Joint Statement by Youth Organizations in Bangladesh on the Voluntary National Review 2020
The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the main UN platform on sustainable development. It has a central role in the follow-up and reviews of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. All UN Member States as well as representatives from civil society organizations participate in its meetings. The Forum adopts inter-governmentally negotiated political declarations at the conclusion of its eight-day session. The HLPF meets under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) annually. In 2020, ECOSOC will convene the 2020 session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development from Tuesday, 7 July, to Thursday, 16 July 2020. Following the first five-days, the HLPF’s three-day ministerial segment will take place jointly with ECOSOC’s high-level segment, from Tuesday-Thursday, 14-16 July 2020. The ECOSOC high-level segment concludes on 17 July 2020.

The establishment of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was mandated in 2012 by the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), "The Future We Want". As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the government adopted a comprehensive response plan embracing health and socioeconomic recovery measures to control and contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The VNR process of Bangladesh is led by the “SDGs Implementation and Review Committee” to integrate regarding the SDGs views of relevant stakeholders from central to the local levels. Where each District and Sub-District is lagging behind with the following topic including reaching the target rate of neonatal mortality rate, family planning needs and reduction rates of poverty and hunger are on-track, enhanced budgetary allocation and gender parity in primary and secondary education.
The Bangladesh government has adopted a comprehensive response plan embracing health and socioeconomic recovery measures to control and contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Hon’ble Prime Minister announced stimulus packages of around US$ 11.6 billion (3.3% of GDP) to be implemented in three phases- immediate, short and medium, until FY 2023-24.

The VNR process of Bangladesh is led by the “SDGs Implementation and Review Committee”. Our Whole-of-Society approach in implementing the SDGs has integrated the views of relevant stakeholders from central to the local levels.

The initiatives taken by the Government after VNR 2017 are as follows: (i) Preparing SDGs Action Plan with new projects and programmes, (ii) Launching SDGs Tracker to monitor implementation in terms of indicator-wise data updating, (iii) Finalizing SDGs Financing Strategy which included updating of the financing needs with an estimated additional amount of US$ 928.5 billion being required for the FY 2017 to FY 2030, (iv) Convening the 1st National Conference on SDGs Implementation Review participated by representatives from the government, NGOs, CSOs, private sector, and DPs, (v) Forming National Data Coordination Committee to harmonize data generation, (vi) Developing a framework of collaboration between the Government and the UN agencies in Bangladesh, (vii) Approving 40 priority indicators for localizing SDGs; 39 of them will reinforce the implementation of the other indicators. The additional (+1) local indicator is to reflect the “Leaving no one behind”, the vulnerable issue where each District and Sub-District is lagging behind.

Under-five mortality and neonatal mortality have reached the target set for 2020. Prevalence of current tobacco use, family planning needs and reduction rates of poverty and hunger are on-track. The Government’s commitment to social protection is evident in the enhanced budgetary allocation and extensive coverage. Gender parity in primary and secondary education has been achieved. The annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person and manufacturing value-added as a proportion of GDP has crossed the target set for 2020. Access to electricity is 96% on track with the commitment to provide electricity to every household by 2021. Numerous initiatives have been taken to ensure the safety, well-being, and security of vulnerable sections of the society including women and children.
However, the VNR 2020 has identified some challenges. Sustained GDP growth has not resulted in reducing income inequality. Although the health sector has shown notable success, attaining Universal Health Coverage remains a challenge. Same is true for ensuring quality education at multilevel educational streams. Ensuring sustainable urbanization remains a challenge. The climate vulnerability will continue to be a threat to our economy. More target-oriented efforts are needed to facilitate domestic resource mobilization at the desired level.

Call for Action

As still there are some challenges that must be focused, brought out, conversed with resolutions and put out in the global advocacy. Connecting to this, SERAC Bangladesh along with the Coalition of Youth Organizations in Bangladesh (CYOB) hosted a national level participatory youth consultation in Bangladesh and stimulate recommendations from the youth organizations actively engaged in SDG implementation and complementing the initiative undertaken by the state, especially by working at local and national level in uplifting young people’s lives. Over this course, 22 youth organizations simultaneously echoed with the title - Youth or Nothing on 13th of July, 2020 conveying a great number of powerful messages to the United Nations, the Bangladesh government and relevant stakeholders regarding. As an important stakeholder in realizing the global goals, we, the following organizations represent communities and youth groups that require increased attention and meaningful and inclusive participation scopes at all levels.

With this common demand and value, here are our recommendations to this UN High Level Political Forum 2020, that to be considered as a shadow report to the Bangladesh Voluntary National Review 2020.
SDG-1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

- Improvise decentralization of resources in urban areas to eradicate poverty conforming education facilities, and create space for unemployed youth by ensuring flexible scopes of financial inclusion, and access for youth led innovation;
- The social safety net must priorities unemployed youth by supporting them to build skills for combating poverty.

SDG-2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

- Support youth led business models with training, capacity building and on Boosting methodology and systems with efficiency to assorted the dimensions of productivity including up warding business model that contribute to the food, and nutrition supply chain, and reduce waste

SDG-3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

- Introduce a sustainable youth led health auditing mechanism for systematic assessment to ensure availability, affordability and accessibility of information and treatment for adolescents and young people in all divisions of the country.
- Enable youth friendly environment and introduce a funding mechanism for youth led organizations to engage meaningfully in health policy implementation
- Eliminate information and service related restrictions for young people to access sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and HIV, and introduce policy changes for inclusion and preventing discrimination
Health programs for adolescents and young people must be improved to address crucial issues including but not limited to puberty, mental health, contraception, menstrual regulation, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, non-communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS, menstrual health management in a non-judgemental, accessible, gender transformative, non-discriminatory, privacy ensured, youth friendly approach at every health facility in the country.

Health care centers need to be well equipped with service providers to assure youth friendly health services including sexual and reproductive health and rights, with special attention for the marginalized and deprived communities in rural, semi urban and urban areas.

The government should upgrade the information gateways on adolescent friendly health centers, promote technology friendly and accessible youth health services, promote the helpline facilities, and introduce digital health service and education programs through online sessions, digitized information booklets, behavior change communication e-materials for easy access of adolescents and youth.

Ensure regular basis accountability, monitoring and evaluation on the progress of health and family planning programs in the light of ICPD Program of Action, FP2020 Country Commitments, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the commitments for universal health coverage to assure quality and standard health services for adolescents and youth.

**SDG-4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

Government should initiate an inclusive, gender-responsive, disability-friendly universal life skill education system to open access to accurate, evidence-based information, age appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, and acknowledge the evolving capacities of young people from diverse backgrounds.

Ensure free and subsidised free and subsidised e-learning tools and facilities for young people providing cyber safety especially for girls and young women.

Ensure adequate budget allocation to improve subsidized, discrimination free and quality education facilities for children and young people living in low resource areas, persons living with disabilities, transgender, indigenous, dalit and other marginalized populations.
● Ensure the teachers have adequate access to capacity development tools and resources including but not limited to training on human rights, climate change, age specific comprehensive sexuality education, use of technology friendly curriculum, upgraded facilitation methods and soft skills, followed by a reward based close monitoring on the implementation.

● Ensure allocation of national reserve and recovery budget for emergency situations like the COVID-19 with special attention to launching alternative education methods.

● Ensure impartial and standard edification at institutional educations to secure employability pertinent to effectual learning upshots for all, especially girls and women.

● Education system should extend to learning exchange programs between community leaders, parents, guardians and students to ensure spread of the benefits of quality education in the community.

SDG-5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

● As women participation in strategic mechanisms and decision making areas are very low, state sponsored policies and programs for girls and young women must be improved to promote inclusion of girls and young women in the policy level and program implementation spaces is widely accepted as a best practice.

● Protect all young people from discrimination, stigma, social exclusion, and violence based on sex, gender, religious, cast, ethnicity, sexual orientation with a universal human rights based approach.

● Government must monitor child marriage law implementation and adopt youth centered initiatives to combat child marriage both legally and socially.

● Initiate a gender auditing mechanism for all government, non government, and private sector organizations to ensure women are entitled to equal pay and benefits at every level, and promote meaningful participation of transgender community in formal economy.
SDG-6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- Strengthen implementation monitoring of menstrual health (MH) management policy and programs at schools and communities ensuring adequate access to knowledge and information, free and subsidised MH commodities, and disposal facilities for girls and young women in low resource based areas including but not limited to climate, coastal, disaster prone and hard to reach areas.
- Reduce polluting water bodies, prevent overuse of water, and promote eco friendly sanitation facilities by empowering local youth organizations with skill building and access to resource management.

SDG-7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

- Engage youth to promote affordable access to clean, renewable energy, and eco friendly technology to combat the climate change effects.

SDG-8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- Promote sustainable youth empowerment schemes with employment focused education and e-learning opportunities, and flexible financing facilities for young professionals and entrepreneurs.
- Ensure safe, secured, and standard pay scale based equal employment opportunity at every sector with proper monitoring, diversified skill building programs for young people, and easy access to labor law and justice mechanisms.

**SDG-9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**

- Integrated programs for skill building of youths focusing sustainable industrialization and human centric resilient infrastructure, information and communication technology, artificial intelligence, robotics, supply chain management, automobile engineering and other youth focused business models must be promoted with state support.
- Active participation of women in the business sector should be encouraged by introducing mandatory policy change for both private and public sectors operational mechanisms, as well as representation processes.

**SDG-10: Reduce inequality within and among countries**

- Ensure at least 50% participation of youth in politics, especially representing electoral positions, and promote civic engagement in policy implementation.
- Government should introduce flexible taxation policy for youth entrepreneurs in business and social sectors, and prevent unequal responses towards young people in terms of employment, leadership, and capacity development opportunities based on race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual and gender orientation, geographic representations.
SDG-11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

- Acknowledge house is human rights for young people to ensure basic shelter for everyone that reduces vulnerability and improves access to other supports eventually. To ensure that, all departments concerned for housing and basic infrastructure must introduce new and timely youth centric housing schemes with context specific easy financing mechanisms.
- Ensure meaningful and inclusive youth participation in urban planning and development by introducing democratic mechanisms of youth representation in the city authorities.
- Engage youth in designing and planning urban infrastructure and facilities, take concerns on rules and regulations, and financing municipal programs including youth employment generation and social empowerment.
- Ensure adoption of the New Urban Agenda by UN-Habitat in every city authority to achieve sustainable development in the cities by 2030.

SDG-12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

- Create massive awareness on responsible consumption by youth led social, behavior communication models, with sustainable waste management, and reward for best practices.

SDG-13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

- Allocate adequate financial and technical resources to implement the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan with special attention to youth and adolescents especially in the coastal areas, char lands, other flood prone areas.
• Invest in building competence of youth led climate change programs and divest in initiatives that are harming the environment with immediate actions.

**SDG-14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

• Increase surveillance for seas and marine resources to prevent harmful business of marine resource trades, and promote conservation initiatives both with public and private mechanisms.
• Introduce training and policy awareness fisherman communities including the youths to promote conservation and prevent abuse.

**SDG-15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

• Engage youths in national deforestation prevention initiatives and utilize their ideas in combating it.
• Invest in science and technological programs to prevent biodiversity loss, tracking wildlife population, and improve natural ecosystems.
• Close down animal captivity through zoos or other private and public wildlife caging facilities, and protect wildlife from abuse and engage youth to ignite conservation drives.
**SDG-16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

- Government must protect young people from abuse and engagement with organizations or groups associated with crimes, drug, and terrorism.
- Youth friendly correction facility for children, youth and adolescents must be introduced as a part of government’s counter-terrorism measures.
- Young people from all communities and groups must be involved to co-create and implement programs to prevent violent extremism, and conflict among communities based on cultural and religious disparities, diversity of opinions and expressions.
- Youths must be engaged in rule of law monitoring and countering corruption by empowering them with voices and tools to prevent and expose.
- All forms of abuse against children, and young people at all levels must be prevented adhering to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and domestic laws, including the Elimination of Child Labor, Protection of Children and Young Persons Act 2013, Child Policy must be implemented properly and the national helpline must be made much more responsive.

**SDG-17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development**

- Build sustainable and strong partnership between youth organizations and the government institutions to deliver a cohesive outcome to SDG implementation mechanisms at both local, and national levels.
- Legalization process for youth organizations must be made easier and reduce bureaucracy for youth led groups.
- Frame a government led process to reduce implication in traditional youth-adult partnership both in public and private sectors, and open gateways to engage more young people in policy formation, governance and politics.
● Reduce data and knowledge gap to transform into youth friendly data to assess the SDG implementation progress from a youth lens.
● Support youth led organizations with long term funding and resources to sustain their impacts beyond project basis interventions.

This Statement Report is jointly submitted by:
SERAC-Bangladesh and Coalition of Youth Organizations in Bangladesh (CYOB)

Youth led and serving organizations actively participated and endorsed:

Bangladesh Youth Health Action Network (BYHAN)
Bengal Aid
Ghashful Shishu Forum
Goals for Generation
Icche Forum Rajshahi
IYAFP Bangladesh
Jagroto Bibek Foundation
Kopot Youth Foundation
Rumisa Foundation
SDG Youth Forum
Shoccho Foundation
Speak & Act
Tori
United Nations Youth Advisory Panel, Bangladesh
With She
Walk for All
Youth Nexus
Youth Ending Hunger
Y-Coalition
Youth for Change
Youth Hub
Youth platform for Sustainable Development
Youth against Hunger