

Editor's Desk

SANEM proudly celebrates 10 years of successful and timely publication of *Thinking Aloud* in June 2024. *Thinking Aloud* would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to all the readers, contributors and well-wishers throughout this journey. The theme of the June 2024 issue of *Thinking Aloud* is "Contemporary Development Challenges and Opportunities in Bangladesh". The first page article, "Poverty research in Bangladesh: Issues and concerns" analyses the four fundamental questions regarding the research on poverty in Bangladesh. First, what are the poverty trends in Bangladesh? Do the official figures present a true picture? Second, how do different shocks (economic and noneconomic) affect poverty and vulnerability? Third, what are the structural factors behind poverty? And fourth, what are the important aspects of addressing poverty in a sustainable way? The article concludes highlighting the important aspects for sustainably addressing poverty in Bangladesh. The second, third, and fourth pages of this issue present three more articles. The second article titled "Unlocking Solar and Wind: Driving Bangladesh's Shift to Clean and Green Energy" argues that, in order to effectively utilize renewable energy for sustainable growth and economic development, addressing infrastructural and policy challenges is crucial for Bangladesh. However, the article suggests, this transition requires careful strategic planning and continuous investment. The third article titled, "Challenges and the Opportunities for Women's Participation in the Construction Sector" remarks that the construction sector has the potential to increase female workforce participation, ensuring gender parity and aligning with SDG goals (SDG 1, 5, and 8). Occupations in this sector are predominantly male-centric across all tiers underscoring gender bias and stigma, necessitating considerable attention by the Government and policymakers. The fourth article titled, "Digital Public Infrastructure in Bangladesh: Progress, Challenges, and Future Prospects" examines the DPI scenario in Bangladesh. The article contemplates that the existing challenges such as the digital divide, cybersecurity, sustainability, and the capacity of citizens need to be addressed to ensure the acceleration towards sustainable digitalization. The fourth page showcases the events of May 2024.

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Editor:

Selim Raihan

Associate Editor:

Eshrat Sharmin

Coordinator:

Sk. Ashibur Rahman

Poverty research in Bangladesh: Issues and concerns

Selim Raihan

Research on poverty in Bangladesh requires answers to four fundamental questions: First, what are the poverty trends in Bangladesh? Do the official figures present a true picture? Second, how do different shocks (economic and noneconomic) affect poverty and vulnerability? Third, what are the structural factors behind poverty? And fourth, what are the important aspects of addressing poverty in a sustainable way? According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), in Bangladesh, the headcount poverty rate (as per the cost of basic needs method) declined from as high as 80% in the early 1970s to 18.7% in 2022. In recent years, between 2016 and 2022, the national poverty rate declined from 24.2% to 18.7%. Both the rural and urban areas experienced a drop in poverty rates. While the official statistics paint an optimistic picture of poverty reduction, alternative surveys suggest a more nuanced reality. According to SANEM's two rounds of surveys conducted in 2018 and 2023, which tracked the same 10,000 households nationwide, the decline in the national poverty rate has been slower than reported, while there was also a rise in urban poverty. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which measures various deprivations at the household level in health, education, and living standards, corroborates this trend. Furthermore, the surveys highlight a worrying trend of increasing inequality. The food security situation, a critical component of poverty, has also worsened.

The persistent vulnerability among a large section of the population in Bangladesh remains a pressing concern despite high economic growth, rise in per capita income, export and remittance performances, and microfinance initiatives. Vulnerable households are those who are categorised as nonpoor but may fall into poverty due to any economic or natural shocks. Shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and inflationary pressure have exacerbated these vulnerabilities. SANEM's surveys indicate that COVID-19 led to a sudden spike in poverty rates, reversing some of the progress made in poverty reduction. Climate change poses another significant threat to Bangladesh's development. My recent research suggests that if there is inaction in addressing climate change, a rise in temperature by 2 degrees Celsius by 2040 could increase the headcount poverty rate in Bangladesh by 3.5 percentage points. The ongoing prolonged inflationary pressure added woe to the vulnerabilities. As the vulnerability of households to different shocks is a reality, the coping strategies available to poor and vulnerable households remain limited. Repeated shocks make poor and vulnerable households exhaust their limited options for coping strategies.

In-depth poverty research in Bangladesh requires understanding the structural factors behind poverty. The ownership structure plays a critical role, as unequal distribution of assets can lead to wealth concentration in the hands of a few, exacerbating poverty for the majority. The labour market is another determinant; limited access to well-paying jobs and the prevalence of low-wage work perpetuate a cycle of poverty. Gender disparities further compound poverty, particularly for women who often face barriers to equal rights in property, receiving equal pay, and are sometimes subjected to practices like child marriage, which can limit educational and economic opportunities. Exclusion based on ethnicity, disability, or social stigma can restrict access to resources and services, leading to entrenched poverty. Lastly, prevailing economic, social, and institutional paradigms shape the opportunities and capabilities of

individuals to improve their well-being.

A significant aspect of the labour market in Bangladesh is its informality, which leads to a lack of job security, benefits, and legal protections for workers. Unemployment and underemployment are persistent issues. Among the youth, the NEET (not in education, employment, or training) rates are concerning, pointing to a generation at risk of being left behind. The labour force participation (LFP) among females remains low due to cultural norms and structural barriers. Workers face poor working environments, low wages, and little to no social security. Occupational rigidities, such as difficulty in transitioning between jobs or sectors, further exacerbate the situation. The lack of opportunities for productive and diversified employment means that workers are often stuck in low-value, labour-intensive jobs with little chance for advancement or skill development. This situation can be called the "low pay, low productivity, and low compliance" vicious circle.

The economic, social, and institutional paradigms of Bangladesh shape the pathways to the reduction of poverty. The economic paradigm is related to the pattern of structural transformation of the economy. Despite the notable progress over the past five decades, the lack of economic and export diversification in Bangladesh undermines the prospects of the reduction in poverty and vulnerability in a sustainable manner. The policy regime, related to the pattern of structural transformation, remained narrowly focused towards supporting a few sectors. There is a need for productive economic and export diversification supported by a broad-based policy regime.

The social paradigm refers to the pattern of social development. Over the past five decades, there have been some notable improvements in health and education. Bangladesh's success in health and education came with finding some low-cost solutions to addressing child and maternal mortality, and a rise in school enrolment. However, with the evolving demographic structure of the population and growing demand for high-skilled labour, the current and future outlooks remain bleak. Low public spending on health and education and inefficient education and health sectors are not suitable to reap the benefit of demographic dividends and thus are not in a position to enhance the capabilities of the poor and vulnerable population to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

The institutional paradigm refers to the quality of institutions and the political economy of development. In Bangladesh, weak formal institutions, in the form of weak state capacity, weak regulatory regime, the prevalence of corruption, crony capitalism, and the dominance of informal institutions seriously undermine the scope for enhancing the capabilities of the poor and vulnerable population. For example, the weak state capacity in mobilising tax revenue limits the state's capacity to spend high on health, education, and social protection, and at the same time, the high reliance on indirect taxes leads to a regressive tax system which affects poor people.

In conclusion, we can highlight three important aspects for sustainably addressing poverty in Bangladesh. First, there should be a meaningful solution to the ownership issue. The economic, social, and institutional paradigms for poverty alleviation in Bangladesh have to ensure enhancing both material ownership and the feeling of ownership among poor and vulnerable people. Second, the economic and social capabilities of the poor and vulnerable households have to be enhanced through economic diversification, labour market reform, and investment in health and education. Third, the state has to effectively redistribute resources from rich to poor through taxes and social expenditures.

Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics, University of Dhaka and Executive Director, SANEM. Email: selim.raihan@gmail.com

Unlocking Solar and Wind: Driving Bangladesh's Shift to Clean and Green Energy

Israt Hossain and Ekramul Hasan

In alignment with the growing importance of renewable energy in the global power and energy sector, the Government of Bangladesh has produced numerous government documents outlining different ambitions for the renewable energy sector. There is the 40,000 MW renewable energy capacity target by 2041, as stated in the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan (MCPPI), for which existing renewable capacity has to grow at the overarching rate of 24.78 percent annually. Given that Bangladesh has fully utilized its hydropower capacity and other renewable sources like biomass and biogas lack the potential to meet ambitious energy targets, the nation must prioritize the development of its solar and wind energy sectors. Focusing on even smaller target of 11 percent of total capacity from solar and wind according to the Integrated Energy and Power Master Plan (IEPMP-2023), the country still needs to thrive at 13.65 percent annually.

Bangladesh's solar energy sector advanced significantly with the 2018 inauguration of the 20 MW Teknaf Solar Power Plant in Cox's Bazar, the country's first utility-scale solar project. The Teesta Solar Park, with its 200 MW capacity, is the largest and significantly boosts the national grid. Other key projects include the Mymensingh Solar Park and the Energon solar plant in Bagherhat, integral to diversifying the national energy mix. Additionally, the 60 MW wind power plant at Khurushkul in Cox's Bazar marks Bangladesh's first major commercial wind energy initiative, currently the only operational wind facility in the nation.

These power plants come with new infrastructures benefitting all the people in the locality and creating employment. Despite these successes, the journey is not without its challenges. Land acquisition is a significant hurdle due to Bangladesh's high population density and agricultural priorities. Although the capacity of Teknaf Solar Park seems modest (20 MW), the plant's 116-acre footprint reflects extensive land use. However, over time, advancements in photovoltaic (PV) technology have allowed for more efficient land use. For instance, the Beximco Group's 200 MW Teesta solar power plant, the largest in the country, was constructed on 600 acres of land, demonstrating the reduced land requirement per MW. Orion Group's 100 MW Energon solar park also demonstrate technological advancements, needing only 2.8 acres per MW due to larger photovoltaic (PV) panels and more efficient layouts.

In this case, a significant additional advantage of wind power, as demonstrated by the Khurushkul project, is its efficient use of land. Unlike solar farms that require extensive land coverage, each wind turbine at this facility is surrounded by a boundary of only 25 meters, having a gap of 0.5 km from another turbine. This configuration allows the land between turbines to be used for other activities, such as salt cultivation, showcasing the multi-functional utility of wind farm sites.

Additionally, the Khurushkul project is expected to make a substantial environmental and social impact. The Khurushkul project was invested in by Wuling Power Corp., a subsidiary of China's State Power Investment Corp. (SPIC), and constructed by Power-China Chengdu Engineering Corp. They trained the

first batch of practical talents in the field of wind power for Bangladesh and providing more than 1,500 local jobs. According to reports from the State Council of Information Office China, the project will significantly reduce coal consumption by 44,600 tons and decrease carbon dioxide emissions by 109,200 tons annually. Moreover, it will fulfill the electricity needs of approximately 100,000 households, illustrating the broad-reaching benefits of investing in wind energy infrastructure.

Despite of land scarcity, we observe plenty of similar underutilized or poorly compensated lands during our site visit, these could be viable for future solar projects. There are thousands of acres of underutilized lands in Khulna division alone. These lands were intentionally salinized seeing the high export potential of shrimp industry in 1990s, which later diminished drastically in later years. Moreover, there are significant number of "char" lands (island) with high degree of solar irradiation in Bangladesh.

Similarly, wind energy in Bangladesh has been identified as a significant untapped renewable resource, according to a collaborative study conducted by the USAID and the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). Their preliminary technical analysis highlighted over 20,000 square kilometers of land demonstrating a gross wind potential exceeding 30,000 megawatts (MW). However, this figure represents a theoretical maximum as it does not account for land already in use, environmental sensitivities, or other unsuitability factors. Despite these considerations, the data suggests a robust potential for wind energy development that could significantly bolster Bangladesh's energy sector.

However, establishing plants is not just about land; the presence and proximity of the grid are crucial. The intermittency of solar and wind power requires robust solutions for energy storage and grid upgradation to ensure a stable and reliable supply. The 200 MW Teesta plant required a 35 km transmission line to connect to the national grid, highlighting the infrastructural challenges. Potential sites for new solar and wind initiatives are thereby hindered largely by their distances from the national grid. Furthermore, the national grid hardly has the adequate capacity to absorb increased supplies from larger solar and wind installations. For instance, if the Teknaf plant's capacity were increased to 50 MW, the 33 KV grid infrastructure would struggle to distribute this power effectively. With this limitation, the country needs major investment in grid expansion and upgradation.

Despite of having these challenges, Bangladesh can move towards a more sustainable and secure energy future by capitalizing on the inherent advantages of renewable energy, such as its low environmental impact and the capacity for local job creation. Expanding renewable energy also helps meet international climate commitments by reducing fossil fuel dependence and cutting emissions. However, this transition requires careful strategic planning and continuous investment. To effectively utilize renewable energy for sustainable growth and economic development, addressing infrastructural and policy challenges is crucial for Bangladesh.

*Israt Hossain, Senior Research Associate, SANEM.
Email: hossain.israt698@gmail.com*

*Ekramul Hasan, Research Associate, SANEM.
Email: ekram.eco.du@gmail.com*

Challenges and the Opportunities for Women's Participation in the Construction Sector

Dipa Das and Eshrat Sharmin

Bangladesh's economy has witnessed remarkable growth, solidifying it as one of the fastest-growing economies worldwide. According to Bangladesh Economic Review 2023, the construction sector significantly contributes to this growth, accounting for approximately 6.41% of the GDP growth rate in 2023. The sector's share within the broad industry in GDP at constant prices rose to 9.55% in FY 2022-23, up from 8.19% in FY 2015-16. The construction sector's growth rate increased to 8.71% in FY 2021-22, compared to 8.08% in FY 2020-21.

As the construction industry expands, it demands more labour. According to the LFS 2022 report, construction is the fifth-largest industry in terms of employment in Bangladesh, with about 5.44% of the employed population working in this sector. A study conducted by BIDS projects that the construction industry in Bangladesh is expected to require approximately 9 million workers by 2030. But among the top five employment-generating industries, the construction sector ranks second to last in terms of female employment. Only 0.4% of women are employed in this sector, compared to 8.18% of men. With female labour force participation in Bangladesh increasing from 36.3% in 2016/17 to 42.7% in 2022, the expanding construction sector presents a significant opportunity to accommodate more female workers.

Additionally, with the country's LDC graduation and the anticipated decline in RMG exports, exploring sectors like construction is crucial for accommodating the expected structural shift in labour dynamics. Also, the rise of automation and Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technology highlights the need to focus on technology and skill-based occupations for women.

According to the Labour Force Survey 2016-17, females in the construction sector are primarily concentrated in lower-tier jobs: 31.23% as civil engineering labourers, 22.15% as building construction workers, and 18.27% as bricklayers. Also, studies found that many women work in senior management and administrative roles, accounting for approximately 7.1% and 4.3% of total female employment in the sector, respectively. Across all occupations, most female workers are either unskilled (53%) or semi-skilled (17%). According to the employers, female workers are considered less productive than males according to CISC Employers survey 2018 and 2020 findings.

The construction sector is highly informal, 78.42% of female workers are employed under verbal agreements. Only 0.3% of female employees have access to toilets and sanitation facilities, and 1.88% have maternity leave benefits. This sector is inherently hazardous due to the nature of its work and only 1% of female workers have access to safety gear. Additionally, just 0.78% receive transportation and food subsidies, and 0.66% benefit from daycare facilities.

Despite policies to boost women's participation in the labour force, there are no gender-specific policies in construction. The Public Procurement Rule, 2008, and Occupational Health and Safety Policy, 2013 ensure workplace safety but lack gender provisions. The Bangladesh Labour Law addresses critical women's issues like hygiene, maternity leave, medical facilities, and working hours, but enforcement is challenging in informal sectors like construction.

Women are largely confined to unskilled jobs like brick breaking and excavation due to a substantial skill gap and lack of access to training programs. The sector's high informality, characterized by irregular recruitment, work hours, and payment methods, limits job stability. Additionally, mobility and transportation issues, coupled with inadequate on-site infrastructure and security concerns, deter women from long-term roles. The work environment is often abusive, with frequent conduct violations, resistance to female leadership, and harassment. Unsafe conditions and inadequate accommodations, such as the lack of separate bathrooms and resting areas, further exacerbate these difficulties. Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and physical assault, is significant with limited avenues for complaint. Wage exploitation is prevalent, with female workers often paid less than their male counterparts for similar work. Societal norms and gender bias further discourage female participation, with industry stakeholders perceiving women as less productive and costlier due to additional safety and security needs. Barriers related to marriage, pregnancy, and care work, combined with a lack of role models and representation in workers' unions, further limit women's opportunities and perpetuate their marginalization in the construction sector.

To increase female participation and to create a more inclusive environment in the construction industry several essential actions should be undertaken to overcome the challenges. Firstly, establishing a comprehensive workforce database, gradually formalizing the sector through structured recruitment, fair wages, standard work hours, proper implementation of well-defined health, safety, and compensation policies, and an institutional body addressing workplace abuse and harassment are crucial. Secondly, promoting female participation through skill-training incentives and create a gender-responsive ecosystem with standard wages, safety measures, maternity benefits, and flexible work hours are also extremely important. Ensuring that training programs include 30% female participation as mandated by the government and declaring minimum wages for entry-level jobs should be considered. Thirdly, streamlining the labour hiring processes for contractors and subcontractors, maintaining a worker database with National ID numbers to identify wage gaps, and adding specific clauses to labour laws addressing construction sector related concerns are vital. The Ministry of Women and Children should play a significant role in this regard, with private associations like BACI and labour organizations advocating for workers' needs. Fourthly, state-owned insurance companies should offer injury packages.

The construction sector has the potential to increase female workforce participation, ensuring gender parity and aligning with SDG goals (SDG 1, 5, and 8). Occupations in this sector are predominantly male-centric across all tiers underscoring gender bias and stigma, necessitating considerable attention by the Government and policymakers. Implementing the above recommendations can help to make the construction sector a leading example of gender parity and inclusivity, driving sustainable development and economic progress in Bangladesh.

*Dipa Das, Research Associate, SANEM.
Email: dipadas.sandwip@gmail.com*

*Eshrat Sharmin, Senior Research Associate, SANEM.
Email: sharminishrat4@gmail.com*

Digital Public Infrastructure in Bangladesh: Progress, Challenges, and Future Prospects

Takrem Ferdous Surid and Eshrat Sharmin

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) refers to the technological and institutional framework that supports the delivery of e-government services to citizens, businesses, and other stakeholders. The DPI scenario in Bangladesh has been improving rapidly over the past decade with the vision to promote Bangladesh as a knowledge-based economy and bridge the digital divide. However, according to the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI), the country has ranked 111th among the countries all over the world in 2022. This index provides an overview of how well a country is leveraging digital technologies to deliver public services and represents the composition of three important indicators in e-governance, i) provision of online services ii) telecommunication connectivity iii) human capacity. The position of Bangladesh indicated that there is a large gap to work on online services, enhancing connectivity and improving human capacity. The "Digital Bangladesh" campaign that was launched in 2009, has been the cornerstone of the transformation and now aiming towards "Smart Bangladesh" by 2041 by ensuring the use of digital technologies, financial inclusion, and overall socioeconomic development.

According to the e-Government Master Plan for Digital Bangladesh, there are 366 digital services. All these services have significantly enhanced public service delivery to the citizens. Aspire to Innovate (a2i) mentioned the substantial economic impact, as the DPIs saved \$21.8 billion, 19.1 billion working days and 12.9 billion visits to government offices. The establishment of the network of Digital Centres is one of the foundational elements of DPIs in Bangladesh. As per a2i, more than 8,858 centres have been established across the country. The centres provide over 300 public and private services to citizens including birth registration, land records, utility payment and telemedicine, especially in the rural areas. Bangladesh National Portal is another centralized digital gateway that links to more than 52,200 offices of the government and numerous services for citizens. The portal is designed to facilitate the flow of information and the delivery of services from the Union Council to the Ministry level. Additionally, National Identity (NID) System and Porichoy gateway are playing a significant role. NID system enables citizens to validate their identity for service delivery, such as financial transactions, social safety net programs, and healthcare services. The gateway server known as Porichoy, was launched in 2019 which has made the NID verification easier and secure. The National Service Access Helpline (333) is a voice-enabled service designed for citizens who may not have easy access to internet. It offers several services, including information requests, grievance reporting, and telehealth services. For ensuring the access to financial services, the government launched the payment gateway named ekPay, which enables citizens to make convenient digital payments for utility services. Other than these, government initiated Surokkha app, which was a good example of digital

solutions for public health crises. The platform facilitates vaccine registration, appointment scheduling, and certificate issuance. As per a2i, Surokkha had supported the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination program with over 131 million registrations.

The DPI scenario of Bangladesh faces some challenges including digital divide. The digital divide between urban and rural areas is there, as many citizens still lack access to the internet and digital literacy. This disparity reduces their capacity to avail the benefits of DPI. The funding for infrastructural development and information sharing is also a challenge towards digitalization. Additionally, ensuring the security of digital services and protecting citizens' data has become a critical challenge. The need for implementing strong cybersecurity systems and raising awareness at the individual level is crucial for preserving the general digital environment. Furthermore, ensuring the sustainability of the digital initiatives is another challenge. Long-term planning, investment and policy support are necessary to manage and utilize the digital system efficiently.

For a proper digitalized system, bridging the digital divide should be the top priority. Ensuring broadband internet availability in areas lacking sufficient access, especially rural regions, is essential. Measures need to be taken to enhance the knowledge of the citizens regarding the technological aspect more often referred to as digital literacy. The availability and affordability of the internet will guarantee that all citizens can access DPI. Opportunities in Bangladesh also include an aspiration to accommodate new technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and IoT to augment service provision and innovation. It also opens up new opportunities for rationalization of the work and better delivery of services by the authorities. Promoting public-private partnerships is needed for the sustainable development of DPI. Collaboration with private sector companies can bring the technical expertise, innovation, and investment needed to expand and improve digital services. On the other side, the policies should focus on inclusivity, accessibility and affordability of digital services. Moreover, establishing robust monitoring mechanisms to assess the impact of DPIs will be important for continuous improvement.

The existing challenges such as the digital divide, cybersecurity, sustainability, and the capacity of citizens need to be addressed to ensure the acceleration towards sustainable digitalization. Additionally, emphasizing on innovation and emerging technologies will be crucial for overcoming these difficulties. Finally, the successful implementation of the current DPI initiative as well as the inauguration of new DPIs may contribute to socioeconomic development and achieve the vision of "Smart Bangladesh" by 2041. The long-term development for all the citizens is possible if the county will continue investing in digital infrastructure and implementing inclusive policies.

*Takrem Ferdous Surid, Research Associate, SANEM.
Email: suridferdous20@gmail.com*

*Eshrat Sharmin, Senior Research Associate, SANEM.
Email: sharminishrat4@gmail.com*

SANEM and GDI hosted research dissemination event at Manchester University



SANEM and the Global Development Institute (GDI) of The University of Manchester hosted a research dissemination event titled "The COVID-19 Pandemic, Post-pandemic Challenges and Poverty Dynamics in Bangladesh: Evidence from a Longitudinal Household Survey" on May 28, 2024, from 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM (GMT+1) at the Arthur Lewis Building, The University of Manchester. Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM, presented the survey findings at the event. Professor David Fielding, Professor of Development Economics, GDI, University of Manchester, presented key findings from the technical papers. Professor Sohela Nazneen, Research Fellow, IDS, University of Sussex shared her remarks. The session was chaired by Professor David Hulme, Professor of Development Economics, GDI, University of Manchester. Mr Mahtab Uddin, Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Economist of SANEM also participated in the discussion.

Dr Selim Raihan presented at OPM workshop

Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM, delivered an insightful presentation titled "Poverty Research in Bangladesh: Issues and Concerns" at the DEEP Engagement Workshop organized by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) on May 8, 2024, at the Lakeshore Grand Hotel in Dhaka. The workshop aimed to introduce the DEEP initiative, frame future research areas, and establish impactful partnerships through the DEEP Challenge Fund. Dr Selim Raihan's presentation focused on the dynamics of poverty in Bangladesh, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting key issues and challenges in poverty research and post-pandemic recovery. Distinguished guests, including Mr M. A. Mannan, MP, Former Minister of Planning, and Dr Mashur Rahman, Economic Affairs Advisor to the Prime Minister, shared their reflections on the discussions, emphasizing the importance of research in shaping effective poverty alleviation policies. Ms Afia Mubasshira Tiasha, Senior Research Associate of SANEM and Mr Ekramul Hasan, Research Associate of SANEM also attended the event.

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha presented at a policy discussion event



SANEM actively participated in the event "Study Sharing & Policy Discussion on Assessing Public Expenditure in NPAN-2, 8th Five-Year Plan," co-organized by Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome and The Daily Star with CARE Bangladesh's support. At the event, Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and Research Director, SANEM presented a study titled "Assessment of Government Investment in Nutrition-related Interventions of Selected Ministries." SANEM's Senior Research Associate, Ms Afia Mubasshira Tiasha and Research Associate, Ms Shafa Tasneem and Research Assistant, Mr Rafiul Ahmed also participated in the event.

SANEM's role in enhancing economic policy analysis at CGE Modeling Training in New Delhi



SANEM significantly contributed to the recently concluded 'International Capacity Building Program on Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Modeling for Economic Policy Analysis,' held from April 29 to May 3, 2024, at ICAR-IARI, New Delhi. Organized by IFPRI and the CGIAR Initiative on Foresight, in partnership with SANEM, ICAR-IARI, and ICAR-NIAP, the program equipped researchers and policy analysts from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka with practical CGE modeling skills. Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics, University of Dhaka and Executive Director, SANEM, served as a resource person, guiding participants through the complexities of IFPRI's Standard CGE model to analyze policy impacts on macroeconomic and microeconomic scales. SANEM's Research Associates, Mr Md. Abdul Aahad and Ms Khandakar Iffah, also attended the training, emphasizing the organization's commitment to advancing economic modeling capabilities in South Asia.

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Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha was a speaker at MJF seminar

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, was a designated speaker at the National Seminar titled "Recognition of Unpaid Care Work: A Step Towards Financial and Social Empowerment of Women," organized by Manusher Jonno Foundation on May 26, 2024, at the BRAC Inn, Mohakhali. The seminar, opened by Ms Shaheen Anam, Executive Director of MJF, featured key insights from Ms Banasree Mitra Neogi, Director of Programs at MJF, and other distinguished speakers including Dr Binayak Sen, Director General of BIDS, and Dr Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director of CPD. Guest speakers included Mr Mashud Alam, Director of Demography & Health at BBS, and Ms Gitanjali Singh, UN Women Representative to Bangladesh. Ms Waseqa Ayesha Khan, Honorable State Minister of Finance, provided the closing remarks.

Dr Selim Raihan presented at GDI seminar

Dr Selim Raihan, Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM, presented key findings from his recently published book, co-edited with François Bourguignon, Emeritus Professor of Economics, the Paris School of Economics and EHESS, Paris, and Umar Salam, Senior Economist, Oxford Policy Management, and Scientific Committee Member of the Economic Development and Institutions (EDI) Programme, "Is the Bangladesh Paradox Sustainable?" at the 29th lecture of the GDI Seminars in Development Economics (SIDE) series. The event took place on May 28, 2024, from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM at Arthur Lewis Building, University of Manchester, and was also accessible online via Zoom. Mr Mahtab Uddin, Assistant Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Economist of SANEM was also present at the event. The seminar was chaired by Professor David Fielding, Professor of Development Economics, GDI, University of Manchester.

Ms Israt Hossain attended training on renewable energy integration

Ms Israt Hossain, Senior Research Associate at SANEM, participated in the "Grids and System Integration of Renewables" training workshop hosted by Agora Energiewende from May 21-23, 2024, in Bangkok, Thailand. This three-day program aimed to enhance participants' understanding of integrating renewable energy into power grids, focusing on the challenges and strategies for reliable and affordable energy transitions. The knowledge and skills acquired from this training will empower SANEM to actively shape policy debates and contribute to the region's energy transition initiatives.