many factors which contribute to global poverty there is not a single factor which is solely responsible for it or perpetuating it. There are cases, such as genocide, where extreme poverty in a country is caused directly by clear violation of basic human rights, but this does not necessitate that the greater level of poverty induced is in and of itself a violation of the human rights which the genocide violated, rather the resulting poverty is one of the serious outcomes of a horrific violation of human rights.

Just as poverty is not caused by a single factor the present global institutional order is not caused by a single factor either. However, I am of the opinion that while the many factors which comprise extreme poverty, such as a lack of food, clothing, housing, education, medical care (etc), are in fact violations of basic human rights they cannot be explained together as poverty violating human rights **because the causes and remedies for each of these factors is not necessarily the same.**

Supports behind poverty reduction strategies in Bangladesh

a. Constitutional Guidelines for Formulation of Bangladesh's Development Strategy

b. National Development Plans:

1st five years plan	(1973-1979)
2nd five years plan	(1980-1985)
3rd five year plan	(1985-1990)
4th five year plan	(1990-1995)
5th five year plan	(1997-2002)
6th Five Years Plan	(2010-2015)

PRSP

In 1999 the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) adopted a new model of processes to guide lending to some of the world's poorest countries. They recommended adopting strategies for eradication of poverty. These strategies would take the form of papers called poverty reduction strategy papers. Regarding PRSP – Poverty reduction strategy papers are not a trivial bureaucratic hoop through which countries have to jump. Rather they comprise major assort, written papers averaging around a hundred pages on so on how these countries plan to reduce poverty.⁴

Interim PRSP

NSAPR-I

FY-2005-07

NSAPR-II

FY-2009-11

Bangladesh & UN Millennium Declaration:

As a member of United Nations Bangladesh also reaffirm in faith on adoption of United Nations Millennium Declaration – 2000 in New York from 6 to 8 September for more peaceful, prosperous and just world. In this Declaration Part-III deals about development and poverty eradication – which is Art-11 says in following ways – We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehu, managing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. Again in Art-12

“We resolve therefore to create an environment at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty.”

Various prospective targets:

UN Millennium Declaration 2000

Millennium Development Goals of Bangladesh:

- 1) Eradication of Extreme Poverty
- 2) Achieve Universal Primary Education

- 3) Promote Gender Equality & Empower Women
- 4) Reduce Child Mortality
- 5) Improve Maternal Health
- 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
- 7) Ensure Environmental Sustainability
- 8) Develop a Global Partnership for Development

These above mentioned goals are acting an effective catalyst to eradicate poverty from our country.

Incorporation of Human Rights based approach into Legal Framework & Development Issues for Poverty Reduction in Bangladesh:

Definition of Rights Based Approach:

A right based approach is a conceptual framework for the purpose of human development that is normatively based in international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. The right based approach integrates the norms, standards and principle of international human rights system into the plans, policies and process of development.⁵ It should be emphasized that at the heart of human rights approach must be the legal character of the international treaties that create rights and duties.⁶ Who ever want to apply human rights based approach to poverty reduction or for development progress they must at first understand the legal character of this model of development of poverty reduction.

Basic features of RBA:

- Explicit recognition of national and international human rights normative framework.
- Interdependence and indivisibility among human rights and priorities.
- Accountability.
- Equality and non-discrimination (case).
- Protection for the vulnerable and the marginalized.
- Participation and inclusion.
- Human Rights impact Assessment & benchmark.

The main features of Human Rights approach to poverty reduction:

Because of less success of various other models for poverty reduction the human rights approach to poverty reduction is becoming the milestone for the policy maker of country concerned. In this situation I can rightly support this –human rights and human development are close enough in motivation and concern to be congruous and compatible and they are different enough in strategy and design to supplement each fruitfully.

- ⇒ Empowering the poor

- ⇒ Explicit recognition of the national and international human rights normative framework
- ⇒ Accountability

Accountability mechanism:

There are four categories of accountability mechanism¹⁶ –
Judicial, Quasi-Judicial, Administrative & Political
⇒ Non-discrimination & Equality

International response to Equality & non-discrimination:

- (1) ICERD (2) CEDAW (3) ICESCR
- (4) ICCPR (5) CRC (6) UDHR

- ⇒ Participation
- ⇒ Progressive realization, indicators and benchmark
- ⇒ International Assistance & Cooperation
- ⇒ Other human rights of particular importance to poverty reduction strategies
- ⇒ Realities of the poor people will be the key concern of PRSP
- ⇒ Ensuring right to information
- ⇒ Right to association
- ⇒ According to crying out for change

A human rights approach to poverty reduction entails –

- Ensuring that poverty analysis addresses the multiplicity of causes of deprivation, exclusion and discrimination of the poor.
- Ensuring that duty bearers are identified with their obligations, as well as the capacity gaps as to why they are not meeting them.
- Ensuring that claim-holders and their capacities to effectively assert their rights are identified.
- Supporting the collection of disaggregated data to identify those most in need.
- Identifying obstacles to the implementation of the human right-based approach by addressing the different interests and cultural, social and economic realities.
- Designing policies and programs based on the above analysis that address in a targeted and disaggregated manner poor people and marginalized groups.
- Applying a holistic approach to human rights and poverty reduction through the integration of economic/social rights together with civil/political rights.
- Empowering people to participate fully, equally and responsibly in decision making.

- Monitoring progress and result, as well as budgetary inputs, including share that reaches units of services delivery (e.g. – local school and rural clinic) tangible proxy indicators for good governance.
- Supporting legal instruments and law enforcement capacity.
- Conducting advocacy and awareness raising campaigns and fostering access to information in a user-friendly way in local language for broader outreach (e.g. – NHDRs and MDGRs)

Changing thinking by rights based approach in case of foreign aid:

Clients, beneficiaries..... Right holder
Charity..... Duty, obligation
Needs..... Entitlements
Providers..... Duty-bearers

The Human rights Commission – A Prospective Hope:

In 2008 in a significant development, the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission was established to protect and promote human rights.

- Bangladesh has also made some progress prioritizing efforts to improve citizen’s safety and security.
- Greater focus is being given to civil service reform to ensure people’s right to
- Development through improved, effective and efficient service delivery.
- Such as Formulation of Civil Service Act.
- The Public Administration Reform Road Map (2010-2014).
- A National Plan of Action for e-governance is also being pursued to improve public sector service delivery.
- In 2009, the public sector has been made more accountable to citizens through the establishment of an independent information commission under the Right to Information Act.
- Since 2000, Bangladesh has made a number of efforts to tackle corruption. Recognizing that corruption was hampering human development, the government formed the Anticorruption Commission in 2004.
- Bangladesh acceded to the UN convention against corruption in 2007.

Bangladesh has ratified almost all the key international human rights instrument.

CONCLUSION

As it is very much difficult to reach a single and concrete definition of poverty because its nature and characteristics are not same in all time, place & also for all people. Some may give priority to their CP rights & other may their ESC rights. But in my opinion , violation of ESC rights are much more responsible for creating sever poverty in our country. Achieving human right based approach with a

national framework for poverty reduction is not an event but a process, The demystifying of int. human rights standard and incorporating it without existing framework take time. They need to be entrance able (e.g.-participatory programming tools, guidelines, benchmarks, indicators)to those responsible for the apply of human rights as much as to those whose role is to demand positive change.

Al discussion about RBA indicates that if one has to make the right based approach in development strategies successful one has come up with innovative mechanism and ways in which to reach to the poorest of poor. Perhaps it is high time that rights defenders have started to take a leaf out of the develop mentalist’s view.

So the here the relevant statement of AMARTYA SEN can be mentioned....

“I would like to argue that the deep question raised by both the ethics related view of motivation and social achievement must find an important place in modern economics, but at the same time it is impossible to deny that the engineering approach has to offer to economics as well.”

At last I must say & hope that in spite of having various obstacles in right based model for poverty reduction, it can really bring some prospective fruits for our nations as whole to reduce or eradicate poverty from our country, that one day will certainly be come when not only Dr. MOHAMMAD YUNUS alone but also\ each and every people of Bangladesh will hold the same dream that.....

WE CAN PUT POVERTY AS A MODEL IN OUR NATIONAL MUSEUM.

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