

INDOMITABLE BANGLADESH

INVESTING IN YOUTH



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Indomitable Bangladesh: Investing in Youth

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Introduction

Active engagement and empowerment of youth in all kinds of development efforts are central to inclusive and knowledge societies. Youth are integral to tackling all the challenges to sustainable development including climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, extremism and decent migration.

Currently, around one-third of Bangladesh's population are youth. The country is in a unique position to reap demographic dividend of this large young population. Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and non-government sectors have been working together to put the right policies and investments in health, education and employment so that the youth can reach their full potential and can contribute in Bangladesh's development.

The National Youth Policy 2017 highlights the importance of making age-appropriate life skills and education, sexual and reproductive health rights, information and services available to the youth. Continuous efforts are being made to strengthen sectors such as education and skill system, health service, ICT service, sports to ensure that the youth get the best of preparation to become quality citizen and productive members of the society.

Last but not the least, there exist a strong political will in favour of youth empowerment. Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has always been vocal about her faith in the youth of Bangladesh. She has shown strong commitment towards development of youth.



01

National Youth Policy and Action Plan



In Bangladesh, youth are defined as citizens aged between 18 and 35. Youth make nearly one third of the population.

1.1 Youth policy in context

In Bangladesh, the first ever youth policy was formulated in 1983. It was revised and updated in 2003 due to new challenges facing the nation. The policy (2003) aimed to utilize the potential of youth and hone leadership qualities through proper guidance and training. There are some other policy measures initiated by successive governments of Bangladesh in sectors like education, skills and sports, that complement the vision of youth development.

Youth development falls under the purview of multiple Ministries and Departments, albeit Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and Department of Youth Development of the Government of Bangladesh are the focal agencies overseeing youth policy implementation, reduction of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and thereby sustaining economic growth and development of the country. However, at least 22 Ministries invest in youth development, primarily by providing technical and vocational training.

1.2 National Youth Policy 2017

Government of Bangladesh (GoB) formulated and endorsed the National Youth Policy 2017. The policy “is framed with the spirit of nurturing in youth an exalted kind of mind, heart and soul and boosting them with sense of responsibility to the country, society and the environment and eventually developing them into a modern and capable generation on a par with the 21st Century.” The policy, tailored and adapted to national and local contexts, will help to address the challenges faced by the youth.

Vision

To develop moral, humane and forward-looking youth capable of boosting prosperity and glory of Bangladesh.

Mission

To ensure fulfillment of youth potential and youth empowerment in every sphere of life.

■ Objectives

- To develop youth into righteous, progressive, self-respecting and positive human beings
- To create congenial conditions for youth to achieve their inherent potential
- To develop youth into human resource
- To ensure quality education, health and security for all youth
- To provide youth with employment and choice of profession according to their ability
- To promote economic and innovative enterprise by youth
- To enable youth to play an active role in every sphere of national life through their empowerment
- To involve youth in the decision-making process at local, national and international levels
- To encourage youth to volunteer in protecting the environment, combating climate change and calamities
- To imbue the young community with sensibility and a sense of responsibility towards those in the society who are backward and physically-mentally or otherwise challenged
- To ensure the rights of youth with special needs
- To motivate youth to shun ideological radicalism and aggressiveness
- To inspire liberal, non-communal, humane and global spirit within youth.

Within purview of the policy, GoB shall take special measures for the welfare of the following categories of youth:

1. Unemployed youth,
2. Female youth,
3. Youth entrepreneurs,
4. Youth migrants,
5. Rural youth,
6. Youth dropped out of school,
7. Illiterate and semi-literate youth,
8. Unskilled youth,
9. Youth belonging to ethnic sects,
10. Youth with special needs,
11. Youth addicted to ill-ways of life,
12. Homeless and slum-dwelling youth,
13. Transgender youth,
14. Youth affected in accidents or calamities,
15. Youth victims of human-trafficking and torture and
16. Youth with communicable diseases.

1.3 Plan of action to implement Youth Policy

Strong political leadership and vision, adequate resource allocations, utilizing the knowledge, experience and expertise of young people in planning, implementation and monitoring of policy are key to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved. Fortunately, Bangladesh possess a visionary leader in HPM Sheikh Hasina who has always backed the youth and sincerely believes that the youth are entitled to get opportunities to flourish and contribute in national development. Her government is fully committed to promoting youth development guided by the national policy.

Ministry of Youth and Sports(MoYS), the focal body to implement the youth policy (2017), has taken other national and international organizations on board to formulate National Plan of Action (NPA) to implement the policy. To this end, a national steering committee has been formed to develop the plan of action. The committee met regularly to guide the development of NPA for youth policy implementation.

Consultation workshops in Chattogram, Rangpur, Khulna and Sylhet had been organized, in these consultation workshops, relevant stakeholders and youth leaders were invited. The working committee has already compiled a draft lists of actions suggested by the stakeholders attending the workshops. Next, a validation workshop will be organized to get feedback from the relevant stakeholders on the draft NPA. Finally, a national seminar will be organized to disseminate the final NPA among relevant stakeholders.

Political Commitment on Youth Development

To ensure civic and political empowerment of the youth, Bangladesh Awami League's Manifesto 2018 pledges to involve them in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and incorporate their suggestions and feedback in formulating all medium and long term national development plans.

The ruling Awami League (AL) government in Bangladesh envisages and aspires to transform Bangladesh into a developed country by 2041. Since being in power from 2009, AL has been most vocal about empowerment of youth. The party, before the 11th National Election, published a comprehensive manifesto to lead the country toward inclusive development by empowering youth force of the country.

The manifesto sets 21 priority areas in the form of special pledges, one such area is youth, which is a new dimension to its election manifesto. It aims to harness the strength of youth for the continued prosperity of the country. The manifesto puts special focus on the development of youths by expanding the education sector and enhancing the quality of education. It pledges to create scopes for more jobs for the youth, especially in the information technology sector. It also pledges to roll out a plan for the unemployed educated and those with no or little formal education and unskilled.

The manifesto promises to

Full implementation of the Youth Policy 2017

Form a separate youth department under the ministry of youth and sports

Increase budget for youth development

Form a Youth Research Centre

2.1 Education and skill development

Education and skills are important issues for youth and as such have been afforded the due importance in the AL manifesto. Emphasis has been laid on improving the quality of education through focusing on technical and vocational education, more research funds in higher education, increased importance of science and technology and the enhanced use of information and communications technology.

Skill development for employability has also been highlighted in the manifesto. Two specific large-scale skill development programmes for the youth have been suggested: The 'Kormoth' project envisages providing skill training for the low-skilled/semi-skilled youth in labour intensive sectors and the 'Shudokkho' project aims to provide the educated/skilled youth with further grooming through advanced employability skills training, suitable for managerial and semi-managerial positions.

2.2 Employment creation

Awami League pledges to create employment for 15 million youth by 2023



The manifesto has pledged to create more than 15 million jobs in the next five years. To that end, the party plans to extend the coverage of the National Service Programme to all upazilas (sub-districts). A nationwide integrated database

of the employable youth has been planned for making it easier for public and private enterprises to connect with the youth who are looking for employment. The manifesto also proposes to set up a 'Youth Training Centre' in every upazila (sub-district) to provide training on various trades. Eventually, the plan is to transform these centres into full-fledged 'Youth Employment Centres'. The party also plans to prioritise youth entrepreneurship. The manifesto pledges to further increase financial incentives along with other supports and facilities for budding entrepreneurs. Additionally, there is a pledge to formulate a 'Youth Entrepreneurship Policy'.

2.3 Mental and physical wellbeing



The Awami League's manifesto aiming for overall development of youth, including their physical and mental wellbeing, is a step in the right direction towards harnessing their full potential. To ensure that youth spends their social time in more constructive and creative ways, AL promises to establish a youth recreation centre in every upazila and youth sports complex in every district. To fend off youth's inclination towards religious fundamentalism, AL advocates secular ideology of the Liberation War of 1971. The manifesto mentions the importance of proper counselling to safeguard the youth from social risks of terrorism, extremism and drugs. It envisages infusing the youth with Bangladesh's founding principles as a bulwark to radicalisation.



03

Developing Youth as Human Resource

- **Strategic Plan** for Higher Education in Bangladesh: 2018-2030 in effect
- **13** new public universities since 2009
- **103 Private universities** in operation
- Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) in **69 universities** (31 public and 38 private)
- Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) has awarded **345 academic innovation** grants

3.1 Ensuring quality education

In the last decade, Bangladesh has taken great strides in terms of human development particularly in the education sector. The country now boasts of one of the largest education system in the world, catering to over 35 million students. National policies and resources were geared towards ensuring access, inclusion and quality at all levels of education. Robust policy support, planning and implementation and greater investments on human development have yielded commendable results.

The country almost 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 recent years, beside access, emphasis has been given on quality in both these sub-sectors. To ensure delivery of quality education, the government continues its efforts e.g. updating curriculum and contents, strengthening teacher training, improving school monitoring and supervision mechanism. The government restructured the assessment system and introduced inclusive classrooms to ensure quality education for students with special needs. Introducing modern ICT for learning is a

smart measures taken to improve the quality of education in the country.

Agreement worth \$ 700 million has been signed with World Bank (WB) to finance the fourth phase of Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP 4). Under the project, work is going on to improve learning by developing efficient curriculum and examination system, create a well-trained teacher pool, use ICT in education and regular assessment. Meanwhile, Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) is in operation and will continue till 2022/2023 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.

Revamping post-secondary and higher education to better respond to the needs of market demand has been a top priority of the government. Access to higher education has also been rapidly expanding in 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. Now, the focus has shifted to quality of higher education which is being seen as crucial for recognition within the country as well as abroad.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh has been operating Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP) to raise the standard of education the a tertiary levels.

One major component of the project is initiating “Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)” in each public and private universities. So far IQACs are activated in 69 universities. IQAC s are promoting a quality assurance culture within the universities. Most recently, UGC with assistance from World Bank (WB) initiated a next generation Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation (HEAT) project to establish a regional network of higher education institutions, improve teaching-learning and research to support graduate employability and improve the higher education management of the country. Students in tertiary level as well as teachers and researchers are expected to immensely benefit from the HEAT project.

Government with support from WB has developed the College Education Development Project in 2016. The project has invested \$130 million on overhauling the college sub-sector over a period of 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.

Recent years have seen increased allocation for science studies, research and innovation in the national budget. Various agencies including the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UGC are offering funds/grants to promote research. The Academic Innovation Fund (AIF), the largest component under HEQEP with an allocation of \$1 million, introduced a competitive grant award mechanism for the first time in Bangladesh.



3.2 Skilling youth

Government of Bangladesh is committed to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 4, specifically Goal 4.4, and 4.5 which focus on increasing access to TVET

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 instances a new TVET Act, National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF), National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) 2011, National Skills Development Authority, Industry Skills Councils (ISC), Competency-based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) have been introduced. The NSDP 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 improves coordination among all the parties involved.

Vocational education programmes 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 courses. GoB has decided that at least one vocational subject will be introduced from grade 6 to 10 in general and also in madrasa education systems.



Steps have been taken to establish Youth Development Centres at all levels across the country from where youths can get training to become self-employed. Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Youth Development is being groomed as the 'Centre of excellence' to create skilled manpower through providing youth with necessary training and education.

TVET

- **8,675 technical education institutions** in the country
- Number of seats in **Diploma level increased to 57,780** from 25,000
- **12 Skill Councils** established to strengthen linkages between industry and training system
- Enrolment rate in TVET now stands at **16%**; was only 1.8% when this government assumed office

Under Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), there are 118 institutions with capacity of serving more than 100,000 students per year. These institutions offer secondary and higher secondary equivalent, diploma and degree programme. For certificate program, there are 64 Technical School and Colleges (TSCs), 49 Polytechnic Institute for diploma and 3 Engineering Colleges for degree programmes. Four polytechnic institutes for women have been set up in four divisions - Dhaka, Chattogram, 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

establishing 329 TSCs in upazila level in Second Phase.

The government, with assistance from development partners, is 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 Training Enhancement Project (STEP) are some of the major projects which either currently being implemented or have been completed in the recent years.

3.3 ICT manpower development



ICT-enabled workforce will be the biggest challenge for building digital Bangladesh. To face the challenges, the government has taken up programmes and is now working to create a large pool of ICT skilled workforce. It has taken steps to create digital technology friendly environment, where children can learn ICT by using devices. Now, laptops and tabs are produced within the country; these devices will be provided to the children at the primary level of schooling.

Government has already brought 209 upazilas (sub-district) and 1,213 unions under optical fiber connectivity and now, there are 86 million internet subscriber in the country, most of them are being youth. Youth can easily access two hundred services (including job search) from 5,275 Union Digital Center across the country.

IT training

- **3,342 youths** under “Freelancer to Entrepreneur” programme
- **5,120 youth** on professional outsourcing under “Learning and Earning” project
- **20,000 women and 1,920 media professionals** in ICT
- **166,000 women** on IT/ITES under “Sustainable Women Development on ICT” program via Digital Buses
- **3,500 youth** on e-commerce

Leveraging ICT for Growth, Employment and Governance (LICT) Project:

Local and international trainers provided world- class IT training to 30,000 students from colleges and universities across Bangladesh. Of the 30,000 trained youths, 10,000 received Top-Up IT training while 20,000 received foundation skill training.



04

Youth in Sports

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has taken initiative to upgrade the national sports policy.

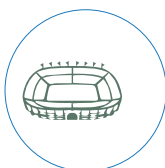
Bangladesh has always been a sports-loving nation. Youth are encouraged in sports and games alongside education, so that they grow up with sound health and mind. Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) has taken initiatives to streamline the sports budget stressing the importance of training, organising and participating in sports competitions. It continues working to find talents in sports from the grassroots, create skilled players through intensive training, undertake sports development programmes and establish modern sports infrastructures. Sports associations regularly arrange national, local leagues and age group competitions at the grassroots.



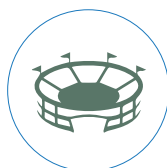
During the past decade, initiatives have been taken to build new stadiums, sports complexes, gymnasiums and upgrade old structures. Divisional stadiums of Dhaka, Narayanganj, Khulna and Chattogram are upgraded to international standard. New international standard stadiums were built in Sylhet and Cox's Bazar. MoYS is implementing a project to construct Sheikh Russel Upazila Mini Stadium at all upazilas(sub-districts) of the country. The mini-stadiums built on a minimum of three acres of land will facilitate sports activities of youth living in these upazilas. Under the first phase of the scheme, construction work of 131 mini stadiums has started and 66 stadiums are already opened for sports activity.



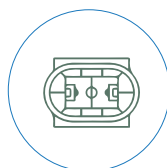
Country's international standard sports infrastructure



8 cricket stadiums



2 football stadiums



64 district stadiums



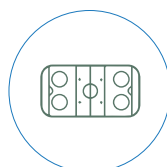
21 swimming pools



2 indoor stadiums



7 indoor practice stadiums



1 hockey stadium

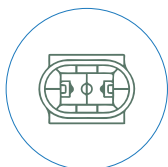


35 gymnasiums

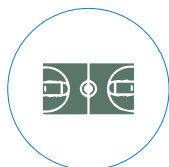


5 women's sports complex

Sports sector development (2017-18)



90 new sports infrastructure developed



25 old infrastructure renovated



7,950 sports person received training



Athletes participated in 70 international competitions



55 international competition arranged



31 talent-hunt programmes organized

Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP) in Saver, a national sports education institute built by the government in 1986, remains the primary source of youth talents. It has enriched the country's sporting scenario by nurturing quality athletes in many disciplines. BKSP have 17 disciplines and admits student every year. Students receive a general education as well as specialized sports training. They are accommodated in four hostels for boys and one for girls. The government is planning to establish BKSP's branch in all divisions of Bangladesh.

Ongoing BKSP's (sports education institute) development projects:

- *Development of sports facilities and infrastructure for 4 new games*

- *Development of BKSP Regional Training center in Barisal, Dinajpore and Khulna*

- *Modernization of sports facilities in BKSP*

- *Establishment of Sports schools under BKSP in Chattogram and Rajshahi*

Bangladesh is now widely acknowledged for women's participation in diverse sports including athletics, swimming, shooting, football and cricket. Sports associations have started offering incentives and special trainings to women participants. The women's cricket in Bangladesh has travelled a long distance since the team's inception in 2007. National women cricket team earned their place in the cricket history by bringing Bangladesh's first international trophy- the 'Women's T20 Asia Cup in 2018'. The national women's football team played more matches than before during last eight years. The national team and the age level teams have seen a surge of potential players from all over the country once Bangladesh Football Federation's (BFF) long term development plans culminated in divisional tournaments for aspiring women booters in 2012. The BFF has been exclusively nurturing 50 young footballers, who formed age-level national women's teams in recent times. The country's women athletes won several prestigious regional awards in recent years.

05

SDG for Youth, Youth for SDG



Youth cohort is the major stakeholders of the SDGs (Agenda 2030). Youth have pivotal role to play both as beneficiaries of actions and policies under the Agenda and as partners and participants in its implementation. More than 10 goals of the SDGs are directly related to youth. Among the targets under these goals, two interrelated areas - education and employment are fundamental to overall youth development. Other goals that address priority areas for youth are gender equality, good health, reducing inequality, combating poverty and hunger, and action on environmental issues and climate change.

If Bangladesh is to achieve the 2030 agenda, youth must act as the driving force of development. Henceforth, the potential of the youth needs to be realised by appropriate policies and their implementation for achieving the SDGs. Under this circumstances, Bangladesh recognises that youth development is a multi-sectoral concept and emphasises that youth should be given more access to the process of decision making. The government is trying to ensure active participation of young women and men from diverse backgrounds in planning, implementation and monitoring of all kinds of initiatives.

Besides, there is strong political will and conducive environment working in favour of youth empowerment in Bangladesh. Present



Awami League (AL) government has been committed towards the development of youth and giving priority to youth in its development agenda, policy-plan and programmes. During two successive tenures, it has endorsed a number of pro-youth policies and has been implementing those policies with specific action plans. Vision 2021, the central development agenda of the government, is focused on meeting the needs of youth to become skilled workforce. A Perspective Plan (2010-2021) and two Five Year Plan (FYP) - 6th (2011-2015) and 7th (2016-2020), were formulated to implement the vision. Seventh FYP integrated SDG targets and GoB is preparing an action plan for implementation of the SDGs in Bangladesh in alignment with its national plans.



*The young generations
would get all
opportunities for
flourishing their talents
and thoughts for the
beautiful future of the
country.*



Sheikh Hasina
HPM
Government of Bangladesh

For Bangladesh, development and empowerment of youth population is major challenge at hand. The government is making all-out effort to equip youth with quality education, skill and training, increase employment opportunities, organize youth groups and motivate them to participate in country's development activities.

Agencies implementing and monitoring youth development policy and initiatives need to be strengthened further with human and physical resources to respond to the challenges. The NGO's and private sector are coming forward to supplement government initiatives.



06

Challenges to be Tackled

There are certain areas of youth development where further attention and work is required. A large number of youth are not finding adequate opportunities to get involved in the economy. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) 2016-2017, around 2.68 million youths are unemployed; among them, 1.36 million youths are between 15-24 years of age. Jobs are not being created in accordance with the supply of entrants to the labour force every year. It is also observed that many growing sectors do not find the manpower with desired skill set and qualification.

The country has to ensure full employment and decent work for all men and women, including the youths within 2030. Education and skill are central to the issues of youth unemployment. Bangladesh must seek to raise the standard of education up to global standard. Particular attention is needed to make skill training programs responsive to local and overseas market demands. Moreover, there has to be a comprehensive mechanism consisting of survey

and information service, career counselling, apprenticeship/internship, job placement platform and business incubation to facilitate employment for youth.

The country must pay greater attention so that the youth acquire social and human values as well as cultural identities of the land. Youth of the country are to some extent vulnerable to the threats of terrorism and radicalization. The government has to strengthen its measure to counter terrorism and violent extremism through undertaking concerted social, educational and religious programmes.

Lastly, the Government needs to allocate more resource to the sectors relevant to youth development, e.g. education and skills, health, sports and culture. Allocations for these sectors are inadequate considering their implications on growth and development of youth.

Conclusion

In Bangladesh, empowering youth has been one of the top development agenda since its founding in 1971. The country is striving to utilize the potentials of youth, ensure all-round development of youth and reduce inequalities by ensuring effective participation of youth in policy planning and decision-making process. In recent years, emphasis has been on providing technical and soft skill training for developing self-employed youths with the potential to become young entrepreneurs.

Besides, youth of Bangladesh has a long history of contribution in social and community development activities. Currently, there are innumerable youth initiatives going around the country in sectors like social-community activity and awareness, education, environment conservation, sports and fitness, women's empowerment, science and innovation. Relevant government agencies have been providing financial and technical support to initiatives undertaken by youth groups and organizations across the country.

The future looks brighter because the government has been implementing a large number of programmes addressing the needs and challenges of the bulging youth population of Bangladesh.

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