

# Structural Violence and Social Development: A study of Ashrayan-2 Project

Tanzim Ahmed

*Research Officer, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Bangladesh*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2023.10618>

Received: 05 June 2023; Revised: 20 June 2023; Accepted: 24 June 2023; Published: 21 July 2023

**Abstract:** The Ashrayan Project, established under the auspices of the esteemed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh, endeavors to furnish lodging and property entitlements to impoverished and landless households. The endeavor has accomplished a notable feat in enabling the female population, upholding social safety, fostering enhancement of manpower, attaining economic progress, equipping rural vicinities with urban amenities, encouraging ecological durability, and enhancing healthcare provisions. The initiative has facilitated the displacement of more than 524,244 households since its establishment in 1997 while being in conformity with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals. The initiative seeks to offer resilient housing to communities that are susceptible to the impact of environmental crises, including climate change and natural disasters, with a focus on those who are particularly vulnerable. This distinct undertaking has facilitated the advancement of collective growth at an effortless rate, yielding advantages for underprivileged groups and lowering disparities. The endeavor has unveiled novel prospects for enhancement in familial, communal, and financial advancement in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Ashrayan-2 Project, Social Safety, Displacement, Underprivileged, Disparities

## I. Introduction

The Ashrayan-2 Project, also referred to as the Ashrayan Project, is a government initiative under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office in Bangladesh, which aims to provide adequate housing options for families without lands or homes, or those who lack stable residences. This scheme involves the construction of housing units designed to benefit the underprivileged and marginalized segments of society, thereby alleviating their housing-related distress. On the 20th of February in the year 1972, the revered figure often referred to as the "Father of the Nation," Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, embarked upon an undertaking of great social significance. This undertaking consisted of the establishment of a resettlement program aimed at providing a home for the landless and homeless segment of the population, who were experiencing great vulnerability. This program was launched in the village of Charpoddar Gacha, located within the Ramgati Upazila district, which is presently known as the Laxmipur district. Subsequent to the barbaric murder of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, perpetrated by elements opposed to the ideals of liberation, initiatives aimed at restoring and advancing the socio-economic status of destitute and landless households within the nation were suspended. It was not until 1996, when the competent daughter of the country's ruling elite, the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, assumed responsibility for the administration, that the benevolent and constructive programs for these disadvantaged individuals were recommenced. She introduced the concept of the "Comprehensive Development Model" to reintegrate the underprivileged population into society through a range of endeavors. In 1997, she initiated the "Ashrayan Project" under the supervision of the Prime Minister's Office to revive the destitute and homeless individuals of the entire nation. Commencing from Saint Martin Island in Cox's Bazar district, where the project was first implemented to reconstruct the lives of individuals affected by an intense cyclone that caused damage that same year.

Some special features of the project Ashrayan-2 are:

**Women's Empowerment:** Land and property ownership are provided to couples from landless, homeless, destitute, and vulnerable families. Special privileges are given to disabled, river-erosion affected families, freedom fighters, third gender (hijra), elderly, widows, and abandoned spouses. To ensure that the resettled families do not face any complexity in the future regarding land ownership, the Upazila administration registers the land ownership by transferring the registered deed/title, name clearance certificate and mutation in the name of the new owners.

**Ensuring Social Security:** The benefits of other programs, including allowances for freedom fighters, elderly people, widows, and the disabled, are evaluated with rights.

**Human Resource Development:** Members of resettled families are given practical and technical training to get involved in various productive and income-generating activities.

**Economic Development:** Small loans are arranged for socio-economic development of the resettlement families through the Ashraya-2 project and various governmental institutions. Other social organizations and NGOs are also involved in these programs.

**Ensuring Urban Facilities in Rural Areas:** Free electricity connection is provided, and wells are installed for safe drinking water at the project area. Roads are constructed for internal communication, along with community centers, mosques/temples, and graveyards for the resettled families.

**Environmental Sustainability:** Fruit trees, forest trees, and medicinal plants are planted in the project area to encourage home-based agriculture activities among the homeless.

**Improved Health Services:** Health services are arranged through community clinics for the resettled families to ensure better health facilities.

### **Background of the study**

The phenomenon of structural violence has garnered significant academic scrutiny with particular attention paid to its manifestation within the confines of Bangladesh. This pertains to the methods through which societal, governmental, and financial frameworks sustain deliberate inequalities that lead to the deprivation of fundamental human necessities. Prior studies have brought attention to the widespread occurrence and severe ramifications of systemic aggression in Bangladesh, alongside probable approaches to tackle this intricately knitted problem.

The foremost catalyst behind the proliferation of structural violence within the context of Bangladesh is poverty. As per the research conducted by Islam et al. (2017), indigence is a prominent element that aids in the alienation of susceptible demographics, especially females, juveniles, and natives. The scholars contend that destitution results in restricted entry to healthcare, education, and other indispensable amenities, sustaining patterns of cross-generational want and societal ostracism.

Socioeconomic disparity is a pertinent manifestation of systematic aggression in Bangladesh. As per a report released by Oxfam, the wealthiest 1% of Bangladeshi society possesses a greater amount of riches than the remaining 50% of their compatriots. The persistence of this disparity is fueled by an absence of pathways to financial prospects, especially for females and underrepresented factions. The inequitable distribution of economic resources in Bangladesh is further intensified by bias in work environments and restricted entry to credit and financial services.

In addition, there exists a high degree of concentration of land possession among a select group of privileged individuals, which amplifies disparities and restricts prospects for individuals who lack land ownership. The aforementioned circumstance is particularly conspicuous in remote localities, whereby numerous agriculturalists are obliged to toil as hired personnel on said territories, resulting in indebtedness and further segregation. According to Kabeer et al.'s (2018) research, a lack of land ownership serves as a crucial catalyst for poverty and inequality in Bangladesh. This circumstance further aggravates a continuing cycle of oppression and the deprivation of authority.

Furthermore, the exacerbation of structural violence through discrimination on the grounds of gender, social caste, and religious affiliation is a prevalent and consequential issue afflicting numerous individuals within Bangladesh. Females are particularly susceptible to violence that is rooted in their gender, encompassing intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and dowry-linked violence. According to research conducted by Rahman et al.'s (2019), patriarchal conventions and customs sustain and exacerbate instances of gender-related violence, thereby impeding women's ability to obtain legal recourse and assistance.

One of the most ubiquitous domains where systematic oppression is discernible towards hijras is within the realm of medical care. In research conducted by Hoque et al. (2017), it was revealed that hijras in Bangladesh confront major obstacles when it comes to acquiring quality healthcare services, such as unfavorable treatment, marginalization, and insufficient education and empathy from the healthcare professionals. The research contends that this circumstance epitomizes systemic aggression, which sustains unequal health outcomes among hijras.

Furthermore, endowing oppressed communities with agency can effectively mitigate their susceptibility to manipulation and maltreatment. One viable approach to achieve such objectives is through the advocacy of gender equity, safeguarding the entitlements of aboriginal communities, and instituting legislative safeguards for the welfare of workers. An investigation conducted by Hossain and Paul (2018) revealed that endowing women in rural areas with authority and resources can yield extensive outcomes in mitigating destitution and fostering enduring growth.

In conclusion, the occurrence of structural violence in Bangladesh is all-inclusive, and it continues to foster a repetitive chain of impoverished circumstances, unequal distribution of resources, and social isolation. Previous studies have accentuated the fundamental origins and corollaries of systemic aggression and recommended various strategies to tackle this intricate predicament. Through the strategic stimulation of economic progress, the establishment of fair socio-economic policies, and the provision of resources to disadvantaged sectors, the incidence of systemic aggression can be mitigated and a society that is characterized by fairness and impartiality can be advanced in Bangladesh.

## Problem Statement

- Identification of barriers and challenges faced by landless, homeless, destitute, and vulnerable groups in accessing rehabilitation services under Ashrayan Project 2.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of empowerment programs such as training and loans provided through Ashrayan Project 2 in improving livelihoods and socio-economic status of beneficiaries.
- Assessment of the impact of potential earning programs created under Ashrayan Project 2 on poverty alleviation at the individual and community level.

## II. Methodology

**Research Design:** The study's research plan incorporates a blend of quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis techniques, known as a mixed-methods approach. The objective of the research is to investigate the correlation between structural violence and societal advancement in the milieu of the Ashrayan-2 Initiative in Bangladesh.

**Data Collection:** Assorted sources were employed to gather data for this study, which include virtual forums such as YouTube videos, official Bangladesh government websites, and local newspapers. To procure valuable perspectives on the subject matter, consulted were erudite articles authored by subject matter experts. Furthermore, an investigation was conducted on project records to comprehend the project's aims, methods of execution, and achievements. An assessment was made to determine the efficacy of the Ashrayan-2 Project by analyzing the Annual Performance Agreement and Evaluation Report released by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the government. Subsequently, the regulations and guidelines stipulated in the "Manual for Constructing and Designing Individual Residences in Tribute to Mujib Year," which was issued by the Prime Minister's Office in the year 2022, were scrutinized to discern the housing policies and initiatives of the national administration.

**Data Analysis:** The information obtained from diverse sources was scrutinized through a content examination methodology. The gathered information was initially classified according to distinct conceptual categories and their corresponding subordinate classifications in accord with their pertinence to the queries raised by the study. Subsequently, the information was scrutinized employing both deductive and inductive methodologies to detect configurations, connections, and tendencies.

**Considerations:** While procuring information from the YouTube platform, the examiner guaranteed that the visual content was accessible on the public domain and did not infringe any intellectual property legislation. The investigator also ascertained that the information assembled from alternative origins upheld dependability, soundness, and moral standards.

**Limitations:** Potential constraints of this investigation may encompass the accessibility and dependability of information obtained from specific origins. Furthermore, the partiality and personal viewpoint of the investigator may exert influence.

## III. The Model of Sheikh Hasina: Comprehensive Development for Poverty Alleviation

The government of Sheikh Hasina has undertaken various initiatives to promote the development of socially disadvantaged groups for the benefit of society. Through the shelter project, landless and homeless families from all other communities in society, including those affected by climate change, small minorities, third gender, beggars, the disabled, and Harijans, are being provided with homes including land. By creating opportunities for education, health, and employment, they are being included in the mainstream of economic development.

Since the start of the program in 1997, a total of 524,244 landless and homeless families have been resettled through the shelter project, which includes barracks, flats, various types of homes, and single houses named after Mujib Barsha. The 'Inclusive Development Model' also known as the 'Sheikh Hasina Model,' offers an unparalleled example of how a home can be a primary vehicle for overall family well-being and social development. Its six main attributes include:

1. Increasing earning capacity and promoting savings to make them financially self-sufficient.
2. Creating decent livelihoods and establishing social dignity.
3. Empowering women with land ownership and half of household property.
4. Increasing human resources development through training and skills-building.
5. Promoting environmental sustainability through extensive construction and tree planting.
6. Ensuring urban facilities and amenities in rural areas.

The ongoing economic development discussion is focused on extending the 'Inclusive Development Model' with its distinctive features, which includes providing semi-pucca single houses with 2 decimal land ownership to economically backward people including those who are behind in society. With land ownership, they now have the financial resources to invest in their own growth and development. In addition, the inclusion of women in the mainstream of development by enhancing their capacity and empowering them through land ownership is ensured through the shelter project. Every family member of the resettled families

receives vocational training in various areas, including production-oriented training, making them self-reliant. Furthermore, every house is equipped with free electricity and a clean water supply to improve the quality of life for the beneficiaries.

#### IV. Adoption in achieving SDGs: Ashrayan-2 Project

The Shelter Project plays an exceptional role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. It provides an incredible opportunity for impoverished families to break free from the vicious cycle of poverty by simply having a home. This enables them to access safe living conditions, education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and other related issues, thereby bringing about significant changes in the field of sustainable development, as envisioned by the Honorable Prime Minister. Through this project, landless and homeless families are gaining access to housing, which helps them achieve the following SDG targets:

SDG Goal 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular, the poor and vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, and appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance. Through the Shelter Project, spouses co-own 2% of agricultural land with access to electricity and safe drinking water, as well as a semi-pucca house at no cost. They are also provided with small loans to become self-reliant.

SDG Goal 1.5: Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters. Two disaster-resistant semi-pucca houses have been provided to vulnerable communities affected by climate change and natural disasters through the Shelter Project.

SDG Goal 2.3: By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular, women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists, and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment. Displaced and vulnerable families are cultivating vegetables and fish farming in the project's pond, and they are receiving different training and small loans for income-generating activities.

SDG Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Health services are being provided through community clinics, ensuring safe drinking water, modern sanitation, and hygiene for beneficiaries.

SDG Goal 5.c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. In the Shelter Project, joint ownership of land and houses is given under the name of husband-wife, and the rights of the rightful heirs to these lands and houses are ensured within the framework of applicable laws.

SDG Goal 6.2: By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations. Modern sanitation and provision of safe drinking water are being ensured with each unit's semi-permanent house in the Shelter Project, thus ensuring appropriate sanitation for everyone, including women and girls.

SDG Goal 10.2: By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. By providing 2% of land ownership to landless-homeless people belonging to socially marginalized communities such as transgender, climate refugees, beggars, disabled, and small minority groups, their social standard and dignity are being improved, and they are being brought into the mainstream of development.

SDG Goal 11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations. To protect against natural disasters such as floods, each house is built in a comparative high place, which is semi-permanent and can withstand natural disasters, including floods, ensuring the safety of life and property of the beneficiaries.

The main reason for Bangladesh's progress in the institutionalization and integrated policy framework of SDG implementation is the inclusion-oriented development programs and infrastructure development. At the same time, SDG has been aligned with the Eighth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) which has unified the development agenda with a focus on the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized communities. Under the leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, this unique initiative was taken to provide land and housing to the poorest of the poor people in society during the Mujib Year. The "Right to Advancement" policy adopted because of this has accelerated inclusive development at a smooth pace. The beneficiaries of the project are primarily the people living in extreme poverty (10.5 percent). As a result, this project is unique for these marginalized communities. The benefits of this initiative extend to the backward areas of the country as well. Small communities, sanitation workers, tea workers, landless farmers, transgender people, climate refugees, leprosy patients, and extremely poor women are the main beneficiaries of this

program. This program helps increase their income and productive assets and provides them with minimum education, health care, and nutrition. As a result of the implementation of the SDG 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, inequality will be reduced, accessibility to various services will be improved, access to electricity and safe water will be ensured, and the focus will be on eliminating obstacles and disasters that affect citizens. At the same time, gender and small group inequalities will also be reduced. Only household ownership will have an indicative impact on employment and earning opportunities. As a result of cluster-based housing, primary healthcare services will be provided from the same place. As a result, family welfare assistants and healthcare workers will be able to serve regular beneficiaries in rural areas. Local construction materials are collected directly from the rural market, resulting in lower construction costs while improving rural economies. This project has opened new horizons for family, social, and economic development in Bangladesh.

**V. Findings**

According to the chart provided, the aforementioned initiative not only aims to reduce structural violence, but also prioritizes the establishment of sustainable social connections and the significance of maintaining a pristine and healthy ecosystem. This initiative endeavors to establish capable personnel for sustained economic development through educational schemes. Conversely, it manifests a significant emphasis on establishing and preserving communication infrastructures by erecting terrestrial stations in the designated zones of the undertaking. Constructing elevated dwellings for the Rakhain ethnic group in Patuakhali exemplifies that this initiative does not encounter any incongruity impediment in achieving constructive tranquility.

Title: Achievements of Ashrayan Project: July 1997 to June 2022

Activities	Achievement	Activities	Achievement
Number of Srijeet projects in villages	2,170	Number of registered acceptances	2,13,913
Number of constructed barracks	21, 983	Number of beneficiaries provided with training	2,78,896
The number of landless and homeless families resettled in the barracks	1,68,048	Number of families provided with loans	1,42,718
The number of houses constructed on their own land for those who have land but no houses	1,53,853	Number of projects provided with electricity connection	1,109
The number of semi-pucca units with 2 rooms each provided on an 871 square feet land lease basis	1,85,129	Number of planted trees	15,54,678
The number of houses built with a special design for small tribal families in three mountainous districts	580	Number of constructed community centers	2,204
The number of raised houses built for the Rakhain community in Patuakhali	20	Number of constructed landing stations	472

Source: Annual Report 2021 – 2022, Ashrayan Project- 2.

Upon conducting a comprehensive assessment of the financial report pertaining to Project Ashrayan-2, it has come to light that the developmental endeavors of this initiative endured a mild setback during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Subsequent to the pandemic, this enterprise evinces a positive trajectory towards progress. Over the course of the past dozen fiscal cycles, the mean proportion of progress, as measured by numerical quantification, has been calculated to be 95.71. This is an auspicious and noteworthy indication for the Ashrayan-2 initiative.

Title: Financial Statement of Ashrayan- 2 Project

Financial Year	Allotted Amount (Crore:Tk)	Expenses (Crore:Tk)	Development (%)	Unused Amount (Crore:Tk)
2010 – 2011	163.63	163.63	100	0.00
2011 – 2012	145.00	142.7	98.41	2.30
2012 – 2013	120.10	119.27	99.31	0.83
2013 – 2014	165.00	163.87	99.32	1.13
2014 – 2015	200.00	199.50	99.75	0.50
2015 – 2016	210.00	207.55	98.83	2.45
2016 – 2017	299.54	296.07	98.84	3.47
2017 – 2018	1214.55	1202.03	98.97	12.52
2018 – 2019	450.46	450.46	100	0.00
2019 – 2020	450.00	444.88	98.86	5.12
2020 – 2021	1096.92	1060.19	96.65	36.73
2021 – 2022	727.92	568.18	78.06	159.74
<b>Total</b>	5243.12	5018.33	95.71	224.79

Source: Annual Report 2021 – 2022, Ashrayan Project- 2.

## VI. Recommendations

- Determine appropriate terrain for the establishment of a relocation initiative dedicated to accommodating persons without property, those who lack shelter, susceptible populations, and individuals with limited land assets that are incapable of adequately sustaining themselves.
- The delineated territory might comprise official policies mandated by the governing body for the relocation of destitute, dispossessed, and susceptible households in the vicinity.
- Venture entails the preparation of unoccupied tracts of land that have been chosen in accordance with pre-sanctioned designs and cartography, for the purpose of erecting residential structures and facilitating the relocation of designated households. The ownership of the property will be conveyed to the families through the provision of deeds, registration formalities, and nomenclature procedures.
- For the families who have been resettled, a fundamental housing allowance for a period of three months shall be rendered.
- On the accessibility of land allocated for relocated households, communal establishments, such as cultural centers, Islamic places of worship, burial grounds, natural reservoirs, and animal care facilities will be developed.
- Individuals who have successfully finished their training programs will receive specialized instruction and the allocation of academic credits.
- Promote problem-solving skills and foster self-esteem among resettled participants, a cooperative association will be established as part of the project program.
- Project initiative will facilitate the enrollment of minors ranging from six to fourteen years of age in primary educational institutions and community centers situated in the close vicinity. Furthermore, the literacy education for grown-ups will be guaranteed.

## VII. Conclusion

The commendable undertaking Ashrayan, executed under the leadership of the esteemed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has served as an exceedingly crucial measure in mitigating destitution through the provision of residences to impoverished and roofless individuals. The honorable endeavor by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has engaged a comprehensive range of entities including the government, non-governmental organizations, laborers, legislators, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists. The Ashrayan initiative,

spearheaded by the esteemed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is not solely focused on the provision of shelter to indigent and vagrant individuals across the nation, but also on harnessing pathways that enable them to break free from the inescapable grip of destitution.

## References

1. Bhumihinder Jibon Bodle Diyeche Ashrayan Prokolpo | Ashrayan Project | Hili News | Dinajpur | Somoy TV. (n.d.). [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g-jFzaxmNA). Retrieved June 20, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6g-jFzaxmNA>
2. Ashrayan-2 Project. (n.d.). [www.ashrayanpmo.gov.bd](http://www.ashrayanpmo.gov.bd). [http://www.ashrayanpmo.gov.bd/site/page/5e75d465-34fa-48a6-b1af-54b983a666d7/-](http://www.ashrayanpmo.gov.bd/site/page/5e75d465-34fa-48a6-b1af-54b983a666d7/)
3. (2022). Annual Report 2021-2011, Ashrayan Project (M. Haque, Ed.) [Review of Annual Report 2021-2011, Ashrayan Project]. Prime Minister's Office. [www.ashrayanpmo.gov.bd](http://www.ashrayanpmo.gov.bd)
4. Ashrayan Project: "Sheikh Hasina Model" in inclusive development. (2022, September 3). The Business Standard. <https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/ashrayan-project-sheikh-hasina-model-inclusive-development-489250>
5. Hoque, M. E., El Salibi, N., Rahman, Z. U., & Haque, M. (2017). Healthcare Access and Utilization among Hijras of Dhaka City, Bangladesh. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 28(4), 1382-1399.
6. Hossain, M. E., & Paul, B. K. (2018). Empowering rural women for reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development in Bangladesh. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 19(2), 103-118.
7. Islam, M. S., Hasan, M. K., & Hossain, M. I. (2017). Structural violence and chronic poverty: A micro-level study in rural Bangladesh. *Journal of Social Sciences Research*, 3(2), 58-69.
8. Kabeer, N., Mahmud, S., & Tasneem, S. (2018). Social and economic costs of gender inequality in Bangladesh: Insights from new survey data. *Feminist Economics*, 24(3), 1-29.
9. Oxfam Bangladesh. (2019). Inequality in Bangladesh: A Rapidly Widening Gap between the Rich and the Rest. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-bangladesh-rapidly-widening-gap-between-rich-and-rest>
10. Rahman, M. M., Kabir, R., & Sultana, N. (2019). Patriarchal norms as barriers to accessing justice for women survivors of gender-based violence in Bangladesh. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(2), 305-326.