



POLICY BRIEF

Protecting Bangladesh's Future: A Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for Environmental Sustainability

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M Zakir Hossain Khan

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Protecting Bangladesh: A Multi-Sectoral Action Plan for Environmental Sustainability

Dhaka, along with the rest of Bangladesh, faces a critical pollution crisis that demands immediate and decisive action. Air and plastic pollution are severely impacting public health, the environment, and the economy. While the government has taken some steps to address these issues, a lack of effective implementation, insufficient monitoring, and a fragmented waste management system have hindered progress. This policy brief outlines key recommendations for the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to prioritize, building upon your stated priorities and leveraging existing government initiatives.

Problem Statement:

Issue	Severity & Impact
Air Pollution	Ranked most polluted globally (IQAir, 2023). Dhaka residents lose 6.8 years of life expectancy, with annual healthcare costs exceeding USD 1.7 billion. (Greenpeace, 2023; AQLI, 2023). 65% of youth reported air pollution as the most frequent type of pollution in their locality, while 32% of youth report frequently suffering from air pollution-related illnesses. (Youth Survey Insights. Change Initiative, 2022)
Plastic Pollution	70% of plastic waste is mismanaged, ending up in landfills, waterways, and oceans, leading to flooding, harming marine life, and entering the food chain. (World Bank, 2021b). 85% of youth consider plastic pollution a major problem, particularly in urban areas. Drainage clogging, waterlogging, and environmental damage were identified as key problems. (Youth Survey Insights. Change Initiative, 2022)
Water & River Pollution	- Industrial effluent, untreated sewage, agricultural runoff, and plastic waste contaminate rivers, impacting water quality, aquatic life, and human health. 83% youth reported that water pollution has caused health problem in their locality (Youth Survey Insights. Change Initiative, 2022)
Noise Pollution	Noise from traffic, construction, and social events exceeds safe limits, impacting public health and well-being.
Encroachment & Pollution	Illegal encroachment on rivers, forests, and wetlands drives pollution and ecosystem degradation, threatening biodiversity, water security, and livelihoods. (Environmental Issues in Bangladesh, n.d.)

Issue	Severity & Impact
Biodiversity Loss	The Sundarbans lost 75% of its tiger population between 2004 and 2024, highlighting the impact of habitat destruction, pollution, and encroachment.
Climate Change	Rising sea levels threaten 17.95% of Bangladesh's coastal area by 2100, potentially reducing rice production by 5.8%-9.1% due to salinity. (Climate Change Initiatives of Bangladesh Towards Climate Resilience, n.d.). A majority of respondents believed achieving 100% renewable electricity by 2030 was possible. (Youth Survey Insights. Change Initiative, 2022)
Economic & Social Costs	Pollution cost Bangladesh 17.6% of GDP in 2019, disproportionately affecting the poor and vulnerable.

Drivers of Environmental Degradation:

- **Unplanned Urbanization & Industrialization:** Rapid growth has outpaced sustainable development, concentrated pollution sources and leading to encroachment. This is reflected in [Percentage] of youth reporting high pollution levels in their districts. (Hussein, 2024; Change Initiative, 2022)
- **Weak Enforcement & Lack of Transparency:** Corruption, weak penalties, and a lack of transparency have created impunity for polluters and encroachers. 44% of youth perceive government inaction on air pollution, highlighting this challenge. (Hussein, 2024; Islam, 2024; Mustajib, 2024; Change Initiative, 2022)
- **Fragmented Waste Management System:** A lack of source segregation and an inefficient waste collection system, particularly reliant on the informal sector, result in mismanaged waste. (Khatun et al., 2023; Change Initiative, 2022)
- **Limited Public Participation & Awareness:** Public understanding of environmental issues and their health and economic impacts remains low, hindering proactive engagement. (Khatun et al., 2023)
- **Climate Change Vulnerability:** Bangladesh's geography and dense population make it acutely vulnerable to climate change impacts. (Rashid et al., 2024; Change Initiative, 2022)

Recommendations:

Timeframe	Action	Department Responsible	Justification
Immediate (0-12 Months)			
Implement polythene bag charge	Enforce the existing ban and impose a 200% charge on all polythene bags at retail outlets.	DoE, with support from city corporations and local authorities	Aligns with the priority to reduce single-use plastic and the public's willingness to pay for alternatives.
Enhance air quality monitoring & transparency	Install additional CAMs in Dhaka, publish real-time data online, and launch public awareness campaigns on the health and economic costs of air pollution.	DoE, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting	Addresses data gaps, promotes transparency, and empowers citizens to take action.
Launch a "Clean Rivers for Bangladesh" Campaign	Raise awareness about river pollution through a multi-platform campaign that highlights the health and economic costs of pollution. Utilize youth creativity through competitions (photography, art, video).	DoE, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, BWDB	Promote responsible waste disposal, industrial effluent treatment, and citizen monitoring of river water quality.
Mid-Term (12-24 Months)			
Introduce a Carbon Tax	Impose a phased carbon tax on polluting industries, starting with a 3% tax on fossil fuels in the next budget, gradually increasing to 15% by 2041.	MoEFCC, Ministry of Finance, NBR, Energy Regulatory Commission	Aligns with international best practices, incentivizes cleaner production, and generates revenue for environmental initiatives.

Timeframe	Action	Department Responsible	Justification
Increase penalties & empower citizens	Amend the Environment Court Act to: 1) Increase penalties for environmental violations, particularly for repeat offenders. 2) Allow citizens to directly file cases for environmental harm.	MoEFCC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Law	Strengthens enforcement, deters violations, and promotes environmental justice.
Develop a National Noise Pollution Control Plan	Establish noise limits for various sources (traffic, construction, social events) and enforce them through monitoring, public awareness campaigns, and stricter penalties.	DoE, Ministry of Home Affairs, City Corporations, Department of Public Health	Addresses the growing threat of noise pollution and protects public health and well-being.
Develop public transport electrification plan	Conduct a feasibility study, secure financing, and create a phased implementation roadmap for electrifying public bus fleets in Dhaka.	Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, in collaboration with the MoEFCC and the Ministry of Power	Prioritizes public transport over private EVs for greater impact on air quality and demonstrates government leadership.
Establish a Green Entrepreneurship Support Program	Financial incentives: Tax breaks, grants, and subsidized loans for green businesses. Technical assistance: Training, mentorship, and access to technology for developing and	Ministry of Industries (Mol), in collaboration with the MoEFCC, Ministry of Finance, and relevant financial institutions.	Green entrepreneurship offers significant potential for economic growth, job creation, and environmental sustainability.

Timeframe	Action	Department Responsible	Justification
	scaling up green innovations.		
Long-Term (2-5 Years)			
Establish a National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy	Develop a comprehensive strategy based on scientific evidence, stakeholder input, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Focus on habitat restoration, protected area expansion, combating wildlife crime, and mainstreaming biodiversity into national planning.	MoEFCC, Ministry of Land, Ministry of Agriculture, Forest Department, Research Institutions, Local Communities	Protects Bangladesh's unique biodiversity, safeguards ecosystem services, and ensures sustainable livelihoods.
Implement Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	Develop and implement a national EPR framework for all plastic products, making producers responsible for the entire life cycle, including collection and recycling.	MoEFCC, in collaboration with relevant ministries and industry stakeholders	Shifts responsibility upstream, incentivizes sustainable design, and reduces reliance on informal recycling.
Establish a National Waste Management Framework	Create a comprehensive framework that prioritizes waste segregation at source, develops formal waste collection and recycling systems, and promotes a circular economy.	MoEFCC, in collaboration with city corporations, local authorities, and the informal sector	Addresses the systemic issues leading to plastic pollution and promotes sustainable waste management practices.

Timeframe	Action	Department Responsible	Justification
Create a National Air Quality Management Plan (NAQMP)	Develop a comprehensive plan with clear targets, emission reduction measures across sectors (industry, transport, energy), and mechanisms for public participation and stakeholder engagement.	MoEFCC, in collaboration with relevant ministries and agencies	Provides a long-term roadmap for achieving clean air goals and ensures a coordinated and comprehensive approach.
Establish an Environmental Prosecution Agency	Create an independent agency, shielded from political interference, to handle environmental violations and ensure the timely prosecution of cases.	MoEFCC, in collaboration with the Ministry of Law	Strengthens enforcement, improves accountability, and promotes environmental justice.
Strengthen International Collaboration	Advocate for increased global climate finance and technology transfer, prioritizing adaptation. Strengthen partnerships with India and Nepal on transboundary pollution, sharing data and technology, and implementing joint monitoring. Promote the CVP's "Climate Prosperity Plan" globally.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoEFCC, Ministry of Finance, Relevant Sectoral Ministries	Secures international support, promotes regional solutions to shared environmental challenges, and accelerates Bangladesh's transition to a green economy.

These recommendations offer a roadmap for transformative environmental action in Bangladesh. By prioritizing immediate measures, building institutional capacity, and integrating environmental sustainability into national planning, the government can protect public health, conserve its natural heritage, and ensure a greener and more prosperous future for all Bangladeshis.

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