

**National Budget Allocation for
Rural Women, Indigenous Peoples and Land Reform:
Analysis of FY 2019-20 and Proposal for FY 2020-21**

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National budget works as the framework for the economic advancement of a country. It is considered, basically, as an effective tool for the development of national economy and poverty alleviation of common mass. But questions remain: (a) whether the amount of allocated budget is enough for poor and marginal people of the country, and (b) whether the allocation is spent appropriately. For historical injustice and exploitation, the rural women and Indigenous Peoples (IPs) or small ethnic communities remain in backward section of the society. There is a question among learned quarter whether the budget allocation for the women in the rural area and IPs are adequate. In Bangladesh, a large portion of people especially in rural area are deprived of their land possession, which is one of the reasons behind social inequality. Land reform, as a part of the agricultural reform, based on the philosophy of social justice, can play an incredible part in diminishing threat of inequality. But no issue in line with land reform is found in budget, from which the degree of state negligence over the issue could easily be assumed.

In view of the abovementioned context, ALRD has commissioned HDRC with the responsibility to conduct the study titled *National Budget Allocation for Rural Women, Indigenous Peoples and Land Reform: Analysis of FY 2019-20 and Proposal for FY 2020-21*. This is the second consecutive year of doing the similar type of assignment.

We express our deep gratitude to the relevant officials of ALRD for entrusting HDRC in carrying out this important assignment. We owe our profound gratitude to Shamsul Huda, Executive Director of ALRD and Rowshan Jahan Moni, Deputy Executive Director of ALRD. Throughout the study, their encouragement, participation, guidance, and unstinted support have helped to enrich the study.

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The recommendations of the study are based on analysis of both primary and secondary data and information. In this regard, the participants (a total of 102) of regional consultations held on 18th, 19th and 20th May, 2020 deserve special thanks for providing their ground reality-based context of the issues and suggestions (79 in total).

A national level webinar was arranged on 7th June, 2020 to validate the study findings and recommendations. We thank all the representatives of civil society organizations and executives of NGOs who participated in the webinar. Their valuable situation analysis and recommendations for the upcoming budget of 2020-21 has certainly enriched the report.

We acknowledge all in-house staff of HDRC who have worked untiringly to conduct this research study within the short timeframe. We specially acknowledge Abu Taleb, Mohammad Kabiruzzaman, Sabed Ali, Syed Junnun Hasan and Arif Mia for their constant support and sincere efforts.

We believe the study would be meaningful if this report sensitizes the policy-makers to readjust national budget allocation with the needs of all poor and marginalized communities including the landless, land poor, rural women and the indigeneous peoples.

The responsibility of any remaining error in this report is solely of the authors.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Annual Development Programme
ALRD	Associaiton for Land Reform and Development
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEA	Bangladesh Economic Association
CCC	Copenhagen Consensus Center
CDSP	Char Development and Settlement Project
CHT	Chattogram Hill Tracts
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease-19
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DLMS	Digital Land Management System
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HIES	Household Income and Expenditure Survey
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Indigenous People
JDCF	Japan Debt Cancellation Fund
LFS	Labor Force Survey
MPO	Monthly Payment Order
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NBR	National Board of Revenue
NEC	National Economic Council
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SANEM	South Asian Network on Economic Modeling
US	United States
VAT	Value Added Tax

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background, Objectives and Methodology of the Study

Though national budget has exerted positive impact on poverty reduction, human and social development of Bangladesh, there is a debate whether the full potential of the budget has been utilized for the welfare, development and empowerment of the poor and marginalized sections of the society. Majority of the rural women and small ethnic communities or indigenous peoples (IPs) belong to the mentioned poor and marginalized communities. Land reform is a consciously-ignored issue having potential of reducing poverty of marginalized people like rural women and IPs.

Even in normal time, the share of poor and marginalized people in the national budget is not adequate and fair. In the class-society like Bangladesh, the upper class powerful minority group, the rent-seekers, misappropriate the budget share of the majority weak people with the influence of their political and economic power. In the new reality of the Corona epidemic, there is a risk of contraction of the upcoming budget. Even if it increases compared to the previous fiscal year, that increase will be marginal. In such a tight budget, there are worries that share of the vulnerable communities will be inadequate and unfair. Allocations for the protection of vulnerable population like rural women, indigenous peoples etc., will either be reduced or not raised to the desired level. Because these people are socio-economically weak, their voices are always weak, and un-heard. So there is a responsibility of the civil society to be vocal in favor of these low-voiced or voice-less communities.

This study, based on primary and secondary information and data, has explored what have been in the budget for rural women, IPs and land reform in FY 19-20; what are missing; what are the amount of development allocations for the mentioned sectors in on-going fiscal year and what should be the allocations for them in FY 20-21. Besides extensive literature and budget documents review, web-navigation; three regional consultations have been conducted to gather the contents and suggestions from the local civil society of 8 divisions.

Table 1: On-line Regional Consultation Meetings

Consultation Meeting	Divisions	Date	Participants
First	Rajshahi and Rangpur	18 May, 2020	39 Executives and Representatives of 26 Organizations
Second	Khulna and Barishal	19 May, 2020	31 Executives and Representatives of 24 Organizations
Third	Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Chattogram	20 May, 2020	32 Executives and Representatives of 26 Organizations

In order to validate the findings and recommendations, gathered from the consultations and secondary sources, a national webinar was arranged on 7th June, 2020; with the participation of 55 CSO and NGO representatives.

On-going Budget 2019-20 and Upcoming Budget 2020-21

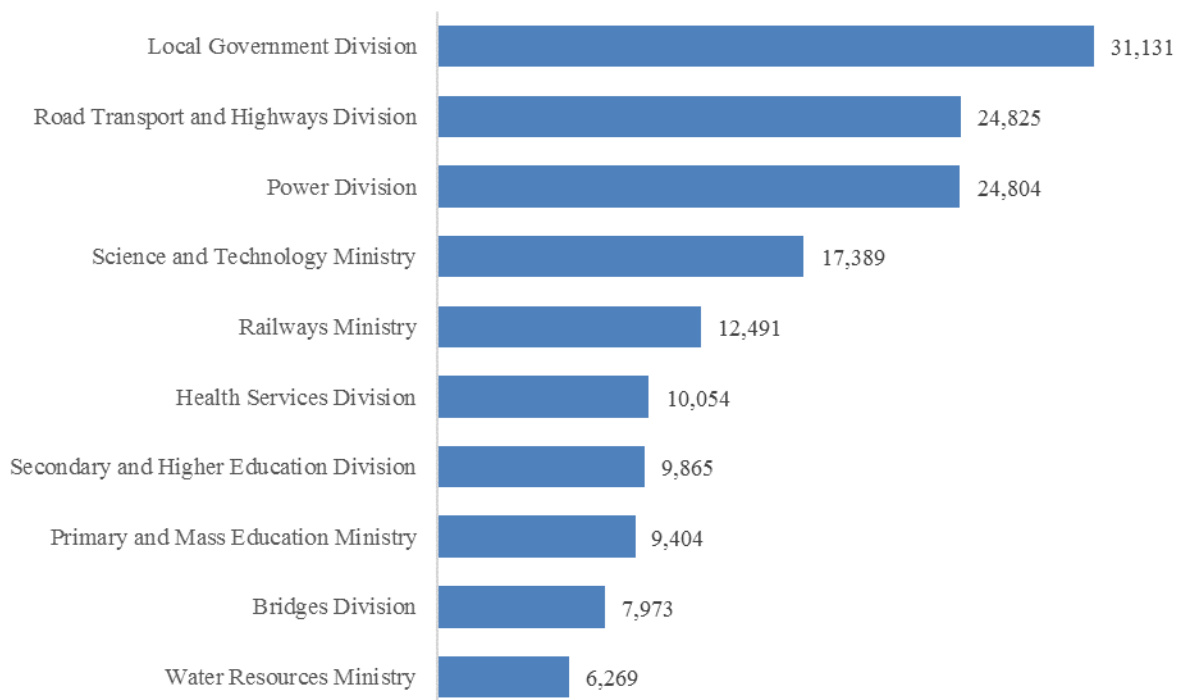
National Parliament passed Tk. 5,23,190 crore national budget for FY 19-20 themed as “Bangladesh on a Pathway to Prosperity: Time is Ours, Time for Bangladesh,” on June 30, 2019. Finance Minister is going to place his second budget in the Parliament on 11 June 2020; the size of which is expected to be Tk. 5,60,000 crore. Though, in nominal amount, the upcoming budget is larger than the present one by Tk. 36,810 crore, if 5.5 percent inflation rate is adjusted, the increase of the new budget size, in real amount, will be only Tk. 8,000 crore.

The National Economic Council (NEC) on 19th May, 2020 approved a Tk. 2,05,145 crore Annual Development Programme (ADP) for FY 20-21. Though, in nominal amount, the upcoming ADP is larger than the present one by Tk. 2,424 crore, if 5.5 percent inflation rate is adjusted, the decrease of the new ADP size will be Tk. 8,726 crore.

Table 2: Leading 10 Sectors in terms of ADP Allocation in 2020-21

No.	Sector	Tk. Crore	Percent
1	Transport	52,183	25.43
2	Physical Planning, Water Supply and Housing	25,795	12.57
3	Power	24,804	12.09
4	Education and Religion	23,390	11.40
5	Science and ICT	18,448	8.99
6	Rural Development and Rural Institutions	15,555	7.58
7	Health, Population and Family Welfare	13,033	6.35
8	Agriculture	8,352	4.09
9	Water Resources	5,527	2.69
10	Public Administration	4,048	1.97

Figure 1: Leading 10 Ministries or Divisions in terms of ADP Allocation in 2020-21 (Crore Tk.)



Rural Women: National Budget Analysis of FY 2019-20 and Proposal for FY 2020-21

It is estimated that in 2020 a 61 percent of the population of Bangladesh lives in rural areas. Using this statistics, the number of rural women is estimated at 5,14,37,000. Historically, in rural Bangladesh, women are subject to social marginalization due to the patriarchal structure of the society. They are deprived, exploited and marginalized which requires policy and resource supports for their equal rights in the society. National budget can play role in this regard. A large portion of the rural women is directly involved with various activities of agricultural production; they are farmers. But these women farmers are not recognized and there are no budgetary supports for them. There is no specific allocation for the rural women in the budget. They are benefitted from the budget of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and few projects of some other ministries and divisions.

In FY 19-20, MoWCA has 15 projects in ADP. These projects focus on combatting violence against women, accommodation of working women, skills development of women, their livelihood training, ICT skills, women entrepreneurship, women economic empowerment, primary and reproductive health care and nutritional services to disadvantaged women, ending child marriage, women's rights promotion etc. Apart from the MoWCA projects, 6 other ministries or departments are expected to implement 7 other projects in FY 19-20 which are supposed to benefit rural women. There is hardly any line item or project either in MoWCA or in other ministries or divisions that is solely dedicated to the rural women.

Development budget allocation for the rural women of Bangladesh in FY 2019-20 is estimated at **Tk. 37,937.91 crore**; comprising 3 components: (1) Share of the rural women in the ADP allocations for MoWCA: Tk. 224.18 crore; (2) Share of the rural women in the ADP allocations under 6 other ministries/divisions: Tk. 754.86 crore; and Share of the rural women in the development allocation in 'social safety and welfare' sector: Tk. 36,958.87 crore.

Per capita ADP allocation is about Tk. 12,388. For the welfare, development and empowerment of rural women, development allocations towards them should be at least double than the national average. Hence, per capita ADP allocations for rural women should be Tk. 24,776. So, the amount of development budget allocation for the rural women in the upcoming FY 20-21 should be **Tk. 1,27,440 crore 32 lakh**.

Indigenous Peoples: National Budget Analysis of FY 2019-20 and Proposal for FY 2020-21

Indigenous peoples of Bangladesh live in both the Plains and the Hills. In different government and independent research-based statistics, the number of IPs living in the country has ranged from 15 lakh to 50 lakh (9 lakh to 40 lakh in case of Plain IPs; 6 lakh to 10 lakh in case of Hill IPs) during the time period 2011-18. IPs are one of the poorest and the most marginalized communities of the country. While the national poverty rate is 22.8 percent; it is about three times higher for the IP-majority areas, which is estimated at more than 60 percent. The average income of the IPs is lower than the national average. It is 26 percent lower for the Hill IPs and 41 percent lower for the Plain IPs. Two-thirds of the Plain IPs are functionally landless. For a long time, these indigenous communities whether from the Plains or the Hills are deprived in different socio-economic sectors.

Beside the “Development Assistance (except for CHT) Programme Implementation for Improvement of Living Standard of Small Ethnic Minorities Living in Plain”, from Office of the Prime Minister, there are two other projects for Plain IPs in the ADP of FY 19-20. However, there is no separate ministry or division for the allocation and implementation of their development budget.

In FY 19-20, the budget allocation for the Ministry of CHT Affairs is Tk. 1,194 crore – combining Development and Operating – which is 8.79 percent lower than previous fiscal year. In this FY, 12 projects have been undertaken in ADP under the Ministry, where the proposed development allocation is Tk. 242.99 crore. Apart from the Ministry of CHT Affairs, allocations for the inhabitants of the CHT have been given through another 16 projects/programmes under 10 ministries/divisions/institutions, in FY 19-20, where, naturally, the Hill IPs have their partial share.

Development budget allocation for the IPs of Bangladesh in FY 19-20 is estimated at **Tk. 3,761.14 crore**; comprising 4 components: Allocation for the Plain IPs – Tk. 59.21 crore; Share of the IPs in the ADP Allocations for the Ministry of CHT Affairs – Tk. 126.35 crore; Share of the IPs in the ADP Allocations under other 10 ministries/divisions – Tk. 342.24 crore; Share of the IPs in the proposed Development Allocation in ‘Social Safety and Welfare’ Sector – Tk. 3,233.34 crore.

Per capita ADP allocation is estimated at Tk. 12,387 (if the population is 16.56 crore). As the IPs have been the victim of historical exploitation, discrimination, and human created poverty and deprivation, so per capita allocation for the IPs should be 3 times higher than the national average. Hence, per capita ADP allocation for the IPs should be Tk. 37,161; that means total ADP allocation for them should be **Tk. 11,148.3 crore**.

Land Reform:

National Budget Analysis of FY 2019-20 and Proposal for FY 2020-21

Land reform still possess the potential of increasing the pace of poverty and inequality reduction in Bangladesh. For this type of reform, policy and administrative initiatives are needed on one hand; on the other hand regular budgetary measures are required.

There is no line item named as land reform in the budget. So this study has enquired the budget allocation of the government that is land reform oriented in FY 19-20. If the allocation for the Ministry of Land is considered as allocation for land reform (which will be incorrect), then the amount would be Tk. 1,943 crore; and if only ‘directly land reform oriented projects’ are considered, then the amount would be **Tk. 265 crore**; comprising 3 projects: (1) Land Survey and Record Formulation and Conservation (1st Phase: Computerization of Existing Mouza Maps and Khatians) Project (Revised) – Tk. 10.00 crore; (2) Establishment of Digital Land Management System (DLMS) through Digital Survey and Settlement Operation of 3 City Corporations, 1 Pourasava and 2 Rural Upazilas of Bangladesh – Tk. 90.44 crore; and (3) Ghucchogram (Climate Victims Rehabilitation) (2nd Phase) (revised) – Tk. 164.56 crore.

In the upcoming FY 2020-21, ‘Land Reform related’ budget is estimated at **Tk. 16,000 crore**.

Key Recommendations

A. Recommendations for the Rural Women

1. Adequate allocation should be made in the forthcoming budget so that the society as well as the state can play effective role in removing the social, economic, cultural, and political barriers to rural women's inclusive participation in the society and economy.
2. The role of women in agriculture sector should be recognized, by making special allocation in the budget for women farmers.
3. Specific quota has to be maintained for rural women in the agricultural projects.
4. Special measures should be taken so that female agricultural laborers get the opportunity of opening Tk.10 bank account like the male farmers.
5. Separate budgetary measures should be taken for the rural women farmers so that they can avail swift and hassle-free credit for their farm and off-farm initiatives.
6. Project like marketing centres named as 'Joyeeta' should be taken for the marketing of products of the rural women farmers and laborers.
7. Financial assistance and other supports are needed for those marginal rural landless, farming women, fisher women, women involved in cottage industries and small off-farm initiatives due to Covid-19 induced crisis; for this the upcoming budget should have adequate allocation.
8. Agriculture insurance for all women farmers and health insurance for all marginal rural women are needed; allocations should be there for these in the upcoming budget.
9. Budget should have the provision for the project of ensuring primary education and vocational training for the haor women.
- 10. For the rural women, development allocation in the upcoming FY 2020-21 should be Tk. 1,27,440 crore 32 lakh.**

B. 'General' Recommendations for the Small Ethnic Communities or Indigenous Communities

11. There should be a separate chapter on indigenous people in the budget, mentioning total allocations, expenditure items and the ministries where the IP allocations have been made.
12. Special budget should be allocated to give bank loan facilities to the indigenous farmers and the entrepreneurs.
13. There should be budgetary provisions for employing indigenous teachers, teachers' training, and supply of certain learning materials to impart education among the indigenous children through their own language.
14. Indigenous people alone should be employed in the indigenous cultural academies or institutions.

15. For the small ethnic communities or indigenous communities, development allocation in the upcoming FY 2020-21 should be Tk. 11,148.3 crore.

B.1 ‘Special’ Recommendations for the Indigenous Peoples of the Plains

16. A separate ministry should be formed for the Plain IPs to look after their issues; and separate budget should be made for them.
17. Land Commission for the Plain IPs has to be set up following the Land Commission for the Hill IPs and make it functional with adequate allocations.
18. There should be allocations in the budget for restoring the grabbed land of IPs in haor and other Plain areas.

B.2 ‘Special’ Recommendations for Indigenous Peoples of the Hills

19. Budget of Ministry of CHT Affairs need to be categorized in three groups: 1) For Indigenous, 2) For Bengali and 3) For both.
20. CHT Regional Council has to be made functional by allocating adequate budgetary supports.
21. Allocations should be there for necessary human resources and logistics to make the Land Dispute Settlement Commission functional.
22. Rationing system should be introduced for Jhum cultivators, at least for six months, when they have no works.
23. Extended allocations should be made in case of CHT projects considering the remoteness.

C. Land Reform Related Recommendations

24. “Land Reform” related all big sectors and sub-sectors have to be shown as different line item with allocation in the budget of Ministry of Land.
25. A cell has to be established for monitoring the functions and malfunctions of all the land offices; and sufficient budgetary allocations should be there for it.
26. **In the upcoming FY 2020-21, ‘Land Reform related’ budget should be Tk. 16,000 crore;** which includes:
 - Tk.3,000 crore for *khas* land and water body distribution amongst the poor and marginal agricultural and water body dependent households;
 - Tk.3,000 crore for providing poor and marginal farmers with short-term interest-free loan;
 - Tk.1,000 crore for the development of the Haor region;
 - Tk.7,000 crore for ensuring fair market price for the agricultural products of the farmers;
 - Tk.1,000 crore for the insurance of poor and landless farmers; and
 - Tk.1,000 crore for the rehabilitation of the Settler Bangalees in the Plain.

D. Recommendations on Agriculture, Health and Others

On Agriculture

27. Interest-free loan for farmers, rather than the 4 percent interest the Bangladesh Bank made effective recently, should be arranged. It must be ensured that only genuine farmers who need it have access to the loan.
28. Projects should be taken on imparting training to farmers on modern agriculture and nutrition-based farming.
29. Farmers are not getting the fair price for their crops. Since the local administration is now very active at the grassroot level during the on-going crisis created by Covid-19, in collaboration with the local administration it is necessary to increase substantially the amount of government procurement of paddy directly from the farmers at a fair price, If the government warehouses fall short, private warehouses should be rented by the government for the purpose.

On Health

30. In the face of unprecedented crisis in recent time due to Covid-19, upcoming budget should be health budget, in terms of both resource allocation and administrative reforms of the health sector.

Others

31. Unemployment due to Corona crisis should be taken care on priority basis both for economic reason and social stability. There should be an urgent employment generation fund in the upcoming budget.
32. There should be sufficient budget for the mid-day meal of poor and marginal children in school so that they can get 70 percent of their calorie need from the food.
33. Necessary administrative reforms should be pursued and budget allocation made to ensure effective mass-participation in determining line item and allocation in the budget and budget implementation monitoring.