Communication

A Study on the Contribution of Police in Implementing SDGs (Goal-16): Bangladesh Perspective

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Abstract: Over the years, Bangladesh has made significant strides in its economic advancement, particularly in addressing issues related to poverty, healthcare, and education. Despite this, in the last 15 years, the nation continues to grapple with various developmental hurdles, including the mistreatment of women and children, the illegal circulation of weapons and money, corrupt practices, and organized criminal activities like terrorism and extremism. By signing on to the SDGs adopted by UN member states in 2015, Bangladesh gained an opportunity to address many of these challenges. This study delves into three specific objectives outlined in Goal 16 of the SDGs, which hold great relevance to the police and the developmental obstacles faced by Bangladesh. The primary focus of the Bangladesh Police is to reduce the security threats faced by citizens, encompassing a wide range of manifestations such as interpersonal and criminal violence, gender-based violence, as well as politically or religiously motivated acts of violence (Goal 16.1). To achieve this, the Bangladesh Police has implemented various measures, including the creation of a child affairs officer position, a dedicated investigation unit for women and children, and a support center for victims (Goal 16.2). Additionally, Bangladesh Police prioritized efforts to curb the illicit flow of financial resources and weapons by combating all forms of organized crime, thereby fostering an environment of peace and stability in the society (Goal 16.4).

Keywords: Economic Advancement, Sustainable Development, Developmental Obstacles, Financial Resources, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Development refers to the advancement and improvement that societies and nations strive for in order to attain higher standards of living that are both prosperous and equitable. Sustainable development, on the other hand, entails the continuous progress of individuals and communities while ensuring the resilience of economic, social, and environmental systems. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), Sustainable development is a process that aims to meet the needs of today while ensuring that future generations can meet theirs." Sustainable development encompasses three essential pillars: environmental, economic, and social development, as stated by Das (2016). Each pillar represents distinct facets of development, namely people, economy, and society. Initial literature on development focused primarily on economic growth, with an emphasis on creative sectors that provide jobs, expected consumption, and property.

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However, at present there has been a shift towards human development, which includes valuing and pursuing goals like education, improved standard of living, justice, and equal facilities for all. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development board also identified calls to create a community that valued the security and well-being of states, regions, and organizations as well as the social capital of kinships and social bonding (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Development and security are interconnected. Development entails progress, while security deals with perceived threats that could jeopardize that progress. In Bangladesh, the Police serve as the primary agency liable for providing safety and security. It is regarded as the civil force entrusted with the task of upholding public order, enforcing regulations to prevent and penalize law violations, and detecting criminal activities. With security as a top priority, world leaders convened at a special United Nations summit in New York and adopted the General Assembly Resolution titled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." This program outlines a comprehensive framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which consists of 17 goals and 169 targets. Goal 16, in particular, places significant emphasis on peace and security. Noticeably, the goals and targets of the SDGs pursue the goals and targets of the Millennium Development Goals that were adopted in 2000 and ended in 2015 (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The SDGs exhibit a substantial expansion in terms of the number of goals, targets, and overall scope and aspirations compared to the MDGs. Of particular relevance to this study is the introduction of new goals and targets in the social and political domain, focusing on peace, security, and justice.

This study intends to examine the role of police forces in implementing specific targets within Goal 16 of the SDGs, which include ensuring secure and peaceful societies for sustainable development, ensuring accessible justice for all, and promoting fruitful, accountable, and inclusive establishments at all levels. A significant portion of this research is dedicated to analyzing a selected set of targets and indicators within Goal 16, namely:

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere;

16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children;

16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat all forms of organized crime.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the selected number of targets and indicators of Goal 16 of the SDGs in the context of Bangladesh.
- To identify the contribution of the Bangladesh Police in implementing Goal 16 of the SDGs.
- To illustrate how active policing and a secure atmosphere enable and support the SDGs.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Although there are few studies that demonstrate how, when, and by what means active policing and resulting enhanced security circumstances would enable, support, and sustain economic development, the notion that security and economic development are related makes sense. Furthermore, there is little discussion or systematic research regarding the types of security and policing systems that are most likely to promote economic advancements. Thus, the present study will look into the nexus between the police force and development in implementing the SDGs' selected targets.

2. Literature Review

In September 2015, leaders from around the world assembled at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York and reached a consensus, setting up the new 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprising 169 targets. All the goals and targets were designed following the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and provide guidance for the development of the earth until 2030, spanning 15 years. The MDGs, the first-ever global framework to fight against poverty on such a large scale, made significant progress in addressing various global challenges and instilled hope for the earth within the same means. Remembering this, the SDGs' 2030 Agenda has offered a set of bold, constructive, and innovative packages to change the world (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Given the positive experience with the MDGs, there is considerable anticipation surrounding the new goals. Bangladesh, in particular, has ample reasons to be enthusiastic about the promises that lie ahead for the next fifteen years. Substantial evidence supports the notion that governance, peace, and security play universal roles in development, and conversely, development contributes to peace and security. Assessments of the MDGs' effects have revealed that nations afflicted by war typically have slower growth rates and have more trouble putting poverty alleviation and social development plans into action (Denny, 2012). The difference in MDG accomplishments across states with high levels of corruption and violence was also notable and growing. Peace and stability are, therefore, essential to development because they foster a situation that is favorable to long-term planning and execution. However, some of the basic causes of conflict, like competition for scarce resources and economic marginalization, can be reduced by inclusive and sustainable development (IEP, 2015). According to research conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2011) and the World Bank (2007), the reduction of crime in a specific region can increase its per capita income. The research shows that a one-third crime reduction in the Caribbean region may potentially lead to a doubling of growth in per capita income. Hipp et al. (2022) also showed that the consequences of changes in local crime are closely associated with the improvement or decline of per capita income of a country. Additionally, the intangible relation between violence and crime, such as psychological trauma, may undermine both human and government development. This view is supported by Van Dijk (2008), who stated that crime, corruption, and weak access to law collectively account for eighty per cent of the variation in GDP growth among various countries. Dammert and Sarmiento (2019) also supported that corruption, especially political corruption, leads to a poor governance system and hinders development in Latin America. In summary, the presence of organized crime, corruption, and ineffective governance hinders the development of a country. Intentional homicide, which refers to deliberate acts of killing, poses a significant obstacle to good governance and a country's development. "Unlawful death inflicted upon a person with the intent to cause death or serious injury" is the definition of intentional murder given by ICCS (2015). So, intentional homicide is defined by three essential components: 1. The killing by another person (objective element); 2. The perpetrator's intention to murder or gravely harm the victim (subjective aspect); 3. The killing's illegality means that the perpetrator is held legally responsible for the unlawful death (legal element). The study conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2011) revealed that there are multiple factors that contribute to interpersonal violence and intentional killings. However, the levels and trends of homicide demonstrate a clear link to development. It

further elucidated that higher levels of homicide are associated with lower levels of human and economic development. Countries with low levels of human development experience the majority of homicides, and nations with significant income inequality suffer from homicide rates nearly four times higher than in more egalitarian societies (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011). Coccia et al. (2024) also support this statement, as their research about how immigration, level of unemployment, and income inequality affect crime in Europe shows that homicide is significantly associated with the economic growth and development of a country. According to Garuba (1992), the importance of equitable and efficient security and active policing systems in promoting and maintaining economic growth has become accepted as common knowledge in the fields of economic and human development policy. He added that the role of different security personnel contributes to people's confidence because, if people are confident in their safety, the market and economy will also have their trust and support, which will lead to the advancement of the market. On the other hand, the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) stated that a safe and conflict-free environment of a country brings feelings of happiness and contentment among people. It fosters investment in the country. No investor would feel safe to invest in a troubled and conflict-infested society. In this regard, Newburn (1999) said that environmental safety can be provided by effective democratic policing, and Jankovic et al. (2023) said that Police provide personal safety and support sustainable developments by protecting and lessening the fear of victimization.

Moreover, active and lawful policing will increase the sense among the people that their everyday routine work, like going to jobs, walking in their neighborhoods and parks, riding bicycles, and doing small-scale business activities, etc., will continue to be possible and protected by laws. Moral and Professional policing will also reduce the level of corruption that police are routinely alleged to be engaged in (Newburn, 1999). Baylay (1969) said that lack of security because of dysfunctional police systems can have several adverse effects, like lower productivity because a high crime rate may lead to shorter working hours, reduced foreign investment because crime and insecurity constitute risks that affect profitability, and diminished quality of social life and interaction because fear of crime may prevent people from using certain public spaces or attending community and religious meetings.

3. Methodology of the Study

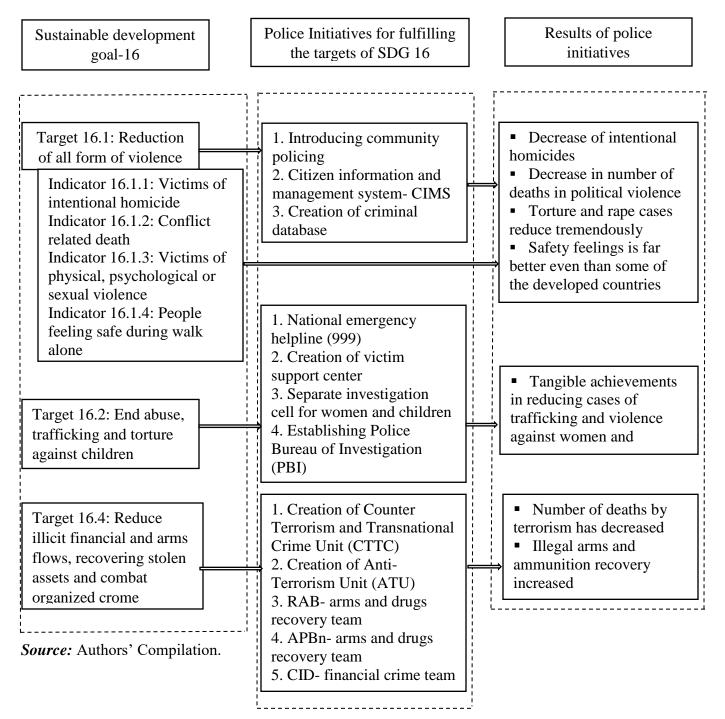
Mainly, secondary sources of data have been used to meet the objectives. In order to obtain reliable secondary data, various research reports, international indices, country reports, institutional reports, national databases and media reports have been reviewed carefully. Initially, a thorough background study has been conducted by reviewing various literature about sustainable development goals and a theme has been accepted to carry out the study. After that, the study was conducted with the following three consecutive steps. Firstly, among the seventeen sustainable development goals, one specific goal (Goal 16) has been selected where the Bangladesh Police has an immense role to achieve this goal. To be more precise, three targets of this goal have been specified, which are closely related to the functions of the Bangladesh Police. Secondly, the discussion has been made with Bangladesh Police authorities and personnel to find out the initiatives taken by them to meet the specific targets of Goal 16. Different journals, research reports, articles, and media reports have also been reviewed to find out the initiatives of police for fulfilling the specific targets of Goal 16. Finally, the achievements made by Bangladesh Police through taken initiatives in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16 have been presented in this study by reviewing all the information collected from different

sources. Laptop and Smartphone have been used during the preparation of this report. This study has been conducted using the Microsoft Excel application.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework has been developed to draw the full picture of this study (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis on selected targets of goal 16 of SDGs from Bangladesh perspective 4.1.1 Target 16.1

The primary objective of Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to achieve significant reductions in all forms of violence and related death rates worldwide. This goal comprises four specific indicators.

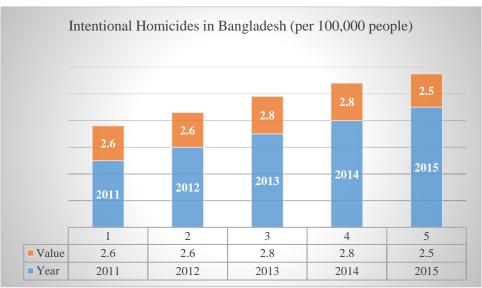
Indicator 16.1.3 Indicator 16.1.4 Indicator 16.1.1 Indicator 16.1.2 • Proportion of • Conflict-related • Proportion of • Proportion of victims of population people feeling deaths per intentional 100,000 subjected to safe while homicide per populations, by physical, walking alone 100,000 gender, age and psychological around their populations, by cause of death. or sexual living area. gender and age. violence in the last 12 months.

Figure 2: Four Indicators of SDG Target 16.1

Source: Authors' Compilation.

For sustainable economic and social improvement to thrive in the long term, it is essential to establish governance systems that uphold the principles and values of the law. Notably, countries that have witnessed a tightening of their law over the past 15 years have also experienced a decline in homicide rates. Conversely, countries with an increase in homicide rates tend to have relatively weaker rule-of-law frameworks (Figure 2). Indicator of target 16.1.1 has been analyzed below using the figure and description (Figure 3):

Figure 3: Intentional Homicides in Bangladesh (per 100,000 people)



Source: The Telegraph (2015).

In Bangladesh, the proportion of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population was 2.6 in 2011 and 2012, 2.8 in 2013 and 2015, and 2.5 in 2015 (The Telegraph, 2015). Intentional homicides occur in every country across the globe, making this indicator universally applicable. It is mandatory to monitor intentional homicides to have better knowledge about their causes, drivers, and consequences, and, further, to take effective and necessary preventive steps. Bangladeshi people experience various forms of violence and cruelty, resulting in loss of life, human suffering, diminished economic activity, and hindered social development. In recent years, political factions (both pro-government and opposition) have been responsible for a significant proportion of violence, including clashes between these groups and the state, leading to violent riots and protests. Forbes Asia (2015), based on data from the Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), stated that over the past five years, at least 1,028 people have been killed and 52,066 injured in 3,540 instances of political violence in Bangladesh (Indicator 16.1.2). The Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry claimed that during the 16 days of unrest in January 2015, businesses lost a total of BDT 350,000 million, or approximately US\$4.5 billion (The Telegraph, 2015). SDG target 16.1 denotes the risk that arises from various conflicts and the impact of insecurity on the people of Bangladesh. Despite the achievement of 84th place in the Global Peace Index (with 162nd place being lowest), IEP (2015) estimated that violence still costs US\$13.5 billion in Bangladesh. According to the news published in the Dhaka Tribune in 2017, the number of deaths in political clashes is decreasing at a noticeable rate. It stated that 44 persons died in 256 political clashes in 2017, 177 died in 907 political clashes in 2016, 153 died in 865 political clashes in 2015, 147 died in 664 political clashes in 2014, and 507 persons died in 848 political clashes in 2013. It indicates that the death rate in political clashes is decreasing shown in the figure below (Figure 4).

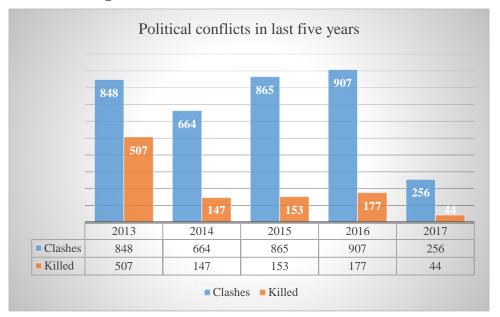


Figure 4: Political Conflicts in Last Five Years

According to Gallup's Global Law and Order Survey (2015), 82 percent elderly people feels safe while walking home at night in Bangladesh, which is far better than many other developed countries, and Bangladesh scored 78th in the criteria of environmental safety and security where

Source: The Dhaka Tribune (2017).

Sri Lanka scored 79th, India 67th, Pakistan 60th and Nepal 73th. It indicates a better position of Bangladesh compared to India and Pakistan in case of people's safety and security, which ensures the Bangladesh police's achievements by securing Indicator 16.1.4 of SDG 16. Nonetheless, violence based on gender is a major issue in Bangladesh. The National Human Rights Council (2015) found that here, more than 35 percent of female respondents go through different types of domestic violence by their husbands, which is, to a great extent less than some developed countries. This denotes Indicator 16.1.3, Proportion of population who are subject to physical, psychological, and sexual violence, is somewhat better in Bangladesh.

4.1.2 Target 16.2

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds a fundamental right to ensure children's protection from all sorts of cruelty and violence. The adoption of a dedicated target (SDG 16.2) in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming to eradicate all forms of cruelty and violence against children, renews the commitment to ensuring every child's entitlement to a life free from violence, negligence, and any sort of abuse and exploitation. The United Nations General Assembly (2015) issued an alarming report on violence against children. It showed that every year, one billion children globally experience different sorts of sexual, physical, or emotional violence, and one child died resulting from violence in every five minutes. Despite reaching epidemic proportions, child violence often remains concealed and unaccepted by society. The repercussions of violence are severe and enduring for its young victims, significantly impacting their health, development, and academic performance. Additionally, violence imposes substantial economic costs, hinders sustainable development, and erodes human capital, impeding societal progress. Preventing violence against children is feasible, and recent years have witnessed tangible advancements, as emphasized in the reports by the Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (2016). According to this report, there was a slight reduction in murder, rape, sexual harassment, and other unsafe situations like road accidents and drowning in 2016. The report further highlights fatality as the primary form of violence against children, affecting both boys and girls. For boys, kidnapping and missing cases rank second, while for girls, sexual abuse and exploitation take precedence. Girls between the ages of 4 and 12 face a particularly high risk of experiencing sexual abuse and exploitation. Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (2016) further reported a total of 2931 cases of fatalities in 2015 and a total of 1441 cases of child fatalities in 2016, which are 51% less compared to the fatalities reported in 2015. This study found fifteen major reasons of child fatalities, of which the top five were (1) drowning, (2) murder, (3) road accidents, (4) homicides, and (5) other deaths caused by accident and these categories incorporate more than 77% of the total child fatalities in Bangladesh.

4.1.3 Target 16.4

Terrorism poses a significant threat not only to the stability of a country and its government but also to the overall security of the state. Acts of terrorism can undermine the sense of safety and security among the populace. In recent years, there have been deliberate efforts by terrorists to destabilize Bangladesh. Prior to the Holi Artisan attacks, minority groups, bloggers, intellectuals, and religious leaders were targeted.

4.2 Initiatives Taken by Bangladesh Police in Implementing Goal 16 of the SDGs

Goal 16 of the SDGs is dedicated to upholding peaceful, healthy, and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of accessible law for all, and building active and

accountable establishments at all levels. This study is conducted on some selected targets and indicators that are highly linked with the functions of the Bangladesh police. Bangladesh police has also taken some effective and modern initiatives which will work as a driving force to implement Goal 16 of the SDGs. Community policing has become a major tool to involve the public in police activities. It helps to combat terrorism from the grassroots level of a society. Bangladesh Police is preparing for a big leap with the help of newly established departments, modernization of existing ones, and involvement with the public from the grassroots level, which helps to achieve Target 16.1. Citizen Information and Management Systems (CIMS) form has been introduced by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) as a modern system to collect detail information of citizen living in the city which supports to fulfill target 16.1 by helping police to reduce all form of violence and related death, as well as to hinder and detect criminal activities. Bangladesh police is also preserving a Criminal database to find out the habitual offenders and helping to reach target 16.1. Bangladesh police is reputedly operating a national emergency helpline 999, a toll-free service for all, for urgent needs. It also provides services in the case of any torture against women and children, exploitation, accident, crime, fire, or ambulance. It is the most responsive emergency number in the country and also an important initiative for the upsurge of the Bangladesh police force to serve. Pro-active and intelligence-based policing helped Bangladesh to make a stable country with a minimum level of violence and torture, which is under control now, denoting target 16.2 of ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against women and children.

The rate of intentional homicide increases with the inefficiency of law enforcement agencies. Bangladesh police have undertaken several steps to reduce torture against women and children (Target 16.2) and to reduce intentional homicides (Target 16.1), such as

- Creation of the post of child affairs officer
- Setting up a separate investigation cell for women and children
- Establishing a victim support center
- Establishing a separate investigation unit named Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI)
- Emphasizing on scientific investigation in The Strategic Plan (2018-2020).

Bangladesh Police has set up a new unit named the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) Unit for the purpose of combating terrorism. Enhancing police capabilities to fight against the updated form of militancy and terrorism is the main target of this unit. It includes-

- Bomb disposal unit,
- K-9 Unit (Dog Unit),
- Crime scene unit,
- Cyber-crime unit,
- SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics Team),
- R&D unit (Research and Development).

These units actively function to control militancy, terrorism, and crime, like money laundering, transnational crimes, arms flow, human trafficking, and drug smuggling, as mentioned in target 16.4. Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) was also formed with the above-mentioned sub-units to control and combat against updated form of militancy and terrorism. The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has a specialized unit called the Financial Crime Unit, solely responsible for dealing with the money laundering activities of Bangladesh. It's doing great and contributing a

lot to achieving target 16.4 by fighting against money laundering. Bangladesh Police is working to combat terrorism from the very beginning of the problem. Bangladesh Police has shown its Zero Tolerance to terrorism (Marjan, 2017). As a result, 342 Islamic terrorists have been killed in different operations, while 37 security forces, along with police have sacrifice their life during these operations which has been mentioned in the following Table 1.

Year	SFs	Terrorists	Total
2013	18	133	379
2014	9	22	60
2015	2	31	56
2016	4	74	121
2017	4	52	65
2018	0	3	3
Total*	37	342	749

 Table 1: Fatalities-Islamist Terrorism 2013 - 2018

Source: Strategic Plan (2018-2020).

The Bangladesh Police is showing a fantastic performance against the terrorists. It is more visible after the Holey Artisan Attack. However, terrorism is a global phenomenon; the Police should be proactive for new threats. The action of the police cannot be sustainable if there is a lack of participation from the people. It is to be noted that the counter terrorism task is not only for the police. Fairly, it is the responsibility of each and every citizen to assist the police in the counter terrorism task. At the same time, all need to be united to uproot terrorism from the beloved country. Illegal arms and ammunition are the source of violence and organized crime. Different units of the Bangladesh Police, such as the Rapid Action Battalion, Armed Police Battalion, and the Detective Branch, are working for the reduction of illicit arms and ammunition flow, which is also an important target of SDG Goal 16. Furthermore, the responsibilities of policing encompass a wide range of duties, including general law enforcement as well as specialized tasks such as managing public unrest and disturbances, investigating complex domestic and transnational crimes, safeguarding the state and its government, gathering quick and accurate intelligence to prevent crimes proactively, controlling boarders, and providing safety and security to delicate installations and establishments.

5. Conclusion

Bangladesh Police is the apex law-enforcing agency of the country. It helps to maintain the law and order situation of the country. It is also an important part of the country's development process. As a part of the Criminal Justice System, without active participation from the police force, it is impossible to achieve the SDGs. Effective policing plays an important role in upholding economic improvement by safeguarding private and public business activities. It also ensures their security against ordinary criminal acts, fosters a sense of safety, reduces the fear of victimization, and encourages private economic endeavors, as people trust that their hard-earned assets will be protected from both criminals and any corrupt practices within the police force. Goal 16 of the SDGs includes security-related issues, which are absent in the MDG framework. The SDGs have been cautiously appraised for this issue. The 2030 agenda encompasses an ambitious framework that seeks to identify the prime causes of poverty by establishing a clear link between peace, security, justice, and sustainable development. It is almost impossible to

achieve poverty eradication and sustainable development without tackling insecurity. Meaningful and sustainable development can be achieved depending on two main pillars of development-Security and Peace, which are the prime functions of the Police. Specifically, to implement Goal 16, policing is the most important stakeholder. Violence, intentional homicides, women and children's repressions, human trafficking, and illegal arms and ammunition flow are all included in the indicator of Goal 16 of the SDGs, and the Bangladesh Police has undertaken several initiatives to implement SDG 16. Firstly, they have taken the initiative to increase the number of police. Now the police-to-person ratio in Bangladesh is 1:815. A number of female officers are also increasing day by day, which will help to create a child and women-friendly Thana. Secondly, several new units such as the anti-terrorism unit, the cybercrime unit, police internal oversight, the police bureau of investigations, etc., have been created to combat terrorism and organized crime, and also to reduce violence. Community and beat policing are the new tools for the Bangladesh police, which are helping to minimize the gap between police and people, because without the help of people, police will not be able to successfully implement all the targets under goal 16. Bangladesh police have shown their efficiency and eligibility to combat all kinds of violence and are worldwide praised for their role in combating terrorism and extremism. Moreover, it needs the assistance of government and non-government institutions to fully implement the different targets and indicators under goal 16. The three targets analyzed in this paper also need special political and social care to be successfully implemented.

5.1 Limitations and Future Research Directions

As this study has been conducted mainly based on secondary data and a few primary data from discussions with the police authorities and personnel, more primary data could add something more to this study. There are some limitations of the current information in this study because of the unavailability of the secondary sources. In the future, a more detailed study will be possible when the time for achieving the SDGs comes closer and more information will be available in numerous sources.

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