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Ascertaining the Place of UN Sustainable Development Goals in Public Libraries

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Published in:
Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication

DOI:
[10.1108/GKMC-03-2022-0072](https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-03-2022-0072)

Published: 05/08/2022

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript

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Please cite the original version:
Islam, M. A., Sultana, R., & Widén, G. (2022). Ascertaining the Place of UN Sustainable Development Goals in Public Libraries: How Much Progress Have Public Libraries Made in Bangladesh? *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-03-2022-0072>

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Ascertaining the Place of UN Sustainable Development Goals in Public Libraries: How Much Progress Have Public Libraries Made in Bangladesh?

Journal:	<i>Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication</i>
Manuscript ID	GKMC-03-2022-0072.R2
Manuscript Type:	Article
Keywords:	Public Libraries, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, UNSDGs, Bangladesh, community information

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Ascertaining the Place of UN Sustainable Development Goals in Public Libraries: How Much Progress Have Public Libraries Made in Bangladesh?

Abstract

Purpose

The present study investigates the SDGs awareness of public librarians, their perceived understanding of public libraries to achieve United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and identify the challenges affect the library adoption to SDGs.

Design/methodology/approach

In this study, a quantitative survey method was used to collect responses. The study population was all [head of public libraries in Bangladesh](#). Seventy-one personalized individual e-mails with a link to a web-based questionnaire were sent out to the public librarians (head of public libraries) inviting them to participate in this study. Fifty-nine responded to the survey which was 83.09 percent of all population.

Findings

The findings revealed that public librarians working in different public libraries were generally aware of UNSDGs. The perceived understanding on the role of public libraries to achieve SDGs varies from SDG #1 to SDG#7. However, most of the librarians' responses ranked well in line with SDGs #1, #2, #3, #4 and SDG#17, and they believed that their public libraries are doing well on some of these goals. Out of seventeen SDGs, public libraries are working well on seven goals. Lack of SDG-related activities, awareness, funds, implementation plan and unwillingness of the policy makers are challenges identified in this study.

Originality

There are not many studies on public libraries in Bangladesh and the research areas are not diverse. There are only few studies in this area and there is a need for different kinds of studies to reach a better overview and understanding when developing public library services to support SDGs. This could serve as the basis for a deeper study.

Keywords: Public libraries, Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations, UNSDGs, Bangladesh, community information, information access, Information services.

Background of the study

Hunger is on the rise, the climate is changing faster than we expect, and more than 700-million people still live in extreme poverty in the world. To improve human lives and protect the environment, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Open Working Group (OWG) came up with seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 for the 193 UN member countries to work towards. While the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 were only for developing nations, the SDGs relate to the entire world and have the mission, 'Leave No One Behind' by 2030 (UN, 2015). These goals, along with their one hundred and sixty-nine targets, are designed to turn the world into several life-changing 'zeros', including the fight against poverty, hunger, carbon emission, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls (UN, 2015).

Since the time SDGs came into action in 2016, public and private organizations in different countries started working to achieve these goals in their mission (Scheyvens, Banks and Hughes, 2016; Rodić and Wilson, 2017), and mapping their organizational goals in line with the SDGs. Public libraries work for ensuring human rights in many ways, for example ensuring freedom of expression, access to information and gateway of knowledge for community people. The motto of UNSDGs 'Leave No One Behind' are areas where public libraries can stand with the SDGs. Providing access to information, fostering inclusive environment and providing services for the marginalized and ethnic groups, public libraries are also in line with the mission of UNSDGs (McCook & Phenix, 2007; Edwards & Edwards, 2010). In addition, by formulating national policies, taking the best global examples, recommendations and models for providing library services and working for a mass society, public libraries can relate with SDGs (Helling, 2012; Black, 1991). In line with these missions, public libraries can help achieve specific SDGs by designing community outreach services such as ICT services for access to health, education, agriculture, and other community information, creating need-based content, and promoting information literacy (Bradley, 2016). Libraries can help reduce poverty (SDG 1) by providing free access to job information and offering training to learn new skills. They can promote good health and well-being (SDG 3) by providing credible health information. Libraries can contribute to quality education (SDG 4) by promoting early literacy and lifelong learning through reading

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3 and writing programs, and help reduce inequalities (SDG 10) by providing access to the
4 information-poor.
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8 A lot of work in these areas has already happened. Public libraries across the world **have**
9 contributed to SDGs by fostering community engagement, social services, and digital inclusion.
10 In many cases, public libraries support SDG #1 “no poverty” and SDG #2 “zero hunger” by
11 converting spaces as shelters, food distribution centers, etc. (Tyler, 2019). For example, German
12 public libraries are helping refugees by offering training, education, and health information
13 (Wang & Lund, 2020). Public libraries in the USA **have provided** COVID-19 trusted sources,
14 disseminating pertinent information, and supporting COVID emergency teams (ALA, 2020).
15 Under the library maps of the world, IFLA has highlighted examples of stories across the world
16 what public libraries are doing to achieve SDGs in different countries. For example, mobile
17 libraries are helping to increase student engagements in India and the ‘human library’ offers
18 shelter to discriminated communities in Kazakhstan (IFLA, 2018). In Scotland, public libraries
19 are enabling health and well-being, and public libraries in Australia are focusing more on
20 increasing social inclusion, providing places and spaces, and encouraging diversity than the
21 conventional services like providing information access and resources to the community people
22 (Tyler, 2019; Hider, *et.al.*, 2022).
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35 While there have been many studies related to SDGs and public libraries in the global context
36 (e.g., IFLA, 2018; ALA, 2020; Bradley, 2016; Tyler, 2019), we have found very few related to
37 SDGs and public libraries in Bangladesh. What public libraries are already doing or can do to
38 help achieve the UN sustainable development goals are the areas which are not discussed in the
39 existing literatures. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study has investigated the role of public
40 libraries and perceived understanding of public librarians about SDGs in the context of
41 Bangladesh.
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48 **SDGs and Bangladesh: Context of Public Libraries**

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51 As per the World Bank report, Bangladesh has well positions in Human development index,
52 Global peace index, ICT index and GDP growth rate becomes 8.4% which ranked this country
53 under the lower-middle-income economy from least developed country (Yusuf, 2021; World
54 Bank, 2020). In UNSDGs ranking, Bangladesh stands 109 of all 193 UN member States. Out of
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3 the seventeen SDGs, reducing poverty, child and maternal mortality and sanitation are the areas
4 where Bangladesh is doing well (Sachs, *et.al.*, 2021; Rahman, 2021). For achieving SDGs,
5 government and other organizations in Bangladesh take many initiatives and tracking progress
6 under the SDG tracker. Under the SDG Working Committee of The Prime Minister's Office, a
7 set of thirty nine indicators has been prioritized to work which fall under the SDGs #1 to #17. As
8 per the ministry wise report of SDGs, we wanted to see the role of public libraries under the
9 ministry of Cultural affairs (SDG Tracker, 2020). Unfortunately, in the dashboard we did not
10 find any data related to public libraries and its potential role to achieve SDGs.
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18 In Bangladesh, government public libraries came into existence in late 1950's and Sufia Kamal
19 National Public Library started its operation in 1958 at Dhaka (Department of Public Libraries,
20 2020). Directorate of Public libraries under the ministry of cultural affairs is one of the leading
21 bodies which have been working across the country for the well-being of the community people
22 in many ways. Under this ministry and directorate, seventy one government public libraries are
23 running across the country. These libraries are conducting regularly career counseling programs
24 and offering many community-based services. Many public libraries organize computer coding,
25 creative brick play sessions and preparing documentary for the school going children under the
26 'Libraries Unlimited' project. The primary objectives of 'Libraries Unlimited' project are to
27 ensure improved access to information and knowledge for millions of people in the country. For
28 achieving these objectives, the nationwide library development project work for formulating
29 policy and advocacy for the local people, designing model for innovative library services,
30 arranging training for the library practioners and monitoring for the best practices. British
31 Council and Department of Public Libraries (DPL) under the ministry of Cultural Affairs are
32 jointly conducting the five-year project 'Libraries Unlimited'. This project is funded by the Bill
33 & Melinda Gates Foundation, to develop the library sector in Bangladesh (British Council,
34 2015).
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49 Some of the general services offered by the public libraries in Bangladesh are; reading room
50 facilities, community information services, book lending services, career counseling, mobile
51 library services, information literacy training and many extension services like drawing and
52 reading competition, book fair, and observing national library day and other historical days.
53 (Islam and Islam, 2010; Chowdhury, Islam and Islam, 2012; British Council, 2015). [Like other](#)
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3 countries, COVID-19 pandemic has affected the public libraries in Bangladesh and the services
4 were closed from March 2020. In October, 2021 physical services started again with some
5 restrictions and regulations. During pandemic, public libraries executed some online activities
6 like online report submission, annual performance agreement, online meeting, webinar, book
7 reading competition , knowledge sharing session, training and awareness campaign of COVID-
8 19 via social media. However, the coverage of public library services in the context of
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13 Bangladesh is limited as this hasn't established the concept the way public libraries serve in a
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15 developed country. For example, in North America public libraries often conceptualize to
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17 upholding democracy, re-commit to democratic practice, foster civic activism, re-unite the
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19 community and catalyzing community issues (Kranich, 2020).
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23 While many organizations are aligning many activities with the SDGs, shifting organization's
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25 mission and vision to align with the SDGs, a lot of initiatives ranging from institutionalization to
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27 localization were taken; this study aims to assess the readiness of public libraries in the context
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29 of achieving SDGs.

30 **Public libraries and SDGs: Review of related literature**

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32 Sustainable Development (SD) is a new focus in the field of Library and Information Science
33 (LIS) research and practice. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
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35 (IFLA) has prepared one story telling manual for libraries and librarians on SDGs. In the list of
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37 seventeen SDGs, each goal is examined in line with the library activities and suggests how
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39 libraries could contribute that policy makers care about (IFLA, 2018). For the present study,
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41 some of the recent papers on SDGs have been reviewed. In a study by Khalid, Malik and
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43 Mahmood (2021), where they have reviewed papers from Scopus, Web of Science (WoS),
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45 Library and Information Science Research (LISA), Library, Information Science and Technology
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47 Abstracts (LISTA) and Google Scholar databases from 2000 to 2020, it is shown that there is
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49 lack of sustainable education in LIS curriculum, sustainable strategies, operations, services and
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51 rapid transition to digital environment, which have limited the libraries role to achieve long term
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53 SD goals. Based on these results they have come up with some plans to help library leaders and
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55 policy makers to achieve SDGs in libraries. Tbaishat (2021) investigated how a Jordanian public
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57 library is working to reduce hunger (SDG2) and achieve progress in the areas of improving life
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3 and land (SDG 16). Findings of this study showed that Egyptian rural public libraries are
4 struggling to be a part of the SDGs mission but positive attitudes of these libraries towards the
5 achievement of these goals are the hope for the Egyptian public libraries.
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10 Balôck (2020) found that public libraries in Cameroon are working to resolve some social
11 conflicts by providing access to information, disseminating job information, employment and
12 providing ICT facilities to reduce poverty under goal 16. Public libraries in Cameroon placed its
13 position as change agent or involved as mediators for the community people. In a study,
14 Qayyum, Afzal, and Mahony (2020) discussed that different programs of public libraries in
15 Canberra, Australia such as singing, dancing, and rhyming through “Giggle and Wiggle”, and
16 story times for young children and their families is helping improve early literacy and reading
17 habits (SDG4). Koscieljew (2020) reviewed the LIS literatures with the UN sustainable goals and
18 came up with a framework of achieving these agendas in the context of public libraries. In a
19 bibliometric study, Meschede and Henkel (2019) mapped out the LIS publications relating to
20 SDGs from 102 LIS journals and identified 81 publications relates to sustainable development
21 areas.
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32 IFLA believes that access to information and ICT facilities provided to community people help
33 to achieve SDGs. IFLA took a drive to map out all the stories relating to SDGs and libraries in
34 2018. In a library map of the world, IFLA covers 29 countries with evidence-based 47 stories
35 ranging from public, academic, special and national libraries across the world. Each story helps
36 the audiences to learn how libraries contribute to the 17 UN SDGs (IFLA, 2018a). Pinto and
37 Ochôa (2017) discussed the initial findings of ‘Project PLS’- a project of public libraries and
38 SDGs. Authors have come up with a framework of evaluating Portuguese public libraries with
39 some evidences, and discussed how the public libraries could achieve some SDGs 4, 5, 9, 10, 13
40 and 14. Based on the same project, the authors proposed a methodology how the libraries could
41 perform their role align with the SDGs (Pinto and Ochôa, 2019). Jain and Jibril (2017) discussed
42 how Botswana public libraries support Goal 8 by providing ICT training, job information and
43 assisting children for school homework under Goal 4. Under Goal 5, some public libraries in
44 Botswana organize programs to support girls and women.
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3 While we see that there are numbers of recent studies related to public libraries in Bangladesh,
4 for example, community information services (Islam and Islam, 2010); information literacy
5 readiness of central public library (Chowdhury, Islam and Islam, 2012); landscape assessment of
6 libraries in Bangladesh (British Council, 2015); multi-channel system for public libraries in
7 Bangladesh (Karim, *et.al.*, 2017); and impact of service quality of the selected Public Libraries in
8 Bangladesh (Amanullah, Hasan and Hafez, 2021), none of these studies relate to public libraries
9 in the context of SDGs in Bangladesh. However, there is one study that focuses on SDGs in the
10 context of public libraries. Alam (2020) presents that public libraries in Bangladesh can help to
11 achieve SDG Target 4.4 by offering educational facilities, Targets 5B, 9C by providing access to
12 ICT and Targets 16.6 and 1.4 by preparing people media and information literate. The study
13 further highlighted how the improved awareness of SDGs and information literacy skills can
14 expand the role of public librarians. Finally, some recommendations are presented on how to
15 improve the capacity building of the public libraries in Bangladesh.
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26 There are some recent initiatives connecting research and professional information organizations
27 on the topic public libraries and SDGs in Bangladesh. An international symposium in
28 Bangladesh on ‘Empowering the Library and Information Professionals for Achieving the SDGs’
29 was the first event in 2020 which was jointly organized by the Department of Information
30 Science and Library Management, University of Dhaka and South Asia Chapter, Association for
31 Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) (ISLM, 2020). Later in the same year one of the
32 authors of this paper talked as a panelist in the ASIS&T annual meeting on ‘Information for a
33 Sustainable World: Addressing Society’s Grand Challenges’ and delivered a talk on SDGs and
34 academic Libraries in the context of Bangladesh in 2021 (ASIS&T, 2020; UiTM, 2021). The
35 present study is the first empirical study which measures the perceived understanding of public
36 librarians to achieve UNSDGs in the context of the public libraries in Bangladesh.
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48 Objectives

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50 Tailoring the need of the community people, public libraries could offer a variety of services and
51 programs to achieve the SDGs. The overall objective of this study is mapping out the public
52 library services in line with the UNSDGs and examining how these libraries are working or can
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work to achieve SDGs. To assess the place of SDGs in the public libraries activities, the following research questions (RQs) are stated;

RQ1. How aware are public librarians in Bangladesh about the UN SDGs?

RQ2. What is their level of understanding for achieving SDGs through public libraries?

RQ3. What are the areas where public libraries are doing well in line with the SDGs?

RQ4. What are the challenges identified to achieve SDGs?

Investigating these research questions will help the public librarians to think and understand the pattern of SDGs and identify the possible role of their libraries. Public libraries can drive progress across the entire UN SDGs if they start designing services and programs in line with the SDGs. Knowing the perception of seventeen goals among the public librarians in Bangladesh will help to achieve these goals. Finally, participating in this study will make the librarians aware about SDGs.

Methodology

The present study collected both primary and secondary data. For the present study, a quantitative survey method was used for collecting data. This method helped to reach a wide pool of public librarians in Bangladesh. For supporting the initial findings of this study, the existing literature related to SDGs are used in the context of Bangladesh. As a theoretical lens, this study has used the United Nations Theory of change method which explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions help to achieve certain agenda (UNDG-UNDAF, nd). In recent years, several UN agencies have moved into Theory of change thinking. For the present study, this lens allows the various actors to gain a better understanding of the importance of the activities carried out by the public libraries in Bangladesh.

Study population

The study population for this study was librarians in Bangladesh who are serving in the public libraries. The study only considered government public libraries which are run by the Directorate of Public Libraries (DPL), Ministry of Cultural affairs in Bangladesh. As per the DPL, there are seventy one public libraries running across the country. Seventy one email addresses of public librarians from the official website of public libraries were collected and compiled for this study.

Each district public library is headed by a public librarian (head of library) with two to four supporting staff members. The number of supporting staff members and the size of the public libraries vary from district to division. In many public libraries some of the positions remain vacant due to manpower shortage. For the present study, only the head of libraries were contacted to fill out the survey form (n=71).

Instrument development

For preparing the questionnaire on SDGs, the seventeen goals adopted by all UN member states in 2015 were examined and further mapped in line with objectives and services of the public libraries. Also the 'IFLA Library Map of the World' was studied, a platform where the stories of SDGs and libraries are compiled, and discussed how libraries in different countries contribute to achieving SDGs (IFLA, 2018a). The questionnaire was a mix of self-developed and adapted from prior studies such as the Egyptian study on rural public libraries towards the attainment of SDGs (Mansour, 2020); SDGs and public libraries in Cameroon (Balôck,2020); Jordanian public libraries and SDGs (Tbaishat, 2020) and SDGs experiences in the context of Botswana public libraries (Jain and Jibril, 2018). The survey questionnaire adopted the 5-point Likert scale to get a holistic view of public librarians' opinion and their level of agreement with the seventeen SDGs.

Data collection

The e-mail questionnaire was pre-tested by five public librarians to find out any inconsistency or missing items. A google form was created with giving a short description of the seventeen goals and objectives of this study. Seventy one personalized individual e-mails with a link to a web-based questionnaire were sent out to librarians inviting them to participate in this study. A couple of reminders were sent in order to get back more responses from the librarians. After the reminder emails and phone calls, fifty nine responded to the survey which was 83.09 percent of all populations. The data collection period was from November 6, 2021 to February 11, 2022.

Analysis

The datasets were downloaded from Google form, saved as Comma-separated Values (csv) format, and imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Later, some of the fields in the SPSS were edited in line with the question pattern. Descriptive statistics are used to

describe the data set (mean, standard deviation, or frequency) for demonstrating the variable information.

Findings

Demographic information of the survey respondents of this study are shown in Table 1. The highest number of respondents 45 (76.3%) were male, and 14 (23.7%) were female. Among the respondents, the largest number of participants came from the 31-35 age group which were 19 (32.2%) and most of the respondents have M.A.M.S.S degree 51 (86.4%). Other demographic characteristics show the library experience of the respondents, work roles or positions specified by the respondents which were classified into five categories. Also the number of employees in their library was asked for. The majority of the respondents had 5-9 years of work experience (33.9%), 55.9% were librarians, and most of the respondents work in libraries with 1-9 employees (89.8%).

Table 1: Demographic information (n=59)

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
	Gender		
Gender	Male	45	76.3
	Female	14	23.7
	Age		
Age	25-30 yrs	16	27.1
	31-35 yrs	19	32.2
	36-40 yr	6	10.2
	41-45 yrs	8	13.6
	>45yrs	10	16.9
	Education		
Education	B.A.	3	5.1
	M.A./M.S.S	51	86.4
	Diploma	3	5.1
	H.S.C.	2	3.4
	Experience		
Experience	1-4	10	16.9
	5-9	20	33.9
	10-14	8	13.6
	15-19	9	15.3
	20-24	4	6.8
	25-29	5	8.5
	30-34	3	5.1
	Position		
Position	Librarian	33	55.9
	Assistant Librarian	12	20.3
	Assistant Director	5	8.5
	Junior Librarian	4	6.8
	Library Assistant	4	6.8
	Attendant Officer	1	1.7

No. of employees	<i>No. of employees</i>		
	1-9	53	89.8
	10-19	5	8.5
	30-39	1	1.7

Table 2 shows the ICT infrastructures of the selected public libraries in Bangladesh. It is apparent that all the selected public libraries have major ICT tools like computer, internet, scanner, printer and half of the selected public libraries have webcams.

Table 2: ICT infrastructure and social media used in selected public libraries (n=59)

ICT tools	Frequency (%)
Computer	59(100)
Internet	59(100)
Scanner	59 (100)
Printer	59(100)
Webcam	31(52.54)
Others	22(37.28)
Internet connectivity	
Broadband	52(88.11)
Wifi	52(88.1)
Mobile net	31(52.5)
Social media	
Facebook	28(47.5)
Facebook, YouTube	24(40.7)
Facebook, Youtube, Blog	2(3.4)
Facebook, YouTube, Twitter	2(3.4)
Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram	3(5.1)

The majority of the selected public libraries in Bangladesh are enjoying broadband and Wifi facilities for the internet accessibility, and 31(52.5%) have mobile net facilities in their libraries. Facebook is widely used by all of the librarians and YouTube is the second highest social media tool. Table 3 shows the public library activities and explored what programs and services improving outcome across need of the community people.

Table 3: SDG related programs and services offered by public libraries (n=59)

SDG and public libraries program and services	Yes	No
Promoting universal literacy e.g., media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy	33(55.9)	26(44.1)
Closing gap by providing access to information	39(66.1)	20(33.9)
Meeting local information need of community people	45(76.3)	14(23.7)
Providing a platform for disseminating government programs and services	36(61.0)	23(39.0)
Helping digital inclusion through access to ICT,	37(62.7)	22(37.3)
Helping people develop new digital skills	29(49.2)	30(50.8)
Serving as information hub for research and academic community	35(59.3)	24(40.7)
Providing access to the world's culture and heritage	27(45.8)	32(54.2)

Offering computer and internet facilities	46(78.0)	13(22.0)
Career guidelines, vocational training, mentoring	30(50.8)	29(49.2)
Providing access to children information, reading books, storytelling e.g., early literacy	36(61.0)	23(39.0)
ICT training for students, community people	29(49.2)	30(50.8)
Book home delivery services	37(62.7)	22(37.3)
Helping people to locate information, which helps create better informed citizen	33(55.9)	26(44.1)
Promoting lifelong learning	36(61.0)	23(39.0)
Arranging language learning session e.g. English language	25(42.4)	34(57.6)
Promoting reading habit by book reading club	30(50.8)	29(49.2)
Arranging debate competition on social issues	27(45.8)	32(54.2)
Observing national days	38(64.4)	21(35.6)
Empowering citizens for fighting against misinformation, disinformation and fake news	22(37.3)	37(62.7)
Outreach programs i.e. literary competitions, workshop, seminars, library orientation etc.	28(47.5)	31(52.5)
Door to door reader's service through mobile library	42(71.2)	17(28.8)
Readers' service with open book shelves	41(69.5)	18(30.5)
Reference services with reference materials	40(67.8)	19(32.2)
Book lending service for registered members	46(78.0)	13(22.0)
Health information e.g., navigating health sites	35(59.3)	24(40.7)

From Table 3, it is evident that a relatively high percentage of public libraries are offering computer and internet facilities, providing book lending services for the registered members and meeting the local information need of the community people. On the other listed services and programs, the results showed that most of the public libraries are doing well.

Awareness of SDGs among the public librarians

More than forty percent 24(40.7%) of the librarians reported that they are familiar with the SDGs and 23(39%) are very familiar. Only one percent of the respondents replied that they had never heard of SDGs (Table 4). Thus, most of the librarians had heard of SDGs in some forms. Figure 1 reveals that majority of the respondents 44(74.6%) heard about SDGs from government organizations which are followed by newspaper 41(69.5%), television 34(57.6%) and colleagues 26(44.1%).

Table 4: Familiarity of UNSDGs?

Variable	Frequency	%	Cumulative
Very familiar	23	39.0	39.0
Familiar	24	40.7	79.7
Somewhat familiar	11	18.6	98.3
I had never heard of SDG until now	1	1.7	100.0
Total	59	100.0	

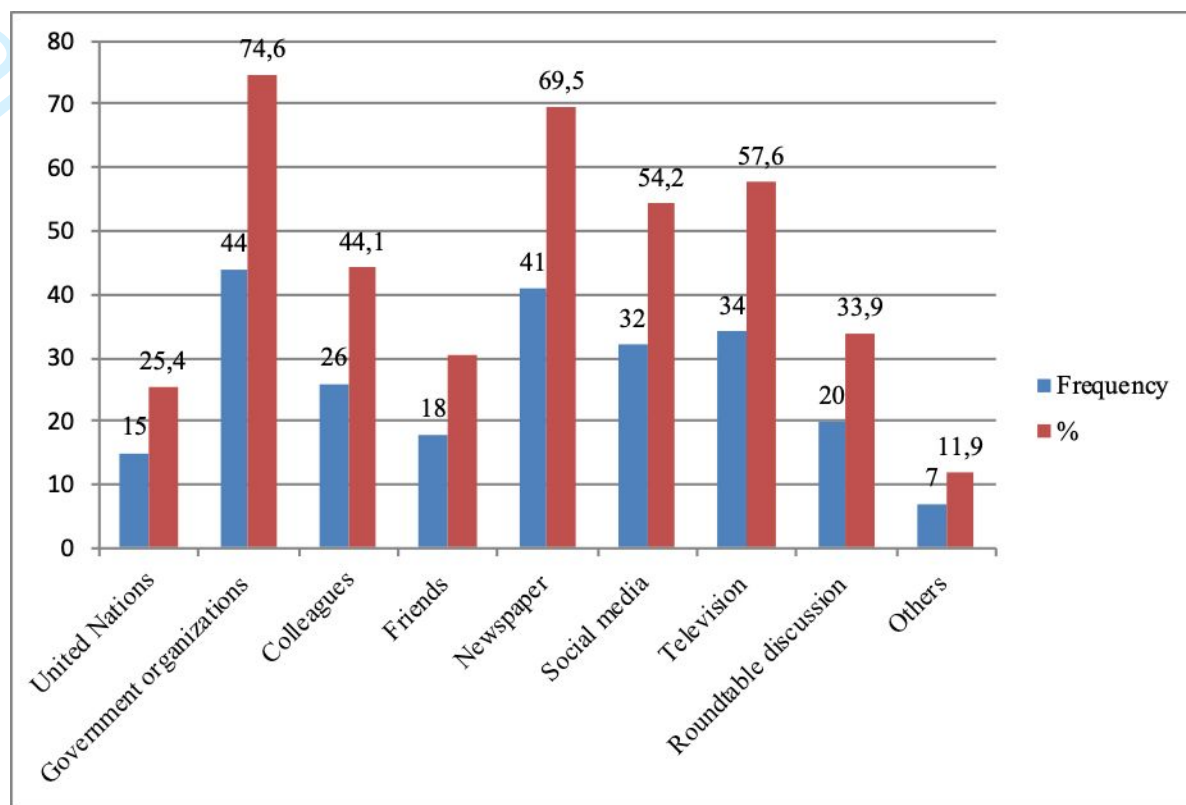


Figure 1: Heard about SDGs (n=59, multiple responses)

To measure the librarians' understanding of achieving SDGs through public libraries, the goals were placed with some scope note in order to examine how familiar they are in the given areas that public libraries can do well. Table 5 shows the frequency and percentages of responses and weighted mean for each questionnaire item. From their professional's point of view, they have rated the 17 SDGs. Under each of these goals, we have further added some explanations. Based on the weighted mean, we have ranked all these goals where SDG # 4 (quality education) got the highest position and SDG # 17 (partnerships) ranked in the second position which is was followed by SDG#3, SDG#1 and SDG#2. The weighted mean score of these top five SDGs fell above 3 i.e., the average scores in the five-point Likert scale (Table 5).

Table 5: Perceived understanding-achieving SDGs through public libraries

Overall understanding	1	2	3	4	5	Weight. Mean	Rank
SDG-4 Quality education (Support literacy program, support learning)	-	6(10.2)	6(10.2)	16(27.1)	31(32.5)	4.22	1
SDG-17 Partnerships for the goals	1(1.7)	6(10.2)	12(20.3)	20(33.9)	20(33.9)	3.88	2

(Libraries work with public and private organizations-community programme)								
SDG-3 Good health and well-Being (Public access to health information)	2(3.4)	4(6.8)	10(16.9)	33(55.9)	10(16.9)	3.76	3	
SDG-1 No poverty (Provide opportunities by giving information to improve lives)	-	10(16.9)	11(48.6)	34(57.6)	4(6.8)	3.54	4	
SDG-2 Zero hunger (ICT training for job, access to information in local language)	4(6.8)	6(10.2)	15(25.4)	26(44.1)	8(13.6)	3.47	5	
SDG-8 Decent work and economic growth (Employment clubs to share tips with other job-seekers, ICT training)	2(3.4)	20(33.9)	21(35.6)	11(18.6)	5(8.5)	2.95	6	
SDG-7 Affordable and clean energy (Only space where people get access to light and ricity to read and study)	1(1.7)	24(40.7)	15(25.4)	16(27.1)	3(5.1)	2.93	7	
SDG-10 Reduced inequalities (Reduce inequality by providing access and spaces to all in both urban & rural)	1(1.7)	19(32.2)	34(57.6)	5(8.5)	-	2.73	8	
SDG-5 Gender equality (Offer programs for women & girls to access information)	6(10.2)	30(50.8)	11(18.6)	6(10.2)	6(10.2)	2.59	9	
SDG-15 Life on land (Offering open access to biodiversity data and literature)	15(25.4)	22(37.3)	16(27.1)	6(10.2)	-	2.22	10	
SDG-11 Sustainable cities and communities (Preserving documentary)	24(40.7)	10(16.9)	18(30.5)	7(11.9)	-	2.14	11	
SDG-13 Climate action (Raise awareness about climate change)	22(37.3)	13(22.0)	21(35.6)	3(5.1)	-	2.08	12	
SDG-12 Responsible consumption and production (Sustainable centers by sharing resources within community)	21(35.6)	25(42.4)	8(13.6)	4(6.8)	1(1.7)	1.97	13	
SDG-6 Clean water and sanitation (Provide evidence-based information on water and nation for policy makers)	19(32.2)	27(45.8)	11(18.6)	2(3.4)	-	1.93	14	
SDG-16 Peace, justice and strong institutions (Trusted and key source of information for people)	28(47.5)	20(33.9)	3(5.1)	7(11.9)	1(1.7)	1.86	15	
SDG-9 Industry innovation and infrastructure (Some libraries operate business centers and offer training)	28(47.5)	16(27.1)	14(23.7)	1(1.7)	-	1.80	16	
SDG-14 Life below water (Preserving and giving access to ocean data)	42(71.2)	9(15.3)	8(13.6)	-	-	1.42	17	

(1-Not at all importance; 2-Low importance; 3-Neutral; 4-Very important; 5-Extremely important)

In table 6, the first column (bold SDGs) and the last column rank values indicate that public librarians perceive that their libraries are creating value for the community people for achieving SDGs on SDG#4, SDG#2, SDG#3, SDG#10, SDG#17, SDG#13 and SDG#1.

Table 6: Where public libraries are doing well in Bangladesh

SDGs and public libraries	1	2	3	4	5	Weight. Mean	Rank
SDG-4 Quality education	-	1(1.7)	2(3.4)	29(49.2)	27(45.8)	4.39	1
SDG-2 Zero hunger	-	3(5.1)	7(11.9)	41(69.5)	8(13.6)	3.92	2
SDG-3 Good health and well-Being	-	3(5.1)	7(11.9)	40(69.5)	8(13.6)	3.91	3
SDG-10 Reduced inequalities	-	2(3.4)	12(20.3)	37(62.7)	8(13.6)	3.86	4
SDG-17 Partnerships for the goals	-	2(3.4)	18(30.5)	27(45.8)	12(20.3)	3.83	5
SDG-13 Climate action	2(3.4)	3(5.1)	15(25.4)	30(50.8)	9(15.3)	3.69	6
SDG-1 No poverty	-	8(13.8)	17(28.8)	30(50.8)	4(6.8)	3.51	7
SDG-9 Industry innovation & infrastructure	1(1.7)	22(37.3)	26(44.1)	9(15.3)	1(1.7)	2.78	8
SDG-12 Responsible consumption & product	15(25.4)	13(22.0)	22(37.3)	9(15.3)	-	2.42	9
SDG-16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	18(30.5)	12(20.3)	21(35.6)	7(11.9)	1(1.7)	2.34	10
SDG-11 Sustainable cities and communities	18(30.5)	16(27.1)	21(35.6)	4(6.8)	-	2.19	11
SDG-8 Decent work and economic growth	24(40.7)	13(22.0)	15(25.4)	7(11.9)	-	2.08	12
SDG-5 Gender equality	14(23.7)	27(45.8)	18(30.5)	-	-	2.07	13
SDG-15 Life on land	25(42.4)	11(18.6)	19(32.2)	4(6.8)	-	2.03	14
SDG-6 Clean water and sanitation	27(45.8)	14(23.7)	14(23.7)	4(6.8)	-	1.92	15
SDG-14 Life below water	39(66.1)	16(27.1)	2(3.4)	2(3.4)	-	1.44	16
SDG-7 Affordable and clean energy	47(79.7)	12(20.3)	-	-	-	1.2	17

(1 Strongly disagree; 2 Disagree; 3 neither agree or disagree; 4 Agree; 5 Strongly agree)

The role of public libraries to achieve SDGs are comparatively new research areas in the context of Bangladesh. It was important to explore what are the existing barriers that public libraries and librarians face to achieve SDGs. Considering the adequacy of resources, public libraries in Bangladesh have severe shortage of resources. Even the public librarians are reluctant to take additional roles in their activities lists (Alam, 2020). Figure 2 shows that 43(72.9%) of the librarians replied that SDGs and its activities in libraries are not well-practiced among the library stakeholders in Bangladesh. This is followed by lack of SDGs implementation plan 36(61%), lack of funds 42(71.2%), both lack of awareness, and policy makers fails to understand the importance of public libraries 34(57.6%) and unwillingness attitudes of policy makers 28(47.5%).

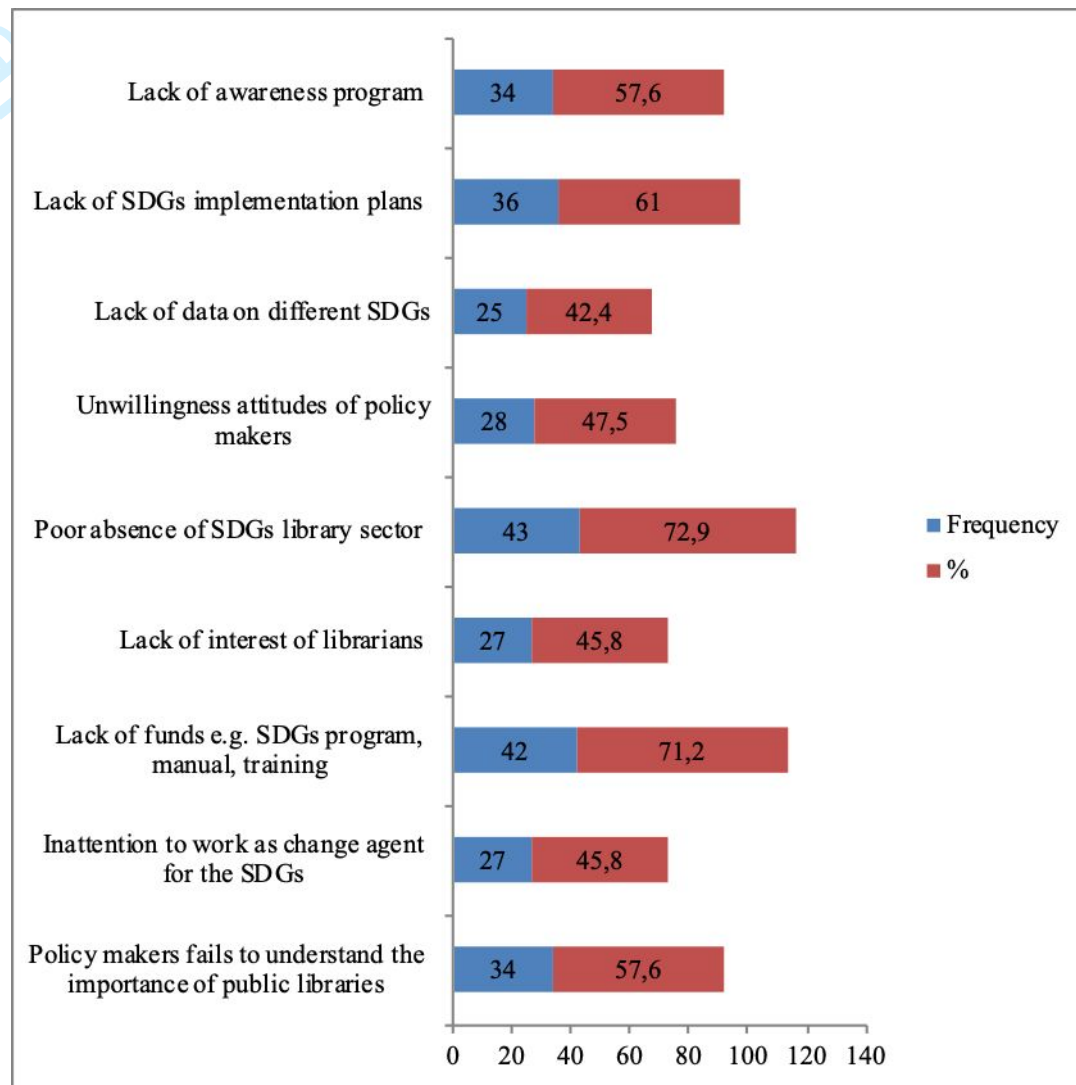


Figure 2: Barriers of achieving SDGs (n=59) (multiple responses)

Discussion

For the present study, the four research questions were examined and resulted in a wide set of findings. These findings are related with awareness of the SDGs, librarians' perception about the role of libraries to achieve SDGs and readiness of libraries with the limitations they identified.

RQ#1: While the different ministries and divisions of Bangladesh are partially working on 39 out of 169 targets of SDGs and did not have enough data on different SDGs, the awareness ratio of SDGs among the public librarians is very significant. Knowing about SDGs among the public librarians is the first step in determining whether they are interested to adopt SDGs in their activities or not. This approach would lead the public libraries to work in line with the SDGs and

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3 make this a mission and vision for their libraries. The majority of the respondents came to know
4 about SDGs from the government organization, newspaper and television. This is significant in
5 the sense that Bangladesh has adopted ‘Whole of Society’ approach in implementing the SDGs.
6 Different government organizations from top to bottom levels have set the work plan which is
7 led by the implementation committees (General Economic Division, 2020). However, a good
8 number of respondents also came to know about SDGs from social media which also was
9 supported by United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). Social media and
10 Web 2.0 tools have great potential to reach people and aware them about the SDGs (UNITAR,
11 2022).

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19 RQ#2: It is evident that all SDGs are not equally perceived by the librarians and some of those
20 goals are ranked well where public libraries can work well to achieve SDGs. Public librarians
21 believe that supporting early literacy, information literacy, adult literacy, lending reading
22 materials and other educational programs organized by the public libraries can help to achieve
23 Goal#4. The second highest numbers of librarians believe that libraries can collaborate and work
24 in a partnership with other organizations to carry out the community awareness campaign
25 Goal#17. Igbinovia (2017) noted that SDGs mission is holistic and cross-disciplinary approach
26 of human endeavor, and public libraries need to cope with collaborative research and practices in
27 the activities. Perhaps working with different public and private organizations and working in
28 different projects perceived them to understand the potentials of partnership and collaboration.
29 Teamwork, building and scaling up partnerships to share and disseminate knowledge for
30 sustainable development, public libraries can help to achieve many of the SDGs. In addition,
31 providing health information to community people and navigating COVID-19 health information
32 in the public library portal (Goal#3), offering mobile libraries books and internet access facilities
33 to people which would otherwise be isolated (Goal#1) and providing ICT training and access to
34 information in local language (Goal#2) are the three other goals where librarians perceived that
35 public libraries can support. However, public librarians showed relatively lower levels of
36 awareness related to climate action, responsible consumption and production, clean water and
37 sanitation, peace, justice and strong institutions, industry innovation and infrastructure and life
38 below water. This finding is supported by some of the researchers that discussed aligning public
39 librarians’ awareness with SDGs may be different in different context and countries (Awodoyin
40 and Ojo, 2021). As a community organizer and community service provider, public librarians’

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3 awareness to SDGs may be varied from SDG 1 to SDG 17 but this would help to design library
4 services in line with the SDGs.
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7 RQ#3: Barnes (2012) noted that public libraries support to build sustainable communities by
8 covering different aspects (e.g., green libraries for environmental sustainability, educating
9 communities, and providing access to information) of the sustainability. IFLA (2017) supports
10 that access to information executes many goals by promoting information literacy, digital
11 literacy, reducing digital divide and improving social inclusion and working as a channel of
12 service delivery site for government programs and services. In this context, we measured the
13 public librarians' response where their libraries are doing well for achieving SDGs. With regard
14 to 'quality education' Goal#4, the highest number of respondents reported that their libraries are
15 doing well. The weighted mean score 4.39 reflects that the kind of programs and services they
16 are offering for the community people are praiseworthy, and creating value for the community
17 people (Table 6). Book lending services, offering computer and internet facilities, reference
18 services with reference materials, reader services with open book shelves, reader's service
19 through mobile library and promoting universal literacy which led public libraries for achieving
20 quality education goal. Providing access to children books and organizing storytelling session
21 also led to promote early literacy. This finding is supported by Mchombu and Cadbury (2006)'s
22 study where they discussed how public libraries could offer quality education by developing
23 literacy skills and aid in developing ICK skills. Regarding the 'zero hunger' Goal#2, the second
24 largest number of librarians (weighted mean 3.92) reported that they help their library's users to
25 identify the various support programs related to hunger, agriculture and nutrition. They
26 disseminate agriculture information, market information, farming methods and provide ICT
27 facilities to get agricultural information. This finding support the IFLA's point that public
28 libraries could provide access to agricultural information on local languages and modern
29 methods of farming which can help obtaining good agricultural production. From table 6 (based
30 on rank), we can see that Goal #3, Goal #10, Goal#17, Goal#13, and Goal#1 where librarians
31 reported that their libraries play a key role to reduce inequalities by providing access to
32 information and ICT facilities, encouraging partnership with other government organizations,
33 educating community members about the importance of climate change and empowering people
34 through ICT training, organizing career counseling session for improving the employability
35 skills. For example, they observe the national environment day for encouraging awareness and
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action for the protection of the environment. Some of these findings are supported by many researchers e.g., libraries are a primary place to enable the fight against poverty (Mbabaali, 2017); public and private partnerships for public libraries (Scherer, 2014; Mansour, 2020).

RQ#4: The top three challenges fall under the poor absence of SDG related activities in the library sector, lack of funds, training and programs, and SDGs implementation plan. Other challenges like lack of awareness among the library stakeholders, unwillingness attitudes of policy maker and shortage of SDG related data also set the drawback in public libraries. For example, the head of DPL is not a specialized professional from LIS discipline, and this may affect the understanding of the potential roles of public libraries in the SDGs. Under the SDG tracker, there are no data on different programs, services, training and community outreaching activities of public libraries where many of those activities are running in line with the SDGs. Transform public library services into sustainable long-term practices need fund and lack of funding is the key challenge of SDG implementation in Bangladesh. Apart from these, public libraries in Bangladesh faced a number of challenges related to lack of awareness among the community people about public library services, inadequate library resources and fund, poor infrastructural facilities, absence of innovative services and poor outreaching activities (British Council, 2015). Moreover, the COVID-19 outbreak shows us how vulnerable the public libraries in Bangladesh are when most of the user-related services were off.

Unfolding the perceptions and being able to understand is not only important for advocacy but also help to set the agenda where public libraries are and in what areas these libraries are doing well. The perceived understanding of SDGs in the context of public libraries in Bangladesh can help to identify the gap and set the plans and programs to reduce this gap. For the present study

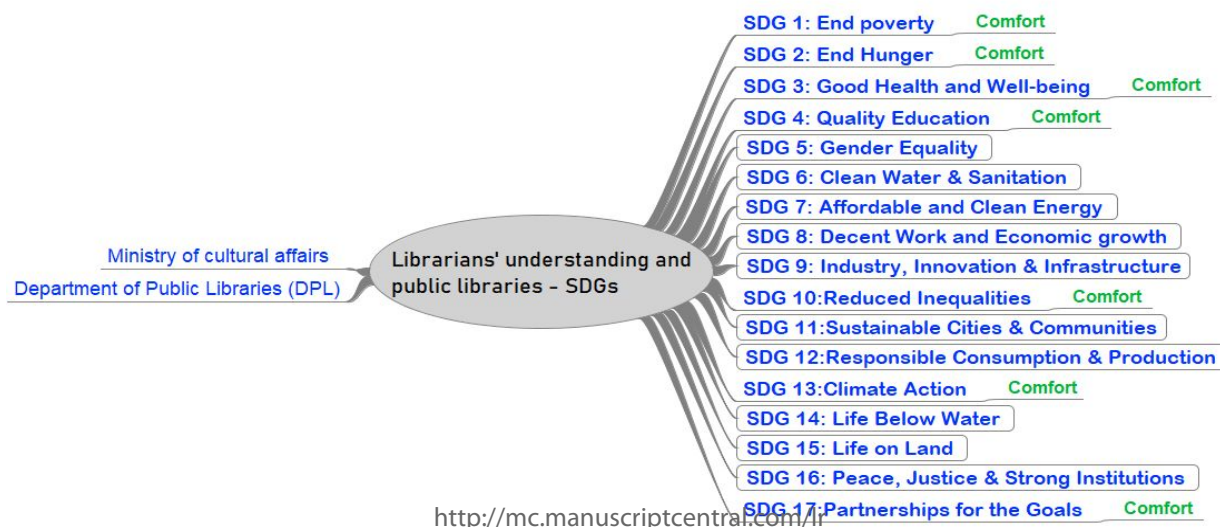


Figure 3: Mapped of SDGs and public libraries

it was found that public librarians' perception to SDGs varies from SDG1 to SDG17. In Figure 3 the SDGs where public libraries in Bangladesh are doing well have been mapped and further, the SDGs where librarians' responses were not in favor, have been identified. For the alignment with SDGs and public libraries, the SDGs with comfort and discomfort categories were mapped. Out of seventeen goals, it is clear that only seven goals fall under the comfort category, and other categories librarians' perceptions are not well. For example, to achieve SDG#5 'gender equality' Bangladeshi women have been struggling against discrimination in education, health, job and other sectors. For women, opportunities to visit public libraries and avail services are still fancy in many areas across the country. Considering the resource limitations, public libraries in Bangladesh cannot offer specialized programmes for women and girls to access information and other services. However, public libraries in Bangladesh could create awareness programs by celebrating the international women day, support the global campaign for women, create awareness about gender equity and violence against women by campaign, promoting women's rights and can provide information for the women empowerment process e.g, women entrepreneurship. Most importantly, safety of women and other facilities for female users need to be ensured.

The root of SDG#16 is access to legal information so that more people could get to know their rights they have. Public libraries partnership with law libraries can help community people to know their rights. While the Bangladeshi public libraries and librarians are not well-oriented with this, Bangladesh could learn the examples set by Kenya and Australia. For ensuring accountability and transparency (SDG#16.6), Kenyan government offers [an](#) open data portal to overcome the difficulties to access government information. In partnership with the Legal Information Access Centre (LIAC) of the State Library of NSW, public libraries in NSW, Australia are delivering legal information to the community people (Ngure and Ochungo, 2016; Scarf, 2016). Bangladeshi public libraries could collaborate with the law libraries and create an open data portal in the website. The easy reading law materials and access to law information can give access to justice a reality for many who would otherwise have been left out. Like this for the other SDGs (discomfort categories), public libraries can take the global examples,

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3 examine the resources to implement and if need put more resources to success in the context of
4 Bangladesh.

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6 Even though this study did not get responses from all public librarians, we can draw some useful
7 insights from the findings. Without knowing many activities, reading manuals, lesson learned
8 and joining programs and trainings on SDGs, the above figure reveals that public libraries and
9 librarians in Bangladesh are working well in their own capacity on achieving some goals. For
10 example, the mobile library project of public libraries are distributing and collecting books
11 across the country. Distributing books with eye-catching buses in different corners helping to
12 promote early literacy and to build reading habits among the children. This also plays an
13 important role to raise awareness against drug addiction, child marriage and other social
14 problems exist in the society. For achieving certain SDGs within the development agenda, there
15 need to be must necessarily be a systematic investigation to extract pertinent factors relating to
16 these goals and targets. Under the discomfort goals, there are many areas to work on where
17 public libraries can demonstrate its activities. Perhaps re-designing the outreach programs, re-
18 examining the existing services and design some goal oriented services can improve the
19 discomfort zone. Changing the community need and increasing demand put public libraries in a
20 position where public libraries need to think of providing demand-based information services
21 (British Council, 2015). Considering this, in many countries public libraries are turning into
22 multipurpose centers by re-designing of access to information facilities, digitization of
23 information and inspiring examples (Macdonald, 2015; Rhinesmith and Stanton, 2018).

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25 For example, identifying, capturing and preserving indigenous knowledge of the community
26 people and promoting traditional festivals and outdoor games, public libraries in Bangladesh can
27 support SDG#11 ‘Sustainable cities and Communities’. Similarly public libraries can observe
28 international women’s day, organize seminar on violence against women and girls and ensure
29 gender equality in recruiting and hiring under SDG #5 ‘Gender Equality’. Under the Goal#7
30 ‘Affordable and Clean Energy’ public libraries in Bangladesh can start thinking of green library
31 concept by reducing energy consumption, promoting environmental awareness among the library
32 users, library staff and staying informed about sustainability issues at large in libraries.
33 Librarians can examine the Green library checklist project of IFLA and can gain experiences
34 from winners of the IFLA Green Library Award, e.g., Oulu City Library receives the IFLA
35 Green Library Award 2021 (ENSULIB, 2022). In addition, many social innovation activities like
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3 promoting financial and information literacy toolkit in public libraries can alleviate poverty in
4 Bangladesh like other developing countries (Potnis and Gala, 2022). Contextualizing the best
5 practices and lessons, public libraries in Bangladesh can follow the SDG-oriented library
6 projects in European libraries - European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation
7 Associations (EBLIDA) and IFLA's SDG stories of libraries across the world (EBLIDA, 2020;
8 IFLA, 2018).

14
15 The seventeen SDGs with one hundred sixty nine targets and the potential role of public library's
16 contribution to the achievement of SDGs is a challenging issue. While the public libraries are
17 facing lots of challenges, **they** have to come up with **a** real plan and proposals, framework to
18 work, and turn challenges into opportunities. Libraries have to assess the capacity to advocate
19 around the SDGs, and convince the decision makers and influencers to understand what public
20 libraries can do.

27 **Conclusion and recommendations**

29 This study concluded that public libraries in Bangladesh are behind from many of the SDGs set
30 by the United Nations. Perceived understanding of librarians to SDGs and public library's
31 capacity to meet the SDGs are not worthy. Despite the lack of SDG elated activities in libraries,
32 shortage of funding, lack of understanding and awareness among the policy makers and lack of
33 proper implantation plans, public librarians have positive understanding on seven goals where
34 the libraries are doing well. This is somewhat positive and can inspire the policy makers to start
35 considering public libraries as change agent for achieving SDGs. Based on the present findings
36 and some previous studies related to SDGs and public libraries e.g., (Pinto and Ochôa, 2017;
37 IFLA, 18; Pinto and Ochôa, 2019; EBLIDA, 2020; Mansour, 2020; Kosciejew, 2020; Tbaishat,
38 2020), we have summarized some recommendations for the public libraries in Bangladesh.
39 Public libraries should step up to create awareness among the library stakeholders, and
40 demonstrate the capacities of public libraries by gathering evidence of contribution to SDGs.
41 Under the SDG tracker, dashboard of the ministry of cultural affairs should up-to-date so that
42 policy maker could see on what goals public libraries are working across the country. Like
43 'Libraries Unlimited' public libraries should start another project with the national and
44 international partnership on designing services and contents for the community people in line
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with the SDGs. Libraries need to design and run effective services that would directly impact the success of SDGs. Libraries should expand digital access and use of information considering the changing nature of library services in the post-COVID lens. ICT facilities need to be improved by offering computer with better internet connectivity. Digitalization and other online networking and resource sharing activities needs to be started to offer inter and intra-library services. Library Associations of Bangladesh (LAB) and Bangladesh Association of Librarians, Information Scientists and Documentalists (BALID) can step up to create awareness and organize seminars, symposiums to the implementation of the SDGs. These professionals associations can shift the mission and vision to align with the SDGs. Perhaps, these associations can work jointly with the IFLA and other library associations to adopt the policy, best practices and SDG framework for the associations. Finally, we expect the government will recognize and encourage the library's role in both measuring and achieving the SDGs. The present study has some limitations as well. Apart from this survey study, a future study interviewing the public librarians and extracting the evidence of what they are doing and working on which projects will give us better understanding. Future researchers should examine these findings further and continue work in this area.

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3 Referee: 1
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5 Recommendation: Minor Revision
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8 Comments:

9 The author(s) have incorporated reviewer feedback and strengthened the article by clarifying
10 points, adding new citations, and have deepened the analysis. The content of the article is
11 interesting and helpful. However, the article needs another edit to correct grammar, awkward
12 phrases, and the use of articles.
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17 Dear Editor,
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19 Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work on the revised paper. We have worked hard and
20 spent reasonable times for editing the paper. Hope it is much improved. All changes are marked
21 under track changes in article.
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24 Regards

25 Anwar

26 (Anwar, Sultana and Widen)
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31 Additional Questions:

32 1. Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify
33 publication?: Yes.
34

35 2. Relationship to Literature: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the
36 relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any
37 significant work ignored?: Yes.
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40 3. Methodology: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts, or
41 other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been
42 well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?: Yes.
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45 4. Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions
46 adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?: Yes.
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48 5. Implications for research, practice and/or society: Does the paper identify clearly any
49 implications for research, practice and/or society? Does the paper bridge the gap between theory
50 and practice? How can the research be used in practice (economic and commercial impact), in
51 teaching, to influence public policy, in research (contributing to the body of knowledge)? What
52 is the impact upon society (influencing public attitudes, affecting quality of life)? Are these
53 implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?: Yes.
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3 6. Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the
4 technical language of the field and the expected knowledge of the journal's readership? Has
5 attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon
6 use, acronyms, etc.: The author(s) have incorporated reviewer feedback and strengthened the
7 article by clarifying points, adding new citations, and have deepened the analysis. The content of
8 the article is interesting and helpful. However, the article needs another edit to correct grammar,
9 awkward phrases, and the use of articles.
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