



# *strategic plan*

2014-2018



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## List of Acronyms

ACC	Anti Corruption Commission
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
BCG	Bacillus Calmette–Guérin
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
COP	Conference of the Parties
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DFID	Department for International Development
DCC	District Campaign Committee
EB	Executive Board
EC	Election Commission
EFA	Education for All
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
GCAP	Global Campaign Against Poverty
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IFI	International Financial Institute
LDC	Least Developed Country
LGI	Local Government Institute
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NC	National Council
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OCAG	Office of Comptroller and Auditor General
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBA	Right Based Approach
RTI	Right to Information
SAAPE	South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication
SAARC	South Asia Alliance for Regional Cooperation
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SSNP	Social Safety Net Programme
SUPRO	Sushasoner Jonny Procharavijan
TNC	Trans National Corporation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNO	Upozila Nirbahi Officer
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
VAT	Value Added Tax
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Acknowledgement

SUPRO, the Campaign for Good Governance, has been working to ensure rights, justice and equality and envisions a participatory democratic society. Applying the rights-based approach on the ground, and reaching out to the millions, it gathered handful experiences to shape the plans and priorities and further to continue its journey with the people. In the new context of the world order where policies and priorities need rearticulate in a timely manner while SUPRO, with its multi-stakeholders, set new priorities for the future strategic direction to act on with its countrywide constituency.

The strategic plan has been developed through a series of participatory and consultative processes that include countrywide meetings and workshops with the network members, district committee, national council members, secretariat staff members, development partners and professional bodies and organisations among others. The process captured their invaluable contributions setting the future priorities. It also synthesizes review and analysis of the current national and international development plans and strategies, and set priorities and agenda as strategic directions for future interventions.

An excellent SUPRO team that coordinates the process of the strategic plan development must get special thanks for their sincere efforts and endeavours. So credit goes to Abdul Awal, Daisy Ahmed, Md Shariful Islam, Shakera Nahar and Alison Subrata Baroi for their outstanding support facilitating the process of the SUPRO Strategic plan 2014-2018 and no doubt, the National Council Members, Executive Board Members, District Secretaries and network campaigners including other staff members own the same credit. Also we acknowledge and highly appreciate Md. Shariful Huq for his insightful support to the entire process including drafting the strategic plan. We deeply express our gratitude to Oxfam's Arie Schuurmans, Conor Molloy, and Dhana Ranjan Tripura for their wonderful technical support and contributions to the whole process of the strategic plan.

We trust the strategic plan 2014-2018 will be instrumental achieving the outcomes we set for the period.

**Ahmed Swapan Mahmud**  
Chairperson

**Md. Arifur Rahman**  
General Secretary

## Introduction

Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan – SUPRO (Campaign for Good Governance), a national network of more than 600 grassroots non-governmental organisations, civil society organisation and activists in Bangladesh, strives for establishing economic, social and cultural rights of the poor and the marginalised communities of the country. SUPRO strives to unite the poor and the marginalised and the voices of the grassroots NGOs and CBOs and bridges them with the micro and macro level policy reforms and decision-making process. A pro-active, responsive and closely-knit countrywide network is the base of SUPRO's strength, which is also bridged with the international rights movements. Moreover, SUPRO is also connected with many professional networks in the country, which has helped it earn recognition and acceptance in a wider circle. By now this movement has crossed a long path of more than a decade in facilitating grassroots activism at local, national and international level, and the experience has enriched its members with the knowledge and understanding of how to develop, continue and lead effective citizen movements for defending the rights of the poor and marginalised.

SUPRO was founded as a forum of grassroots NGOs in 2000, one year before the country's 8th parliament election, and as a direct result of a collaborative analysis and effort of local NGOs engaged in a campaign for democratisation as a vital strategy for fighting against poverty and injustice. From the very beginning, SUPRO grew on a firm four-pillar basic strategy:

- A rights-based approach
- Critical analysis of national and global contexts, laws, regulations and policies
- Capacity building of the grassroots NGOs and CBOs in designing and leading rights campaign
- Strengthening network through building effective partnerships with other right defenders

### Achievement mileposts

- Creating awareness about and popularising budget analysis at grassroots and national level
- A powerful campaign about people's participation Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) compelled government to introduce provision for grassroots consultation
- Popularised the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) issues and linked the nation's struggle to achieve these goals with the question of external debt cancellation issue
- Sensitised the stakeholders on human rights issues and good governance
- Demonstrated efficiency in bringing grassroots voices to the national and international forums on a number of issues such as external debt, MDG and budget allocation

- Motivated a number of influential policy actors and politicians for pro-poor policy changes that resulted in building confidence among them about SUPRO's role as a rights campaign body
- Popularised the demands for debt cancellation and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) target at 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income of developed countries without any conditionality
- Creating awareness and popularising budget analysis at the grassroots besides national level and playing a catalytic role in raising the grassroots voice to influence the policymakers and duty bearers for decentralisation of budget process through preparing district budget
- Campaigning for tax justice that resulted in fair taxation emerging as a new development agenda in the country, gradually taken up by other civil society bodies and development actors too
- Playing a catalytic role in raising the voice of the grassroots on the rights of the marginalised over essential services and their concerns of the quality of these services particularly in healthcare and primary education

Currently SUPRO is involved with more than 600 grassroots NGOs, CSOs and activists in 45 districts, raising campaigns on different rights issues. The grassroots interventions are operated by district campaign committees comprising 15 organisations that are network members. The National Council – the highest decision making body consists of 24 members, seven of whom are women. The National Council elects nine-member executive board to provide guidance and policy direction to the secretariat team. The secretariat, which is a team of professionals, is led by the director and is overall responsible for implementing all the organisational activities.

The immediate past strategic plan of SUPRO covering the period of 2009-2013 had four priorities: i) Governance, human rights and right to information, ii) Food sovereignty, climate justice and rural livelihood, iii) Aid, debt, trade and role of IFIs, iv) Building capabilities and perspectives of grassroots NGOs.

The strategic priorities are determined based on a critical analysis of the rights situation of the poor and marginalised communities and also of the strength and scope of the organisational framework. The strategic plan also works as a management tool for SUPRO, enabling it to engage its energy, resources, and time keeping in sharp focus the priorities of the five-year strategic plan. However, newly emerged challenges or changes in the dimensions of the organisational strength may necessitate to reorganise strategic priorities. In view of this necessity, SUPRO adjusts its strategic priorities in every five years. However, the consistent focus while developing SUPRO's strategic plan remains that it aims at to develop alternative intellectual and policy discourses, challenging the existing neo-liberal orthodoxy and the ideas, policies and programmes borne out of it.

In the current year of 2014, SUPRO has formulated its Strategic Plan 2014-2018 for to be implemented during the next five years. The planning process covers series of workshops with the network members, district committees, donors and development partners and likeminded organisations. Besides, a desk review to analyze the current national and international progress, contexts, development priorities, development agendas including country strategy documents (Sixth Five Year Plan, National Perspective Plan, etc) and other international instruments/documents (MDG, CEDAW, ICPD, COP, WTO etc.).

After a range of workshops and context analysis, SUPRO has set out the following three areas as its programme priorities which will be reflected in its strategic plan 2014-2018:

- Poor and marginalised friendly budget accountability and institutional governance
- Promoting Equitable and Universal Public Services and
- Promoting Fair Taxation and Fiscal Justice

These three issues are very closely linked to each other while on the other hand, their planned strategies and targeted outcomes highly correspond to the vision of SUPRO. The fourth programme priority under the strategic plan for the said period is organisational strength building. Titled 'Capacity building for achieving work excellence' will cover both the network secretariat and members.

The Strategic Plan 2014-2018 will also guide SUPRO in formulating its focuses, strategies and tools for advocacy, policy reform and networking activities in a flexible framework, which will help the organisation build on its past and current successes, while initiating new line of actions responding to emerging demands.

# Situation Analysis: The Context

## 1. Development since 1971

In 1971 Bangladesh began its journey as an independent nation and as a people's republic after its War of Liberation that claims millions of lives. Thousands of people irrespective of class, education or socio-economic background went to the warfront to win their dream of a state where justice and equity of share in resources will be ensured. Post-war reconstruction suffered series of political upheavals that slowed down the growth of the new nation. Nevertheless, in last four and a half decades Bangladesh achieved significant socio-economic development, which has helped build its image in the world stage as a persevering and fighting people.

A brief account of Bangladesh's progress in the indicators of the Millennium Development Goals, which represent an international commitment to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and foster global collaboration for development by 2015, is good evidence in this regard. The country has already met several targets of the MDGs, including reducing poverty gap ratio, attaining gender parity in primary and secondary education, reducing under-five mortality rate, containing HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs, and detecting and curing rate of tuberculosis. In addition, remarkable progress has also been made in the areas of reducing the prevalence of underweight children, lowering infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio, lowering fertility rate, improving immunisation coverage, reducing the incidence of communicable diseases<sup>1</sup> and increasing primary school enrolment.

Under Vision-2021, the government has committed to reduce poverty rate to 15 per cent by 2021.

## 2. Areas of concern

Despite worthy progress in poverty reduction, poverty and hunger remains widespread in pockets of at the national and regional level. Poverty levels in rural and urban areas are often drastic too. Hence these factors contribute to Bangladesh's status as one of the countries in the world with the highest level poverty incidence.

In Bangladesh the gaps between the richest and the poorest is not only enormous but it is growing also. Besides, the fact that costs in essential livelihood areas such as health, education, agriculture, trade, and migration contribute to increasing this gap is still not adequately recognised at the policymakers' level. Disaster, which has been the consistent feature of this delta's climatic history, is becoming more frequent due to climate change impacts, thus contributing more to increasing extreme poverty particularly among the coastal communities. While these have been the familiar causes of extreme poverty in Bangladesh, there are less discussed about factors like unfair tax systems and improper budgetary allocation to essential services and social protection programmes that play role behind increasing inequality and poverty.

1. Bangladesh's progress on the MDGs, UNDP website

Attaining gender parity in primary education is an important achievement of the country's effort to achieve gender equality. But disparity in learning outcomes mainly due to different curricula under government primary schools, private primary schools, English medium schools and madrassah education still plagues its education sector and the human resources produced by these different systems.

Studies indicate to the existing strong relation between education and inequality in Bangladesh. Studies on the returns to education in developing countries generally indicate higher social benefits at primary level compared to those at secondary and tertiary levels. Bangladesh in this regard is no exception, i.e. the social benefits for primary education in this country are also high. But according to the studies, in this country private benefits are higher for secondary-level education than those of the primary level. But as both direct and opportunity costs of secondary education are higher than that of the primary level, poor parents often cannot afford to send children to school for secondary education. Or, even if they can, often they are unable to continue to provide the expenses, as a result of which their children drop out before completing their secondary education.

In health sector also despite many remarkable progresses, essential healthcare services continue to suffer from weak administration and lack of quality care. These two reasons keep many poor from accessing services at the local public healthcare centres such as Union Health Centre(s), Community Clinic(s) and Upazila Health Complex(es). This results in compelling the poor families to look for expensive private healthcare services, aggravating their poverty.

Maternal health is another health in which Bangladesh still needs to do a lot. Many studies suggest that most of the rural landless women did not take any additional food which she should have done during their last pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

The gap between the well-off and the poor in accessing different health services is also enormous which is growing also. Large gaps also exist between poverty groups, such as moderate poor and extreme poor, in terms of accessing healthcare services.

## 3. Under-focused areas of concern

The impact of the current taxation system and fiscal policy on the poor and its direct and indirect role in increasing poverty is still a rarely talked-about issue among the country's development practitioners. It is evident that the current taxation system benefits the rich and corporate sector and contributes to increasing the gap between the poor and rich. The national revenue earning largely depends on the value added tax, VAT, which is equal for the rich and poor. A poor person pays the same VAT as a rich person while buying a particular commodity. When a country's revenue largely depends on VAT like taxes, it self-evidently contributes to increasing rich-poor gap as rich people pay relatively less while enjoying better living condition and the poor pay

relatively high prices while living in poor condition. The basic feature of an ideal and strong system is that the major share of the revenue will be drawn from the direct tax in the shape of income tax. In Bangladesh the number of income tax still remains far from expected. While the National Board of Revenue estimates that it should be at least 10 million, currently only less than one million people are registered as income tax payers. Over the last 10 years, indirect tax constituted larger share of the revenue against the direct tax comprising smaller share. For example, in 2011-12 indirect taxes provided 57.57 per cent and against direct tax at 25.05 per cent of the total revenue.

SUPRO's recent study titled 'Tax, Tax Gap Analysis and Tax System in Bangladesh' indicates that the tax system in Bangladesh is not pro-poor and the tax burden mainly falls on the public in general. Though several policy reforms have been undertaken to increase the tax-GDP ratio, people's participation in the policy reform process remained largely inadequate. The grassroots voice has never been considered with due importance in this regard. The study also finds that more than half the respondents think the current 15 per cent VAT is high, which should not be identical for all with different level of economic strength. Some 63 per cent respondents are for raising the VAT on luxury commodities and against imposing VAT on essential goods.

Democracy in Bangladesh as an institution still demands much qualitative improvement. Bangladesh since her independence has witnessed several political hiccups including assassination of presidents, army coups and major political movements that caused the downfall of political regimes. The weak state governance pulled Bangladesh down and away from the true potential of its hard-working people, threatening the social justice, harmony, and security they deserve<sup>2</sup>. Although, fundamental rights are guaranteed by the constitution of Bangladesh, however, human rights are much neglected since the country started its journey in 1971. The Civil, Economic, Cultural and Political rights of the Bangladesh citizen are seen to be violated frequently by the state and becoming a common phenomenon in its socio-economic life.

During the last couple of years the country has witnessed a shocking trend of paradigm of socio-political cultures and practices that include minority attacks, political polarizations, external interference, intra and internal conflict and terrorisms among political parties, extra judicial killings, disbarment of voting rights due to ideological crisis among the political parties, denial and control of civil societies' and grassroots' voices, etc. All these have stepped up misfortune to democracy and governance of the country.

Lack of respect to governance, democracy and human rights, has impacted socio-economic life of Bangladesh seriously of which Bangladesh has been encountering challenges to achieve significant progress in reducing poverty, income inequality and discrimination; and in improving citizen's access to better public services and to have decent life.

2. Good Governance in Bangladesh, Nurul Momen and Marzina Begum

## Broader priority areas of work

### 1. Reducing poverty, inequality and vulnerability

The decline in poverty in Bangladesh stems in large part from strong economic growth. The 5.4 per cent annual average rate of GDP growth between 1991 and 2010 has provided the basis for consistent growth in per capita income and household consumption. Manufacture and service sectors have expanded much more rapidly than agriculture. In particular, rapid growth in the readymade garment export has provided impetus to the growth of GDP. A steady increase in remittance flow from \$868 million in 1991 to \$11 billion in 2010 supported the growth of household consumption<sup>3</sup>. To boost the economy and strengthen the poverty alleviation effort, the government has increased the allocation for social safety net programmes in shape of food from year to year- the 2013-2014 budget allocated Tk 9080.68 crore to food under SSNP programmes, while the 2012-2013 budget provided Tk 7705.14 crore in this regard. Poverty declined 1.8 per cent annually between 2000 and 2005, and 1.7 per cent annually over the period of 2005-2010 and the population of poor people declined by 26 per cent in the decade of 2001-2010<sup>4</sup>.

Based on the constitutional obligation, Bangladesh government has kept undertaking policy and programme initiatives for poverty eradication, essential services to health and education, social protection, etc, enabling it to achieve worth mentioning progress in this area.

Nevertheless, over the past decades inequality in income distribution as well as in the access to productive resources, basic social services, opportunities, market and information has not only been persistent but also on the rise, causing and exacerbating poverty. Thus this situation has made it a challenge to fulfil the following constitutional obligation:

- (1) The State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens.
- (2) The State shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between man and man and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic.

Despite the praiseworthy progress of the last one decade in poverty reduction, increasing inequality between rich and poor remains a critical issue, which is also a question of denial of the rights of millions of people. Reducing inequality is a critical issue in poverty reduction discourse because if let persist unbridled, in the long run it breeds poverty and powerlessness of the poor and reduces the nation's capacity to achieve economic growth. Inequality, often a systemic feature of any oppressive socio-economy, also breeds exclusion and discrimination, causing deep rooted conditions such as youth unemployment and suppression of rights and voice, which often lead to pervasive social frustration and from there, to conflict.

3. Progress and prospects for poverty reduction in the Sixth Plan, Sadiq Ahmed

4. Bangladesh Poverty Assessment: A Decade of Progress in Reducing Poverty, 2000-2010, World Bank

Steady growth of agriculture sector is essential for the country's poverty reduction as it is the largest production sector comprising about 19.29 per cent of Bangladesh's GDP and providing job to around 47.5 per cent of the total labour force (source: website of the Ministry of Agriculture). The performance of this sector has an overwhelming impact on major macroeconomic objectives of employment generation, poverty alleviation, human resources development and food security. However, the sector is heavily dependent on the multinationals for agricultural inputs including seeds, machinery and fertilisers and also for production increase, market value, crop storing and loan. Shadow employment is also a big challenge for agriculture sector. As a result, the growth prospect of the agricultural sector remains a big question, making the poor and marginalised farmers particularly vulnerable.

Controlling population growth is another vital issue for poverty reduction particularly in a country like Bangladesh where shortage of land is an all-time concern for the government. The sharp drop in population growth rate in recent years from 3 per cent to 1.4 per cent is a matter of relief although population density remains chokingly high. As the domestic production and service sectors are unable to provide work to a large percentage of the country's workforce, ever more people are searching for work in foreign countries.

Climate change impacts are among the new challenges Bangladesh is facing in poverty alleviation. Historically Bangladesh is a natural disaster prone country and thousands of years of fight with such disasters strengthened the knowledge and resilience of the people, which will be our strength in dealing with this new challenge. While this is said, recent increase in the frequency of cyclones, tidal bores and floods has is posing special challenge in poverty reduction situation especially in the long coastal belt. A large part of the communities living in these parts are traditionally marginalised and poor, who are faced with further vulnerabilities in terms of food security, employment and health situation in the midst of climate change impacts. Many from these communities are forced to migrate to another locality for survival while those trying to survive in their own land have to struggle to maintain their agricultural production as climate change reduce their crop production. Consequently, an integrated strategy becomes essential to address all these challenges of climate change impacts.

Unbalanced external trade relations with direct neighbours and others and inequitable distribution of water of international rivers are two major reasons, hindering the country from achieving further growth while internally, shortage of energy resources, political nepotism and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, assets and power have caused a large number of people to become poor or exacerbated poverty.

Among other reasons that cause or aggravated poverty in different communities in the country include: violation of rights and prevalence of injustice, inequitable distribution of land, low wage, chronic shortage of cash, absence of food reserves, riverbank erosion, shortage of transport facilities, lack of institutional education and saleable skills, lack of administrative

fairness and accountability, limited access to public services and lack of people's participation in local governance. All these socio-economic factors discussed along with the absence of a fair taxation system, improper budgetary allocation inadequately addressing the poor peoples' needs and rights, poor democracy and lack of good governance accelerate poverty situation in the country.

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ended in 2015, the United Nations undertakes to formulate a new development framework- the post 2015 agenda that will be adopted in September 2015 through its General Assembly. The post-2015 agenda must need to address inequities and inequalities in fundamental power structures. It must measure and address economic inequality between the richest and poorest, and reduce the extreme differences between the top and bottom quintiles of populations, both within and between countries, including through progressive tax systems and redistributive mechanisms at national and international levels. This must remain as a stand-alone goal, and be mainstreamed throughout the framework<sup>5</sup>.

The post-2015 agenda must secure the full spectrum of human rights – including the right to development, to information, free media, and the protection of civil society organisations' ability to organise and engage. It needs a new understanding of financing that explicitly recognizes human rights as a basis to promote the interlinkages between the three pillars of sustainable development (social, environmental and economic); an understanding which identifies principles which ensure that 'finance for development (FfD)' becomes 'financing for sustainable development. There is a lack of clarity as to how the FfD outcome will be linked with the post-2015 agenda in terms of monitoring, accountability and follow-up. A follow-up and accountability mechanism must be proposed which enables all stakeholders, including civil society to track and monitor commitments and implementation in both tracks. Space must be made for people and their organisations to provide feedback on whether the proposed accountability mechanism is adequate to meet this need. SUPRO believes to engage in the Post 2015 Development process and carry forward the agenda to act on with the people.

## **2. Poor and marginalised friendly budget accountability and institutional governance**

Strong good governance of the public institutions is the prerequisite for ensuring proper service delivery and adequate and timely response to the citizen needs. Local government Institutions (LGIs) are entitled to respond to the local people's needs, aspirations and protect the rights of the people. Bangladesh constitution in its fundamental principles (Article-9) states

'The State shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers and women.'

Although the Local Government Acts for Union Parishod and Pouroshava was

5. Facilitating Good Governance at Grass Roots: BRAC and the Women Members of Union Parishad, 2007

enacted in 2009, a huge gap still exists between the scope and responsibilities stated in the Act and the LGIs for which it has been enacted. The LGI steering committees are seen only in papers and not in reality while the women members from the reserved seats are underutilised and heavily discriminated<sup>6</sup>. In many cases, budget preparation and scheme/project distribution to the UP members are not done according as instructed in the Act. The power and governance of the LGIs are centralised and they are not adequately empowered and autonomous. Moreover, there is ambiguity in difference of roles between the upazila chairman and UNO. Undue interference of the lawmakers in the local government system is also a common matter.

In the context described above, it is high time that citizen's effective participation has been ensured in the planning of activities as well as budgets of the local government institutions. An essential part of the LGI functioning has also to be their monitoring by the citizens accompanied by regular social audits. Universally a very important role of the LGIs is to promote citizen rights but that can be done only when effective governance of these organisations is ensured.

Effective participation of citizens in formulating national development plans and budgets is essential as only such participation can ensure that these plans are need-based with properly-placed and adequate budgets, ringed with a strong monitoring mechanism. However, the process of formulating development plans and budgets seriously lack the process of reflecting citizens' perspectives.

Lack of institutional governance and budget accountability promotes inequality and discrimination, directly affecting the poor and marginalised, particularly women and children. It limits and corrodes their livelihood, access to resources, essential services and justice, which are part of their basic human rights. But till now the main focus of the local governments has been on building infrastructure. Investing in the development of women and children has largely remained out of their perspective.

Citizens' access to information is also a vital factor for ensuring good governance and promotion of rights. Right to Information (RTI) Act was notified in the Bangladesh Gazette on April 6, 2009. The Act makes provisions for ensuring free flow of information, endorsing people's rights to information. Freedom of thought, conscience and speech is recognised in the Constitution as a fundamental right and the right to information is an inalienable part of it.

However, a large part of the people, especially in the rural areas, is not adequately aware of their right to information. It is mainly the lack of resources that has limited the capacity of public awareness campaign in this regard, both of the government instituted Information Commission and NGOs. Very few NGOs run campaign activity on RTI.

6. Facilitating Good Governance at Grass Roots: BRAC and the Women Members of Union Parishad, 2007

Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG), Election Commission (EC), Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) are some important government bodies to ensure good governance in the public offices. OCAG is responsible for maintaining good governance in public expenditures, EC is for holding free and fair elections, ACC for preventing corruptions, and protection and NHRC is for promotion of human rights. However, these public bodies are observably not free from political influence and interference. Freeing these major public institutions from political interference as well as strengthening them with different capacities has been a major good governance issue for some now.

### 3. Promoting equitable and universal public services

Bangladesh constitution has recognised education in its fundamental principles, not under the basic rights, in the way of:

17 (a) The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law; and, 17 (b) The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs; removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.

The 98.7 per cent enrolment rate in primary education is very near to the target while the ratio of girls and boys is almost equal at primary level (1.02 as reported in Annual Census Report of DPE 2011). Since 1990s, greater emphasis has been placed on education for all (EFA) and significant amount of resources have been invested by the national governments, various NGOs, and international donors to realise the goals and objectives of the EFA. The government initiative for stipend and free book for all children are remarkable initiative in this regard. However, dropout rate has remained a big concern for primary education. The issue of inclusive education is also a priority agenda at present concerning the children of the indigenous communities.

For ensuring quality education with quantity at the primary level education the current issues include: Effective activation of school management committees, infrastructural and environment development, effective mothers' gathering, flexible school calendar, non-discriminatory and gender neutral curriculum, improved capacity of teachers, increase in the number of primary schools and teachers, increase in schools in the hard-to-reach areas such as haor, char, and hills, opportunity for primary education in mother tongue, improved teachers-students ratio and mid-day meal for students.

The government has already enacted the National Education Policy and presently the priority should be its effective and full implementation. Also community-based advocacy initiatives might be undertaken to ensure community participation in education management to ensure better enabling environment for quality education.

On the issue of post-primary level education, two major points need to be taken into consideration. Firstly, children from the poor and marginalised families are often compelled to stop studies because they have to start earning to feed themselves and families and secondly, while they need to continue education for their further development, general education will not be of much benefit for them in terms of searching for job. Rather they need a kind of education equipped with that will increase their skill in particular trades, helping them to find better-paid jobs to start earning soon. Thus technical and vocational education and training (TVET), which will be poor friendly in terms of monetary engagement and time schedule, has become a demand of the day.

Health is another essential service area by which the socio-economic situation of the poor communities is profoundly affected. The Bangladesh constitution thus states its citizens' right to health:

The 15 (a) of Bangladesh constitution proclaimed the basic necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care and in the 18 (1) the state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the improvement of public health as moving its primary duties....

Bangladesh indeed has made significant progress in health sector, some of which are merited as among the best examples in the developing countries.

Over the last decades, key health indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality and coverage of immunisation have improved notably, while maternal mortality and fertility rates are yet to be improved. The Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) in Bangladesh is vastly considered a health system success because of its remarkable progress over the last two decades. It provides almost universal access to vaccination services, as measured by the percentage of children under 1 year of age who receive BCG (a vaccine against tuberculosis). This increased from 2 per cent in 1985 to 99 per cent in 2009. Coverage of other vaccines has also improved substantially (BRAC, 2009). The country already has achieved the target of a polio free Bangladesh.

Shortage of healthcare providers is the most critical challenge Bangladesh is currently facing in health sector. According to the SUPRO Social Audit Report (2012), the total number of physicians in all the government health facilities was 12000 against a total of 19000 available posts. The total number of vacant posts for physicians, nurses and technicians were at that time 26000. Although every upazila level government health facility was supposed to have 10 specialist doctors in 2012, there was only one specialist physician at every Upazila level hospital. According to that report, in 2012 Bangladesh government facilities were giving services with doctor-patient ratio at 1:4719, while there was 1 nurse for every 8226 citizens. Absenteeism of physicians at the public health facilities especially at the sub-national level ones makes matters worse. Lack of drugs supply and other facilities also plague the health complexes. As a result, public-funded healthcare system is used by only 25 per cent of the population. Furthermore, the also suffers from an acute shortage of medical technologists and allied health professionals including physiotherapists, laboratory assistants and x-ray technicians.

To improve healthcare services at the public facilities, some particular needs are voiced at different levels of the community, which include forming health committees at the districts, strengthening the Community Clinic(s) and allocate adequate budget by the health ministry for improving services at different layers. Although the government has established Community Clinic(s), Union Health and Family Welfare Centre(s), Upazila Health Complex(es) and district hospitals for reaching healthcare at minimum cost to the community but virtually all these facilities are plagued with many different problems, including poor infrastructure, shortage of medical equipment, vacant posts, absenteeism and lack of community participation.

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) information is important for the people of this age group as well as general citizens. Moreover, accessibility to such information is internationally recognised as a right. However, progress in the initiatives to equip this age group with the knowledge on sexual and reproductive health is lagging behind the progress made by the industrially developed countries in the corresponding area. The gap is even larger in the poor and marginalised groups as their access to information is even more limited. Insufficient ASRH orientation results in unsafe sex, sexually transmitted diseases and infections (STD and STI), low nutrition status especially in women, and pregnancy complications, affecting child and maternal health and survival.

Civil society engagement is essential to improve the quality of health services. Interventions are needed for effective implementation of the health policy and a rigorous mechanism should be put in place to monitor progress, challenges and gaps in ensuring the accountability of the duty bearers.

#### 4. Promoting fair taxation and fiscal justice

In the four decades of Bangladesh's independence, taxation remained overlooked as an essential aspect of nation building and democratisation of the society. It remained overlooked as an integral part of the process to build an active citizenry who as tax payers will demand for their rights. Consequently, resistance towards paying tax that we inherited from our predecessors continues till today. Bangladesh has one of the lowest tax per GDP ratios in Asia at less than 9 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. Out of its 150 million population with most people being in the active age, less than one million are taxpayers. Taxpayers therefore only cover for government employees, some of the largest enterprises, but rarely formal sector factory workers in the hundreds of textile mills or jute manufacturing plants.

Paying taxes is a direct link that citizens have with the government. The amount and nature of taxes, however, are often mediated through interest group politics<sup>7</sup>, while these same interest groups will argue for less taxes

7. Fjedstad and Rakner 2003

especially in export sectors, which has led to the problem of excessive tax exemptions,<sup>8</sup> which even according to official estimates amount to 2.25 per cent of GDP.

Fair tax system is where revenue is not only fairly raised, but it is also spent fairly<sup>9</sup>. Tax is not only a statutory tool for generating revenue but also an effective tool for reducing income inequality and to serve citizen welfare. Fair taxation and fiscal justice are interwoven in the sense of both theoretical and practical aspects. Fiscal justice includes the obligation from the state to generate and use the maximum resources to progressively realise economic, social and cultural rights, to tackle inequality and prevent discrimination in generating and use of resources, and to ensure transparency, accountability and meaningful participation in fiscal policy processes. It is precisely the extent to which a state enjoys robust, equitable and accountable fiscal foundation, anchored in the human rights duty to maximise all available resources, which makes or breaks its ability to realise human rights and sustainable development.

Fiscal policy in Bangladesh fundamentally encompasses activities, which the country carries out to gain and utilise resources to provide services to ensure maximum efficiency of the economy. <sup>10</sup> Still Bangladesh is far away to comply with the thrust and principles of a fair taxation and fiscal justice that confront several unfair practices and systems such as insufficient collection of direct tax, regressive taxation, inadequacy to advance sustainable economic growth, insufficient effort to upward grassroots mobilisation, conventional thinking of fiscal policy and practices, high inclination for tax evasion and avoidance, scope of black money whitening, corruption, poor accountability and transparency of state institutions in the planning and implementation of fiscal policies, inappropriate and inequitable distribution of resources in essential public services under the national and local government budget, lack of political will and courage to introduce a just fiscal policy, etc.

SUPRO will raise its effort to run a more robust campaign for a fair and equitable fiscal system that will consistently combine tax and public spending policies with tax and budget management in order to meet full compliance with the redistributive function of the state through public budgets, expand the taxable base and scope of national tax systems, reduce the high level of tax evasion and tax avoidance, generate clear benefits to promote the progressive formalisation of companies and working people, promote economic diversification and development of environmentally responsible activities, contribute to national efforts to dismantle discriminatory views that restrict significant sections of the population from attaining opportunities for improvement, and ensure transparency in fiscal reforms and effective mechanisms to facilitate broad public debates on these reforms.

8. Golam Mortaza, M. and Begur, L. (2006) Tax Expenditures in Bangladesh: An Introductory Analysis, Bangladesh Bank.  
9. <http://taxjustice.org.au/what-is-tax-justice/>

## 5. Uphold peace, security and democracy

Peace and security are the prerequisite of development. In Bangladesh, the rising trend of political violence is accelerating the factors that are most threatening for human rights. The causes for this deteriorating scenario include a trend to jump into violent confrontation whenever there are disagreements among the political parties and factions, politico-historical legacy of confrontation and divergent policy choices of both government and opposition. In 2013, a number of people including women and children have been killed in political violence.

A matter of grave concern in this regard is the use of children in politics. Little children are taken into the processions of political parties to chant slogans in processions, engaged in road blockades, election campaigns, political receptions, hartal picketing and even in violent attacks. All political parties and groups irrespective of their views must reach a consensus about not using children in political activism as they are not in an age to consciously and conscientiously form their own political views. It is the inability of independent judgment for which the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits children's participation in politics. If the current practice of using children in politics cannot be stopped, the nation will have to face the consequences.

The country's parliament is now passing through a long period of lacking full function owing to the continual boycott by the opposition. The debate over Bengali versus Bangladeshi nationalism between the two majority political parties is a bone of contention being dragged for four decades now, leading to many violent confrontations. The extra-judicial killings and incidents of disappearance, torture and arbitrary arrests are going on during successive governments, raising concern and questions from both national and international community. The provision of death penalty in the national criminal law is yet another concern for the international community especially for the European Union as it sees capital punishment contrary to fundamental spirit of human rights. The failure of the successive governments to fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord is another major threat to the national peace. Lack of mutual agreement among the political parties on national interests, poor functionality of the state owned institutions to protect human rights are other major concerns regarding peace and stability of the country.

A number of issues relating to the frontier regions also critically relate to the peace and security of not only Bangladesh, but its neighbours also. Killings of Bangladeshi citizens by the Indian Border Security Force, human trafficking, small arms trade, smuggling and influx of Rohingya at the border with Myanmar are the current issues, creating tension between Bangladesh and its two neighbours. Rise of terrorist activities triggered by spread of political religious extremism is also a current cross-border concern as the operatives are often part of international fundamentalist groups networking and acting often from across the frontier.

Incidents of violence and violation of human rights for non-political reasons are also rampant and backing of the perpetrators by politically strong groups or individuals is a major hindrance in bringing them to justice. The context in this case essentially necessitate that the civil society representatives, organisations and networks work together to raise their collective voice to protect human rights, governance and democracy either in purely domestic issues or the cross-border matters. The priority issues for which collective voice needs to be raised are protesting against boarder killings, amending laws stop to death penalty, motivating political parties to shift their culture toward non-violence, preventing misuse of power and demanding independent and responsible function of the state institutions responsible for protecting law and order.

### **6. Food sovereignty, climate justice and disaster impacts**

Food sovereignty in its essence is defined as the right of the people and sovereign states to democratically determine their own agriculture and food policy. Like many poor countries, Bangladesh has already surrendered its food sovereignty to global markets when it adopted agricultural market liberalisation policies dictated by the international financial institutions since mid-nineties of the last century. Farmers have lost their control over agri-inputs such as seed, fertiliser and irrigation, entirely depending on the market controlled by giant multinationals and their local associates. Farmers of Bangladesh now no longer determine what they want to produce rather it is the market that dictates them what to produce, how much to produce. An entirely market-dependent agriculture policy not only denies the rights of the farmers but also potentially contributes to exacerbating food crisis situation caused by market-shocks. In addition, rising oil and food prices globally are taking toll on the poor farmers. Researches show that at least 60 per cent of the country's population at present take fewer calories than they need.

Climate justice is generally used as a term for viewing climate change as an ethical issue and considering how its causes and effects relate to the concepts of justice, particularly social justice and environmental justice. Bangladesh is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts, which are heavily impacting the livelihood of the millions of people living in the coastal belt in particular. Sea level rise, salinity increase currently affecting around 53 per cent of the coastal areas and frequent bouts of cyclone and drought, all manifestations of climate change, have their worst toll on the poor, children and women in particular. It is damaging agriculture production, affecting health and forcing people to migrate limiting their livelihood options. Climate change also has security dimensions and has the potential for triggering interstate tension and conflict.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is the first plan (2005-2015) to explain, describe and detail the work that is required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses. Its goal is to substantially reduce disaster

losses by 2015 by building resilience of nations and communities against disasters. While the Post Hyogo-2015 is still on progress, we should remember that whatever form a post-2015 framework takes, it should offer the opportunity to scale up disaster risk reduction efforts that can be measured against development outcomes. It should emphasise greater outreach at local and community levels and reflect on the substantive issues, especially the economic case for greater investment in disaster risk management (source: website of UNISDR).

These entire phenomena have the potential of triggering discrimination, rights violation, marginalisation, internal migration, health hazards, food scarcity and insecurity, livelihood and environmental disorders, and reducing energy sector efficiency. At this juncture, it is crucially important to recognise that the agenda of food sovereignty and climate justice should be placed at the centre of all programmes. Civil society role is pivotal to monitor utilisation of funds and rehabilitation and adaptation programmes. Evidence-based advocacy on the compensation and adaptation issues for the affected people at national and international level is also essential.

### **7. Gender equality, violence against women, trafficking in women and children**

Bangladesh as a poor country has many development constraints including a high gender disparity. At present, globally, gender inequality has been identified as a major human rights concern. To address the concern gender sensitivity has been a consistent focus in the strategies and action plans of all the development initiatives undertaken by actors that recognise gender inequality residing at the heart of all discriminations.

While Bangladesh has made important gains in maternal, neonatal and child health and family planning services, many gaps and needs are still there awaiting to be properly addressed. An estimated 7,000 mothers die each year due to pregnancy complications reflecting the high maternal mortality and morbidity with which the country is still struggling. Thousands of families in the rural areas and in the urban slums still fall outside the life saving support services for mother and baby including birth aided by skilled birth attendants as well as antenatal, post-partum and emergency obstetric care (Source UNFPA Bangladesh Website).

The key<sup>10</sup> gender inequality issues in the country's education sector are typically characterised by girl children having less attention and opportunities from their families in education, which brings the inevitable consequence of girls having lower learning outcomes than boys and dropping out at a much greater rate than boys at the secondary level. This is reflected in smaller number of girls at secondary level comprising five classes from VI to X. The very environment of the school, which is heavily dominated by patriarchal attitude, calls for immediate change initiatives. Moreover, regarding physical structures of schools, it is high time separate toilets for

10. Women Situation in Bangladesh-An academic Research Paper by Md. Shariful Hoque

boy and girl students are included in the primary school architecture so that not only children's health needs can be properly met, but also they can learn from early age the necessity to have separate toilets for males and females. Substantial change also need to be brought to the learning materials, the books and other resources that will help shape children's mind with the values of gender equality, instead of what they presently do. At present the learning materials are burdened with male-dominated attitude, reflecting the conventional values of our society to see women through the lenses heavily tainted with patriarchal values.

The obstacles for girl children's education have to be removed. Marriage at early age, sexual harassment on the way to and from school, unsafe school environment, girls having less attention from the teachers are the major factors in this regard that need immediate attention.

Gender-biased wage difference is a familiar scenario in Bangladesh, at the root of which is the preconception that women are less productive than men. Labour rights activists and feminists have long waged their movement to fight this misogynist value the ultimate effect of which is productivity devalued and a repressive society perpetuated. The battle, nevertheless, is yet to be won.

Women's participation or positioning as the decision makers in the country's political processes is still far from being equal to that of men. While this situation itself is blaringly discriminatory, it perpetuates the conventional milieu where women's needs and priorities always fall behind. Here we may refer to the Article 9 of the Bangladesh Constitution proclaiming

‘The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers, and women.’<sup>11</sup>

Reflecting this constitutional obligation, the government took initiatives to increase the number of woman representatives in LGIs but it has fallen short of creating the enabling atmosphere in which the women can utilise their full potential as people's representatives. The problems they often face include a lack of adequate legal provision for women representatives to act with required authority, deep-rooted gender discrimination in the LGI environment and lack of cooperation from the male members, chairman and Upazila administration.

Violence against women is a regular phenomenon in Bangladesh. A new study has found that Bangladeshi men who have preconceived negative attitude towards women are more likely to use violence against women.

11. [http://www.asiaticsociety.org.bd/journals/Golden\\_jubilee\\_vol/articles/H\\_446%28Kamal%20Uddin%29.htm](http://www.asiaticsociety.org.bd/journals/Golden_jubilee_vol/articles/H_446%28Kamal%20Uddin%29.htm) - \_ftn26

Other major findings of the study are: more than 40 per cent of men who use sexual violence, first forced women into sex when they were children i.e. when they were below 19 years old; men's experience of abuse and violence during childhood increased the likelihood of perpetrating intimate partner violence; about 57-67 per cent of men sexually abused women just for fun; and about 43-51 per cent of the perpetrators did not have any concern or reaction after perpetrating sexual violence against women.

Bangladesh is a source and transit country for women and children subjected to trafficking, specifically forced labour and forced prostitution. According to a recent report of India's Kerala state police, poor Bangladeshi girls as well as adult women are collected by the Indian trafficking rings from many districts. Bangladeshi children and adults are also trafficked internally for commercial sex exploitation, domestic servitude and bonded labour. Recent reports indicate many brothel owners and pimps addict Bangladeshi girls to steroids with devastating side effects to present them in a more attractive manner to clients.

Bangladesh although does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, it however is making significant efforts to do so. The government has much fallen short of increasing its efforts to catch and prosecute labour trafficking offenders, particularly those responsible for the fraudulent recruitment of Bangladeshi workers for the purpose of forced labour overseas.

# Strategic Plan 2014-2018

Being a rights-based national network, SUPRO has developed its strategic plan for the period of 2014-2018, following a participatory consultation process. The plan development process includes active involvement of the network members, critical analysis of current national and international context and review of various national and international development instruments, treaties and documents to learn the emerging development priorities, targets and needs. It has also facilitated a number of sharing and feedback sessions from different categories of stakeholders, including district committees, development partners and likeminded organisations.

## Vision, Mission, Strategic Goal, Objectives and Values

### Vision statement

SUPRO envisions a participatory democratic society based on human rights principles that adhere to equity and justice for all.

### Mission statement

The mission of SUPRO is to facilitate CSOs and citizen actors for collective actions towards establishing economic, social, cultural, political and environmental rights as well as to bringing about accountable and transparent governance system at all levels.

### Strategic goal

Increase accountability of public institutions through better response to human rights issues by addressing the needs of the poor and marginalised by facilitating the process of empowerment and alliance building among SUPRO network members.

### Strategic objectives

1. To empower grassroots organisations in the network in demanding rights to development by means of micro-macro level policy reform and essential public services to all
2. To increase the level of accountability of the state and duty bearers in promoting equitable and universal essential public services
3. To build broader alliance of CSOs to influence the policymakers and duty bearers in taking stronger pro-poor position particularly for women and children
4. To build critical awareness among the stakeholders in promoting human rights and participatory governance towards achieving a more inclusive and egalitarian society.

### Core values

SUPRO is committed to values of equity, justice, democracy, participation and accountability.

### Priority areas

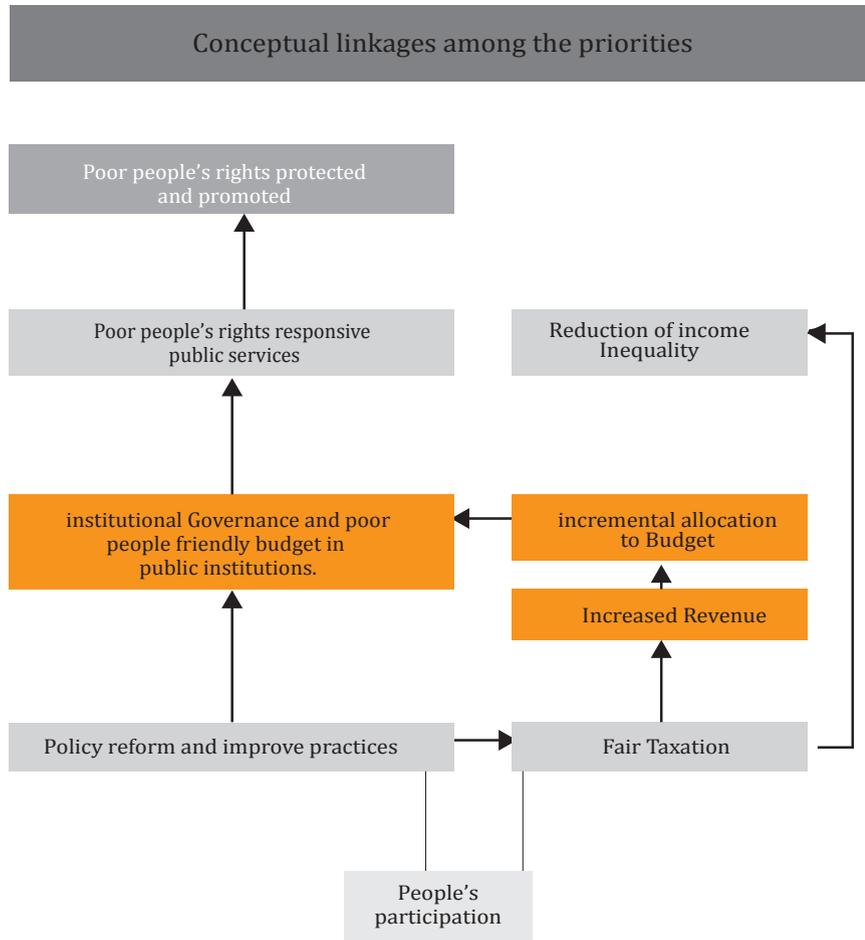
Over the years, SUPRO has successfully carried out numbers of advocacy and campaign programmes and projects such as Debt cancellation and essential services campaign, Promoting pro-poor policy reforms and public services for all, Promoting tax justice in Bangladesh, Promoting local level civil society and capacities for human rights and governance: A micro macro linkage; Promoting awareness against neo-liberal economics: A micro-macro linkage – Part-I; Positioning and civil society mobilisation on PRSP; Public budget discourse in view of monitoring PRSP, MDG and public services; Promoting access to information; and Activist's capacity for equity and justice.

The years of experience in campaign and networking has brought SUPRO a solid position as the largest advocacy and campaign network in the country, particularly in the area of budget governance and accountability, pro-poor policy reform and essential services, and in the recent past in tax justice promotion. A good number of concrete case studies, best practices and innovative tools are in the stock, which need scaling up and dissemination at the national and global level.

Taking into consideration the past experiences, best practices and success, and the present socio-economic and political context and challenges, SUPRO has identified tax justice, budget governance and essential services as programme priorities for its 2014-2018 strategic plan with the view that scaled up campaigns in these areas will potentially contribute to attaining the mission of the organisation.

The context analysis has clearly pointed out a strong relation among institutional governance, poor friendly budgeting, tax justice and rights responsive essential services are closely knit factors in establishing sustainable good governance. Quality participation of peoples in policy formulation as well as reform and budgeting of public institutions help establish strong good governance while fair taxation helps increase government revenue, which in turn can be used in ensuring better government services. It is a circle where all these factors influence each other to bring about a better society with the poor and marginalised having their rights and needs better fulfilled.

From the organisational perspective these priority areas of work are also regarded as major programmes featured by mobilisation, campaign, research, and advocacy linking the grassroots with national and international actors. Social accountability tools and Right to Information Act



will be used as the core advocacy and campaign tool for bringing up the voice of the poor and marginalised to the micro-macro level government decision makers for integration and action.

Although, presently SUPRO has set focuses and outcomes for three priority issues, namely Poor and marginalised friendly budget accountability and institutional governance; Promoting equitable and universal public services; and Promoting fair taxation and fiscal justice, however, the organisation will maintain its strategic priorities flexible so that when required, focuses and outcomes can be set on the following issues too as

cross-cutting development agenda:

- Reducing poverty, inequality and vulnerability
- Peace, security and democracy
- Food sovereignty, climate justice and disaster impacts
- Gender equality, violence against women and trafficking in women and children

While SUPRO's geographical focus is throughout Bangladesh from grassroots to the national level, it will give special attention to the remotest parts, chars, haors, hills and costal areas of the country.

### **Poor and marginalised friendly budget accountability and institutional governance**

SUPRO observes that citizen participation in government planning and budgeting process is essential for ensuring good governance, accountability and promotion of human rights. With this perspective SUPRO will work to ensure grassroots participation to reflect their reactions, concerns, opinions and aspirations in the government planning and budgeting process. It will continue its grassroots movement to drive home its demand on participatory and decentralised budget formulation and budget tracking while ensuring the participation of the local and marginalised people with particular focus on women and children.

SUPRO is also intent on keeping its governance priority focused on the local government institutions, including Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad, Zila Parishad, municipality corporations, city corporations, and Hill District Local Government Councils. Our focus will be to closely lobby with the LGIs to motivate them about becoming truly participatory in formulating and implementing their budget and also to lobby with the government so that adequate allocations of resources are mobilised for the LGIs, decentralisation process is adequately utilised and play a strong role in reducing discriminatory attitude towards women representatives and capacity of the LGIs is developed so that they can mobilise local resources. Campaign will also focus strengthening of LGI standing committees to better address local people's needs and promote their rights.

Citizen monitoring, social audit and use of right to information will be the key tools for achieving the results in this priority area.

### **Expected outcomes**

1. Allocation of resources for the poor, marginalised, women and children for essential service delivery in the national and local budgets increased;
2. Concerns, needs and priorities of the poor, marginalised, women and children reflected in micro-macro level policy, plan and budgets
3. LGIs improved with authority and resources as part of their decentralisation process

4. LGIs' accountability to local people for non-discriminated and transparent services improved.

### **Promoting equitable and universal public services**

In a developing country like Bangladesh, the role of the government as essential service provider is imperative to meet people's basic needs and human rights. SUPRO will keep focusing essential services in health and education with particular impetus on creating a non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive and capable system, which will be adequately able to serve the poor and marginalised. SUPRO will also advocate for incremental budget allocation to these two sectors to attain expected service quality.

SUPRO's strategy in this regard will also include acting as a powerful pressure group for the government institutions to motivate and drive them to develop poor and marginalised centric policies and ensure non-discriminatory and transparent services through their proper implementation. On the other hand, SUPRO will support their policy formulation, decision making and undertaking corrective measures by providing information collected through social audits and citizen monitoring. RTI indeed will also be a tool to be used for citizen monitoring. One of the major limitations of present

Apart from primary education, technical and vocational education will also be a major focus of SUPRO in education sector. Technical and vocational education and training is highly important in our country with its particular context where thousands of children have to end their education as they complete primary level. In that situation technical and vocational education is the only way through which they can develop their skill to enter formal job sector in a better fitted way.

In health sector, SUPRO will do strong advocacy campaign to increase the quality of services in the public health facilities, including community clinics, union health and family welfare centres, upazila health complexes and district hospitals, as poor and marginalised communities are the major clients there.

Moreover, the government has already enacted the National Education Policy and National Health Policy in the respective sectors and now the impetus should be their proper implementation. SUPRO will grow campaign, advocacy and lobby from the grassroots to the policymakers to see that the policies are adequately reflected in the government's service delivery.

### **Expected outcomes**

1. The concerns of the poor and marginalised, especially of women and children of these groups reflected in micro-macro level policy, plan and budget formulation and implementation process of primary education,

technical and vocational education and training and health sector

2. Quality, infrastructures, coverage, facilities, human resources of primary education, technical and vocational education and training and health improved
3. Implementation of local level planning of health sector strengthened
4. Incremental budgetary allocation to health and primary education facilitated.

### **Promoting fair taxation and fiscal justice**

Bangladesh is increasingly focusing on internal resource mobilisation for its socio-economic development and meeting budgetary expenditures. VAT and tax are the important sources of a country for internally mobilising resources. Like many other developing countries, Bangladesh is still far away from reaching the expected level in this regard. Poor tax administration, outdated tax and fiscal policy and weak tax practices are the major obstacles for developing a solid and people friendly taxation system. SUPRO strategy will be to facilitate grassroots activism to raise collective voices to influence policymakers and duty-bearers in establishing a fair taxation system able to substantially prevent tax evasion and reduce tax avoidance both at the individual and institutional level.

With the slogan 'My tax for our welfare and development', SUPRO's campaign strategy in fair tax movement will be designed to contribute to the making of the country's tax system equitable, transparent and complying with the people's aspirations. The broader aim in this area will be to contribute to reducing income inequalities by creating an enabling environment for people with ability to pay tax, which will in turn help increase the coverage of direct tax. The campaign will be directed based on the basic understanding that if tax justice is ensured, a country has better revenue earning and can allocate more budget for essential services that will finally benefit the poor and marginalised groups.

### **Expected outcomes**

1. VAT and tax policy reformed with a pro-poor perspective adopting fair tax index
2. VAT and tax administration system upgraded and decentralised making it more efficient and transparent
3. VAT and tax administration officials grown more responsive to the taxpayers
4. Tax evasion and avoidance at individual and institutional level reduced
5. Citizen awareness and willingness on VAT and tax increased
6. Resource allocation increased in essential public services particularly in education and health.

### Capacity building for achieving excellence in work

SUPRO's main force is its network members and the grassroots campaigners who design and develop grassroots activism for bridging the voice of the poor and marginalised with the local, national and international level of policymakers and duty bearers as well as with the activist groups. Organisation secretariat plays coordinating role in the network by giving different kinds of support required by the network members and grassroots campaigners. The SWOT analysis has indicated a capacity building need for both the network members and the secretariat staff in designing and implementing more comprehensive and tightly knit advocacy campaigns, following which capacity building has been targeted as an institutional priority for the strategic period of 2014-2018.

#### Expected outcomes

1. The network members' capacity for local level activism improved
2. SUPRO's own governance, networking, alliance building, organisation management, monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management and excellence in work improved
3. SUPRO's staff capacity in policy research, advocacy including media advocacy, making quality publications, success documentation as well as in communication including e-communication strengthened.

### Institutional strengthening and capacity building of SUPRO

SUPRO's institutional strengthening and capacity building objectives and strategies are as follows.

1. **To contribute to the network members' capacity development in local level activism for making peoples' voice heard.**

#### Strategies

- Undertake formal training, on-the-job training and cross visit activities
  - Facilitate a process for the network member organisations to learn and transform skills
  - Support develop communication, coordination and relation with the parliamentarians, politicians, influential actors and civil society organisations
  - Support network members in project designing and fund generation provided they are aligned with and contributory to SUPRO vision and principles.
1. **To accelerate organisational development process of SUPRO in its own governance, networking, alliance building, organisation**

**management, monitoring, evaluation, knowledge management and to achieve excellence in work.**

#### Strategies

- Regular identification and utilization of scope for building network and alliance with the local, national, regional and global networks and with the likeminded organizations through effective communications;
- Develop communication, coordination and relationship with the parliamentarians, politicians, influential actors and civil society organizations through physical visits; dialogues; invitation to the SUPRO's events; electronic communications; sending reports, souvenirs, etc.;
- Identify and improve organizational policies, practices, systems and procedures and make them best fit with the modern management systems and practices;
- Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, research process and knowledge management system of SUPRO by involving internal and external experts;
- Achieve excellence in work through evaluative process.

1. **To strengthen staff capacity in policy research, advocacy including media advocacy, publications, success documentation and in communication including e-communication.**

#### Strategies

- Undertake formal training, on-the job training and cross visit
- Strengthening staff performance management system including periodic performance appraisal
- Extend scope for the staff to learn from each other, internally and to learn from others, externally, specially from the network members
- Trigger off staff towards self directed learning process.

### Sustainability of the network

SUPRO is widely experienced in running its operation supported by the regular subscriptions of network members, which was especially important during its formative period. Ten per cent of its operational cost is still covered by the network members who possess a high degree of commitment in this regard. Apart from this subscription, SUPRO has planned for the following strategy for achieving its organisational sustainability during its next five years of operation covering 2014-2018.

## **Strategies**

- Regularise members subscription
- Increase numbers of member in the network
- Build local level image, strengthen network and fund mobilisation
- Have permanent secretariat with infrastructure
- Undertake and strengthen diverse income generating activities such as establish publication house, build resources and training centre
- Priority given to SUPRO by network member organisations in commissioning consultancy
- Achieve quality in research and studies, campaigns, monitoring and advocacy
- Improve media coverage
- Maintain more communication and coordination with the existing donors and submit project proposal
- Search for new and potential donors on regular basis by SUPRO management, its executive board, national council and network members.