

# BANGLADESH QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL





# Bangladesh: Quality Education for ALL





A large crowd of children, mostly of South Asian descent, are shown from the chest up, holding up numerous colorful books and papers. The children are smiling and looking upwards, creating a sense of excitement and achievement. The books have various covers, some with text in Bengali like 'আমার বাংলা বই' (My Bengali Book) and others with numbers like '2'. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the children and their books. A semi-transparent dark overlay covers the entire image, providing a space for text.

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, Bangladesh has taken great strides in terms of human development particularly in the education sector. The government has expanded access and opportunities at the primary, secondary and tertiary level of education during this period. The country now boasts of one of the largest education system in the world catering to over 35 million students. Formative changes have taken place in the sector during the successive tenures of Awami League government. National policies and resources were geared towards ensuring access, inclusion and quality at all levels of education. Continuous policy support, planning and implementation and greater investments on human development have yielded commendable results in increasing enrollment rate in primary and secondary, achieving gender parity by bringing millions of girls into schools and increasing literacy rate. Significant progress has been achieved i.e. reducing dropouts and increasing cycle-completion, courtesy of a number of access and quality enhancement measures in primary and secondary education. Non-government organizations (NGOs), private sector and development partners also have significant contributions regarding the progress.

The government formulated a comprehensive education policy (Education Policy 2010) which has been in effect for a while. The policy paved ways for significant changes, for instance it introduced pre-primary education, elevated primary education up to grade eight, restructured the assessment system and introduced inclusive classrooms to ensure quality education for students with special needs. Introducing modern ICT for learning is one of the important measures taken to improve the quality of education in the country. Quality of madrasa education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has improved due to various initiatives in the past ten years. There has been a steady rise in allocation for the education sector during that period. The country seems to be on the right track to ensure quality education and lifelong-learning (SDG 4) for all by 2030.

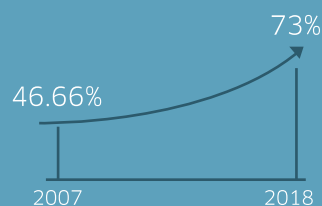
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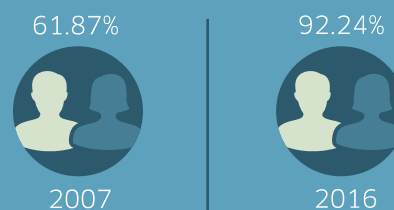
# 1. PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Bangladesh made significant progress in education sector fulfilling different global targets before dead line. The country attained universal access to primary education and high level (80 percent) primary education completion rate. Gender equity has been achieved at primary and secondary education. In the recent years, beside access, emphasis has been given on quality and outcome in both these sub-sectors. To ensure delivery of quality education, the government continues its efforts e.g. updating curriculum and contents, strengthening teacher education and training, improving school monitoring and supervision mechanism. Capacity development of teachers and learning-friendly infrastructure development are the areas which received lot of investment and attention in the recent past. Moreover, teaching-learning approach and assessment system are continuously reviewed and updated to keep alignment with the competency-based curricula. All those efforts paid-off as progress is made in terms of reduced drop-out, improved teaching learning and cycle-completion.

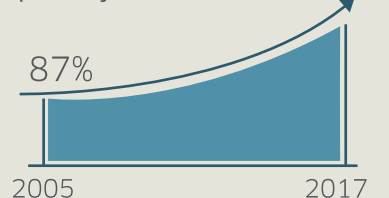
## Bangladesh literacy rate



## literacy rate for men and women aged between 15 to 24 years



## Net enrolment at primary level







primary level



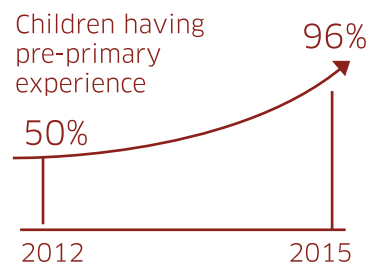
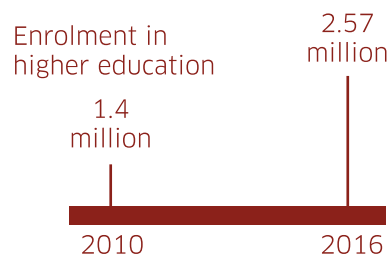
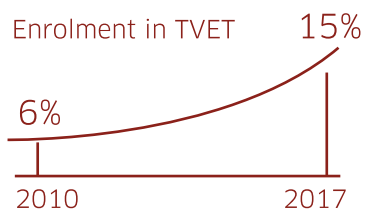
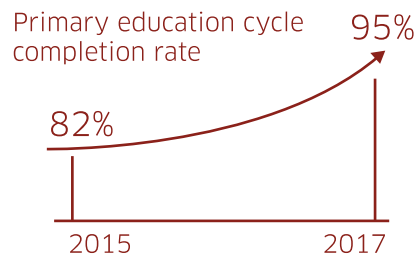
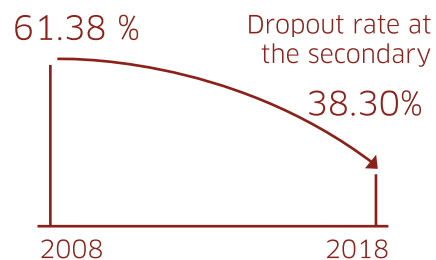
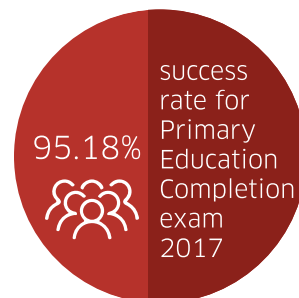
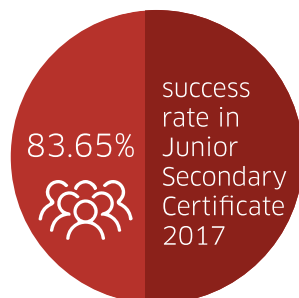
secondary level



Enrolment of girls in  
technical education  
increased by 44% since  
2010



Girls enrolment  
rate at primary  
level 99.4%



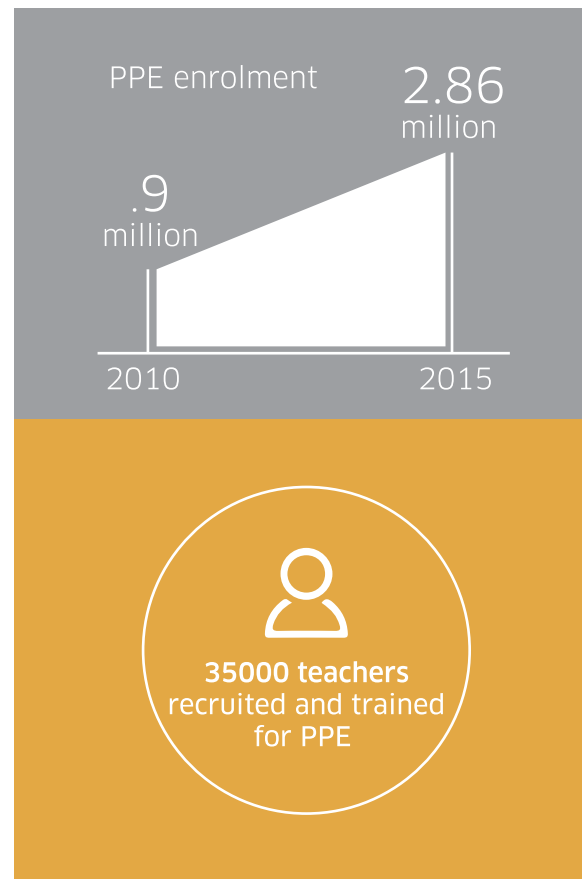


## 2. QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION

The government's strategic vision for universal basic education is laid out under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010. To deliver quality basic education, the government continues with a number of programs including development and distribution of textbooks and learning materials, capacity building of teachers, construction and reconstruction of schools, colleges, madrasa and training institutes, and strong monitoring and supervision support.

### 2.1 Pre-primary education

Government of Bangladesh and its partners worked together to make one year of pre-primary education (PPE) universally available in the country. In 2010, one-year of free PPE to 5-6 years old children was introduced at 37,000 government primary schools (GPS). To standardize the delivery mechanism, the government also developed and approved a national PPE curriculum in June 2011. National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) prepared the learning materials on the basis of that curriculum. A training manual for PPE teachers was developed by the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE), the NCTB and the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in consultation with other stakeholders including NGOs. A total of 37,672 additional assistant teacher posts (one for each GPS) were approved for staffing of PPE classes, so far, 35000 teachers recruited and trained for PPE.





Bangladesh, over the last few years, has made remarkable progress in pre-primary education (PPE). PPE enrolment has tripled since 2010, with the percentage of first grade students with pre-primary experience increasing from 50% in 2012 to 96.1% in 2015. The future focus of PPE is to ensure a minimum standard of quality in all schools providing PPE and to focus attention on areas where education disparities exists.

## 2.2 Measures for inclusion

Education system in Bangladesh is now responsive to the education needs of children of diverse cultural, physical and intellectual backgrounds. Students with special needs are getting access and education in mainstream schools. Projects i.e. Primary Education Stipend Program (PESP), School Feeding Program (SEP) in Poverty-prone Areas and Reaching Out-of-School Children Project (ROSC) supported by the World Bank are operational to support children of poor families. More than 13 million primary students now receive stipend disbursed directly into their mothers' bank accounts. At secondary and higher secondary level, 4.5 million students (2.7 million girls) received \$ 90 million as stipend in 2017. Eighty thousand

58,255

students of 5 small ethnic groups received textbooks in 2018

8,200

braille books were distributed among visually impaired students



80,000

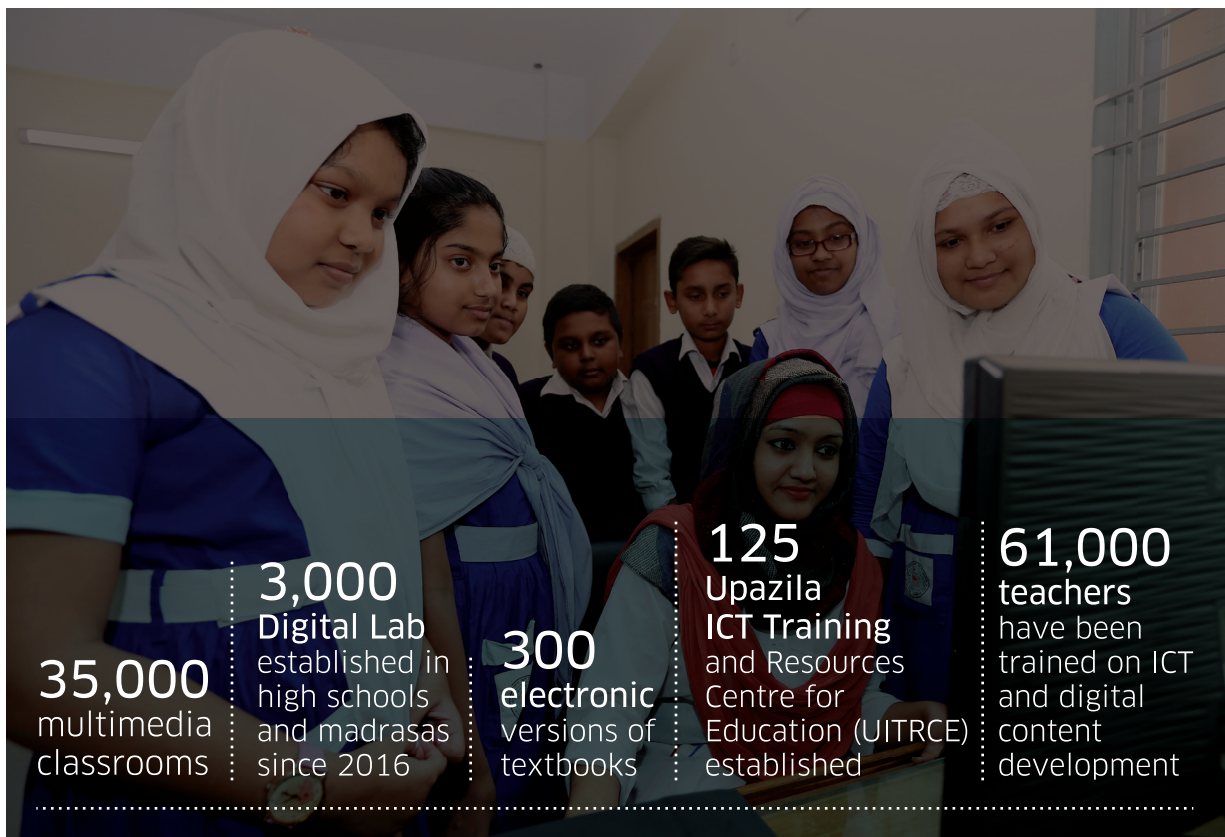
students with disabilities have been receiving stipend since during 2017

1,500

new primary schools in school-less areas

23,370

new classrooms have been added over the past five years



students with disabilities have been receiving stipend since 2017. Students of disadvantaged communities like gypsy, cleaners receive monthly stipend as incentive for education. More than 31 million students are currently receiving food-support under School Feeding program operational in 104 sub-districts (government finances in 85 sub-districts). About 98,211 students (previously dropped-out) passed primary school completion examination from 2009 to 2012 during ROSC-I. During ROSC-II, another 45,763 students passed the exam in two years. Under Primary Education Development Program 4 (PEDP 4), one-million out of school children will receive basic education in learning centers.

### 2.3 ICT for quality education

In the recent past, emphasis was given on effective use of ICT in facilitating learning. Government has created capacity building facilities for teachers. Projects are in operation to establish multimedia classroom to promote ICT-based education in primary and secondary schools. Teachers are now getting training on ICT

in teaching-learning and making digital contents. Teachers are getting training at Primary Teacher's Institutes (PTIs) for improving their ability to develop quality contents. Modern ICT lab is installed in 55 PTIs.

The government has given one laptop with a multimedia projector and a modem for internet connection to primary schools. Computer labs are installed at primary schools of selected sub-districts all over the country. An online social space called Teacher's Portal was created by government and contributed by teachers where teachers upload, share, extract and comment on multimedia content, blogs and ideas.

Another ground breaking project for digitising primary education is the conversion of paper based books into electronic books including teacher's training and other necessary books; anyone can download these books at free of cost from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board website. E-textbooks are now available at primary and secondary levels including technical and vocational and madrasa education.



## 2.4 Curriculum and textbook

The government distributed 35.42 million textbooks free of cost among the primary and secondary level students in the academic year 2018. Total books distributed since 2010 amount to 260 billion. The textbooks were distributed among pre-primary, primary, secondary, ibtedayi and dakhil madrasa and vocational students. About 58,255 pre-primary and primary level students of five ethnic communities received 145063 copies of textbook in 2018. Another 8,200 braille textbooks were distributed among visually impaired students. The NCTB has revised 12 textbooks and printed them in multi-colour with papers of good quality. Competency-based curricula have been introduced at the primary and secondary level. Initiatives are ongoing to make the secondary curriculum more relevant to meet the skills needs of the time.

## 2.5 Improved teaching- learning

In the recent past, Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) ran several program/projects i.e. Primary Education Development Program 3 (PEDP 3) followed by PEDP 1 & 2, Secondary Education Quality Improvement Program (SEQIP), Teaching Quality Improvement (TQI-II),

Secondary Education Sector Investment Program (SESIP) which focused on quality improvement and learning outcome. Primary Education Development Program (PEDP 4) will be implemented over the course of five years from the FY17/18 aiming at improving the quality of teaching-learning at primary schools. Agreement worth \$ 700 million has been signed with World Bank (WB) to finance PEDP 4. The project will help improve learning by developing a solid curriculum and examination system, creating a well-trained teacher pool, using ICT in education and regular assessment. Meanwhile, Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) will be in operation till FY22/23 and it will cover grades 6-12, annually supporting more than 13 million students and 357,000 teachers from more than 20,300 general schools, 9,400 madrasahs, and 1,190 school-based vocational/technical institutions. Moreover, the government has been nationalizing at least one secondary school at each sub-district with a view to ensure better education.

Since teachers are the leaders of the movement for quality education, government has been keen to make sure that they get opportunity for capacity development. Intensive teacher-training programs are ongoing in both

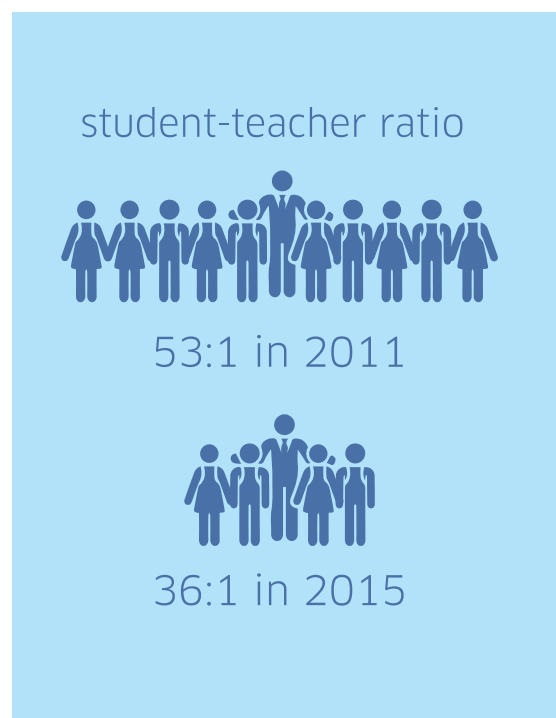




primary and secondary education. Under PEDP3, Diploma in Primary Education (DPED) program (one and half year) was introduced and primary school teachers are getting this Diploma by term. Besides, sub-cluster training is regularly arranged in Upazila (Sub-district) Resource Centers (URCs). At the primary level around 83% and at the secondary level 73% teachers are now trained. Project interventions have led to improved teaching-learning in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science.

## 2.6 Examination and assessment

Efforts are ongoing to improve quality of examination and initiatives have been taken to reduce burden of public examinations. The Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE) has been progressively transformed to assess competencies rather than contents. The Government also conducted three rounds of high quality national assessments under the National Student Assessment (NAS). National assessments for secondary education are undertaken through the Learning Assessment of Secondary Institutions (LASI) program.





### 3. MAINSTREAMING FAITH-BASED EDUCATION

In Bangladesh, there are two types of madrasa education – 1. Alia system regulated by the government under the Madrasa Education Board and 2. Qawmi system financed by donors but run independently. Alia madrasas get funds from the government's revenue and development budget. They are managed by committees consisting of Upazila Nirbahi officer (UNO), who plays the role of president, backed up by an education officer, madrasa principal, teachers, guardians and local people. On the other hand, every Qawmi madrasas has a managing committee consisting of the head of madrasa, its teachers and locally respected people and an executive committee. There are 9,319 Alia madrasas operating in the country as of 2015 and total number of students were 2,409,373.

One major focus of the Education Policy 2010 was to modernize the madrasah education to match with the mainstream education. Following the policy stipulations, government has introduced changes in the madrasa curriculum, syllabuses, course outline and included textbook on modern subjects so that its students can be develop as competent human resource. Government also has initiated scholarships for meritorious students to check drop-out rate in madrasa education. A total of 15,000 students at the madrasa level are awarded general

Multimedia  
classrooms  
have so far  
been set up in  
**5,500**  
madrasas

**1325**  
academic  
building  
constructed,  
another **2,000**  
ongoing  
since 2009



scholarship while 75,000 students get talent pool scholarship. The government has brought 9,397 madrasas under a webportal aiming to modernize madrasa education. Under the programme, a webportal training manual has been developed. As many as 400 madrasa teachers have been given daylong orientation training to create master trainers. Moreover, 35 model madrasas have been set up and modern computer labs have been installed there. Multimedia classrooms have so far been set in 5,500 madrasas. Due to several initiatives in the past eight years, quality of madrasa education has improved.

In 2017, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina recognized Dawrah-e-Hadith, the highest degree conferred by a Qawmi madrasa, as equivalent to a master's degree in Islamic Studies and Arabic. The madrasa teachers and students welcomed this decision as it would create job opportunities for the graduates. It was also praised by educationists as a step to bring Qawmi system into the mainstream education.

Honors course  
introduced in  
51 madrasas

7,000 madrasa  
students received  
scholarship  
and another  
15,000  
received stipend





## 4. STRENGTHENED TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Bangladesh recognizes the potential contribution of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in providing employability skills to youth and to those who drop out of school early. In the recent years, the country has been making progress on TVET reform, for example a new TVET Act, the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF), the National Skills Development Policy (NSDP), Industry Skills Councils (ISC), Competency-based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) are currently in effect. The National Skills Development Policy provides the guideline for the development of human resources by establishing an expanded and reformed TVET system that integrates formal and non-formal education and training and improving coordination among all the parties involved.

The government, with assistance from development partners, supporting and financing public TVET and a number of projects to develop infrastructure, human resource, and overall quality and relevance of the system. Skills for Employment Investment Program (SEIP), Bangladesh Skills for Employment and Productivity (B-SEP), Skills and Trainign Enhancement Project (STEP) are some of the big projects which either currently being implemeted or completed in the recent years.

Skills and Enhancement Project, created through a partnership between WorldSkills China, Guangzhou Industry and Trade Technician College (GZITTC), the World Bank and STEP, provides training for TVET teachers of Bangladesh. The project offers Senior Leadership Program, Mid-level Managers Management Program, and Specialist Teachers Training Program. Some 581 teachers and officials of Bangladesh's technical education sector are getting training in phases.

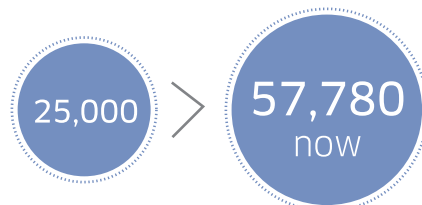
Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) regulates admission, curricula and quality assurance through accreditation, TVET certification and registration of training providers. Under BTEB, there are 118 institutions with capacity of serving 100,000 students per year. These institutions offer SSC & HSC equivalent, Diploma and Degree program. For Certificate program, there are 64 Technical School and Colleges (TSCs), 49 Polytechnic Institute for Diploma and 3 Engineering Colleges for Degree program. Four polytechnic institutes for women have been set up in four divisions - Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna. Another four such polytechnic institutes will be set up in phases. Activities for setting up 100 TSCs are completed in 100 sub-districts while construction work of another 389 are ongoing.



Besides, a large number of private institutions, large and small NGOs also offer skills training courses. Enrolment rate in TVET now stands at 15 percent; was only 1.8 when this government took over power. There are more to be done to achieve gender equality in TVET.

Several initiatives to update curriculum, evaluation and monitoring framework are currently under implementation. Vocational education programs at both secondary and higher secondary level are regularly being updated; traditional courses are converted into competency-based training. Scope has been created for the youth with low levels of education to avail formal skill development course. Pre-vocational qualifications were designed under TVET Reform Project to improve basic skills of youth seeking entry into TVET. Two qualifications have been introduced; Pre-Vocational Level 1 equips candidates with basic language, literacy and numeracy skills relating to an occupation and Pre-Vocational Level 2 adds sector and occupational specific skills to these. Upon the successful completion of Pre-Vocational Level 1 & 2, participants will be eligible to enroll into formal skills development courses.

Number of seats  
in TVET Diploma



Competency Based  
Training & Assessment  
(CBT&A) introduced

Certification  
System  
modernized

Quality Assurance  
Manual developed

Monitoring and  
Evaluation System  
reorganized

ebook, ibook  
are now available

Operational Handbook  
for TVET Institutions'  
Manager developed

**12 Skill Councils**  
established to strengthen  
linkages between industry  
and training system





## 5. HIGHER EDUCATION: ACCESS AND QUALITY

Access to higher education has been rapidly expanding in the recent years. Student enrolment in higher education increased from 1.4 million in 2010 to about 2.57 million in 2016. This is evident, particularly, from the remarkable growth of private universities over the last two decades. Allocation for higher education particularly for science, innovation and research in the national budget has markedly increased during this period. The focus has shifted to quality of higher education which is seen as crucial for recognition within the country as well as abroad.

Government passed the 'Bangladesh Accreditation Council Bill, 2017' to establish an accreditation council with the responsibilities of ensuring quality education in both public and private institutions. The Accreditation council has been functioning to maintain the standard of higher education. Initiating "Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)" in each public and private universities of Bangladesh is one of the initiatives taken under Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) financed by WB and implemented by University Grants Commission (UGC). The general objective of the IQAC is to promote a quality assurance culture within universities. So far IQACs are activated in 61 public and private universities.



Public University  
increased to  
46 and 13 new  
since 2009

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Institutional Quality  
Assurance Cells (IQAC)  
in 61 universities

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High-speed internet  
connectivity in  
35 public and  
private universities



Two-thirds of all tertiary students in Bangladesh are enrolled in colleges affiliated with the National University in Bangladesh. Government with support from WB has developed the College Education Development Project in 2016. This \$130 million investment focuses on overhauling the college sub-sector over the next five years. The Project aims to improve the planning and management of the overall subsector as well as enhance quality and relevance of college education. Through institutional development grants and teachers' professional development program, the project is providing students with an improved teaching/ learning environment for better outcomes.



The government has given approval for establishing 42 private universities during 2009-17



Digital library in 84 universities



Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) has awarded 345 academic innovation grants





## CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has successfully expanded access to all the levels of education over the past decade. Gender equity was attained at primary and secondary education well ahead of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target for 2015. The great challenge is now to maintain the progress. There is scope to improve equitable access, quality and skill attainment at all levels. The quality and relevance of higher education and TVET need to be upgraded to match with contemporary market demands. There is more to be done to strengthen institution-industry linkages. Furthermore, allocation for education as a share of GDP has remained within 2.4 percent to 1.9 percent for the last decade. The education sector allocation accounts for around 14 percent in the national budget, a major share of spending goes to non-development expenditure. Since the country has a healthy policy environment for education reform, this sector will continue to receive greater attention and enhanced investment in the upcoming years. Awami-League Government has strong resolve to foster quality education and skills in the youth force of Bangladesh. The country seems firmly poised to achieve the education related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.



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**QUALITY EDUCATION**  
**FOR ALL**



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