

# SKS FOUNDATION Strategic Plan

July 2024 - June 2029



SKS



# SKS FOUNDATION

*Striving for a Sustainable Change*

## Strategic Plan

July 2024 - June 2029



SKS

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## 1. Introduction & Background

SKS Foundation is a non-government organization established on 1 December 1987. Initially, it was founded by a group of dedicated local young men and women as Samaj Kallyan Sangstha (SKS) to focus on the development of the poor and marginalized *char* dwellers in the Gaibandha district of Bangladesh, one of the most disaster-prone and economically deprived regions in the country. Over time, SKS expanded its profile through a variety of development programs aimed at disadvantaged people. In 2008, it was renamed SKS Foundation, emerging as a national NGO. Upholding its core values, SKS Foundation has grown significantly over the decades, diversifying its plans and programs to target a broader number of marginalized communities. It has been striving for sustainable change in collaboration with development partners and stakeholders.

Over the years, SKS has grown continuously testing, learning, and iterating its approaches to expand its reach to nearly 50% of the districts in Bangladesh. Today, SKS offers a diverse portfolio of various social development programs, microcredit products, quality healthcare services and enterprises. It has supported around 5.5 million people through partnerships with the government, development partners, and civil society stakeholders, thereby contributing significantly to the development of the country. This progress is driven by a dedicated team of 3,462 caring change-makers.

The development landscape of Bangladesh is constantly changing, and SKS aligns its programs by regularly updating its strategic plan. The 4th Strategic Plan (2019-2024) guided SKS in expanding its programs in various areas based on strategic choices. However, strategic management requires ongoing reassessment of current programs and an understanding of the competitive and regulatory landscape to identify long-term priorities. The new 5th Organizational Strategic Plan (2024-2029) embodies SKS Foundation's strategic choices to become more proactive rather than reactive to future issues and priorities in achieving goals and objectives. The Strategic Plan (2024-2025) will guide prioritization efforts, effective resource allocation, and alignment with relevant stakeholders and employees to the organization's goals, ensuring that these goals are backed by data and sound reasoning.

## 2. Profile of SKS Foundation

### Vision

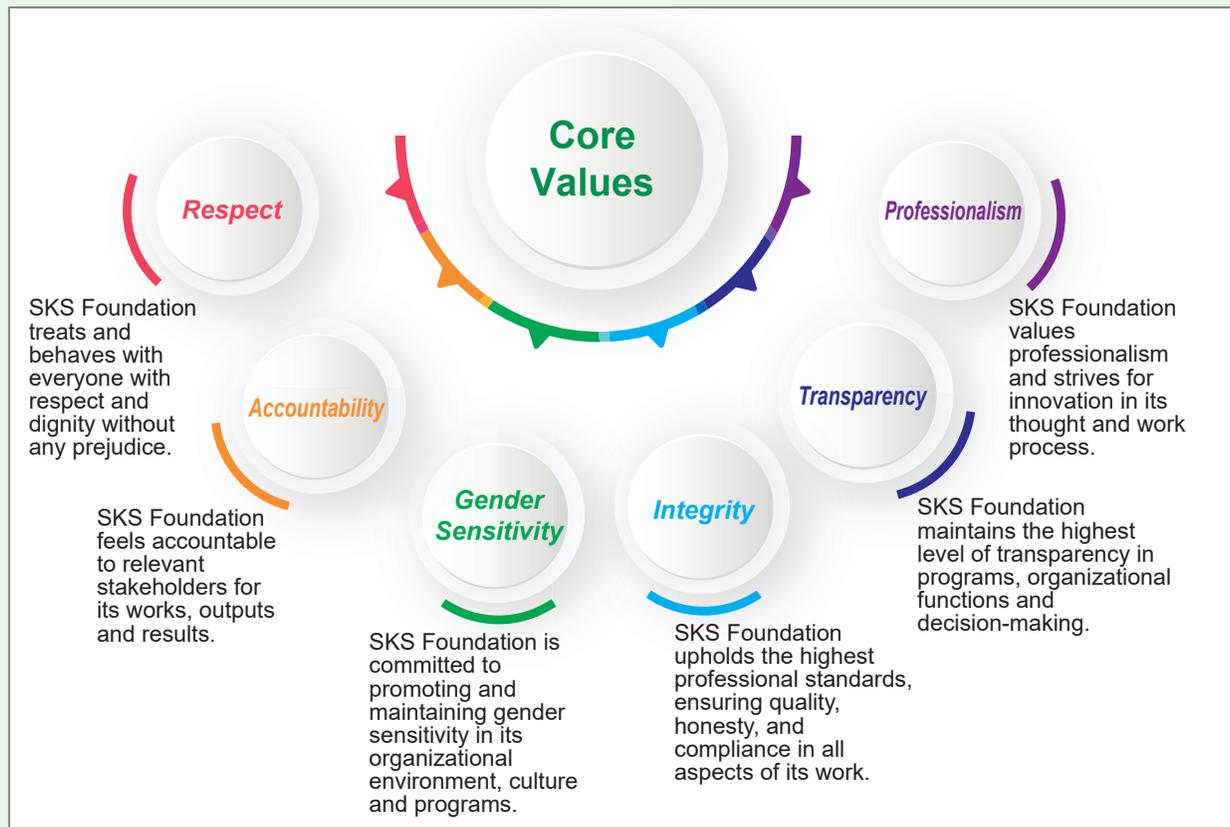
A poverty-free society where everyone has access to resources and lives with voice, dignity and justice.

### Mission Statement

SKS Foundation facilitates the improvement of life and livelihood of the poor and excluded by reducing their vulnerabilities, promoting empowerment and improving access to development opportunities and resources. SKS Foundation collaborates with the government including local government, the private sector, NGO networks and donors to ensure sustainable development.

### Core Values

SKS Foundation is driven by some core values that are shared and upheld to carry out its mission.



## Core Competencies

SKS Foundation is uniquely positioned in the development sector based on its strong presence in vulnerable areas and its adaptive program components that address the needs of the most marginalized communities. SKS Foundation's core competencies encompass the following features:

**Hard-to-Reach Priority:** SKS Foundation was established with a mission to support excluded populations, including char dwellers, indigenous groups, and the ultra-poor, who face various forms of marginalization. The organization is recognized for its unwavering commitment and continuous efforts to assist these communities.

**Innovative Vision:** SKS Foundation has evolved with a forward-thinking approach, committed to growth and diversity through timely actions and innovative solutions. These strategic decisions enable the organization to advance successfully in multi-disciplinary development.

**Collaborative Environment:** SKS Foundation fosters a non-bureaucratic culture that promotes a positive working atmosphere for all staff, regardless of gender. The organization encourages participation, placing staff at the center of its initiatives. Senior staff, including the head of the organization, are highly accessible and engaged with the team.

**Brand Commitment:** SKS Foundation is dedicated to upholding its brand identity and reputation in all aspects of its operations. The organization ensures high standards in partnership execution, self-governance, program and project management, service delivery, and resource management.

**Sustainable Growth:** SKS Foundation prioritizes progressive growth over revolutionary change, adopting an incremental strategy for both program and organizational development. SKS Foundation views social development as the core around which all other initiatives revolve and values social enterprise as a means to promote resource efficiency and self-reliance.

**Adaptability & Responsiveness:** SKS Foundation is flexible and open to change, learning from every individual and interaction within the organization. SKS is committed to responding to emerging needs and opportunities that align with its mission.

**Holistic Development Approach:** SKS Foundation is committed to comprehensive development, maintaining a programmatic focus that encompasses social, economic, and environmental dimensions alongside social enterprise initiatives. SKS emphasizes a rights-based approach to address critical issues whenever opportunities arise.

### 3. Methodology for Developing SKS Strategic Plan 2024-2029

A triangulated consultative approach was followed in developing the SKS Foundation Strategic Plan 2024–2029, which included a review of secondary documents, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, and a situational analysis of the current development processes in Bangladesh through workshops. In the first step, the context of poverty, livelihood strategies, living conditions of the poor, trends in urbanization, emerging issues related to future poverty, and climate change were analyzed by consulting relevant secondary documents.

The review of secondary documents includes the following: the 8th Five-Year Plan of the government, the Poverty Watch Report 2022, SDG documents, the MICS Report 2019, the HIES Survey 2022, and the SKS Foundation's Annual Report 2018 to 2022. Two two-day strategic planning workshops were organized on 8-9 May 2024, and 23-24 May 2024 with the participation of the senior management and mid-level management staff separately to develop the Strategic Plan. The workshops focused on external context analysis and a SWOT analysis of SKS Foundation, critically assessing the organization's past achievements, future goals, etc. Additionally, contemporary and emerging issues in the country, along with the priorities and strategies of the government, donors, and UN organizations concerning the SDGs were analyzed during the sessions. Some Focus Group Discussions were conducted with the program participants who were offered services. Their comments and suggestions were sought for developing the Strategic Plan.

Several in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including representatives from local government and civil society organizations to explore their knowledge, experience and opinions regarding SKS Foundation's program interventions. The discussions focused on changes in development approaches and strategies, as well as emerging issues that are expected to attract greater attention from the government, donors, and international communities in the coming years.

In the final step, a one-day strategic planning workshop was held with representatives from SKS Foundation's governing board. The findings from the review of secondary documents and stakeholder consultations were presented to the board as part of the triangulated process for external and internal context analysis. Based on the overall context analysis, the SKS Foundation Strategic Plan 2024–2029 was drafted during the workshop. The draft plan was then shared with all relevant stakeholders and finalized by incorporating feedback from all reviewers.

## 4. Context Analysis

The Government of Bangladesh aims to end absolute poverty and graduate into higher middle-income status by 2031, and eradicate poverty on the way to becoming a developed nation by 2041. At one level Bangladesh can be seen to be moving successfully from aid dependence towards a trade-based economy with a focus on securing investment. At the same time, good economic performance is not proving to be sufficient to achieve the country's poverty reduction targets and has been accompanied by growing inequality.

Although Bangladesh has seen considerable improvements in social indicators over the last two decades, it now faces an unfinished agenda in the areas of health, education and employment creation, with systemic problems in the provision of services and increasing unemployment figures. The country's gains in the social sectors are unequally distributed between the rich and the poor, between men and women, and between the general population and ethnic minorities.

One major concern is ensuring good governance, transparency, and accountability. A large segment of the population continues to be deprived of access to services due to geographical isolation, caste and gender-based discrimination, and ethnic disparities. Additionally, slum dwellers and the extremely poor face systemic discrimination and a lack of vulnerability tracking. The responsiveness of duty-bearers and local government institutions remains a significant challenge.

### *Poverty Status*

According to the HIES survey 2022 conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) poverty declined to 18.7% in 2022 from 24.3% in 2016. The number of extremely poor at the same time also declined to 5.6% in 2022 from 12.9% in 2016. Though the rate is still high at 20.5%, poverty in rural areas fell by 5.9% and 14.7% in urban areas, declining by 4.2% between 2016 and 2022. However, the BBS has confirmed a widely prevalent notion about inequality in income (expressed in the Gini coefficient). The income inequality widened further between 2016 and 2022, said the survey.

Though slightly less impressive, the reduction of multidimensional has been equally significant: using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) approach (a composite of health, education and living standards indicators), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that multidimensional poverty fell from 37.6% to 24.1% of the population between 2014 and 2019.

The government implements a wide range of safety net programs to support vulnerable populations. Additionally, numerous NGOs and CBOs play a crucial role in assisting these efforts through various initiatives aimed at poverty reduction. According to the latest HIES estimates, extreme poverty remains a significant concern in Bangladesh, closely linked to a low productivity trap. The country continues to face many challenges in improving the lives of grassroots communities.

## Health Promotion

The country has made notable progress in reducing early deaths among infants, with the infant mortality rate decreasing from 28.2 per 1,000 in 2016 to 25 per 1,000 in 2022 (BBS, 2022). However, the under-five mortality rate has slightly increased from 29 per 1,000 in 2018 to 31 per 1,000 in 2022 (BBS, 2022). The maternal mortality rate stands at 156 per 100,000 live births, according to the vital statistics report from BBS, 2022. Additionally, Bangladesh has achieved significant advancements in disaster management. In terms of food security, as the population has doubled since independence- from 65,047,770 in 1970 to 165,158,616 in 2022 (Population and Housing Census, 2022)- food production has more than tripled, despite a shrinking land area.

However, Bangladesh has higher rates of infant stunting and underweight compared to sub-Saharan Africa. Malnutrition remains a critical issue, affecting 52% of children under five and over 50% of the female population. Discrimination against girls begins at birth, with inequitable practices, such as gender biases in feeding, leading to higher malnutrition rates and increased mortality among girls. Approximately 35% of the population remains food insecure, with 28% of children under five being stunted and 23% underweight. Additionally, one-third of married women are underweight, and around 13% have short stature, which raises the risk of difficult childbirth and low-birth-weight infants. Anemia also affects 43% of children aged six months to five years.

The health sector is marred by the burden of non-communicable diseases and reproductive health problems coupled with the inability of the public health service to cater to the needs of the poor. The prevalence of tuberculosis is one of the highest in the world, malaria continues to be a critical health problem in 13 of the 64 districts, and respiratory infections and diarrhea are major causes of morbidity and mortality.

Decent work deficits and environmental hazards are also frequent causes of poor health, especially among the poor. Contaminated water supply, arsenic contamination of groundwater, toxic effluents, and poor sanitation all cause high levels of morbidity.

Climate change-related hazards like cyclones, floods and droughts will affect mostly the poor, threatening their life, livelihoods and health. Today's health system is not in a position to respond to these challenges and effectively meet the needs of the poor and disadvantaged.

## Education Enrollment

Approximately 18 million students at the primary and 11 million at the secondary level make Bangladesh's education system one of the largest in a developing country, comparable in size to those of Brazil and Nigeria. Primary enrolment has steadily and significantly improved over the last decade, starting from a net enrolment rate of 71% in 1990 to almost 100% in 2013. However, in Bangladesh, more than 4.3 million school-aged children are not in school. Around 42 million people, about 26% of the population, are still illiterate. Moreover, while the school enrolment rate is high, the dropout rate is even higher. Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2022 show that the dropout rate was 13.9%

at the primary level and, 35.98% at the secondary level. Low education quality and the pressure of external factors, such as child labor and early marriage, are leading to high dropout rates and low levels of numeracy and literacy skills.

### **Employment Generation**

According to the Labor Force Survey 2022, the total labor force in Bangladesh is 73.41 million, comprising 47.48 million males and 25.93 million females. Over the last 5 years, 9.91 million people have entered the labor market. Additionally, the number of unemployed individuals has decreased by 70,000 during this period, currently standing at 2.63 million.

However, this unemployment figure may not accurately reflect the true level of unemployment in the country due to the prevalence of underemployment and informal employment. "If underemployment is taken into account, unemployed people will be around 1 crore instead of 26 lakhs," quoted by SANEM.

Bangladesh is experiencing a demographic dividend, but unfortunately, the emerging youth force is not yet fully engaged in productive activities. Well-designed policies aimed at improving the quality of the labor force and creating matching employment opportunities can effectively stimulate skill-based growth in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Additionally, enhancing livelihood resilience and reducing vulnerability for households in poverty-prone areas will require greater diversification of income sources.

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) along with the development partners are placing significant emphasis on supporting targeted vocational training in communities identified through a participatory appraisal process. This support should also include training in entrepreneurial skills and micro-business financial management. Additionally, the expansion of flexible micro-credit options, particularly consumption loans and adaptable loans, has proven to be an effective safeguard against asset erosion for disaster-affected families.

### **Social Empowerment**

Despite many remarkable achievements in human development, women empowerment, education and employment, Bangladesh still faces many hurdles in ensuring sustainable socio-economic development for its vast population. Many disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including women and children, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and landless or destitute individuals, require ongoing support to empower them to break the cycle of poverty and rise above the poverty line.

Child marriage is now firmly on the global development agenda, most prominently through its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3, which aims to eliminate the practice by 2030. Although indicator 5.3.1 measures child marriage among girls, the practice occurs among boys as well. Regardless of gender, marriage before adulthood is a breach of children's rights. Child marriage significantly impacts the realization of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to education, health, and well-being. Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of early marriages globally, ranking fourth

in the world. According to UNICEF's Bangladesh Child Marriage Report, 16% of girls in Bangladesh are married before the age of 15, and 51% are married before the age of 18. Gender discrimination remains prevalent in the country. It is essential to empower adolescent girls and boys to make informed decisions about their bodies and futures.

The country has already made excellent communication networking in terms of road networking, and mobile networking which has reduced rural-urban gaps and connected people easily through information communication (ICT) technology. It has empowered people to access information and interact with others in need.

### ***Environment & Climate Change Scenario***

Bangladesh has been profoundly affected by global human-induced climate change, despite its minimal contribution to the problem. The consequences are stark, with the country experiencing frequent cyclones, tornadoes, floods, coastal and riverbank erosion, droughts, landslides, heat waves, and prolonged summer seasons. According to the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, Bangladesh is ranked as the seventh most disaster-prone country in the world, underscoring its extreme vulnerability to both natural disasters and climate change. Tropical cyclones are deadly and have a huge impact on coastal communities through the severe damage caused to houses, property, livestock, crops and fisheries.

The World Bank Group's Climate Risk Country Profile exposes Bangladesh's high risk of climate change. The country faces significant economic consequences, with tropical cyclones taxing about \$1 billion of the country's financial budget annually. By 2050, climate events could reduce agricultural GDP by a third, impacting almost half of the workforce. An estimated 13.3 million people could become internally displaced refugees within the next 30 years, owing to climate change, with women being disproportionately affected by this. Severe floods could decrease GDP by up to 9%, and environmental degradation and natural disasters are expected to worsen, steering Bangladesh and its population towards an unpredictable future.

### ***Water & Sanitation Promotion***

Since the start of the SDG era, water & sanitation (WASH) goals have become more complex and challenging than those of the MDG era. The focus has shifted from simply providing access to drinking water to ensuring safe drinking water (59% in 2021), and from basic sanitation access to safely-managed sanitation (39% in 2021). While a rising allocation trend is necessary, it is not sufficient on its own. With only 6 years remaining to achieve the SDG 6 targets, funding for WASH must be proportional to or exceed the growth in the Annual Development Program (ADP) size. Inequities persist within the WASH sector, with rural allocations being 27.7% lower than urban allocations in 2022-23, a gap that continued into 2023-'24. Additionally, there are ongoing disparities in intra-urban allocations.

Although the budget allocation trend of the government for hard-to-reach areas— haor, hilly regions, the coastal belt has been generally showing an upward trend with some contrasting features in the recent past- a major rise for coastal regions, slight rise for hilly regions but a decline for haor region.

The Fecal Sludge Management (FSM) challenge is rapidly rising in secondary towns and urbanized villages. Greater policy recognition and increased allocation to FSM should be a priority. With climate impact complicating access to safe water, increased investment from both public and private sectors is required for introducing appropriate technologies for safe water, integrated water resource management, and spreading good practices including rainwater harvesting, reverse osmosis, etc., to make water sources pollution-free and sustainable.

### **Civil Society Engagement**

The country has one of the largest concentrations of NGOs and CBOs in the world, and these organizations also need greater coordination among themselves and more support from the government and international partners, if they are to play a more prominent role in ensuring sustainable socio-economic development of the disadvantaged. Recent trends in pro-poor development activities indicate that, in the near future, the country must put adequate emphasis on areas like agriculture, health, human resource development through technical and vocational education, food security, environmental conservation and women and child rights for creating a just and equitable society. Both government and non-government organizations, therefore, have an important role to play in this regard.

There are many GO and NGO activities to combat poverty but unfortunately, there are no functional and effective coordination mechanisms and communication in-between the programs. Such types of problems have been creating instability and loss of resources. A data bank is one of the good options for successful coordination between different programs for combating poverty.

## **5. Stakeholder Analysis**

SKS Foundation conducted a stakeholder analysis based on its professional experiences and identified a variety of stakeholders. The primary accountability of SKS is to the community, especially the poor and disadvantaged, with a particular focus on geographically isolated individuals, women, children, the elderly, people with special needs, and ethnic minorities. Additionally, for strategic reasons, SKS considers community-based organizations (CBOs), occupational groups, community leaders, and the mass media as primary stakeholders due to their significant influence and direct involvement in achieving the organization's objectives.

SKS also engages a group of supporting stakeholders who have strategic influence on program design and ensure accountability. These key supporting stakeholders include local government, various government and regulatory bodies, peer NGOs, financial institutions, development partners, governing bodies, and networking organizations. SKS will actively involve these stakeholders throughout its 5-year strategic journey.

## 6. Organizational Environment Analysis

### *Strengths to Utilize*

Organizational analysis is a crucial component of strategic planning, essential for identifying realistic strategic issues that impact an organization's existence. At SKS Foundation, staff members and stakeholders collaborated to assess the internal strengths and weaknesses. The major strengths identified include:

- Continued dynamic leadership
- Good recognition and growing brand value
- Extensive experience working in hard-to-reach areas
- A congenial, gender-sensitive, and safeguarding working environment
- Transparent financial management and reporting
- Potential and quality human resources
- A multi-sectoral development approach
- Issue-specific organizational policies and guidelines
- Core facilities with institutional setup

These strengths are essential to SKS Foundation's Strategic Planning and ongoing success, and they will propel the foundation's efforts to achieve the goals outlined in this Strategic Plan.

### *Weaknesses to Overcome*

However, SKS Foundation recognizes that addressing the complexities of poverty from a holistic perspective is challenging. The foundation faces several obstacles, including a lack of qualified professional staff to support senior managers, insufficient staff development opportunities, limited experience in research & knowledge management, inadequate publicity, advocacy, and visibility of the organization's presence and successes, unavailability of online software-based reporting, a low percentage of women in managerial positions, and the absence of a succession plan. These issues often hinder the efforts of SKS Foundation.

### *Opportunities to Take Advantage of*

SKS Foundation, a leading national NGO in rural development, has a proven capacity for vertical and horizontal expansion, successfully implementing holistic programs that have gained significant acceptance among development partners and the community. The global commitments towards developing countries through the Sustainable Development Goals have created opportunities to expand partnerships and networks with the government and other development partners. This facilitates resource mobilization for initiatives in climate change and disaster risk management, WASH (including FSM & solid waste management), youth entrepreneurship development, digitalization in programming, and mobilizing marginal farmers towards modern farming. The supportive attitude of the government and donors presents a new avenue for growth. SKS' innovations, especially community-led services, have attracted the attention of partners both domestically and internationally.

### *Challenges to Encounter*

Perceived external threats elicited from the management and staff as a part of strategic planning exercise are natural disasters, control and interference of regulatory bodies may contribute to slowing down the implementation process. The recent trend of shifting the donor priorities and resource cuts for development programs, climate change impact on development interventions, and unstable political situation are potential threats to the NGO community, especially the Microfinance program activities. Additionally, growing unhealthy competition among NGOs poses a threat to the survival of smaller organizations. One of the main challenges now is keeping pace with globalization processes, which have made it difficult for poor and small farmers to compete locally, nationally and internationally.

## 7. Review of the *Strategic Plan 2019-2024* Implementation

SKS Foundation had 4 strategic program components: Social Empowerment, Economic Development, Environmental Justice, and Social Enterprises. Under each component, strategic aims and objectives were established. During the strategic planning process, the achievements of these strategic objectives were critically analyzed.

### Program Theme: *Social Empowerment*

The component aimed to combat social inequalities, exclusion and poor governance that perpetuates chronic deprivation and injustice for the poor and voiceless with the objectives:

1. Promote critical awareness & ability of the poor and excluded communities & disadvantaged population to fight against social odds and injustice.
2. Strengthen local institutions and leadership with means and capacity to promote effective and pro-poor service delivery in all essential aspects of life.

### **Accomplishments**

Key activities to achieve the objectives include rights and governance sensitization for duty bearers, institutionalization with the inclusion of marginalized groups, women empowerment and gender sensitivity, and the protection of child rights and development.

#### **1. Rights & Governance:**

- Sensitizing duty bearers has promoted good governance and accountability, advanced social cohesion and improved public services. People, including LGI representatives and community members, were mobilized through various activities.
- Institutionalization efforts led to the capacity building of community organizations such as CBOs, Village Development Committees, Union Federations, Social Protection Forums, Women Federations, and Adibashi Forums. These groups were empowered to advocate for their rights with elected bodies and service departments, playing a key role in creating social unity and resolving conflicts within communities.
- SKS initiatives helped form about 900 groups and federations with around 34,000 marginalized people, enabling them to raise their voices and claim their rights and entitlements.

#### **2. Women Empowerment:**

- Despite the challenges, organized groups of women are increasingly raising their voices and bargaining for equal wages, participating in decision-making bodies, preventing violence against women, and taking action against child marriage and dowry practices.
- SKS program interventions have increased the participation of over 100,000 women and 48,000 men in both family and national affairs.

### 3. Child Rights & Development:

- Children and adolescents were mobilized and actively engaged in raising awareness about issues that affect them. They are involved in planning & implementing community-based activities.
- These young individuals also play the role of watchdogs, working with the Nari Nirjaton Protirodh Committee to prevent child marriage.

These accomplishments highlight the significant progress made in advancing the strategic objectives and empowering communities.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Pro-active engagements of the community people from all strata, availability of development funding and strategic directions from the senior management help achieve the strategic goals. Changing the social taboo and traditional mindset of the community people that thwart them from social emancipation requires long-term interventions which may not be achieved through short-term project engagements.

### Program Theme: Economic Development

The component aimed to promote income security and economic freedom of the poor and marginalized groups and members who suffer serious livelihood challenges with the objectives:

1. Increase inclusion of the resource-poor in economic and financial services, livelihood innovations and marketable skill development.
2. Promote opportunities for social enterprise development, self-employment, partnership and market with a special focus on women and adolescent girls.

## Accomplishments

SKS Foundation has achieved significant milestones in empowering communities and promoting livelihood development:

### 1. Financial Inclusion & Livelihood Development:

- Over one million people have accessed financial services through SKS Foundation, supporting livelihood development, entrepreneurship, education, and employment opportunities.
- Approximately 95% of program participants in economic development received skill development training tailored for economic and livelihood enhancement.

### 2. Agriculture & Market Access:

- Agriculture extension efforts, particularly in char areas, have enhanced technical, economic, social, and leadership skills among farmers.

- Farmers, including women, gained market access through offline and online platforms such as Daraz and Bengal Meat. This has enabled them to increase income opportunities by cultivating new crop varieties and utilizing technologies like quality seeds, vermicompost, and high-value crops like dragon fruit, sunflower, and watermelon.

### **3. Microfinance and Economic Enterprises:**

- Through the regular microcredit program, about 225,000 participants engaged in economic enterprises, with a substantial outstanding amount of Tk 10,500 million.
- Microfinance customers also deposited savings amounting to Tk. 4,200 million, which represents 40% of the total outstanding amount.

### **4. Youth Empowerment & Vocational Training:**

- Each year, 5,000 youth and adolescents received training in various trades and vocational skills, empowering them to create self-employment and wage opportunities.

### **5. Community Resilience & Support During Crisis:**

- Community initiatives, including the establishment of food banks and fodder banks, have been crucial in addressing crises during disaster periods.
- Marginalized sections of the population, including beggars, have gained sustained livelihood opportunities and access to government safety net programs with SKS' support.

### **6. Response to COVID-19:**

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, SKS Foundation provided liberalized access to social and economic support, helping program participants cope with the crisis effectively.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

The ongoing inflation has affected the economy, impacting the microbusinesses and livelihoods of our program participants. Many have responded by diversifying their income sources through strategies like crop intensification, high-value crop production, and online product marketing. These efforts need proper support to thrive.

## **Program Theme: *Environmental Justice***

The goal of this component was to reduce environmental degradation, climate risks, and disaster vulnerability with a particular focus on those most critically vulnerable. The objectives include:

1. Mobilize critical knowledge and resources from multiple sources including government to help climate change adaptation by communities and institutions.
2. Promote community-based disaster preparedness and environment-friendly actions in livelihood practices, including promotion of WASH.

## **Accomplishments**

As part of its environmental conservation efforts, SKS intervention helped organize many communities into clusters, particularly in the char areas, where community members planted tree saplings on their raised plinths. In addition to raising awareness about fecal sludge and waste management, SKS worked with local authorities to improve waste collection and the emptying of household latrine pits and septic tanks. The successful collaboration with the Saidpur municipal authority on human fecal sludge management serves as a model for others to follow. Additionally, a significant number of households have adopted solar home systems, biogas systems, and improved cooking systems. A group of around 5,000 volunteers and disaster management committee members were trained and activated at the school, Ward and Union Parishad levels to respond proactively during disasters. Each year, around 25,000 members, particularly from vulnerable communities, gained access to flood-resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. During emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, SKS Foundation provided support to those affected, offering cash grants, winter kits, health awareness, and recovery assistance to meet immediate needs.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

The community-based food bank has proven to be a crucial resource for mitigating crises among the poor. The community members emphasized the importance of climate-resilient crops, local seeds, and establishing market linkages. It is recommended that future efforts focus on promoting climate-resilient agriculture, WASH (water, sanitation & hygiene), and renewable energy initiatives.

## **Program Theme: *Social Enterprising***

The component aimed to increase people's access to basic quality services, health, education and other sectors with reasonable stake and terms with the objectives:

1. Develop sector-specific sustainable social business consistent with local demand and affordability that has the potential to scale up.

2. Strengthen quality service delivery under social enterprises with innovation, diversity and institutional development.

## Accomplishments

SKS Foundation's primary healthcare and nutrition program annually educates nearly 40,000 participants, particularly pregnant and lactating mothers, on nutrition, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and other health issues. This education has led to improved maternal weight gain during pregnancy and better growth in children up to 2 years old. Additionally, about 20,000 adolescent girls receive annual education on menstrual health and hygiene management, and married spouses are linked with government health services. Each year, almost 90,000 people from various segments of society access health services through SKS-organized clinics. SKS also provides treatment services to its members and other poor and vulnerable people under a health premium scheme.

In its non-formal primary education program, SKS offers skills development training for school teachers to provide special care in afternoon education assistance centers, helping weaker students and preventing dropouts.

The sustainable, customized WASH finance model enables poor and disadvantaged households to install hygienic toilets and safe water facilities. In addition to installing community toilets to ensure access to safe sanitation, SKS has promoted Fecal Sludge Management services in selected cities, addressing this emerging WASH issue with priority.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Reaching the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country's remotest areas requires a customized service package. The renewal of health premiums is challenging for these populations to afford unless subsidized and integrated into the national health system. Developing climate-resilient WASH services necessitates ongoing research and testing to adapt to the rapidly changing climate environment. Connecting local service providers, such as vaccinators, SaniMart, and Blue Star Providers, with the government health system has proven effective in reaching poor populations.

## 8. Theory of Change

### If We



Build institutions within the community to empower people to take charge of their own development



Strengthen partnerships, networks, and linkages to leverage resources and support



Ensure that the people we work with have access to, ownership of, and control over resources



Enhance the capacity and readiness of our staff

### Then



Local institutions, groups, and communities will be empowered to address inequalities, exclusion, and poor governance, which perpetuate social injustices

Livelihood inputs and financial services will become more accessible to poor and marginalized groups, helping them improve their income and living conditions

The availability of self-financed quality services in healthcare, education, communication, and other sectors will reasonably increase for those experiencing deprivation

Vulnerable communities, groups, and households will be better equipped with the capacity and confidence to combat climate change and environmental risks

### Immediate Impact



A poverty-free, resilient society where everyone has access to resources and lives with voice, dignity, and justice

Empowerment of local institutions, groups, and communities to address social inequalities and injustices



Improved lives and livelihoods for the poor and excluded by reducing their vulnerabilities, enhancing empowerment, and increasing access to development opportunities and resources

### Our Last Impact

## 9. Strategic Issues, Directions & Major Activities

### Programmatic:

SKS Foundation identified some strategic issues under 4 Program Sectors for which the organization should be concerned and formulate appropriate strategic directions to address these issues. The strategic directions were then analyzed and prioritized the major activities to be undertaken. The Sectors are:



### 9.1 Social Empowerment

The sustainability of any program or endeavor depends largely on the active participation and involvement of the beneficiaries and local populace. Keeping it in view, SKS has always strived to make the beneficiaries sensitized about the background and the rationale of program interventions. SKS motivates them to take part in the designing and implementation of the programs so that ownership of the programs can be transferred to the local people and their sustainability can be ensured. This has been facilitated by the free exchange of ideas between SKS and its stakeholders, mutual respect, the development of voluntarism and leadership among the local populace, etc. The Organization concentrates on running capacity & confidence-building initiatives under its Social Empowerment Sector. Multiple natures of interventions aligning with SDG including rights-based activities especially about child rights, early marriage, girls' education, water, sanitation & hygiene, women's rights and right to information, etc are the key areas of its strategy. Transferring the ownership of program interventions to the beneficiaries and local people will remain a key focus of SKS' strategic directives as always. Alongside, SKS Foundation has been in the advocacy process for sensitizing the service providers to ensure justice in addressing the target groups. The key strategies along with the key directions of SKS under its Social Empowerment Sector are:

### 9.1.1 Strategic Issue: *Women Development & Gender Justice*

Women Development & Gender Justice is one of the major priority areas of the government.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 has specific gender-related targets to be achieved by 2030. The 8th Five Year Plan (8FYP) 2020-2025 specifically mentioned improving and enhancing women's economic participation and benefits, women's freedom of speech, and programs for the welfare of mothers and children. Overall, the need for further improvements in gender equality and women empowerment is rightly emphasized.

However, there are some challenges which include removing wage disparity, increasing inclusion of women in productive roles in the private sector, ensuring stronger implementation of CEDAW and other gender-related laws to prevent child marriage and social violence, and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women.

**Strategic Directions:** Increase Awareness of Women's Rights & Entitlements

**Major Activities:** SKS will include the excluded and marginalized communities in its programming. The CBOs, federations and different deprived occupational groups will be capacitated to bargain and access the government services. Sensitizing programs would be taken for the LGIs, duty bearers and law enforcement agencies in support of the poor people so that they can be part of different committees and raise their issues regarding violence, violence against women, child marriage protection, and fair distribution of government services. SKS will undertake need-based and tailored programs to enhance the capacity and resilience of poor and vulnerable people so that they can raise their voices and claim their rights. SKS will ensure women's involvement in various economic ventures by raising awareness among men and the wider community.

**Strategic Directions:** Advocacy for Accessing Gender Equity-based Services

**Major Activities:** Access to services is a significant barrier for women. SKS will undertake advocacy efforts to raise awareness among women about the various services available to them. Emphasis will be placed on creating spaces for women's solidarity and fostering emerging leadership. SKS will work on improving linkages and referrals between government and non-government service providers in the working areas to provide comprehensive support to women. Additionally, advocacy will be undertaken to introduce low-cost banking options for women beneficiaries.

### 9.1.2 Strategic Issue: *Child Protection*

SKS firmly believes that children experience insidious forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. It happens in parts of the country, and in the places, where children should be most protected— their homes, schools and communities. Violence against children can be physical, emotional, or sexual. And in many cases, children suffer at the hands of the people they trust.

**Strategic Directions:** Awareness at Community & Educational Institutions

**Major Activities:** SKS will focus on raising awareness among caregivers at both the household and community levels to protect children's rights. SKS will work closely with the educational institutions with a planned service package to sensitize and build awareness of the duty bearers and extend the fullest possible services to the children for their safety. Additionally, necessary communication aids will be developed to support and sustain children's learning.

**Strategic Directions:** Sensitizing the LGIs & Law Enforcement Agencies

**Major Activities:** SKS will work intimately with the Local Government Institutions (LGI) at each local level, which are responsible for formulating plans and programs for children, providing coordination and technical assistance, monitoring implementation, and performing other functions to promote children's welfare as outlined in the child protection laws. The linkages will be made with the community people by inviting the LGIs and law enforcement agencies to the awareness-raising campaigns and sessions.

### **9.1.3: Strategic Issue: Addressing Inclusivity**

Inclusive growth is a major concern in Bangladesh, particularly regarding sustained economic development, poverty alleviation, and various social indicators. Ensuring that all segments of the population are included in development programs is crucial for achieving true inclusivity. Tailored measures should be directed at enhancing the resilience of the poor and vulnerable, including those living in remote areas, children, women, people with disabilities, the elderly, and ethnic minorities. Policy instruments should also address the specific needs of these groups, particularly those residing in high-risk geographical locations.

**Strategic Directions:** Ensure Access to Services & Facilities by All Sects of People

**Major Activities:** SKS will include the excluded and marginalized communities in its programming. The CBOs, federations and different deprived occupational groups will be capacitated to bargain and access to government services. SKS will undertake need-based and tailored programs to enhance the capacity and resilience of poor and vulnerable people so that they can raise their voices and claim their rights.

**Strategic Directions:** Connecting People with Service Providers

**Major Activities:** SKS will work to ensure that service providers are responsive to the needs of people with special requirements by raising a collective voice and fostering joint efforts among Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). We will support the organization of dialogues and facilitate connections between CBOs, groups, and service providers to institutionalize these efforts. Additionally, we will consider how these groups can be integrated into economic growth opportunities, particularly in sectors with relatively less exposure to climate shocks.

#### **9.1.4: Strategic Issue:** Peace & Harmony in Family & Community

Peace and social cohesion are integral components of development discourse. When fundamental rights are violated, it adversely affects individuals and communities. Rights such as access to information, access to justice, and freedom of association must be addressed. In the current situation, the only viable solution for fostering peace and social cohesion at the family and community levels is through democratic transformation.

**Strategic Directions:** Community Sensitization on Social Bonding

**Major Activities:** SKS will facilitate social interaction and will promote mutual support and cooperation and thus improving participants' livelihoods through income generation, better community governance and capacity building. Local wisdom and community strengths will be harnessed to address social problems that escalate conflict and disrupt harmony. Social capital will be promoted to encourage mutual support during crises, ensuring that victims remain connected and supported within their community.

**Strategic Directions:** Awareness Against Drugs & Violence

**Major Activities:** In Bangladesh, the dependency of young people on drugs often leads to violence, including domestic violence against women and girls, and other associated risks. SKS Foundation will engage with drug users, their families, and community members to share information about the dangers of drug use and its potential consequences. We aim to instill a sense of purpose in individuals, particularly young people, to prevent them from engaging in self-harming activities despite their awareness of the risks. SKS will also work to amplify the voices and capacities of women to combat violence, in collaboration with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), government agencies, and other relevant networks. We believe that women should have a say, bargaining power, and authority in decision-making processes.

#### **9.1.5: Strategic Issue:** Governance & Accountability

Good governance and accountability are essential for economic growth, democratization, health, education, and other public services. SKS believes that enhancing citizens' confidence in government involves strengthening democratic processes through active community involvement, increasing access to justice, protecting human rights, supporting a culture of tolerance, and providing development opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized communities.

**Strategic Directions:** Community Awareness on Demanding Their Rights & Entitlements

**Major Activities:** SKS will mobilize members of the community through 'Change Makers who will act as focal points and links between service providers and the community—facilitating access to information and taking on leadership roles in negotiating power structures. SKS will promote peace by strengthening informal justice systems to reduce the use of violence and solve disputes, and foster youth engagement and trust in local justice mechanisms. SKS will organize public hearings bringing duty bearers on a platform during pro-poor budget formulation, local elections and regular interactions where community people can share their concerns and will ensure accountability.

## 9.2. Economic Development

Bangladesh's sustained economic growth makes it one of the fastest-growing economies in the region. Bangladesh is predicted to be the second fastest-growing economy among 46 countries. However, growth is not the only indicator of development. Some other conditions required for the country to move to the next stage of development remain a challenge. Necessary conditions include the productive capacity of the people of all strata, capabilities, and entitlement, as well as social security.

### 9. 2.1: Strategic Issue: *Expansion of Microfinance Program*

Microfinance has revolutionized the economic landscape of Bangladesh by creating market opportunities for the poor and SKS is proud to be part of this. By providing small loans to individuals who lack access to traditional banking systems, microfinance has empowered millions of people to start their own businesses, become self-sufficient, and contribute to the country's economy. The success of microfinance in Bangladesh has also led to the emergence of new markets, including rural farming, handicrafts, and textiles, that were previously inaccessible to the poor. With access to finance, the poor could be able to invest in these markets, create jobs, and improve their living standards. As a result, microfinance has become a key driver of economic growth and poverty reduction in Bangladesh.

**Strategic Directions:** Horizontal & Vertical Growth

**Major Activities:** To reduce the economic vulnerability of the targeted population, with a focus on the extremely poor, expanding the market share and program coverage based on geographical dispersion and client needs will be emphasized. Over the next five years, SKS's microfinance team will conduct needs assessment exercises across different client segments to develop new savings and loan products. The annual microfinance expansion growth would be 10% to 25% every year. SKS will increase the contribution of member savings to 40% of the total portfolio.

SKS will diversify the loan products to address the emerging needs of the clients. The new products will include financial services for migrant workers, remittance earners, loans for the youth and small entrepreneurs. SKS will continue its microfinance program by offering loans and training to individuals, who have never been involved in mainstream economic activities, and to small entrepreneurs to help them scale up their productivity and create employment. Cash flow-based financing and trade credit products will be explored for small businesses. Additionally, needs-based products for vulnerable segments such as the urban poor will be launched.

**Strategic Directions:** Introduce Innovative Products & Digitization

**Major Activities:** Innovation and process improvement leveraging technology will be at the heart of SKS's microfinance operations in the coming years. Transitioning from a manual and traditional field service management model to a technology-based operations management model is another short-term goal. Digital transformation in the loan collection process will be strengthened and evolved accordingly.

Protecting clients is a mandate of SKS's microfinance operation and part of responsible financial inclusion.

SKS will take steps to digitize client passbooks and SMS transaction alerts. SKS's Customer Loyalty Program will also be introduced and strengthened to ensure a client's sustained growth.

SKS will partner with banks and other financial partners to promote agent banking, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) financing and agriculture financing. Green financing will be promoted by offering loans on renewable energy, eco-friendly schemes and green skills development.

**Strategic Directions:** Increase Financial Capacity by Building Equity & Securing Low-cost Lending

Major Activities: Strengthen ethical microfinance service – SKS's microfinance operation continues to be a socially, economically, and morally valuable undertaking. To further strengthen these dimensions, SKS will:

- Mobile savings through different savings products
- Limit exposure to financial institutions by up to 25%
- SKS will expand the source of financing and use of alternative financial instruments
- Reduce operating expenses by increasing efficiency and through digitization
- Retain top tier benchmark in employee compensation
- Strengthen the qualitative supervision, implementation and reporting system of the program
- Introduce robust risk management tools to protect the loss of the organization and the clients from economic shocks

### 9.2.2: Strategic Issue: *Technical & Vocational Education*

Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) in Bangladesh is undergoing a major reform initiative with government plans to increase the number of training institutions and development partners contributing to improve labor productivity through increased skills and increased trade and create employment and turn youth manpower into productive workforce through providing employable technical skills.

**Strategic Directions:** Youth Skill Development for Employment Generation

Major Activities To give young people a genuine chance to enter the job market, technical and vocational education would be expanded for them in both public and private contexts. SKS will identify the youth from the targeted households and help them enroll in the TVET with the necessary support. Tailor-made training will be offered in collaboration with the government and other development partners for supplying the trained human resources in both formal and informal job markets. Self-employment-related activities will also be undertaken by giving necessary skills and financial services to the poor family. SKS will diversify IT-based earning (IT Enabling Services) at the local level through skills enhancement and networking of services including online freelancing.

**Strategic Directions:** Partnership & Linkage Building with MFIs & Govt. Institutions

**Major Activities:** To ensure skilled young human resources SKS will build more national and international partnerships in this regard and will allocate proper funds for the purpose. SKS will try to channel government, private sector and international funds or donations in this area and ensure cent percent utilization of the

fund. SKS will utilize the local government authority, MFIs and root-level opinion leaders to create community engagement and ensure required services for the potential entrepreneurs. Moreover, adequate campaigns and social mobilization sessions will be organized to reach the youth as well as their guardians and increase the social acceptability of trade skills. Employment support services for the employees and employers will be created to match the job demand and supply.

### **9.2.3: Strategic Issue: *Entrepreneurship Development***

Our country faces a significant challenge with high unemployment, particularly among those with untapped potential. With a growing economy and an increasing youth population, entrepreneurs will play a crucial role in meeting industrial and economic needs, fostering growth, and alleviating poverty.

There is considerable potential for establishing agro-based enterprises, as the agricultural sector supplies most raw materials for industry. Additionally, we will provide freelancing and outsourcing skills to youth interested in building careers as freelancers, helping them capitalize on this growing sector.

**Strategic Directions:** Financing & Promoting Small & Medium Enterprises (SME)

**Major Activities:** Financing and appropriate training will be given to the members with a special focus on youth for undertaking and improving SME enterprises. The training will be practical, addressing job-specific skills needed to increase efficiency and productivity. We will also promote new technologies and technical expertise, integrating modern management practices into SME operations. Additionally, agro-based enterprises will be encouraged, and necessary linkages will be established to ensure their financial sustainability.

**Strategic Directions:** Market Development & Value Chain Creation

**Major Activities:** In recent years, diversity in agriculture, trades, services sectors and social business have emerged as an important avenue to create employment and expand business in poverty reduction. While these individual and private sector initiatives have been successful in creating employment for the poor, they have at the same time revealed certain limitations in terms of building a sustainable market for the poor farmers and entrepreneurs. The following activities will be undertaken to improve the market.

- Connect the poor for value chain co-investment/innovation grants as well as capacity building and training grants.
- Link the growers and the entrepreneurs with agri-firms to invest in supply chain and input distribution networks to support greater inclusion of smallholders in agricultural market growth.
- Help stimulate growth in support service market sectors and facilitate increased access for farmers to improved services and technologies.
- Develop partnerships with local groups such as nongovernmental organizations, private businesses, microfinance institutions, social venture capital firms, and commercial banks
- Promote an online marketing system

### 9.3. Environmental Justice

SKS believes that Climate justice is a set of rights and obligations that corporations, individuals and governments have towards vulnerable people disproportionately affected by climate change.

#### 9. 3.1: Strategic Issue: *Environment Conservation*

SKS promotes multipurpose tree plantation, environment-safe agriculture, and conservation of natural energy by mobilizing the community. It supports the disadvantaged through diversified environment-friendly practices promoting renewable energy, biogas, vermin compost, etc in households & communities.

**Strategic Directions:** Awareness on Environmental Conservation

**Major Activities:** SKS Foundation will mobilize the community to make the people aware of environmental conservation. SKS will promote diversified approaches & actions in partnership with different development partners & actors. At the same time, the respective community people will lead in environment conservation at their homestead and any climatic adaptation in the community.

**Strategic Directions:** Promoting Environmental Protection

**Major Activities:** SKS Foundation will promote multipurpose programs concerning environmental protection. Considering Tree Plantation as a key component of environment protection, SKS will focus on afforestation & bio-intensive family gardening. Alongside, SKS will help the community in nursery development, and the promotion of biogas, solar home systems, etc. Believing in safe water & sanitation for a safer environment, SKS will contribute to the communities both in the rural & urban areas with the improvement of water, sanitation and hygiene coverage.

#### 9. 3.2: Strategic Issue: *Addressing Climate Change*

Bangladesh experiences different types of Natural Disasters almost every year because of Global Warming as well as Climate Change impacts. High temperatures, Heavy rainfall, High humidity, and fairly marked three seasonal variations like Hot Summer, Shrinking Winter and Medium to Heavy Rains during the Rainy season are some of the impacts of climate change.

**Strategic Directions:** Focusing on Resilience & Adaptation

**Major Activities:** SKS will promote climate-resilient agriculture, biodiversity, and local varieties and make the climate victims aware of resilience and adaptation. Activities on improving the livelihood status of the disadvantaged and vulnerable poor people sustainably through diversified and resilient livelihood practices, promoting renewable energy, biogas, and vermin compost at the household level and community level will be undertaken.

As a part of these initiatives, SKS Foundation will promote multipurpose tree plantation, and conservation of natural energy by mobilizing its program participants. The program will focus on promoting early warning systems for monsoon floods, river erosion, tornadoes, and thunderstorms, particularly in remote *Char* areas.

It will include components on adapting agricultural practices and products, as well as disaster preparedness to protect small rural enterprises. SKS will encourage the use of environmentally friendly technologies in all interventions and promote climate-resilient WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) solutions for the targeted population.

**Strategic Directions:** System Strengthening & Collaboration with Government, Academia & other Stakeholders

**Major Activities:** SKS will closely work with government and other civil society networks to pursue international law as a practical tool to address climate change mitigation, at the global level, and adaptation, at the local level. SKS will amplify collective voices to ensure that climate change victims gain access to climate funds, marking a significant achievement in our efforts. SKS will mobilize and include the participation of the disadvantaged and vulnerable poor people and communities in social, political and administrative institutions to be heard. Men and women from disadvantaged and vulnerable communities and CBOs will be capacitated to adapt to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters by using the knowledge and skills received from SKS. SKS will initiate the natural resource conservation scheme in collaboration with the government, LGI and members of the communities in the working areas. SKS will encourage more research and development activities through its partners and network partners, especially on local needs and priorities.

### **9.3.3: Strategic Issue: *Disaster Risk Reduction***

SKS understands from its experiences that disaster risk reduction and resilience involve systematically reducing disaster risks by analyzing and managing the causes of disasters. This includes reducing exposure to hazards, minimizing the vulnerability of people and property, wisely managing land and the environment, and improving preparedness for adverse events. The importance of this program has increased due to the growing concerns and adverse impacts of climate change.

**Strategic Directions:** Promoting Anticipatory Action

**Major Activities:** SKS will undertake Anticipatory Action (AA) as a program that will enable access to humanitarian funding for early action based on in-depth forecast information and risk analysis to reduce human suffering and losses. SKS plans to act promptly during disasters without any delay. Partnerships will be developed with humanitarian organizations to implement the anticipatory plan. The community members will be informed about potential disaster risks through community radio, and efforts will be made to strengthen the early warning system. SKS will update its Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategy, including forming a dedicated DRR unit, developing context-specific preparedness plans, and allocating necessary resources. These updates will be disseminated throughout the organization.

**Strategic Directions:** Strengthening Disaster Management System

**Major Activities:** SKS will strengthen disaster preparedness, response and recovery mechanisms to make it further effective. It will collaborate with the district and upazila-level government officials under the Directorate of Disaster Management (DDM) to take up joint initiatives to strengthen the capacity of local volunteers and community groups for emergency preparedness and response. SKS will collaborate with

other networks, such as the Needs Assessment Working Group (NAWG), to share disaster-related data and anticipatory plans. The organization will also mobilize resources to effectively respond to disasters. The disaster management team of SKS will be further capacitated with the necessary digital tools to identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning. It will promote community-based disaster preparedness, emergency response and resilience.

The Sendai Framework will be adhered to gain a deeper understanding of disaster risks and their root causes. It also emphasizes the importance of accessing reliable data at the scales where action is needed. SKS will partner with other organizations for risk assessment and maps at the local level, and long-term multi-hazard and solution-oriented research.

As climate-induced disasters affect habitation, availability of water, and sanitation systems, SKS will provide climate-resilient livelihoods, and promote climate-resilient inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools and community health centers for these people. The existing fecal sludge and waste management programs will be enhanced by integrating marketable solutions.

## 9.4. Basic Service Support

Bangladesh is committed to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and continuously invests in social services projects, including health, nutrition, WASH, education, and social protection, to support the underprivileged segments of the population. These are considered basic social services. However, gaps remain with the coverage of the targeted population. Thus, SKS complements and supplements the government's initiative through its program interventions.

### 9.4.1: Strategic Issue: *Quality Education*

Bangladesh has achieved Universal Primary Education. However, not all of the students who are enrolled in grades 1-4 complete grade 5. The drop-out rates are consistently higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. The major reasons for non-completion of grade 5 are child labor, inability to afford high educational expenses and not realizing the importance of completing primary education.

**Strategic Directions:** Early Childcare & Development (ECCD)

**Major Activities:** Early childhood is a critical stage for a child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. SKS will implement programs to educate families, especially caregivers, about the essential needs of children, including nutrition, breastfeeding, caregiving, and value transfer. Additionally, we will provide support to schoolteachers to enhance childcare development in their classrooms. We will also offer pregnancy care to expectant mothers, emphasizing the importance of a healthy pregnancy for a healthy birth.

SKS will collaborate with government and professional bodies to improve and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. Our efforts will align with government policies and programs to ensure children's enrolment and completion of the school cycle, address issues of school dropouts, child labor, and reach out to children in hard-to-reach areas, thereby improving the quality of education.

**Strategic Directions:** Promoting Formal & Non-formal Education

**Major Activities:** SKS foundation will run non-formal primary schools for the children who haven't been able to enroll in the schools or dropped out from the schools due to various reasons. The sensitization program will be taken for the parents, children and community people to continue education and mainstream them in the formal schools. Necessary tutorial support will be arranged for the weaker students in support of the school teachers. The school supplies, education materials and financial support to the deserving students will also be arranged in support of the sponsors.

The youth and adolescents will be given basic education through a peer network along with social skills. Job apprenticeship will be linked for the youth and adolescents for future employment. Technical and vocational education will be promoted for the youth and assistance will be given to enroll in the TVET centers. Planned coordination, collaboration and partnerships will be developed with the government, private organizations and other professional bodies to build synergies.

#### **9.4.2: Strategic Issue: *Promotion of Health***

Bangladesh has made commendable progress in advancing healthcare access and outcomes in recent years. However, ensuring equitable access to quality primary healthcare services remains a significant challenge, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

**Strategic Directions:** Promotion of Mother & Child Health

**Major Activities:** Aligning with the government's policy to ensure the safe delivery of mothers, SKS Foundation will make pregnant mothers and their families aware of the concept of safe institutional deliveries. The SKS health workers will ensure ANC, PNC and breastfeeding to reduce the nutritional deficiency of newborn babies. A planned nutrition program will be taken for the pregnant and lactating mothers and children including in the hard-to-reach areas.

**Strategic Directions:** Awareness Raising & Increasing Health-seeking Behavior

**Major Activities:** Special programs will be undertaken to make the people critically aware of non-communicable diseases. Necessary referrals on health and family planning will be made to the government and private health centers based on an agreed understanding. Health camps will be organized to raise health awareness, provide basic drugs and also to refer cases to the referral centers. Emerging health issues will be addressed promptly in collaboration with the government.

#### **9.4.3: Strategic Issue: *Promotion of WASH***

Access to safely managed water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities is one of the development prerequisites. Despite significant progress in the economic development of Bangladesh, inadequate WASH services in both rural and urban areas remain a major concern for the country.

**Strategic Directions:** Promoting Improved WASH

**Major Activities:** SKS will implement WASH programs for disadvantaged people in hard-to-reach areas, ensuring access to inclusive safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. We will work with school authorities to sustain school WASH programs. The community will be educated on the dangers of water contamination,

which can lead to water-borne infections like diarrhea and serve as a vector for diseases spread by mosquitoes. We will promote climate-resilient WASH technologies to benefit a broader user base. Additionally, SKS will collaborate with government departments and microfinance institutions (MFIs) to ensure access to WASH services for the poor and those in hard-to-reach areas.

**Strategic Directions:** Awareness Raising on Hygiene & Best Practices

**Major Activities:** To make the common people aware of hygiene habits, the SKS Foundation will focus on raising awareness among the public concerning personal and domestic hygiene practices. Hand hygiene before & after food handling, after defecation, Menstrual hygiene management (MHM), etc will be emphasized. In relation to this, SKS will observe the Global Hand Washing Day and other relevant events in collaboration with the local administration, service departments & providers and other stakeholders & common people. Rally & miking, cultural events, discussion sessions and demonstrations, etc will be organized regularly with the participation of GO & NGO representatives, students, teachers, parents and civil society representatives to create mass awareness & motivate the people about hygiene management. Community people will be encouraged and supported with the Dignity Kits for hygiene management. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) services will be promoted at schools, communities & households organizing awareness sessions for girls, adolescents & women groups.

#### **9.4.4: Strategic Issue: Senior Citizen Care**

As per the Population and Housing Census, 2022, over 15.3 million Bangladeshis are aged 60 years or above, which constitutes 9.28 percent of the total population—an increase from 7.48% in 2011. With the elderly population growing fast and projected to reach 18% of the country's population by 2050, their needs in terms of housing, food, healthcare, and financial services, are expected to be enormous. SKS will address some of the elderly issues during the next five years.

**Strategic Directions:** Extending Physical & Mental Health Support

**Major Activities:** SKS recognizes that physical and mental health go hand in hand. Poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems and vice versa. Psychosocial support will be a cross-cutting component across various projects for the elderly population. Para-counselor will be developed to provide all the psychosocial support to the elderly people. Special awareness and health camps will be organized for the elderly people. Elderly people's groups will be formed and age-specific activities including recreation will be organized to promote social interaction with the active engagement of the community.

**Strategic Directions:** Safe Home & Access to Social Safety Net Program

**Major Activities:** SKS believes that elderly people should not be isolated from society rather inclusivity will be promoted. Thus, community-based elderly homes would be promoted for the elderly people. Their wisdom and values will be transformed for the children through a community-based program. The common group of elderly people will be supported to bargain with the LGI and the government authorities to access different services as part of their senior citizen rights and also access social safety net services. Different networks and helplines will be disseminated to the elderly people to access those during their needs.

## Organizational:

### 9.5.1 Strategic Issue: *People*

SKS Foundation firmly believes that the employees are the most important asset of the organization. On the other hand, human resource management (HRM) plays a vital role in building an organization. Realizing the importance of HRM, the following strategic directions and major activities will carry a higher value in the organization.

#### Strategic Directions:

- Ensure Required Facilities
- Professional Staffing
- Staff Capacity Development
- Develop & Ensure the Exercise of Organizational Culture

SKS Foundation will ensure the implementation of the staff development plan incorporating both training and non-training interventions. A periodical training needs assessment will be done based on which the capacity development initiatives along with physical capacity improvement will be undertaken. The staff development initiative by HR will be activated more and funding sources will be identified from the resource partners for capacity development of the staff members. A rigorous screening process will be developed for hiring skilled staff. The gender consideration will be addressed during the staff hiring process. The staff performance management will be done comprehensively and the appraisal process will be done objectively in a participatory approach. A learning culture will be promoted in the organization. The HR policy will be reviewed further and implemented with the assistance of the staff development committee.

### 9.5.2 Strategic Issue: *Environment-Friendly Organization*

SKS Foundation envisions itself as an environment-friendly organization, where the prevailing beliefs, values, and behaviors prioritize environmental responsibility, sustainability, and conscientious use of resources. In relation to this, the following strategic directions will be promoted during the next five years:

#### Strategic Directions:

- Eco-friendly Program Promotion
- Introducing Multi-channel Communication
- Technological Adaptation
- Cost Efficiency

SKS Foundation will update its strategies, management, and operations to decline environmental contamination with limited resource usage. Branding will be promoted as an environment-friendly organization across the staff members and the associated members. Well-considered programs will be undertaken which will conserve the environment such as promoting the use of glass as opposed to plastic, the use of renewable sources to generate goods and offers benefits, greenery in the office, etc. Paperless technological adaptation will be promoted across the organization which will reduce cost as well.

### 9.5.3 Strategic Issue: *Organizational Systems Improvement*

SKS Foundation aims to enhance efficiency in its work to meet the rising standards in the industry. To consistently meet the expectations of program participants, development partners, stakeholders, and others, SKS will address the following strategic directions to achieve its goals and fulfill these expectations:

- Living Standard Operating Procedure (SoP)
- Adaptive and Participatory Management
- Digitization and Automation
- Research and Development
- Improve the Internal Control System

SKS Foundation will develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all programs, departments, and units. These SOPs will serve as benchmarks for measuring compliance as part of the organization's internal control processes. Digitization and automation would be promoted in program designing, monitoring and evaluation and ensure easy access to data set by the approved users. All support systems such as accounts, monitoring, HR, MEAL, procurement and admin will be brought under the digitization and automation processes. A complaint response mechanism (CRM) would be developed for the program participants, staff and other stakeholders to ensure accountability and safeguarding. Audit and research would be integral parts of program management making baseline and end-line assessments. Participatory management will be further promoted forming different committees and will ensure an easy flow of communication across the organization.

### 9.5.4 Strategic Issue: *Governance*

SKS Foundation has inculcated good governance since its inception. Continuously the governance systems are improved so that everything is compliant in a transparent manner. During the next 5 years, the following strategic directions and major activities will be addressed:

#### Strategic Directions:

- Making the Governing Board Well-informed
- Putting the Necessary Reports in Public
- Developing Secondary Leadership

SKS Foundation will advocate for a board that balances competencies, experience, organizational knowledge, and independence as endorsed by the General Council. Regular communication and updates will be provided to the Executive Committee ensuring they are collectively responsible for long-term success, under the leadership of a chair committed to continuous improvement. To promote transparency, reports will be made publicly available. All organizational policies will be developed through consultative processes and shared with board members for their approval. The second level of leadership will be strengthened by forming a core group and providing them with the necessary support. The department/section heads will ensure that the organizational culture and values are being practiced and shared both at the organizational

and program level. SKS will create a conducive environment for the staff to share their acquired skills and expertise with other agencies to nurture professionalism.

### **9.5.5 Strategic Issue: Finance**

The flow of foreign funds to non-governmental organizations in the country experienced a substantial contraction during the previous fiscal year, coinciding with Bangladesh's graduation into a developing country. Accompanying the decline in funding commitments, disbursements to NGOs also experienced a downturn of around 10% over the last fiscal year. However, philanthropy and corporate funding have extended further funding opportunities for NGOs in social development while increased numbers of Non-Governmental Organizations have put into further competition to demonstrate capacity and quality. SKS will undertake the following approach:

- Explore Diverse Funding
- Maximize Resource Generation from In-house Sources
- Ensure Efficient Use of Funds

SKS Foundation will develop a promotional package taking into consideration of grant market and promotion. Necessary training and fundraising tools will be used to improve skills in fundraising. SKS Fundraising Team will be equipped with the necessary tools and materials as well as office automation with IT facilities. The team combination and skills will be strengthened to diversify expertise in different programs and fundraising. Documentation on the process, management performance and program will be strengthened to complement fundraising.

SKS will follow a different approach for various donors:

- Reaching institutional donors through professional applications that follow the donor's guidelines and formats
- Attracting Foundation support by presenting logical, tangible benefits to their communities
- Exploring corporate donors through demonstrating win-win opportunities
- Approaching charities aligning with their causes and objectives
- Engaging philanthropists by sharing compelling cases for support
- Identifying potential individual donors and sharing good causes and cases that resonate with them emotionally.

Unconditional funding will be sought to pilot projects that are scalable and financially viable, benefiting poor communities. SKS Foundation will allocate seed funds from its core budget for pilot initiatives, such as Agent Banking and Vocational Training Centers, to demonstrate results in the community. These outcomes will be used to attract larger funding from donors.

## 10. Strategic Issues, Objectives & Directions at a Glance

Strategic Issues	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Directions
<b>Programmatic</b>		
<b>Social Empowerment</b>		
<b>1. Women Development &amp; Gender Justice</b>	- To keep community women aware & sensitized of their rights and entitlements so that they get access to safe and women-friendly services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase awareness of women's rights &amp; entitlements.</li> <li>2. Advocacy for accessing gender-equity-based services.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Child Protection</b>	- To make families, communities and institutions aware & sensitized to keep the children protected from all forms of violence.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness at community and educational institutions.</li> <li>2. Sensitizing the LGIs and law enforcement agencies.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Addressing Inclusivity</b>	- To ensure all sects of people get access to basic services & facilities without discrimination.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure access to services &amp; facilities by all sects of people.</li> <li>2. Connecting people with service providers.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Peace &amp; Harmony in Family &amp; Community</b>	- To mobilize community people to build social peace and exercise freedom.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community sensitization on social bonding.</li> <li>2. Awareness against drugs &amp; violence.</li> </ol>
<b>5. Governance &amp; Accountability</b>	- To keep people aware of and create demands for their rights and entitlements and make duty-bearers accountable.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community &amp; stakeholder awareness on demanding their rights &amp; entitlements.</li> </ol>
<b>Economic Development</b>		
<b>1. Expansion of Microfinance Program</b>	- To ensure access to financial services for the targeted people for improved livelihood.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Horizontal and vertical growth.</li> <li>2. Introduce innovative products and digitization.</li> <li>3. Increase financial capacity by building equity and securing low-cost lending.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Technical &amp; Vocational Education</b>	- To enhance the skills of the target communities especially the youth groups as a productive workforce by providing employable technical skills.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Youth skill development for employment generation.</li> <li>2. Partnership and Linkage building with MFIs and Govt. Institutions.</li> </ol>

Strategic Issues	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Directions
<b>3. Entrepreneurship Development</b>	- To support the youth grow as entrepreneurs to play a crucial role in meeting industrial & economic needs and alleviating poverty.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Financing &amp; Promoting Small &amp; Medium Enterprises (SME).</li> <li>2. Market Development &amp; Value Chain Creation.</li> </ol>
<b>Environmental Justice</b>		
<b>1. Environment Conservation</b>	- To promote environmental conservation targeting an environment-friendly living atmosphere.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness on Environmental Conservation.</li> <li>2. Promoting Environmental Protection.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Addressing Climate Change</b>	- To promote and implement environmental protection and climate change adaptation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focusing on Resilience and Adaptation.</li> <li>2. System Strengthening and Collaboration with government, academia and other stakeholders.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Disaster Risk Reduction</b>	- To promote resilience and strengthen community-led disaster management.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting Anticipatory Action.</li> <li>2. Strengthening disaster management system.</li> </ol>
<b>Basic Service Support</b>		
<b>1. Quality Education</b>	- To develop the children, adolescents and youths through a modern, inclusive and equitable quality education to achieve 'education for all'.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Early Childcare and Development (ECCD).</li> <li>2. Promoting Formal and Non-formal Education.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Promotion of Health</b>	- To mobilize and sensitize the community to maintaining a healthy life by accessing health facilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promotion of Mother and Child Health.</li> <li>2. Awareness raising and increasing health-seeking behavior.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Promotion of WASH</b>	- To mobilize and sensitize the community to accessing improved WASH facilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting improved WASH.</li> <li>2. Awareness raising on hygiene and best practices.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Senior Citizen Care</b>	- To promote an environment that allows senior citizens to live with safety, security and dignity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Extending Physical and mental health support.</li> <li>2. Safe home and access to social safety net program.</li> </ol>

Strategic Issues	Strategic Objectives	Strategic Directions
<b>Organizational</b>		
<b>1. People</b>	- To develop employees as the most important asset of the organization to excel the best.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure required facilities.</li> <li>2. Professional staffing.</li> <li>3. Staff capacity development.</li> <li>4. Develop and ensure the exercise of organizational culture.</li> </ol>
<b>2. Environment-Friendly Organization</b>	- To make the organization environment-friendly, where the prevailing beliefs, values, and behaviors prioritize environmental responsibility, sustainability, and conscientious use of resources.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eco-friendly program Promotion.</li> <li>2. Introducing multi-channel communication.</li> <li>3. Technological adaptation.</li> <li>4. Cost efficiency.</li> </ol>
<b>3. Organizational Systems Improvement</b>	- To enhance the efficiency of SKS's work to meet the rising standards in the industry.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Living Standard Operating Procedure (SoP).</li> <li>2. Adaptive and participatory management.</li> <li>3. Digitization and automation.</li> <li>4. Research and Development.</li> <li>5. Improve the Internal control system.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Governance</b>	- To improve the governance systems so that everything is compliant in a transparent manner.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making the executive council well informed.</li> <li>2. Putting the necessary reports in public.</li> <li>3. Developing secondary leadership.</li> </ol>
<b>5. Finance</b>	- To make the organization equipped to mobilize diverse funding and utilize funds efficiently.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explore diverse funding.</li> <li>2. Maximize resource generation from in-house sources.</li> <li>3. Ensure efficient use of funds.</li> </ol>

## 11. Review Process of the Strategic Plan

The mid-term review will be undertaken to understand the status of progress and accomplishments. The executive council will be consulted to receive their directives for setting new strategic directions, if necessary, in response to changing circumstances. The senior management team, led by the Chief Executive, will conduct programmatic reviews. Organizational and programmatic risks, including financial risks, will be assessed quarterly, with necessary adjustments made to program operations. Government priorities during the strategic plan period will also be considered in the design and implementation of programs.





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