



Leaving the LDCs category: Booming Bangladesh prepares to graduate

Propelled by better health and education, lower vulnerability and an economic boom, Bangladesh, the largest least developed country (LDC) in terms of population and economic size, looks likely to leave the LDC category by 2024. For the first time, the country is expected to meet the three criteria for graduation when the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) convenes at UN Headquarters in New York for its review in March 2018.

“Bangladesh has seen broad-based gains in health, education, infant mortality and life expectancy,” said Daniel Gay, LDC expert in UN DESA’s Development Policy and Analysis Division. “These have in turn driven economic growth, and latterly reduced economic vulnerability, so it’s really a success story.”

Every three years, the CDP, which comprises 24 independent development experts from around the world review the list of LDCs, based on a rigorous methodology using a wide range of sustainable development indicators.

The CDP measures the LDC category on the basis of per capita income, a human assets index and an economic vulnerability index. A country must exceed thresholds on two of the three criteria at two consecutive triennial reviews to be considered for graduation. Up to now, no country has managed to meet all three criteria.

“We have been achieving robust economic growth for the last number of years — over 6 per cent — and also pursuing a policy of inclusive growth”, said Masud Bin Momen, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, as he commented on the

country's success. He also stressed that growth has involved all sectors of society "...especially women's economic empowerment and gender mainstreaming."

Since 1996, the per capita gross national income in Bangladesh has outstripped the LDC average and has recently risen above the threshold used by the CDP. The economy has developed largely through textile and garment exports. Remittances, natural gas, shipbuilding and seafood, as well as information communications and pharmaceuticals are all emerging sources of foreign exchange and economic growth.

This economic boom has helped people living in poverty. Since 1990 about 50 million people left extreme poverty, as defined by the World Bank, a reduction in the poverty rate from 40 per cent to 14 per cent. Bangladesh's thriving non-government organizations have also helped provide vital health and education services to the poor, translating into rapid improvements in the human assets index used by the CDP.

Increases across the five components of the human assets index – infant mortality, maternal mortality, undernourishment, adult schooling and adult literacy – meant that Bangladesh exceeded the threshold on this index for the first time in 2016.

Bangladesh is also unusual in that it has enjoyed a reduction in economic vulnerability. The economic vulnerability index has consistently decreased since 2003, the first year it fell below the CDP's official threshold, partly due to greater export stability and diversification.

Ambassador Momen described the role of the United Nations as an important partner in the country's development efforts. "They have been providing consistent support in capacity-building and by undertaking various projects, and also helped in the build-up of our technical capacity in various social sectors," Mr. Momen said.

Bangladesh's graduation will have implications for the economy, although many of the main stakeholders – including the government and private sector – believe that graduation would be a major step forward in the country's history and therefore an event to be welcomed.

"All of this is very much part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals", said Heidi Schroderus-Fox, Director of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), adding that the graduation from the LDC category is an important part of the efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At the triennial review, the CDP not only reviews the data for all developing countries to identify countries that meet the LDC criteria for inclusion or graduation. A main focus will be to decide whether or not countries that meet the graduation criteria for the second consecutive time should be recommended for graduation, paving the way for them to leave the category in the near future.

This time, the CDP will make decisions on more countries than ever before, including on Bhutan, Kiribati, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.

Booming Bangladesh, a country preparing to leave the LDC category, is a success story likely to inspire others.

For more information: [Committee for Development Policy](#)



#SDGLive at Davos: Tech solutions for the global goals

It is clear: everyone has a role to play in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it is time to accelerate our efforts towards their worldwide realization. During the World Economic Forum in Davos on 23-26 January, the SDG Media Zone honed in on this very topic, bringing together leaders from across sectors to discuss the goals and the imperative of working in

partnership to leave no one behind.

On 23 January, UN DESA's Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin joined the SDG Live stage together with Telia's CEO Johan Dannelind to discuss how innovation and technology can advance the goals and how private sector involvement can be a catalyst for change.

In the session moderated by UN Foundation's Pratik Desai, Mr. Liu stressed how technology and innovation benefit both developed and developing countries and how they are crucial for SDGs realization. He also urged the private sector and the scientific community to play their part in assuring the success of the goals.

Similarly, Mr. Dannelind stressed the importance of turning awareness of the SDGs into impact, especially in the business and technology sectors. He discussed the work that Telia is doing to promote SDG awareness by incorporating the goals into their business model. For example, they created a Unite program for internal engagement to encourage all Telia employees to be engaged in the SDGs and commit to be active around a specific goal to make a difference. When other businesses take this approach, the importance of the goals is expressed, and awareness will turn into impact that will make a difference.

Mr. Liu discussed the importance of bringing innovative technologies to all countries. He stressed that to achieve economic growth, everyone needs to be brought to the next stage of development. The inequality gap needs to be narrowed and the digital divide needs to be resolved. By developing a strategy that ensures that modern technologies will contribute in positive ways, all people will benefit. Mr. Liu also underscored how the technological development of artificial and robotic intelligence, must be created for the mutual benefit of all people.

Both Mr. Liu and Mr. Dannelind agreed that in a globalized world, we must ensure that in addition to competition, there must be more cooperation if the SDGs are going to be achieved. They also stressed the power of digital technology on the economy and its benefits to societies. If this idea is understood by all relevant stakeholders, barriers to digitalization can be removed and everyone can enjoy the benefits of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

Both Mr. Liu and Mr. Dannelind look towards the future with excitement. They see the interest and readiness of governments and the private sector to accelerate innovation

and technological advancement to achieve the goals, and are confident that the challenges the world faces can be alleviated when there is collaboration. With everyone ready to play their part for the SDGs, the future of our world is bright.

In addition to participating in the SDG Media Zone, Mr. Liu attended several events during the Forum that highlighted the importance of technology and the SDGs. The meetings discussed a wide variety of topics including the Circular Economy, the Belt and Road Initiative and the Broadband Commission.

For more information:

[SDG Media Zone at the World Economic Forum](#)

[World Economic Forum Annual Meeting](#)

HIGHLIGHTS



Falling unemployment rates mask deep-rooted challenges

On its surface, the global labour market seems to be headed for a rosy future of decent jobs for all. Unemployment rates are falling across developing and developed countries from Mexico to Germany. In many cases, such as Japan or the Czech Republic, joblessness is at record lows. But a deeper dive into the statistics paints the reality in a much more nuanced and decidedly darker

hue.

Close to 200 million people around the world remain unemployed. If they were to form their own country, it would be the 7th most populous in the world. In many cases, even the people who do land a job, can hardly consider themselves lucky. Over 40 per cent of all workers globally are in vulnerable forms of employment and over 40 per cent of workers in low-income countries do not earn enough to keep them above the extreme poverty line.

Women and youth are disturbingly overrepresented among the unemployed. Across many developing countries, women are several times more likely to be jobless than men and face numerous obstacles on their road to the labour market. In Saudi Arabia, for example, 34 per cent of female university graduates were unemployed in the third quarter of 2017, compared to around 7 per cent of their male colleagues. These educated women represented 40 per cent of all Saudi unemployed labour.

Young people are faring even worse. They are around three times as likely to be unemployed than adults and much more likely to be in insecure or short-term work. A whopping three quarters of all working youth are employed in the informal sector, where they lack social protection and receive lower wages. As a result, some 160 million young people around the world live in poverty despite having a job.

These trends are particularly worrying because of their cost to the society at large. Several studies show that an episode of unemployment when young or starting work during a recession have large negative effects on lifetime potential wages and raise the risks of being unemployed or socially excluded in later years. High unemployment rates among young people can also lead to slower development, lack of social trust and social unrest.

Such problems currently do not concern Japan, where it is the employers who struggle to find young workers. In November last year, the country's unemployment rate reached 2.7 per cent – the lowest in a quarter-century. For every job seeker, there were 1.56 available offers and 86 per cent of the students expected to graduate in March this year have already received a job offer.

But Japan is an exception in a world that appears to have no vacancies left for the rapidly growing cohorts of young people. Even in regions with record low unemployment, such as Eastern Europe, the share of youth among the jobless remains high, approaching 20 per cent in some countries.

Young people's prospects of finding a job are not made any easier by the demographic trends, which predict a rapid inflow of youth to an already crowded labour market, particularly in developing countries, where 85 per cent of the world's youth live.

To give their young citizens a fighting chance of finding a job, countries will have to make long-term investments in their education systems to better match the available jobs with young people's skills. Supporting entrepreneurship, providing safety nets, employment services and quality apprenticeships can also increase the probability of young people finding decent work. With the deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals looming large, countries will need to redouble their efforts to ensure the future of work does not become a future of unemployment.

Every month UN DESA's [Monthly Briefing on the World Economic Situation and Prospects](#) brings you the latest scoop on the global economy. Find the latest edition [here](#).

GET INVOLVED



Have your say: Stand up for migrants!

This February, the international community will intensify its efforts preparing for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Compact, expected to be adopted in December this year, will cover all aspects of international migration in the spirit of human solidarity to ensure that no one is left behind. There are many ways to get involved and have a say to ensure that people on the move around the world are protected.

The Global Compact, which is now entering a phase of negotiations, is expected to be adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt a Global Compact for Safe,

Orderly and Regular Migration, which will be held in Morocco on 10 and 11 December 2018.

For those wishing to have a say in what the Global Compact should feature, there is still time to get involved. One such opportunity is on 21 February 2018, when there will be a [multi-stakeholder hearing](#) at UN headquarters in New York. Registration for this event is open until 7 February and can be done [here](#).

Ahead of this hearing, UN DESA's Population Division is organizing the [sixteenth annual coordination meeting on international migration](#) on 15-16 February 2018 with a view to informing the preparations of the Global Compact. The meeting will bring together Member States, the UN system, civil society and the private sector. It will focus on strengthening the evidence base on migration, [measuring the migration-related targets](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promoting collaboration and coordination on migration-related activities.

Another opportunity to get involved is through the United Nations [Join Together](#) campaign, that promotes respect, safety and dignity for refugees and other migrants. It is a growing coalition of international actors committed to change negative narratives on migration and to counter the rise in xenophobia and discrimination.

Staying active in local communities and bringing awareness to migrant issues and the SDGs is key to reach a universal understanding of the concerns that people who migrate face around the world. Want to join together and be part of these efforts? Find six ways to get involved [here](#).

Photo: UN Migration Agency (IOM)

For more information:

[Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration](#)

[Sixteenth Annual Coordination Meeting on International Migration](#)

[Join Together](#)



“Don’t be afraid to speak up” – Interview with UN Youth Envoy

All eyes were on the ECOSOC Youth Forum this January, as the world’s young activists, leaders and innovators met with representatives of governments at UN Headquarters in New York. As the Forum wrapped up, UN DESA Voice talked to the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, on how history’s largest youth generation is

already building a better future.

What has inspired you to take action for Sustainable Development Goals?

“Youth is our present and our future. If you look around, we are facing many challenges, which affect young people in particular. There are 1.2 billion young people today – the largest generation of youth the world has ever seen. Just imagine, more than half of them live in conflict zones – affected by violence, struggling to access food, water and medicine. More than a quarter of all youth still lack basic literacy skills and 71 million young people are unemployed. This is definitely not the present young people deserve and not the future we want. This is what inspires me to take action and advocate for youth.

Young people also played a role in shaping the 2030 Agenda. Through platforms like the MyWorld survey and the meetings of the open working groups and High-Level Political Forum, young people told the leaders what our vision was for the 2030 Agenda. Now it’s our turn to show that we are also capable of taking action and that we need to be recognized as partners, not just beneficiaries.”

What is your advice for youth who want to get involved in the SDGs but do not know where to begin?

“The best advice is to act now and not wait, to believe in yourself and your power to change the world for the better! And do not be afraid to speak up and express your ideas – you are the best asset that the world has to achieve the SDGs.

You can start by looking at examples of initiatives that already exist in your community, or think about what could be improved. In fact, I believe that the best way for youth to get involved in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is to start locally. Every young person and every little action can make a major difference. For instance, you can set up a workshop to teach your peers useful skills, raise awareness and advocate for gender equality, or promote a healthy and sustainable lifestyle at your school and workplace. The possibilities are endless.”

How can youth make their voices and ideas on the Global Goals heard?

“There are many ways to make your voices heard when it comes to advocating for the Sustainable Development Goals, but I would like to focus on three. First, speaking up

and talking to your friends and peers about issues and inequalities that you see around you. Many positive changes can start with raising awareness. Talk to your community via social media, for instance.

Second, engaging with your peers. Young people today are the most connected generation in history. They are uniquely placed to build partnerships across countries and sectors, and mobilize their collective strength to achieve sustainable development and create lasting peace. You can create or join youth groups, organizations, and networks advocating for a particular goal – such as zero hunger, quality education, access to clean water or sanitation, decent work and economic growth.

And third, get your government on board and participate in the decision-making process. Discuss issues that affect youth, demand actions on SDGs and keep an eye on their implementation.

To speak up and make sure your voice is heard is essential, but what is most important is to take action. I truly admire the work that young people are doing worldwide to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, whether taking climate action or building sustainable cities. Every little action is important!”

For more information:

[Website of the UN Youth Envoy](#)

[2018 ECOSOC Youth Forum](#)

[SDG Media Zone at the ECOSOC Youth Forum](#)

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Indigenous peoples demand respect for their land rights

Faced with increasing pressures on their lands, indigenous peoples insist that their rights to their lands, territories and resources are respected. During a recent meeting at UN Headquarters, global experts on indigenous issues emphasized the need to address growing threats to indigenous peoples' lands from natural resource

exploitation, establishment of conservation areas, large-scale infrastructure projects and large-scale agriculture.

Frequently indigenous peoples are falsely portrayed as backwards and in opposition to development and national interests, while the reality is that indigenous peoples are important contributors to their countries' economies, cultures and preservation of biological diversity.

“Indigenous peoples contribute a lot to our world’s diversity. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for indigenous peoples is beneficial not to them alone; it is beneficial to all human beings,” said Mariam Wallet Aboubakrine, Chairperson of the Permanent Forum.

Themed “Sustainable Development in Territories of Indigenous Peoples,” the experts’ meeting charted ways for implementing the SDGs on indigenous lands with their inhabitants’ full participation. The landmark UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted 10 years ago, spells out that indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination and autonomy.

Despite considerable progress to implement the Declaration worldwide, indigenous peoples in many countries continue to face discrimination, exploitation of their resources and disproportionate impacts of social ills, such as poverty and lower life expectancy.

In most countries, indigenous peoples “are still invisible,” according to Joan Carling, an indigenous activist from the Philippines and member of the Permanent Forum. “They are not in national plans of Sustainable Development Goals, but they should not be left behind.”

One pervasive issue is displacement of indigenous peoples by large-scale agriculture, extractive industry or infrastructure development projects. Experts believe that more action is needed to protect indigenous peoples’ land rights to help end poverty and advance many other SDGs.

“People living closest to natural resources are the best resource. Indigenous people have the knowledge about how to manage their resources in sustainable development ways,” said Eirik Larsen, political advisor of the Sámi Parliament of Norway. He cited the experiences of Norway’s Sámi people, who have support from the local government to manage their own natural resources.

Panelists also discussed protecting indigenous peoples’ rights in relation to the threat of climate change, food sovereignty, and several other issues. Experts emphasized the importance of indigenous peoples collecting and generating their own data, which is “a way we make ourselves visible,” according to Ms. Carling.

The Expert Group Meeting is organized annually and provides input to each year’s session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). “Our role is to provide good analytics and strong policy advice for policy makers, and the Permanent Forum is a key to this mechanism,” said Daniela Bas, Director of UN DESA’s Division for Social Policy and Development. This year’s UNPFII will meet on 16 to 27 April.

For more information:

[Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development in Territories of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

[UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#)

1st Global Conference of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax “Taxation and the Sustainable Development Goals”



From 14 to 16 February 2018, senior policymakers, tax administrators, and representatives from academia, the private sector and civil society will gather at UN Headquarters in New York to discuss how better tax policies can help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. This will be the first-ever global conference of the inter-agency Platform for Collaboration on Tax, held under the theme of “Taxation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

Established in April 2016 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and the World Bank, the Platform aims to enhance the tax capacity-building support that these agencies offer to developing countries.

The Platform is working on several publications to help developing countries tackle tax base erosion and profit shifting – tax avoidance strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to tax havens. The publications will also address other international tax issues of particular concern to these countries.

The Platform assists developing countries in implementing nationally-owned medium-term revenue strategies, so that they can reform their tax policies and administrations and ultimately increase the amount of resources mobilized domestically.

The conference will take forward the global dialogue on the role of tax in achieving the SDGs and seek country insights on relevant challenges and opportunities in using tax systems in support of sustainable development.

The participants will discuss five thematic areas: domestic resource mobilization and the state; the role of tax in supporting sustainable economic growth, investment and trade; the social dimensions of tax; tax capacity development and international tax cooperation.

The conference will allow for a broad-based and inclusive discussion among all relevant stakeholders about the role of taxation in achieving the SDGs. The insights and views from the conference will also help inform and shape the future work of the Platform and its members.

For more information:

First Global Conference of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax – Taxation and the Sustainable Development Goals

Energizing the 2030 Agenda – the Global SDG7 Conference



Energy is inextricably interlinked with many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty eradication, food security, clean water and sanitation, health, education, prosperity, jobs creation, and the empowerment of youth and women. Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is fundamental to human development. A shift toward sustainable energy solutions is also essential to the achievement of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Recognizing the importance of energy for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda established SDG 7, the first-ever universal goal on energy, with five targets on access, efficiency, renewables and means of implementation. SDG7 represents a significant milestone, especially since the Millennium Development Goals did not include an energy goal. Energy is – for the first time – recognized as a core part of the global sustainable development agenda of the United Nations system.

At this year's High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development, SDG7 will be one of the goals in the spotlight. To prepare for this review, a global preparatory meeting will be held on 21-23 February 2018 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok. The event is jointly organized by UN DESA and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), and the Royal Government of Thailand.

Review of SDG7 at HLPF 2018

In 2018, the HLPF will take place under the theme “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.” The forum is the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. In 2018, it will undertake the first global review of SDG7, along with reviews of goals 6, 11, 12 and 15, and the annual review of goal 17.

At the Forum, 48 countries are expected to undertake Voluntary National Reviews to assess progress towards achieving the goals. The 2018 HLPF will serve as a first critical milestone to take stock of progress to-date including energy's linkages with other SDGs and to reflect on the way forward.

Global SDG 7 Conference

The aim of the Global SDG7 Conference is to prepare substantive inputs on the review of SDG7 during the HLPF in 2018. It intends to facilitate exchange of lessons, insights and experiences to-date among Member States and all stakeholders and to consider challenges and opportunities for furthering progress towards 2030. More specifically, it will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss:

- Trends and gaps toward the achievement of SDG7;
- Interlinkages between SDG7 and other SDGs;
- Means of implementation, including finance, capacity building and innovation;
- Key areas of opportunities for action by policy makers and all stakeholders on achieving SDG7 and leveraging its interlinkages with other SDGs in support of the 2030 Agenda.

The conference will consist of plenary sessions, alongside break-out interactive segments and include participation of Member States, observers, UN Agencies and representatives of civil society, private sector, and other relevant stakeholders. Side-events will also be organized on 21 February 2018.

For more information: [Global SDG7 Conference](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

11 February	International Day of Women and Girls in Science
14-16 February, New York	First Global Conference of the Platform for Collaboration on Tax – Taxation and the Sustainable Development Goals
20 February	World Day of Social Justice
20-22 February, Rome	International Conference on Working across Sectors to Halt Deforestation and Increase Forest Area
21-23 February, Bangkok	Global SDG 7 Conference

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