Poverty Alleviation

The First BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 31 July 2004, discussed on the importance of establishing a dedicated forum to address the issue of poverty alleviation and agreed that a Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation be organized in Dhaka in early 2006.

During the Eighth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 19 December 2005, it was decided to add ‘Poverty Alleviation’ to the list of BIMSTEC priority sectors. Subsequently, the Ninth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, held in New Delhi, India on 09 August 2006, welcomed the offer of Nepal to be the Lead Country for Poverty Alleviation.

Bangladesh organized the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation in Dhaka on 09 July 2008. During the Meeting, the Leaders expressed concerns about the high incidence of poverty in the region and reiterated their commitment to poverty alleviation through cooperation among the BIMSTEC Member States. Nepal was given the task of preparing a draft Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation.

The Draft Poverty Plan of Action (PPA) on Poverty Alleviation prepared by Nepal in consultation with the remaining Member States was adopted by the Second BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 12 January 2012. The Meeting also directed the Member States to translate the PPA into actions to benefit people living in extreme poverty in the region.

The Sixteenth Senior Officials’ Meeting, held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 2 March 2014, encouraged the Member States to implement eight broad strategies of PoA including accelerated, pro-poor and inclusive growth; social development; implementation of targeted programs for poor; increased coverage for social protection; increased preparedness to
address adverse impact of climate change; disaster management; good governance; and periodic progress. The Report of this SOM was endorsed by the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held on 3 March 2014.

During the Third BIMSTEC Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw on 04 March 2014, the Leaders reiterated their commitment to alleviate poverty in the region to ensure dignity, improve the quality of life and well-being of the peoples; and agreed to implement the BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action while also welcoming the offer of Sri Lanka to host the Third Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation during the first half of 2014.

Following the BIMSTEC Leaders’ Retreat in Goa, India on 16 October 2016, the Government of Nepal, in the Meeting of the Seventeenth Senior Officials held in Kathmandu in February 2017, offered to host the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Poverty Alleviation. Subsequently, the First BIMSTEC Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Alleviation was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 01 November 2017, which recommended integrating the PPA into the national plans and budgets of the Member States and agreed to convene annual meetings to share updates on collective actions outlined in the PPA, with India offering to host the next meeting in 2018.

The Third Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 19-20 December 2017. The Meeting discussed common challenges and threats faced by the Member States in their efforts to eradicate poverty by 2030. The Colombo Ministerial adopted the Colombo Statement on Poverty Alleviation for implementation by the Member States.

The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit reiterated the commitment of BIMSTEC Leaders to eradicate poverty in the Bay of Bengal Region by 2030, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Summit emphasized the need for effective implementation of the BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action and called for efforts from all sectors to contribute to the goal of poverty alleviation.
As a result, the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Poverty Alleviation, held virtually in New Delhi on 12 November 2020, suggested to update the Priority Areas mentioned in the PPA including the socio-economic indicators and also agreed to submit both country-wise and common Priority Sectors with respect to Poverty Alleviation in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

Poverty Alleviation was initially excluded when the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo in March 2022 adopted the reconstituted sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation under the BIMSTEC Framework. However, the Sixth Meeting of BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC), held in Bangkok on 01-02 February 2023, discussed the need to continue the previously identified areas of cooperation not incorporated by the reconstituted sectors and sub-sectors. Consequently, the recommendation to include “Poverty Alleviation” under the “People-to-People Contact” sector, led by Nepal, was endorsed by the 23rd Session of BIMSTEC SOM on 08 March 2023. The recommendation was subsequently approved by the 19th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held virtually in Bangkok on 09 March 2023.