# Engaging Beneficiaries for Development Participation
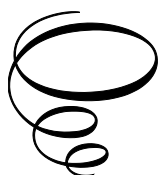
# Engaging Beneficiaries for Development Participation:

*When, How, and To What Extent?*

By

Nandita Dutta

**Cambridge**
**Scholars**
Publishing

*To my parents Chitta Ranjan Datta & Bani Datta*
*– my mentors, my inspirations*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND BOXES

## Figures

Fig. 1.1. Categories of developed and developing countries
Fig. 2.1. GOs' responses to BE
Fig. 2.2. NGOs' responses to BE
Fig. 2.3. Integration of BE and monitoring in donor-funded projects
Fig. 2.4. Community engagement in local development
Fig. 3.1. Interactions of organisations and beneficiaries in project management
Fig. 3.2. Interactive activities for BE in project management
Fig. 3.3. Relationship between microcredit and BE
Fig. 4.1. M&E in the government's development planning
Fig. 5.1. GO–NGO partnership for BE in service delivery
Fig. 5.2. Cross-sector partnership for BE
Fig. 6.1. Development process and BE for participation

## Tables

Table 1.1. The research context: Bangladesh
Table 1.2. Development initiatives and focus on people (1940s to date)
Table 1.3. Predetermined factors for purposive sampling
Table 2.1. What does "engagement" mean to GOs and NGOs?
Table 3.1. Beneficiary responses to DevCom within project settings
Table 4.1. Factors related to GO–NGO advantages for BE

## Boxes

Box 1. Beneficiary integration into NGO objectives
Box 2. Talking face-to-face to engage beneficiaries
Box 3. BE and community harmony
Box 4. Engaging communities in public-sector procurement
Box 5. BE is difficult if not coordinated well

# FOREWORD

Now, more than ever, community participation and engagement in community development is essential. With the United Nations' call for reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, industry, innovation and infrastructure, decent work and economic growth, no poverty, good health and wellbeing, and many other key goals (United Nations, 2015), prioritising beneficiary engagement is essential, particularly in developing nations. This book presents a topic that is seldom discussed in the development field – how development participation is achieved in the Bangladesh context. It presents the idea that how and when beneficiaries are engaged influences the extent of, and outcomes of, participation. It's a novel concept, and the book, Engaging Beneficiaries for Development Participation: When, How and to What Extent? is thoroughly researched to present comprehensive recommendations.

Nandita Dutta has explored development participation in Bangladesh, a country which hosts many NGOs that work together to undertake the country's development agenda. An explanation of terminologies is provided and the planning and implementation of development interventions by integrating people in the process is explored in detail, as ideas for beneficiary engagement are proposed.

This book offers insightful references to the country's development planning and strategies which are specifically related to people-oriented development, starting from the first five-year plan in 1973. A framework of how people-oriented concepts gradually progressed and integrated into the country's development planning is also incorporated.

NGOs connect with beneficiaries to give them access to development. Whether the public sector can engage beneficiaries has seldom been discussed in the development literature. This book reveals how some of the government departments are responsible for engaging beneficiaries in the pursuit of development participation. NGOs find it helpful to partner with the government to carry out their development agenda. Rather than achieving participation alone, NGOs prefer to work closely with the government, private sector and UPs to help these organisations to reach beneficiaries at the grassroots level.

One issue raised in this book is that NGOs are not the only institution to connect beneficiaries, and in fact, NGOs work in competition, or perhaps,

with, Governments to engage beneficiaries. While arguing that beneficiary engagement is a prerequisite for development participation, this book reveals that it takes place within government and NGO project settings associated with many other enabling factors. The book also raises a few concerns, such as the future of participation in the absence of projects, and whether participation in development is still a priority.

This well researched book contributes an understanding of development from the perspective of the institutions responsible, and also the beneficiaries at the grassroot levels. Within a contemporary understanding of developing countries, and engaging with community participation, this book fills an important gap in the market. I commend Dutta for her work on this. Within the chaotic and rapidly changing global environment, a greater understanding of development, and community participation is needed. This book can enable the beginning of many conversations around this space, and development plans to be implemented.

Professor Raechel Johns, Canberra Business School,
University of Canberra

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| ADP | Annual Development Programme |
| ASA | Association of Social Advancement |
| BARD | Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development |
| BBS | Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics |
| BDT | Currency of Bangladesh |
| BPATC | Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre |
| BRAC | Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee |
| BTRC | Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission |
| CDRF | Capacity Development Results Framework |
| CHT | Chittagong Hill Tracts |
| DAE | Department of Agriculture Extension |
| DMB | Disaster Management Bureau |
| DPP | Development Project Proforma |
| DWA | Directorate of Women Affairs |
| ERD | Economic Relations Division |
| ESDO | Eco Social Development Organisation |
| FDI | Foreign Development Index |
| FGD | Focus-group discussion |
| FWV | Family-welfare volunteer |
| FY | Financial year |
| FYPs | Five Year Plan |
| GED | General Economic Division |
| GOs | Government Organisations |
| GOB | Government of Bangladesh |
| GSS | Gono Shahajjo Sangstha |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| HRBA | Human Rights Based Approach |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ICT4D | Information and Communication Technology for Development |
| IMED | Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Division |
| LFM | Logical Framework Matrix |
| LGRD | Local Government and Rural Development |
| LGED | Local Government Engineering Division |

LGIs          Local Government Institutions
M&E           Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG           Millennium Development Goal
MLAA          Madaripur Legal Aid Association
MoA           Ministry of Agriculture
MoF           Ministry of Finance
MoHFW         Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoWCA         Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
NAPD          National Academy for Planning and Development
NGOAB         NGO Affairs Bureau
NGO           Nongovernmental Organisation
NILG          National Institute for Local Government
NPM           New Public Management
OECD          Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PKSF          Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation
PPRC          Power and Participation Research Centre
RDA           Rural Development Academy
RDRS          Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service
RMG           Readymade garments
SDG           Sustainable Development Goal
TA            Technical Assistance
TAPP          Technical Assistance Project Proforma
TIB           Transparency International Bangladesh
UCEP          Underprivileged Children Education Program
UISC          Union Information Service Centre
UH&FPO        UPZ Health and Family Planning officer
UN            United Nations
UNDP          United Nations Development Program
UNO           UPZ Nirbahi (Executive) Officer
UP            Union Parishad (council)
UPZ           Upazila (sub-districts)
WB            World Bank
WBG           World Bank Group

# CHAPTER ONE

# UNPACKING THE QUEST

## Introduction

It is difficult to find any development literature that does not discuss people, given that the concept in itself is about people and their participation. The government in any given country routinely undertakes development initiatives that are designed for and delivered to its citizens. In turn, citizens are expected to be involved in conveying their opinions appropriately, take part in implementing developmental activities, provide feedback on how they benefit from development, and continue with the benefits they receive from these initiatives. This broad understanding of development is narrowed by projects at the micro-level, where participation of target beneficiaries in individual ventures seems to be an integral part of project management. Discussions on development also argue that governments do not wish to pursue development alone but instead partner with nongovernment organisations (NGOs) to respond to their policy advocacy and ensure its intended services reach the people in need. Development practitioners in both sectors are likewise encouraged to dedicate great efforts to ensuring that developmental decisions come from people (or beneficiaries at the micro level) engaged in the process, and who can thus contribute at both local and national levels.

However, one question remains unanswered: How are people participating in the development process, and what roles, experiences and strategies are relevant for government organisations (GOs) and NGOs in the pursuit of development participation? Within the context of Bangladesh, it proved additionally important to identify the factors that stimulate or influence these organisations to ensure that people do participate in the process of managing development initiatives. Based on fieldwork conducted for the PhD study,[1] specific queries answered in this book are related to: factors of influence from government policy and development

---

[1] Background provided in Acknowledgement. The study was conducted from February 2013 to December 2019.

partners; how engaging beneficiaries leads to development participation; when NGOs are perceived as essential for ensuring people's participation, if GOs are equally responsible (and capable); and gauging the understanding (if any) between government and NGO entities working to bring people closer to development.

Bangladesh has experienced steady and continuous improvement in economic growth, with local government effecting development programs and policies to include non-state actors (NGOs, private sectors). The public-sector development planning and policies are focused on delivering services to people, interacting with rural people, undertaking rural and infrastructural development, integrating women in national expansion, and achieving and sustaining the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Also noted was the country's transformation from "disaster victim" to "disaster manager," and from a food-deficit nation of 70 million people to a "nearly self-sufficient" country of 168.22 million (BBS 2021), bringing "abroad" home through exports and expats, and connecting "isolated villages" to a "national economy" (PPRC 2016, 3). Along with the public sector, the key players contributing to the country's development include private sectors, NGOs and development partners. Bangladesh is likewise renowned for its various microfinancing models led by the Grameen Bank, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the Association of Social Advancements (ASA) and other leading NGOs working in various sectors. The private sector is equally responsible for contributing to the country's gradual economic development through readymade garment (RMG) exports, remittances from overseas employment, and private-sector investments and industries. Bangladesh targets becoming an upper middle-income country by 2031 and a higher-income country by 2041 according to an overall scenario of a foreign-assistance management report of 2021–2 by the Economic Relations Division [ERD] (n. d.).

The country's development planning over five financial years (FY) forecasts growth relative to its Annual Development Program (ADP) budget allocation. Along with the government's allowance for the ADP, Bangladesh also receives project aid in the form of grants and loans (ERD 2012). Project aid is integral to the country as it finances ADPs related to human-resource development; social, health, educational and family welfare; as well as infrastructural development (Raihan 2012, 250). The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) is responsible for undertaking development programs. However, NGOs also manage development projects in various service sectors, as either implementing partners to the government or independent providers of services, skills and advocacy as approved by the relevant government authority. Government line ministries, departments and field

administrations are further held accountable for undertaking development initiatives and delivering services to people. NGOs generally implement development projects, receiving funds from development partners and the GOB, and operating within legal and administrative policy frameworks. Naturally, each has financial and administrative accountability to their respective authorities, including line ministries, departments and the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), as applicable within the national context. Table 1.1 presents a snapshot of the country context.

**Table 1.1. The research context: Bangladesh**

| **Political context** |
|---|
| • The People's Republic of Bangladesh established on December 16, 1971 following its victory in the nine-month liberation war with Pakistan |
| • Change from parliamentary to presidential form of government in 1973 |
| • Long-term military regime from 1975 to 1990 |
| • Mass movement against military regime in 1990 |
| • General election in 1991 and return to democracy with the parliamentary form of government |
| • Change of government through general elections, maintaining a parliamentary democracy from 1991 to date. |
| **Geographic context (BBS 2022)** |
| • Area 147,570 km$^2$ |
| • Generally plain land with hilly terrain in a couple of districts in Sylhet and Chittagong divisions |
| • Borders with:<br>  o India to the north and west<br>  o The Bay of Bengal to the south<br>  o India and Myanmar to the east |
| **Development context in brief (BBS 2022), WB Country Data (online), ERD (n. d.)** |
| • Experienced end of war in 1971; natural disasters and famine immediately after independence |
| • Steady economic growth of GDP from (-)14% in 1972 to 6.9% in 2021; GDP: USD 416 billion |
| • Per-capita income USD 2,591 in 2020–1 |

| |
|---|
| • MDG achievements in poverty reduction, girl child education, reducing child mortality rate and ensuring child and maternity health |
| • Foreign assistance: 56% multilateral and 44% bilateral commitments in FY 2021–2 |
| • Private-sector investment of GDP: 23.70% in FY 2020–1 |
| • Share of RMG in national export: 81.16% in FY 2020–1 |
| • Received remittances: BDT 2,101.31 billion in FY 2020–1 |
| • Grant disbursement stands at 1.97% and loan disbursement at 98.03% in FY 2021–2 |
| • Total electricity generation in FY 2020–1 stands at 80,423 MKWh |
| • Development priorities: agriculture and rural development, industry, energy, transport, human-resources development, population planning, education and training, health and sanitation, nutrition and food safety, ICT and telecommunication, infrastructural development |
| **People context (BBS 2022)** |
| • Total population: 168.22 m |
| • Literacy rate: 75.2% |
| • Language: Bangla (Bengali) |
| **Administrative units (BBS 2022)** |
| • 8 divisions, 64 districts, 12 city corporations, 330 municipalities, 495 Upazilas[2] (UPZ), 4,571 Union Parishads[3] (UPs) |

Although they play a significant role in the country's development, GOs and NGOs are criticised on various fronts, particularly for the lack of accountability to development beneficiaries, a preference for donors to provide foreign aid directly to NGOs, and NGO agreements for donor conditionality. Conversely, there is inadequate coordination between the GOs and NGOs in implementing development programs, top-down decision making in the public sector, and governmental control over NGO activities which are commonly attributed to GOs.

However, none of these issues has yet led to any critical discussions on how development is integrating people, what roles GOs and NGOs play in connecting people, and whether people are integrated into the country's

---

[2] Sub-districts; there are Upazilas under each district.
[3] Union councils, a local-government body at the rural level under the Ministry of LGRD.

development process. The extent to which the policies of these organisations are inclusive of their people remains unclear, and the leveraging within their partnership, geared to ensure people are engaged in development, is yet to receive critical attention. These gaps certainly create an opportunity for this book to illustrate how development participation is achieved in a specific country context such as Bangladesh. To this end, the book reflects the two main areas of development discourse: first, the conceptual framework and organisational roles of state and non-state actors that are expected to involve people in national-development initiatives; and second, the process of integrating people into the development process.

Development concepts have been evolving since the 1940s, focusing on economic development, poverty reduction, decentralisation and the participation of non-state actors and people to ensure inclusive, participatory and people-centred development. In the practical applications of theories and concepts, it is the country and people contexts that determine participation achievements. In the Bangladesh context, how beneficiaries are engaged determines how much they participate in the development process, and their reception of and response to development interventions largely impact that participation.

## Development Participation: The Background

Development is a contested concept; despite numerous critiques, it has been accepted globally, and governments consider development as a basis for ensuring continuous improvement in people's lives. Thus, development is undeniable, be it a success or failure for a country that works to improve a specific condition, such as poverty (Rist 2007). The concept is also a paradox, as explained by Kothari and Minogue (2002). To some it means imperialism: it creates a direct dependence on the developed world and is a result of colonisation. The Western developed countries thought that exiting once-colonised countries would create a vacuum they could fill through assistance while not ruling directly (Kohli 1986). This circumstance reflects the dependency of an underdeveloped nation on developed nations' aid, where reliance eventually manifests in policymaking and domestic rule begins to reflect foreign interests (Spivak 1999; Smith 1986; Kentor and Boswell 2003; Escobar 2010). Reflecting on development in the West for countries below the thresholds of income, economy and development (as standardised by the UN and OECD glossary) opened debates concerning developing-world dependency on the developed world. These debates suggest that the former is expected to follow the latter's lead due to the developed world's comparatively overwhelming economic power and

political influence. It is said that dependency on aid causes resources to flow from underdeveloped to developed countries in the name of development (Willis 2011, 79).[4] Crush's (1995) notion of the colonial influence of development connects it closely with geography, dividing the world between developed countries bursting with resources and systems, and underdeveloped countries lacking capital and desperate for development. Evidently, development has little "conviction and coherence" if it is not related to geography and does not further promote ideas about developed and underdeveloped regions of the world (Crush 1995, 550).

These criticisms of colonisation and dependency give rise to the concept of "decolonised" development on the basis that difference should be considered and the local context duly addressed, as well as local actions valued. In this regard, "decolonisation" is further defined as a "self-reflexive collective practice in the transformation of the self, reconceptualization of identity and political mobilization" – all of which Mohanty (2003, 8) deems necessary in encouraging the process. Further, the concept involves engagement with everyday issues and various social groups, "premised on ideas of autonomy and self-determination" as well as "democratic practice" (Mohanty 2003, 254). Similar arguments are given by Sabaratnam (2017, as cited in Buba 2019), who outlines a need to decolonise development assistance and engage more with the targets (i.e. the people or beneficiaries of development) by considering the reality of their conditions. Thus, development is defined as "an idea, an objective and an activity," with related questions being "for whom and whose development" and what activities are included (Kothari and Minogue 2002, 12). For Rist (2007, 488), development should be defined as "actual social practices and their consequences," which anyone can identify. Development practice is expected to have a "human side," which has been missing in achieving economic growth (Campbell and Hoyle 1990, 6–7). The notion of "progress-based development" that emerged in the 1960s failed to provide solutions to alleviate poverty and instead created disillusionment among theorists and practitioners, leading to the concept of developmental aid for the rural poor (Shams 1990, 222). To address this "human side," development approaches had to shift their focus towards integrating rural development that could address the "human" needs of even the poorest groups. This approach extended to providing access to social services such as health, education, nutrition, family planning and employee productivity, instead of purely economic growth (Rondinelli 1986, 112–13). The International

---

[4] The author imagines a structure that outlines the dependency of peripheral entities (i.e. recipients of development assistance) on core entities (i.e. providers of development assistance).

Labour Organization, United National Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank (WB) played vital roles in emphasising the "urgent and necessary" need to directly target the globe's more disadvantaged regions (Riddell 2007, 32). Hence, resolving to address the "human side" of development added a new dimension to the development concept, which was certainly nurtured at organisations funnelling developmental aid to underdeveloped countries.

With this focus on the human side, the theories and concepts shifted towards development participation. People, for whom the development is planned and implemented, should influence the development activities through empowerment, capacity building and cost sharing.[5] Chambers (1984, 12) argued in favour of "putting people first," taking community-based development and combining professionalism with the endogenous knowledge rural people possess. This concept of putting people at the centre of development discourse also led to questions of whose voice counts and where the responsibility lies in bringing change – from economic growth to community participation (Holland and Blackburn 1998). Illustrating the philosophy of "people-based" development and how the concept of beneficiary participation emerged, Oakley and Marsden (1984, 11, 25, 28) maintain that organisational structures could provide rural people with avenues of "contact with and a voice in development programs" necessary to mobilise and empower them to "determine which needs, and whose needs will be met through the distribution of resources." This requires the mobilisation of people, which has an effect on those who need to minimise their normal work in order to participate in the development programs, which is why it is called a "tyranny" (Cooke and Kothari 2001). That said, participation is said to be transformational, as illustrated by Hickey and Mohan (2001). In analysing community involvement, the development literature typically prioritises locals to minimise the "mismatch" between community perceptions and practises, as well as outsider policies (Gujja, Pimbert and Shah 1998, 60). The role of the government in integrating people into development was further emphasised with the concept of New Public Management (NPM), minimising the gaps between the state, non-state actors and people, placing the markets ahead of the government (Steger and Roy 2010; Boston 2011; Apeldoorn and Overbeek 2012). Following the emergence of NPM, people became the customers of the public service in many developed countries (Jamil 2002). Thus, state (public-sector) and non-

---

[5] Paul (1987) identified that the WB mainstreamed public engagement in 38% of its projects.

state actors (NGOs, private-sector) were deemed essential to addressing people's demands in the development.

People-oriented development found new dimension in the work of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen. His book *Development as Freedom* (1999) established connections between the development achieved and the freedom people possessed as outcomes of growth. His concept of development as "freedom" opposes "unfreedom," in which individuals cannot have or sustain the benefits of development if they, for example, are bound by hunger, encounter child mortality, are deprived of political rights or are denied access to social services. According to this understanding of development as akin to freedom, various processes and opportunities must be in place for people to participate in their prospective growth, which Corbridge (2002) considers as the existence of "geographical space" in linking development and "freedom." Essentially, this space differs according to physical location and whether governments are authoritarian or democratic. The author is further critical of denoting a straightforward relationship between both forms of rule when measuring development as freedom. He finds that "true development" involves the "active participation of informed human beings in the processes of social change" (Corbridge 2002, 191). This concept of linking "informed" people to development certainly creates an opportunity to examine the strategies available for engagement in the process, through which people are informed and capable of understanding the benefits in a specific country context.

The beginning of the new millennium saw a declaration to achieve MDGs by 2015. This comprehensive focus on development reinforced the importance of creating people-centred development goals. The creation of the Millennium Declaration in 2000 soon recognised the need for a "collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level," and further clarified the duty for world leaders (if they are donors, governments or heads of states) to honour the "world's people" (UN n. d.). Indeed, the Millennium Declaration alerted the attention of development organisations and practitioners to individual importance in achieving the MDGs. For Fukuda-Parr (2004, 396), these goals put "human development, poverty, people and their lives" at the centre of the global-development agenda, measuring "human wellbeing rather than economic growth," with development adding a different dimension that is "human." The role of people in relation to development was reiterated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in 2015. Kumar, Kumar and Vivekadhish (2016, 2) categorise these goals into three groups covering inclusiveness, sustainability for future generations, and their function in extending the MDGs. Table 1.2

summarises the gradual progression of development concepts in practise focusing on people, evolving at the international level and passed on to countries bound by treaties and declarations.

**Table 1.2. Development initiatives and focus on people (1940s to date)**

| International initiatives | Development focus and people orientation |
|---|---|
| UN Charter 1945 | Social progress for people; better standards of life, fundamental freedoms; excludes "distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion" |
| Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948 | Universal protection of fundamental human rights, entitlement of rights and freedom |
| Economic development in 1950s | Assistance to underdeveloped countries in South and Southeast Asia |
| Formation of Development Assistance Committee, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1960s | Consultation among donors and assistance to less developed countries; private investment in developing countries |
| Common Aid Effort in 1961 | Improving people's standard of life; assisting less developed countries to improve their economies |
| Establishment of Official Development Assistance 1970 | Economic and social development of developing countries |
| Development Cooperation in 1970s | Poverty reduction agenda; rural development |
| Aid Coordination in 1980s | Effectiveness of aid provided to developing countries; structural adjustment; policy making in aid-recipient countries; project appraisal comprising identification, selection, design, monitoring and evaluation |
| Development cooperation in 1990s | People's participation in the development process; democratic government, market and private-sector development |
| MDGs in 2000 | Governments, international community, civil society and private sector working together to achieve development goals centred on people and their development |
| SDGs in 2015 | Peace and prosperity for people and the planet |

Source: adapted from Dutta (2021a), based on Führer (1996), UN (n. d.) and UNDP (n. d.)

The conceptual frameworks of development and participation, though contested, form the basis for development assistance and the strategies undertaken at the international and national levels. Notably, the High Level Forum on Harmonisation held in Rome in 2003, the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda on Action provide key examples of initiatives highlighting the need for improved coordination at the national level. These coordination efforts extend to increased donor and partner countries' respective accountability to their nations' citizens, and efforts to translate development actions into positive change in people's lives. However, increased focus on the procedures, results and effect of developmental assistance and aid coordination meant less attention was given to beneficiaries regarding human rights, social justice and equity (Kelegama 2012, 3). Sjöstedt (2013) argues that the Paris Declaration in particular focuses on the priorities of partner countries, results reporting and prioritising development on behalf of donors. It seems that MDG achievements are geared more towards reaching targets than generating discussions around how people form the basis of developmental success.

## Engaging Beneficiaries for Development Participation: The Gap

Evidently, people have been at the centre of development discussions. However, their integration into the process has not yet been interpreted through the evolution of "engagement" as a concept. Engagement is linked with people's participation in development, which has progressed over several decades. The concept of engaging beneficiaries is less evident in these development concepts; instead, the literature has progressed with the concept of people's participation in development, and its methods, problems and challenges. While development concepts focus on people and their participation, illustrating participation through a beneficiary lens is limited in the development field. Krull (1999, 6) identified popular participation in development programs, defining it as the "voluntary dedication of resources with an expectation of future benefits." Thus, concepts of development participation imply that beneficiaries will actively participate in decision-making, influencing and providing direction in the implementation of development programs and sharing the benefits (Krull 1999). The participatory approach to development concepts argues for this approach. Theoretically, this approach means allowing communities in rural settings to identify problems, plan projects and assist with implementation (Lunt et al. 2018), either by decision-making or resource sharing.

That said, people (or, more specifically, development beneficiaries) may employ "participation calculus" to compare the time and efforts demanded of participation against the potential benefits they expect in return; through this consideration, they can choose whether their involvement will "accrue" to them (Awortwi 2013, 91). "Participation calculus" confers the expectations that beneficiaries have of their involvement in development. Expectations are the critical factors that organisations must address when managing development projects, demanding proper management of ability and expectation upon engagement. According to Purvis, Zagenczyk and McCray (2015, 3), the most important determinant of stakeholder participation lies within one's self-interests,[6] and this is equally true for beneficiaries, as they are the key stakeholders of the development interventions. People may also need adequate freedom to feel confident enough to be involved, or otherwise the engagement process requires greater facilitation for wider involvement. Awortwi (2013) identified that not all communities for whom interventions are undertaken become involved. Thus, the organisational setting (GOs and NGOs in this book) is necessary for conveying development benefits, facilitating beneficiary understanding of the development initiatives, and creating opportunities for the active involvement of beneficiaries (Purvis, Zagenczyk and McCray 2015; Helfer 2006; Sillitoe 2000). Having strategies in place that meet the requisite demands proves essential, as approaches to securing beneficiary participation "across different cultural settings" are inherently "framed" and "operate" according to circumstance (Kenny 2016, 34; Stone 1989).

Lukensmeyer and Torres (2006, 7, 9) distinguish "citizen engagement" from "citizen participation," and define "engagement" as working directly with people throughout a "process" to understand their "concerns and aspirations," which are "consistently understood and considered" in institutional decision making. They add that, in whatever form people are engaged, the purpose is to "recognize and build upon a fundamental right of all citizens to have a say in the decisions that affect their lives." In identifying the problems of participation and suggesting ways to "remake" participation, Eversole (2010) explains participation as an attempt to engage others in decision making, noting that its eventual management and funding are subject to organisational control. Thus "engagement" can be viewed as a process that encourages participation but requires equal facilitation from professional organisations as well as resource support (Eversole 2010).

All these definitions of engaging people in development as beneficiaries describe a process that this book has identified in the Bangladesh context.

---

[6] Self-interests of beneficiaries, organisations and other stakeholders.

Beneficiary engagement also falls under the broad conceptual framework of "stakeholder engagement," which is inextricably linked to most development practises. Taylor (2002, 125) notes its influence on private sectors promoting managerialism in developed countries, eventually spreading to GOs and NGOs in developing countries. According to the WBG (2018) report, multistakeholder engagement began in the 1970s, was formalised in the 1980s and subsequently deepened throughout the 1990s through participatory approaches in various operations; in turn, these efforts reiterated the benefit of recognising citizens' inputs. It is important to note that beneficiaries are not the only stakeholders involved in development, but are part of a whole range of stakeholders in a specific development intervention. Thus, articulating beneficiary engagement through the stakeholder-engagement process is inadequate for illustrating how, when and to what extent beneficiaries are engaged in a specific development context.

Given this interconnection between beneficiary engagement and development participation, the concept of beneficiary engagement has evolved as "people-oriented" development theories have needed to illustrate the conditioning factors under which people (the beneficiaries at the local level) participate. The above findings from literture still require an examination of the context for how and when beneficiaries are engaged to participate in the development process. Also essential to understanding development participation and beneficiary engagement is an understanding of the stimulating factors for beneficiaries getting engaged and eventually participating. This book addresses these gaps in understanding, examining these queries from the viewpoints of GOs, NGOs, development practitioners and beneficiaries in Bangladesh.

Against this backdrop, the book examines beneficiary engagement specific to the development context of Bangladesh by reviewing existing development practises and GO–NGO scopes in engaging beneficiaries. In this context, the book identifies that the scope of beneficiary engagement is embedded in both government and NGO development planning and policies which supplement each other to achieve participation. However, engaging beneficiaries for their participation largely depends on how they receive and respond to development interventions. To this end, organisational infrastructure such as GOs or NGOs and development projects are instrumental in transferring policies into practises and engaging beneficiaries that ultimately results in their participation. It is interesting to discover that engaging beneficiaries is incubated by the development projects[7] which GOs and NGOs undertake and implement at the field level. Different phases of

---

[7] The term "project" is defined later in this chapter.

project management affect beneficiary engagement differently, though the implementation phase covers the largest part of it. Beneficiary engagement is related to a development project in terms of management, personnel, GO–NGO implementation, project templates, service delivery and funding. It requires ongoing interactions with beneficiaries to engage them with the expected outcome of their participation in the development process, identified in this book.

This book reveals that both GOs and NGOs experience challenges and advantages in engaging beneficiaries. Illustrating these challenges and advantages creates an opportunity to observe the extent to which beneficiaries are engaged in the development process. Although the GO–NGO relationship in Bangladesh has been defined as complex because of a lack of coordination and bureaucratic control, the book argues that none of these organisations has absolute leverage to engage beneficiaries without the support of each other in the development field. The existing GO–NGO relationship in Bangladesh is more about coordination than conflicts. Challenges also include new development thrusts, emerging private sectors and mega-projects narrowing the scope of beneficiary engagement. However, the partnership between GOs and NGOs is desirable for minimising challenges and enhancing beneficiary engagement in development. New development opportunities are emerging that can create more scope for GOs and NGOs to engage beneficiaries, ensuring their participation in the process.

## Terminologies

As the discussion progresses, reference to specific terminologies helps retain focus on the book's aims and objectives. Thus, key terms are defined in this section to provide an understanding and further clarify their use in chapter discussions. These terms are commonly used in the literature on development administration, international cooperation, project design and implementation. However, defining these terms specifically for this book is essential in elucidating their connection within the country context.

### Engaging

This term is used to demonstrate how people are involved in development initiatives that either the GOs or NGOs undertake in Bangladesh. "Engaging" with development initiatives includes receiving and responding to information about them and understanding how they will affect the lives and livelihoods of beneficiaries. This book identifies that engaging is a way

to ensure beneficiary participation in the development process. This terminology is based on several definitions of "engaging" identified earlier in this chapter and when investigating the research questions for the study. To keep the key theme clear, the term "beneficiary engagement" is abbreviated to BE.
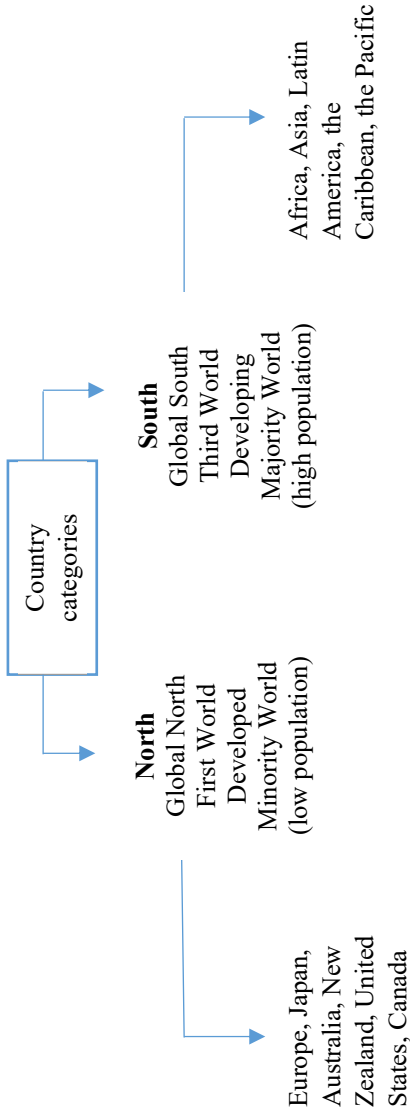
## Beneficiaries

Development deals with beneficiaries at a micro-level and citizens at a macro level, with projects residing in the former relative to development (Gaventa and Valderrama 1999). In this view, the term "beneficiaries" refers to the recipients of development interventions in any given context, including those associated with receiving services through development projects and from GOs, NGOs and local-government institutions. The term "beneficiaries" refers to both men and women at the project setting and participating in the wider development context. In the context of the study, beneficiaries also represent research participants who were interviewed and participated in the focus-group discussion.

## Development

Instead of measuring the statistical scale of progress or financial growth, the term "development" is used as a basis for projects through which the government and NGOs in Bangladesh undertake initiatives to improve beneficiary conditions. In this book it suggests improving conditions (e.g. livelihood, education, social and economic conditions), empowering and building capacity for participation as relevant to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is called a "developing country" based on the categories identified by Willis (2011, 16–19), and illustrated in Fig 1.1.

Unpacking the Quest

**Fig. 1.1. Categories of developed and developing countries**



Country categories

**North**
Global North
First World
Developed
Minority World
(low population)

Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Canada

**South**
Global South
Third World
Developing
Majority World
(high population)

Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Pacific

Source: Dutta (2021a)

## Development participation

As identified in the literature discussed earlier, development participation suggests that beneficiaries actively and/or voluntarily participate in development interventions. They influence the planning of programs by identifying problems, guiding implementation and sharing resources and benefits of the development meant for them. Development participation is linked to BE, considering that the former cannot follow any specific strategy and needs to adapt to the contexts or challenges as they occur (Lunt et al. 2018).

## Projects

Projects comprise the specific development interventions through which agents implement policies in specific areas of development planning in Bangladesh. Herein, "project"[8] refers to development assistance undertaken by the government or NGOs in the service sectors and the community about the capacity development meant for the target beneficiaries. The term "project" helps narrow the focus to a specific area of people's engagement in development, as identified in interviews conducted for the study. The focus is on engagement in service-sector projects such as agriculture, health or education, and other social-development ventures involving capacity and service delivery within specific communities in rural areas. The term "project" in this book refers to technical assistance (TA) and service-sector projects where both GOs and NGOs work directly with beneficiaries. It excludes any infrastructural, capital investment or industrial projects, as NGOs are not involved in these endeavours in Bangladesh.[9]

## Government Organisations (GOs)

The Government of Bangladesh consists of three branches: Executive, Legislative and Judiciary. The term "GOs" refers to the Executive branch (incorporating line ministries, departments and service sectors) and field administration, comprising divisions, districts, Upazilas and Union Parishads. Throughout the book, "GOs" denotes any of these organisations and their representative respondents interviewed or participating in focus-group discussions during fieldwork.

---

[8] See Appendix A. According to the Planning Commission (GOB 2016, 1–22) under the Ministry of Planning, projects are divided into seven categories.
[9] See Appendix A for definitions of different types of projects.