

Indigenous and Dalit Peoples of Bangladesh: *Challenges and Way Forward for Inclusion in Rights and Services*

Executive Summary

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Indigenous and Dalit Peoples of Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward for Inclusion in Rights and Services

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees some concrete directives to establish social and economic justice in every sphere of society. The directives provide that all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law (Article 27); state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens (Article 19.1); state shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities (Article 19.2); state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 28.1). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United States provides that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Article 1). The Agenda 2030 i.e. the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) envisages to 'Leave No One Behind'. The member states of the United Nations (UN) are committed to reaching first those who are farthest behind.

The left behind groups in Bangladesh include women, children, youth, and older persons of poor families, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, dalits, refugees, religious minorities, tea garden workers, sex workers, transgender persons and so on. A few of the above-mentioned groups experience severe forms of marginalisation and vulnerability due to their identities as minorities, determined by ethnicity and traditional caste system. Literature indicates that there are researches on different forms of social exclusion that the indigenous and dalit peoples are experiencing in Bangladesh for generations due to their identities. Moreover, there are legal and institutional limitations in removing the social exclusions and structural deprivation. The social exclusion, which is further intensified through institutional discrimination, corruption and deprivation of rights and entitlements reproduces poverty and marginalisation of these communities.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2011, the number of indigenous population is 15,86,141. However, the number is more than 3 million according to non-government sources. The number of dalit communities, as well as their total population, are not yet officially calculated. The government documents have dissimilarities in counting their communities and population. For example, the Seventh Five Year Plan states that there are over 30 different dalit groups in Bangladesh, representing 4.5-5.5 million of country's population. However, the Department of Social Services (DSS) states that there are about 14,90,766 dalit people living in Bangladesh.

The United Nations states, "Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples". In Bangladesh, the indigenous peoples recognised in laws are Oraon, Koch, Kol, Khumi, Khasi, Khyang, Garo, Chak, Chakma, Dalu, Tanchangya, Tripura, Pankhua, Paharia, Bawm, Barman, Mro, Munda, Monipuri, Marma, Rakhine, Lusai, Santal, and Hajong.

The Seventh Five-Year Plan 2016-2020 of the Government of Bangladesh states that dalit status is historically associated with occupations regarded as ritually impure. These groups of people, as imposed on them the stigma of untouchability, have limited social, economic and employment opportunities to interact with the mainstream. The Plan recognises that the dalit communities are some of the most economically marginalised and socially excluded groups of Bangladesh. Some examples of dalits include Bansphor, Dom, Hadi/Hela, Domer, Lalbegi/Vulmiki, Kolu, Pasi, Rishi/Muchi/Chamar, Harijon/Methor, Mala, Madiga, Sabari, Chakli, Jalodas, Bede, Sutradhar, Karmakar, Kulal/Kuar/Kumor, Jugi, Napit, Sharnakar, Goala, Dhopa, Bainna Bede, Mali, Masuwara, Tanti, Mushaheries, Dholak and so on.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has commissioned this research in view of some rationales. Firstly, in line with SDGs' thrust of 'Leaving No One Behind', it has come to an understanding that there is an importance of flagging out who are vulnerable to remaining left behind. TIB has assumed that there are some potential risks of leaving behind the marginalised communities of Bangladesh if the risks are not exposed and discussed widely. Moreover, TIB has realised that the marginalised communities especially the indigenous and dalit peoples are more vulnerable to remaining left behind due to exclusion and corruption. Secondly, the literature indicates that there are researches on different forms of social exclusion that the indigenous and dalit peoples are experiencing in Bangladesh for generations. However, literature also suggests that there is a dearth of research-based knowledge on the extent and nature of discrimination and corruption experienced by them due to their identities. Thirdly, TIB's priority areas include different service sectors, in which the people especially the marginalised groups experience corruption in attaining services – through this study TIB endeavours to shed light on the discriminatory practices, violation of rights and corruption in service sectors focusing on the experiences of indigenous and dalit peoples. TIB also intends to propose practicable policy suggestions for attaining inclusive public service provisions and fulfilment of the rights of the indigenous peoples and dalit communities of Bangladesh.

1.3 Objective and research questions

The objective of this study is to examine how much the basic public service provisions are inclusive for the marginalised people especially the indigenous and dalit peoples of Bangladesh. The following research questions have guided the research to meet the research objective:

- How much the relevant laws, policies and practices of basic public service delivery institutions are inclusive for indigenous and dalit peoples of Bangladesh?
- What are the challenges of fulfilling rights and ensuring inclusive service delivery for the indigenous and dalit peoples of Bangladesh?

1.4 Scope of the study

This study includes two major marginalised groups—indigenous and dalit peoples considering their experiences of deprivation and exclusion in society, economy as well as political and cultural spheres. This is to mention that this study has covered only the indigenous peoples living in the plain land districts; not the indigenous peoples living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs). It has been realized that there the contextual dissimilarities between the indigenous peoples living in the plane lands and CHTs demand a separate study for the indigenous peoples living in the CHTs. For dalits, the study has considered the communities experiencing exclusions due to their caste-based lower identities. Furthermore, this study inquires into major laws, policies, and practices of five basic service sectors—education, health, land, social safety nets, and Local Government Institutions (LGIs), considering their contribution in building human capabilities and social securities in general.

2. Methodology

The study has followed qualitative methods of data collection. The methods include literature review, in-depth interview, life story, focus group discussion (FGD), key informant interview (KII), and observations. The study has covered 28 upazilas (sub-districts) – 14 upazilas for conducting a field study on the experiences of indigenous peoples and rest 14 upazilas for dalits. At first, the districts where the indigenous and dalit peoples are concentrated (indigenous peoples are mostly concentrated in 33 districts whereas the dalits in every district) were listed in the order of geographic locations. Then, 14 districts for each of the groups had been selected. After that, one upazila was selected from each of the selected districts. After selecting the upazilas i.e. the study

locations, the study team selected the types of indigenous peoples and dalit communities in consultation with local stakeholders such as upazila social service office, journalist, civil society members, and so on. Among the indigenous peoples, data were collected from Pahan, Santal, Oraon, Mahato, Malpahari, Garo, Barman, Hajong, Koch, Munda, Rajbongshi, Rakhine, Khasia, Monipuri, and Tripura. And the dalit groups covered under the study include Banshmali, Rabidas, Harijan, Jele, Patni, Kumar, Sing, Banshfor, Pashchima, Bagdi, Karmakar, Rishi, Nunia, Jalodas and Sheel. The study was conducted during February 2018 - February 2019.

Methods

Sources of data

Literature review	- Relevant laws, policies, articles, research reports, books, website of concerned authorities
In-depth interview, focus group discussion (FGD), and observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community leaders and public service recipients from indigenous and dalit peoples including women, older persons, children, and persons with disabilities - Mainstream communities
Key informant interviews (KII) and observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local level: Upazila Education Officers (UEOs), Upazila Health Officers (UHOs), Assistant Commissioner (Land), Upazila Social Service Officers (USSOs), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), Upazila Fisheries Officers (UFOs), Forest Officers, Upazila Chairmen/Councillors, Union Parishad Chairmen/Members, Municipality Mayor/Councillors, school teachers, journalists, civil society members - National level: Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), Ministry of Land (MoL), Local Government Division (LGD), Department of Social Services (DSS), Rural Electrification Board (REB), indigenous and dalit leaders, experts

The data analysis has maintained an analytical framework. The analysis covers four major principles of inclusive public service provisions—affirmative actions, inclusive laws and policies, non-discrimination in service delivery and fulfilment of rights, and integrity practices.

3. Research findings

3.1 Affirmative actions for the indigenous and dalit peoples

The Government of Bangladesh has taken a number of affirmative actions for the socioeconomic development of the indigenous and dalit peoples. A few of them are mentioned below:

PM Office fund for implementing a programme for plain land indigenous peoples: In 2017-2018, 30 crore Taka was allocated for this programme. The programme reached out to the indigenous peoples living in 280 upazilas in the plain lands with some activities such as income generating training and financial support, stipend for higher studies, and financial support and distribution of materials to schools, cooperatives and religious institutions of the indigenous peoples.

Special programme for dalits and harijans by the DSS: In 2017-2018, the Government of Bangladesh allocated 27 crore Taka for this programme. Main components of this programme are stipends for education, old age allowance (for those who crossed 50 years), and training and financial

assistance to youths. More 48.557 crore Taka has been allocated for a different programme for the period of 2017-2020.

Dalit Manual: The Dalit Manual 2013 has been developed which has identified the goal, objectives and activities for the development of dalit communities.

Inclusion in strategies and plans: The National Social Security Strategy 2015 and in the Seventh Five Year Plan 2016-2020 recognised the indigenous and dalit peoples as excluded groups and identified some areas of work.

Primers in indigenous languages: The National Education Policy 2010 included the special needs of the indigenous students and chalked out some possible actions. According to the Policy, the DPE printed scripts for the pre-school students in the languages of five indigenous communities, which include Chakma, Marma, Mandi (for Garo), Sadri (for Santal and Oraon), and Kakborok (for Tripura).

Special health programme for the indigenous peoples: The National Health Policy 2011 provides some possible actions for covering the indigenous peoples living in hard-to-reach areas. According to the Policy, a framework and a programme have been developed for tribal people's health services. Initiated in 2017, the programme has been going on in 69 upazilas under 15 districts.

Quota system in government jobs: The indigenous candidates are entitled to 5% quota in accessing second and third class jobs in government systems. The Bangladesh Civil Service Rules 2014 also provides that the indigenous candidates are entitled to get extended age bar (32 years) for application in some cadre services such as general education, technical education and health cadres. Moreover, the Model Recruitment Rules 2017 provides that cleaners can be recruited directly, where the harijans will get 80% quota facilities.

Elimination of Discrimination Act drafted: In the draft act, discrimination has been treated as a punishable offence.

3.2 Limitations and challenges in laws and policies

Laws and policies Limitations and challenges

The Constitution of Bangladesh	The Constitution does not provide the recognition of the separate ethnic identities and languages of indigenous and dalit peoples.
International Conventions	Bangladesh was in abstention during adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). However, in spite of its position Bangladesh is bound to implement the Declaration as it was adopted through a voting where majority of the member states were in favour. Nonetheless, this position has impacted critically on the government's efforts to fulfil the rights of the indigenous peoples as stated in the international conventions.
The Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institutions Act 2010	This Act provides that the indigenous peoples will be termed as small ethnic groups, which is contradictory with the definition provided by the United Nations (Article 2.2). The Act provides a list of 27 ethnic groups; however, the forums of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh argue that the number of indigenous peoples living in Bangladesh is more than 50. This has made restrictions to attain quota facilities by the non-recognised indigenous peoples.
The Dalit Manual 2013	The Manual provides distinctive identities of dalits and harijans, though the definitions of these terms as provided in the Manual seem alike. The way the Manual has defined them appears that both types of people are involved in cleaning; however, the dalits are involved in many other professions in addition to cleaning.

The National Education Policy 2010	The Policy does not mention the excluded and deprived groups especially the dalits. Moreover, the Policy does not mention any strategies for reaching out to the dalit children living in poorer conditions and hard-to-reach areas.
The National Health Policy 2011	The Policy does not mention any measures for making healthcare services inclusive for the dalit communities.
The Seventh Five Year Plan 2016-2020	The Plan does not provide any specific directions for the development and ensuring land rights of the indigenous peoples living in the plain lands.
The National Social Security Strategy 2015	The Strategy does not mention any programme developed for the indigenous peoples living in the plain lands. Moreover, the Strategy mentions only the needs for housing of city cleaners; not for other landless dalit families.
The National Land Use Policy 2001	The Policy does not recognise the customary land ownership and use systems followed by the indigenous peoples. It does not also address the way out to ensuring rights of the indigenous and dalit peoples living on the khasland. Moreover, the Policy does not mention about how the traditional living of the indigenous peoples in forests will be preserved and taken care of.
The National Biodiversity Act 2017	The Act provides that the Government reserves the right to declare any place or area as symbol of heritage and rich biodiversity and acquire the place or area for conservation of biodiversity and heritage. It further provides that if the efforts of reservation damage any person or institution, government will compensate the loss and rehabilitate the people in case of eviction. Through this Act, a potential risk may arise in protecting the right of the indigenous peoples living traditionally in forest areas and having huge dependency on forest resources.
The National Public Wetland (Jalmohal) Management Policy 2009	The Policy does not mention about the traditional fisher communities such as Jalodas, Malo, Koibarto and so on who belong to dalit fisher communities. A gazette as of 15 March 2012 provides some amendments, one of which provides that if any association of real fishers is not found for leasing, association of some other groups will be entitled for. The amendment also erases the word 'real' from the term 'real fishers'. Through this amendment, a risk has appeared to deprive the real traditional fishers belonging to indigenous and dalit peoples.
The Bangladesh Civil Service Rules 2014	The 5% quota system for the ethnic minorities in accessing first and second class government job has been abolished through a circular in 2018 as a result of student movements for quota reforms. However, the students did not claim the abolition but reform, which was not taken into account. Moreover, the Rules does not provide any quota options for dalits in spite of their severe marginalization, deprivation and exclusion in society.
The Model Recruitment Rules 2017	The Rules provides that if 80% harijans are not available, they can be replaced by general candidates. This has created a scope to exclude harijans and recruit more than 20% from general candidates by means of corruption.
The National Women Development Policy 2011	The Women Development Policy 2011 includes the importance of taking special steps for the development of indigenous and disadvantaged women. However, the Policy does not mention whether the disadvantaged women also include those who are belonging to the dalit communities.

3.3 Gaps in fulfilment of rights of the indigenous and dalit peoples

Obstruction in access to education: In some cases, indigenous and dalit students were denied to get admission in government primary schools. Field data also show that indigenous and dalit students

were not taught their own religious studies. Instead, they were taught from mainstream religious studies, though they belong other religions, especially Christianity and Hinduism. They were compelled to sit for classes and examinations. It is also notable that indigenous and non-Bengali dalit students are not taught in their mother tongues. They are taught through the medium of mainstream's language Bengali. For this reason, they face difficulty to understand what their teachers saying and face difficulty to understand exam papers. To help their kids accommodate with the mainstream language taught in schools the parents practice Bengali at their home. This has created a risk for surviving of their mother languages.

There are examples of parents those were not included in the school management committee (SMC). For example, one elected SMC president belonging to indigenous community was removed from his position by the mainstream leaders and with the help of their MP, because of his identity. A dalit women SMC member informed that she is always being avoided from SMC's decision-making process.

Denial of reaching out to indigenous and dalit peoples with healthcare services: There are examples of indigenous and dalit pregnant mothers who told that they are not provided with basic immunisation vaccines and healthcare support during pregnancy. Field data suggest that in many cases immunisation camps are not set up in the localities of indigenous and dalit peoples. This is notable that in Chattagram district a many children died of polio as they were not provided with the basic immunisation vaccines.

Leaving out from social safety net coverage: A large portion of poor indigenous and dalits eligible for different social safety net schemes are found to be left out of coverage. Many old aged indigenous and dalit persons including widowed complained that they went to their respective LGI representatives several times, but failed to get enlisted for any scheme.

Violation of right to vote and take part in the election: It is a matter of great concern that some indigenous and dalit communities are compelled to keep themselves restrained from voting in any election especially the local government elections. They have been taking this decision for many years as they received threats from different candidates from mainstream communities and their supporters. A dalit person expressed, "During election different groups threaten us. That's why we have not cast our vote in any election for about 20 years." An indigenous person in another study location also expressed, "I wanted to run as a candidate for the union parishad election. They killed my cattle, destroyed my crops and threatened me. Later I did not run for the election."

Not keeping under particular authority with due emphasis: The rights and interests of the indigenous peoples of plain lands and dalits are not taken under any special ministry or authority with due emphasis. For this reason, their demands get neglected in many cases.

Deprivation of the right to land: The right of the dalits and indigenous peoples to live on their land where they have been living for more than centuries is being violated enormously. Moreover, there are examples of making fake documents of land ownership by the local mainstream elites and eviction of indigenous and dalit peoples from their land by using the fake documents. In some areas, powerful mainstream people are allowed for commercial farming and plantation in the forest lands whereas the indigenous inhabitants of the forests are restricted from their traditional living. Furthermore, their rights to the land are denied in the name of conservation of forests. In some areas, the forest authority even took initiative to build wall around the forest in the name of forest conservation. Some initiatives like development of eco-parks and artificial lakes were also taken in the name of development of tourism. These initiatives were prone to remove the traditional inhabitants i.e. the indigenous peoples from the forest lands. In some cases, the indigenous peoples protested against the decisions, which came in return as harassment from the forest department. An

indigenous person living in a forest area expressed about the harassment he faced, “I have 17 cases against me. I was sent to jail. While even staying in jail, they filed a case against me on account of cutting trees. You see, I can destroy the forest’s tree while even staying in the jail.”

There are remarkable stories relating to violation of land rights. For instance, the Rangpur Sugar Mills acquired lands from Santal community through an agreement, which says that the mill is supposed to give back the unused land to the Santal community. Acres of lands were kept unused for many years. The real owners claimed their lands back. However, the mill authority did not pay heed to them. Instead of following the agreement, they leased out the lands to other powerful elites of that area. The Santal community protested against it. At one stage of their protest, the powerful beneficiaries burnt down the houses in Santal community and attacked on them with the help of local people’s representatives. Law enforcement agencies appeared there and fired on the Santal farmers. Three Santal persons were murdered; many Santal persons also faced fake cases and other ways of harassment and eviction from their lands. In another case, a khas pond was used by the indigenous community living on the bank of the pond. They cultivated fish in that pond and for that, they paid taxes to the government on regular basis. One day their mainstream neighbours robbed their fishes. They placed their complaints to the local administration. However, they did not get justice. Instead of sending back the right to the indigenous families, the local administrative advised them to include the rich mainstream neighbours as beneficiaries of the khas pond.

3.4 Discriminatory practices in service delivery

Education institutes: The concept of “untouchability” is practised in education institutions. Mainstream teachers believe that being transferred in a school located in “Sweeper Colony” is a punishment posting. There are examples of not touching the dalit student’s books and notebooks by their teachers from the sense of untouchability. There are also examples of taking no initiatives by teachers to ensure inclusive environment in spite of seeing some awkward behaviours done by the mainstream students towards the dalit and indigenous students. There are some instances of discriminatory behaviours of the mainstream students. A dalit student expressed, “Muslim students do not want to sit with us. They tell us to sit in the back benches.” Another dalit student argued, “.... Very often, they tell us that we bear bad smells. They then tell us to go away from them.” Some dalit students experienced abusive languages. One dalit student complained that her teacher made her clean the toilet of the school. There is an instance of a dalit student who was punished physically by a teacher, whereas he excused the mainstream students who committed the same misconduct. There are also incidences of not publishing results on time when the teachers saw that dalit and indigenous students secured good positions. There are also complains of indigenous and dalit students who had to wait longer for getting certificates.

Healthcare services: The practice of “untouchability” is also prevalent in government hospitals. There are examples of not touching the dalit patients seeking emergency treatment by the doctors and nurses. There are also allegations that the doctors prescribed medicines without making any primary check-ups of dalit patients. They did it to avoid touching the dalit patients by hand. Experience of hearing abusive words and harassment in the hospitals is very common to the indigenous and dalit service receivers. An indigenous person informed that a doctor told her, “Why have you come here? You have missionary hospitals, go there.” A dalit woman shared her experience about a community clinic, “Chairman’s daughter was given medicine in front of me. When I approached for medicine, the attendant yelled at me and forced me to get out of the clinic.” Some the examples say that indigenous and dalit patients are not behaved well in the hospitals when they seek indoor support. They are even given bed when they are admitted in the hospitals. A Santal woman expressed while narrating a duty doctor’s advice to her while she was admitted with labour pain, “You are Santal, you can stay on the floor.” There is another example of showing negligence.

An oxygen mask was taken away from a seriously ill dalit person without ensuring any alternative back up and was provided to a mainstream patient.

Social safety net schemes: In many cases, differently able person, older persons, old and widowed women, critically ill persons from indigenous and dalit community were not given priority while selecting beneficiaries for safety net schemes. An example can be cited here. An indigenous child was suffering from Thalassemia. While the mother was seeking help for her children, the social welfare officer told her, “Do you think that the government has to pay the money for your child’s blood?” Discrimination is also evident during distribution of the safety net supports. There is an example of not prioritising the indigenous and dalit peoples for providing support during their own religious festivals, where the poor mainstream communities are given support during their religious festivals.

Land services: The indigenous and dalit people argued that they are not given allocation of khasland due to their identity. In some cases, their culture of living in groups is not considered while allocating khasland to a single family, separately from a group of families. In some cases, local powerful elites occupy the lands of indigenous and dalit families, and they are rarely given support from the authorities to restore the control.

Local Government Institutions (LGIs): In Salish, LGI representatives are accused of being talking side of the mainstream people and most often they go against the oppressed indigenous and dalit persons. For this reason, the indigenous and dalits persons do not have faith in the people’s representatives for Salish. A dalit woman expressed her experiences when she was asked for a reason behind not going to them, “Who do I go to for justice? Their (UP Chairman) relatives occupied my land.” There are some discriminatory practices prevailing in the LGIs. For example, roads are not made or repaired in the indigenous and dalit localities. Moreover, they are seldom given any fund for the development of their religious institutions and funeral places even after seeking for support. On the other hand, there are also incidences of evicting dalit families without making any rehabilitation plan. In some cases, city authorities dumped garbage surrounding the dalit families to make the living condition unbearable and make them leave the place. Sometimes, rehabilitation of the dalits was made in such a place where living conditions were worse than before. There are also examples of rehabilitation of city cleaners in somewhere out of the city areas. That rehabilitation imposed a burden travel cost to cleaners who later could not manage and finally got back to the city and started living on the street.

3.5 Deficits of integrity practices in service delivery

Education: There exists deficits of openness regarding providing the information on stipends allocated for the indigenous and dalit students. Stipends are distributed from the fund of the PMO for plain land indigenous students, and from the DSS for the dalit students. Field data suggest that the information about these stipends are not properly circulated. Moreover, there are examples of anomalies that take place in the enlistment and distribution of the stipends. For example, union parishad chairmen and head teachers of concerned schools are given the assignment to select the beneficiaries. Field data suggest that they commit some anomalies in the selection and distribution processes. Moreover, there are examples of providing stipend to dalit students from the PMO fund, though this fund is allocated for the indigenous students living in the plain lands.

There are also allegations that unauthorised money ranging from 200-300 Taka are taken from the indigenous and dalit students in the name of solving problems related to smooth receiving of stipends. This is to mention that mainstream students also face the same experience. Field data also suggest that there is a shortfall in the grievance redress and monitoring mechanisms. For example, indigenous and dalit students complained to their teachers about the abusive languages used by their peers. However, the teachers did not take any initiative to help them get rid of such situation. Field

data also suggest that the school teachers are reluctant to make home visits to indigenous and dalit localities in order to reduce the “drop-out” rate of the indigenous and dalit students. It was also found that the DPE has huge gaps in monitoring whether the textbooks published in five indigenous languages have been distributed or not as well as taught or not.

Health: Field data suggest that there are gaps in ensuring flow of information on the health services for the indigenous peoples. There is a special health programme for the indigenous peoples operating in 15 indigenous prominent districts, which is not well circulated in communities and even the local health service providers are not well aware of the programme.

The indigenous and dalit service recipients alleged that they are forced to bribe to get services in government hospitals, though this experience is also a common to the mainstream population. Despite having antenatal and post-natal card by which the indigenous and dalit women are entitled to get services free of cost, a portion of the respondents alleged that they were forced to bribe for services. Moreover, there are some examples of not providing basic immunisation vaccines to some indigenous localities, which led to death of a number of children in indigenous communities in Chattagram district. Field data suggest that for this acute negligence the responsible officials were not held accountable with due importance; rather they were just transferred to other stations.

Burden of unauthorised money for getting health services

Type of service	Taka	Type of service	Taka
Outdoor	20-100	Child delivery	100-9,000
Emergency	100-200	Maternity care card	500-3,000
Diagnosis	100-450		

Social safety net schemes: It is notable that the selection process of beneficiaries is not much transparent and does hardly involve the indigenous peoples and dalit. Field data suggest that the indigenous and dalit persons are not well aware about the schemes designed for them. In the selection process, many anomalies take place. There are allegations that while selecting beneficiaries, people’s representatives mostly consider their good relation with the potential beneficiaries, take into account the vote bank and bribe money. During the distribution of schemes, some allegations of corruption were also found. Field data suggest that the beneficiaries were given less than the allocated amount of support. For example, during religious festivals each of the churches and temples are allocated with one-ton rice. However, money is provided instead of rice. The reason behind it is to pilfer the support. During the data collection, the market rate of one-ton rice is minimum 25,000-30,000 Taka. However, the authorities i.e. the upazila parishads provide only 12,000-15,000 Taka to the churches and temples. Field data also provide some autocratic decisions of local administration in providing support to the indigenous peoples from the PMO fund. For example, a local administration decided to distribute cattle among some indigenous families, however, without doing any needs assessment. Some families denied to take the small size of cattle as charged a high cost of 40,000 Taka for each cow. They also denied for another reason, as they were unable to repay the money within two years. The local administrator could not take the valid denial easy. A concerned official commented, “These people are full of complexity. We should not trust them.”

Burden of unauthorised money for getting social safety net supports

Type of service	Taka	Type of service	Taka
Old age allowance	500-5000	VGD/VGF	1,000-2,000
Disability allowance	1,000-5,000	Building house	6,000-20,000
Widow allowance	500-2,000	Dalit allowance	1,500-2,000

Maternity allowance	500-4,000		
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LGI: Field data reveal that most of the time, the dalit and indigenous service recipients are not smoothly provided with information related to the fees of different certificates provided by the union digital centres. The indigenous and dalit peoples also experience abusive behaviour, harassment and intentional time killing when they go to the union parishads for certificates. The indigenous and dalit persons seeking Salish support from the people's representatives have to pay high amount of bribe money, though very often they are deprived of getting a neutral Salish. There are also incidences of not providing services even after bribing for services. There also exists gaps in the accountability and monitoring mechanism. In many cases, indigenous and dalits service recipients do not feel confident to lodge complaints against the elected representatives as they have strong political affiliations. For this reason, their respective authorities can hardly make them accountable for their corrupt practices.

Burden of unauthorised money for getting services

Type of service	Taka	Type of service	Taka
Birth certificate	100-700	Salish	1,000-80,000
Indigenous certificate	350-5,000	Trade license	3,000-6,000

Land services: There are allegations against leasing out wetlands (Jolmohals) through corrupt practices. Field data show that some powerful elites create a fake cooperative of fishers to take a lease of Jolmohals by doing close door deals with corrupt officials. Thus, the real fishing cooperatives belonging to indigenous and dalit peoples are deprived of getting the lease of Jolmohals. Moreover, the protective measures for the indigenous peoples are misused. For instance, indigenous landowners have to take permission from district administration before selling their lands. This process provides some extra steps and thus makes the indigenous peoples vulnerable to take extra burden of providing unauthorised money. In many cases, lands of indigenous owners are being recorded in other influential peoples' name and later the corrupt officials claim unauthorised money in the name of correcting the records.

Burden of unauthorised money for getting services

Type of service	Taka	Type of service	Taka
Registration	4,000-40,000	Record	100-10,000
Mutation	4,000-5,850	Document	500-1,800

Other services: Indigenous and dalit people face corruption when they compete for government jobs. There are examples where indigenous and dalit candidates did not get jobs just for their identity even after paying bribe money. There is 20% quota for the Harijan dalit community for cleaner's job. However, this quota is violated by misusing the law and the corrupt authorities recruit more than 20% cleaners from mainstream community by means of taking big amount of bribe money. Corruption experience in electricity service is also notable. Indigenous and dalits are forced to pay extra money for electricity connection just because of their identity. There is also an example of not getting electricity connection even after bribing more money than that of the mainstream people paid. There are also allegations that some police stations did not file cases from indigenous and dalit victims of violence as they found that the perpetrators represent the mainstream and powerful class in society. Moreover, it was alleged that the police protection were not provided to the dalit communities in their special religious festival (Kalipuja).

3.6 Internal discriminatory practices and anomalies in indigenous and dalit peoples

There are examples that some empowered persons in indigenous and dalit communities and those who are having close relation with service providers are involved in committing anomalies and corruption. For example, some elected indigenous and dalit representatives in LGIs were alleged of taking bribe for enlisting beneficiaries of the social safety net schemes. In another case, a dalit school teacher was found to be involved in nepotism who enlisted her daughter and close relatives for stipends allocated for poor dalit students. Some indigenous and dalit community leaders were also found to be associated with the service providers to get themselves and close relatives enlisted for social safety net schemes. There are also examples of going against their own community for personal gain. For instance, some indigenous and dalit fishers provided support to fake fishers' cooperatives to help them get lease of Jolmohals.

4. Conclusions

The identities and rights of the indigenous peoples and dalits are not well recognised and included in the legal frameworks of Bangladesh. Moreover, the mother languages used by different ethnic groups and non-Bengali dalits are not recognised in the legal documents, like the recognition of Bengali language made in the Constitution. Moreover, Bangladesh was in abstention during adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, in spite of its position Bangladesh is bound to implement the Declaration as it was adopted through a voting where majority of the member states were in favour. Nonetheless, many states including Bangladesh still maintain some reservation to expressly distinguish the presence of indigenous peoples. Thus, it has impacted critically on the government's efforts to fulfil the rights of the indigenous peoples as stated in the international conventions. Despite the problem in recognition, there is a bright side of the story. The Government of Bangladesh has taken some affirmative initiatives for the socioeconomic development of indigenous and dalit peoples. Their 'left behind' situations, exclusion and poverty have been recognised in some important policies and strategies. Special needs of them have been addressed in some policies. However, the other side of the story tells that these policies have not properly addressed the needs and priorities of dalits considering their social exclusions nor of the indigenous peoples living in the plain land districts. Some laws and policies have limitations, for which the indigenous and dalit peoples are experiencing denial of rights to land, open water bodies, government jobs, etc. They are also experiencing discrimination and exclusions in accessing different public service provisions as there are no passed laws that can provide the provision of penalisation for discriminatory practices in public service delivery.

The ugly part of the story is that the exclusions imposed on the indigenous and dalit peoples by the mainstream communities induced by some wrong perceptions and unjust social stratification are strongly reflected in the practices of public service delivery mechanisms. This reflection leads to the manifestation of discriminatory attitudes and practices towards indigenous and dalit peoples, which includes denial of providing services, time killing, harassment, enforced unauthorised payment, deprioritisation from development schemes, biasness towards powerful elites, impeding the access to natural resources, etc. Apart from the implications of societal norms, the exclusion and corruption experiences are continuing in Bangladesh due to some particular reasons, which include the deficits of proper awareness of inclusive service delivery among the staff of public service delivery agencies, limitations in laws and policies, and lack of strong monitoring and oversight mechanisms from the top of the institutions.

This is also commendable that the Government of Bangladesh has some affirmative actions for the indigenous and dalit peoples. However, these initiatives are not sufficient to curtail the cumulative deprivation of the indigenous and dalit peoples as well as to leverage their socioeconomic conditions. This is to conclude that if the affirmative actions for the indigenous and dalit peoples are not expanded and implemented effectively, alongside the challenges of ensuring inclusive services and fulfilment of rights are not addressed, the reproduction of poverty and marginalisation in indigenous and dalit peoples will be inevitable. Thus, the main aspiration of SDGs i.e. the concept of 'Leaving No One Behind' will remain unattained.

5. Recommendations

1. Recognize the ethnic identities of all indigenous peoples as well as the identities of dalits through proper inclusion in the Constitution of Bangladesh as well as take proper steps to implement the international conventions on the rights of the indigenous peoples.
2. Identify the groups of indigenous peoples and dalits through proper research and recognise their distinct identities as well as address their rights and entitlements through inclusion in a specialised ministry.
3. Identify the areas of inclusion through proper research and address them in laws and policies through the formulation of laws and policies inclusive for indigenous peoples and dalits.
4. Finalise the draft Elimination of Discrimination Act and ensure its effective implementation.
5. Develop textbooks for the indigenous and non-Bengali dalit children in their mother tongues and ensure the appointment of teachers for teaching the books with a view to ensuring the right to education in mother tongues.
6. Organise orientation and training for the public service providing officials to change their negative attitudes and behaviours and eventually to ensure inclusive public services for the indigenous peoples and dalits.
7. Form a separate land commission for the indigenous peoples of plain land areas and provide effective solutions to their land ownership disputes.
8. Remove the legal limitations and challenges of implementation of laws and policies with a view to ensuring access of the indigenous peoples and dalits to wetlands, forests and other natural resources.
9. Introduce a quota system for dalits in accessing government jobs and restore the quota system for the indigenous peoples in the first and second-class government jobs as well as ensure proper implementation of the existing quota system.
10. Provide clear instructions about ensuring representativeness and participation of indigenous peoples and dalits in the formal power structures at different levels including the local government institutions (LGIs).
11. Take initiatives for the social security, socioeconomic development and dignified lives of the indigenous peoples and dalits based on their opinions and guarantee their active participation along with transparent and accountable mechanisms and their proper practice in order to ensure the effectiveness of the initiatives.
12. Develop separate monitoring mechanism in relevant departments or ministries with a view to ensuring education, health, social safety net, and other basic services for the indigenous peoples and dalits living in hard-to-reach areas.

- I3. The National Human Rights Commission, media and civil society should play an active role to ensure rights and protection of the indigenous peoples and dalits of Bangladesh.