

# Bangladesh

Towards Inclusive and Equitable  
**Quality Education**



# Bangladesh Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education

## Introduction

Over the last decade, Bangladesh made remarkable progress in economic growth, poverty reduction and human development. The country's progress in various human development indicators has been applauded across the world. The education sector, despite various challenges, made notable progress in last decade. The progress in the education sector has been possible due to the concerted efforts by the government, the non-government organizations (NGOs) and the development partners.

The Government of Bangladesh has been implementing policies to increase access to education and training, improve quality and relevance of education, reduce inequality in education and leverage on knowledge and skills in science, technology and innovation. The SDGs, particularly education related SDGs (especially SDG goal no. 4), has been bookmark for policy development for Bangladesh.

The Awami-League government's track record to foster quality education and skills in youth has been steadfast. In the Fiscal Year 2019-2020, It has raised the annual education sector allocation by 17 percent, to US\$7276 million. The government also plans to widen ongoing programs such as stipend provisions, free textbook distributions, and school feeding to ensure a better environment for learning. Meanwhile targets have been set for overall improvement of education through expanding opportunities and raising standard. Since the country has a long-term policy for educational development, the education sector will receive greater investment in the coming years.



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## 1. Promoting access, inclusion and gender parity

In recent years, the enrolment at different levels of education has improved significantly in Bangladesh. The country nearly attained universal access to primary education. The primary education completion at 80 percent is also an outstanding achievement for any developing nation. Significant progress has been achieved in reducing dropouts and increasing cycle-completion. A number of measures in primary and secondary education sub-sectors have been undertaken. For example, greater investments in education have resulted in gender parity and increased literacy rate among girls. The country is on its way to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

### 1.1 Early childhood education

Bangladesh, over last few years, has made remarkable progress in pre-primary education (PPE). PPE enrolment has tripled since 2010. The government and the development community are initiating several programs to enhance the delivery of PPE. For staffing of PPE classes, 37,672 assistant teacher posts (one for each government primary school) have been approved by the government. So far, 35,000 PPE teachers got recruited and trained. School Learning Improvement Plan (SLIP) has been devised to improve PPE at the grassroots. Now, the focus is to ensure a minimum standard of quality in all schools providing PPE. It will be done by focusing on existing areas of disparities.



*The Government of Bangladesh has expanded pre-primary and primary education at rural areas through effective initiatives.*



**93,247**  
institutions  
providing  
pre-primary  
education



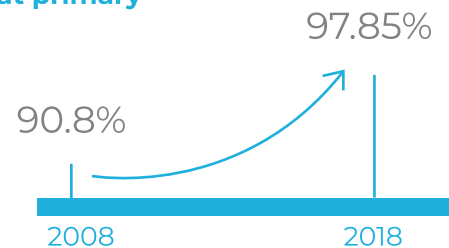
**Over 2.8**  
million children  
got enrolled  
in pre-primary  
grade in 2018



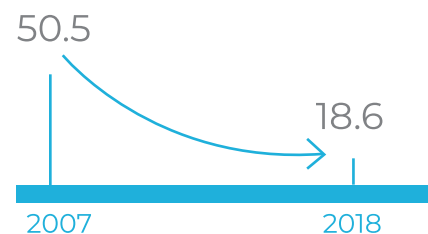
## 1.2 Universal primary education

As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Bangladesh has taken concrete steps towards universal primary education. Since 2000, there has been enormous progress in achieving the target of universal primary education. The country has achieved tremendous success in primary school enrolment. With an estimated 16.4 million primary school aged children, Bangladesh has one of the largest primary education systems in the world. Currently, there are 365,925 primary school teachers, working in more than 82,218 primary schools

### Net enrolment rate at primary



### Dropout rate at primary



**Enrolment rate for secondary education in the country has improved over timing. Net enrolment rate in secondary schools was 53.1% in 2018.**

**95.05%**  
Transition rate  
from primary to  
secondary education  
in 2017

**82%**  
Primary  
education cycle  
completion rate  
since 2015

**38.30%**  
Current dropout  
rate at the  
secondary, was  
61.38% in 2008

### 1.3 Increased girl's participation



**Bangladesh achieved gender equity at primary and secondary education ahead of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target.**

In the past decade, under HPM Sheikh Hasina's leadership, Bangladesh has gained unprecedented success in girl's education. Several measures to promote gender equality in education have been taken at the national level. Necessary policies, and resources have been channeled to achieve gender equality in the education sector. The girls' stipend program remains a landmark measure to highlight the success in access, retention and drop out indicators. In recent years, the coverage of stipend program for girls has specifically been extended. This strategy has resulted in almost 100 percent enrolment rate at the primary level.

Secondary and higher secondary education is critical to human development. Secondary education provides skill and capability to participate in economic activities for a decent life. A notable achievement in secondary education has been the narrowing of gender disparity. A major project undertaken by the government is the "Female Secondary School

Assistance" project; which played a key role in retaining girls in schools. Another parallel project has collectively been providing educational stipends for girls, building separate toilets, and introducing a curriculum to promote health and hygiene of girls. Girls' secondary education in public schools has been made free. Women and girls are incentivized to take up teaching as profession. As a result, 60% primary school teachers are women.

**Female literacy rate**



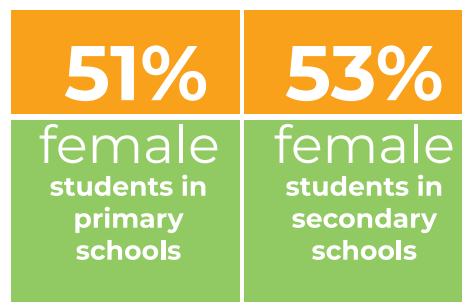
43.74%  
2007



69.90%  
2016

**Girls enrolment rate at primary level is**

**99.40%**



**2.7 million girls**

**are receiving stipend at secondary and higher secondary level**

Source: BANBEIS

## 1.4 Inclusion of disadvantaged communities

The government has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate educational inclusion of economically disadvantaged and small ethnic communities. In accordance with the National Education Policy 2010 guidelines, the school system is now responsive to the learning needs of children with diverse socio-cultural background and physical and mental abilities. Teachers across the country have attended professional development training on inclusive education. The programs are formulated for everyday teaching to incorporate cooperative learning, and experience sharing.

The Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) project is currently being implemented by the ROSC Unit (ROSCU) under the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). ROSC II has been providing primary education to out-of-school children in targeted rural upazillas (sub-districts) of the country. The project also provides alternative education to out-of-school children of urban slums in 8 city corporations. It is also providing pre-vocational training (PVT) to dropped-out children and

adolescents. The project has so far supported 690,000 out-of-school children. Additionally, under Primary Education Development Program 4 (PEDP-4), 1 million out-of-school children will receive basic education. Students with disabilities, ethnic and disadvantaged community background are already getting financial incentives to pursue formal education.



**45,977**  
**children with**  
**special needs**  
**were enrolled**  
**in 2018**



**276,000 copies of**  
**textbooks written**  
**in 5 ethnic**  
**languages were**  
**distributed in 2019**



**5,857 copies of**  
**braille textbooks**  
**were distributed**  
**among visually**  
**impaired students**  
**in 2019**



**Government is**  
**establishing**  
**1,500 new primary**  
**schools in remote**  
**villages**

## 1.5 Adult education

*Non-Formal Education Act 2014 and Permanent Non-Formal Education Project are set in motion.*

*The literacy rate in Bangladesh has risen by 60 basis points to 72.9% in the last year, owing to a series of measures by the government.*

The Government has been implementing non-formal education programs for adults, both male and female, to pull them out of the cycle of illiteracy and poverty. The previously broadening gap between male and female adult literacy rates has been significantly reduced. In addition to the government, the civil society organizations are actively engaged in adult literacy programs. Recently, there has been a shift in focus from providing basic literacy skills to literacy with livelihood skills.

## 1.6 Faith-based education

Due to several initiatives in past ten years, relevance of madrasa education has improved. Following the Education Policy (2010) stipulations, government introduced changes in the madrasa curriculum, syllabuses, course outline and included textbooks on modern subjects so that its students can develop as competent human resource. Government has also has initiated scholarships for meritorious students of madrasa education. Multimedia classrooms have so far been set in 5,500 madrasas. Computer courses have been started in 3,121 madrasas.

## 1.7 Strategies and measures

The government has been increasing allocation for all the sub-sectors of education by prioritizing access and participation. Relentless work to provide education-for-all; through various programs such as distribution of free textbooks and provision of stipends and school meals are ongoing.

## School infrastructure development

Infrastructure and educational facilities of primary schools have improved over time, including space of classroom, sanitation and drinking water facilities as well as rooms for teachers. About 23,370 new classrooms have been added to the existing primary schools over the past five years. Besides, government has been nationalizing at least one secondary school at each Upazila (sub-district) with a view to ensure better educational facilities.

The first Primary Education Development (PEDP) project in Bangladesh started in 1997. The project was completed in 2003. After completion of PEDP phase 1 and 2, government implemented PEDP-3. PEDP-3 gave its principal focus on school infrastructure, building 3,685 classrooms, 2,709 schools, and 28,955 toilets. It also installed 49,300 tube wells and mended 600 classrooms. Currently, Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-4) is in operation and continue till June 2023. The main project components also include construction of 40,000 new classrooms, 10,500 new office rooms for headmasters, 80,000 new wash blocks with sanitation and washroom facilities, safe drinking water facilities at 15,000 primary schools.

### School infrastructure and facilities development 2017-2018



4,847 new classrooms



7,767 new wash blocks



7,780 new tube well



57 new primary schools under PEDP-3 project



93 new primary schools in villages without school

Source: Annual report, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education



## Free textbook and learning material distribution

In Bangladesh, students from pre-primary to secondary level receive free textbooks. 1st January, the first day of school calendar, is now being celebrated as the “Textbook Celebration Day.” In 2019, more than 352 million copies of textbooks were distributed among 42.6 million students. The students of primary, secondary, madrasa and technical education institutes have received around 2.6 billion of textbooks in the past 9 years. Free textbooks have been distributed to students of pre-primary, primary, secondary, ebtedayee and dakhil (the two streams of faith-based education) and secondary level vocational/technical schools. The GoB has also distributed textbooks in braille for visually impaired students. Over 300 textbooks are now available in electronic versions.

## Extended stipend program

The GoB has been allocating millions in stipends for the underprivileged students. Primary Education Stipend program, Secondary Education Stipend program, Higher Secondary Stipend project, and Degree Level Female Stipend project are being

implemented with ever extending coverage. Moreover, the “Prime Minister’s Education Assistance Trust” has been formed. The trust fund has US\$119 million as seed money. These projects have resulted in increased net enrolment, attendance and gender parity in primary and secondary education.

The stipend disbursement system has also been reformed in the recent years. Among the new measures, the cash transfers are now being done through mobile banking channels. Primary students have started receiving stipend directly into their mothers’ mobile banking accounts. Students of secondary schools receive the stipends in their BKash (a mobile banking service) accounts.

## School meal program

The government-led School Feeding Program, in collaboration with World Food Programme (WFP), is annually reaching over 3 million children in poverty prone areas. The School Feeding program is currently operational in 104 upazilas (sub-districts). GoB will soon expand its school meal program to reach 400,000 children in 2,000 schools across 16 sub-districts.



## 2. Towards quality schooling



In line with the education related SDGs, there has been an increased emphasis on the quality of education and the improvement of learning outcomes in both primary and secondary education

### 2.1 Improved teaching-learning

The Government is continuously improving the school system by developing quality teachers, improving teaching-learning, updating curriculum and strengthening school monitoring and supervision mechanism. The government has restructured the assessment system to raise the standard of school education. One major initiative is the introduction of activity-based teaching-learning method in classroom. The initiative is designed to improve students' learning outcomes, and to help acquire the expected grades.

The government, with support from development partners, has started the fourth phase of the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-4) which focuses mainly on quality education. The project will improve learning by developing efficient curriculum and examination system. It will create a

well-trained teacher's pool. Meanwhile, the Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) is in operation to benefit 13 million students. It focuses on improving the quality of education through supportive learning and assessments of students.



## 2.2 Teacher education and development

In recent years, teacher education and development has been a major area of focus for the government. The government is investing in developing training infrastructure for school teachers. Under the sector-wide approach, intensive teacher-training programs are ongoing in both primary and secondary education. Under PEDP-3, one-year long Certificate-in-Education (C-in-Ed) was converted into Diploma-in-Primary Education (DPED). These trainings are expected to increase skill and efficiency of primary school teachers. The DPED trainings also have special focus on women. Under PEDP-4, a total of 139,174 teachers will be given DPED training and all teachers will receive subject-based training. Some 20,000 teachers will also be given one-year-long ICT training.

### During 2018

- 3 new Primary Teachers' Institute (PTIs) were established
  - 13,988 new teachers were recruited
  - 8,984 teachers received C-in-Ed training
  - 5,835 teachers received DPED training
- Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

### Under PEDP-4

- \$476 million has been allocated for teacher training

### Under SEDP

- 165,174 teachers will be recruited and trained
- 500,000 secondary school teachers will receive training



## 2.3 ICT in facilitating learning

Two million teachers and 7.5 million students are getting multimedia-based classroom facility.



Multimedia classroom in **4,500** primary and **33,000** secondary and higher secondary schools



Computer labs have been set up in **3,544** educational institutions



ICT Training and Resource Centers (UTRCE) are functional in **125** upazilas (sub-district)



ICT Learning Center has been set up in **640** secondary and higher secondary institutions



**61,000** teachers have been trained on ICT and digital content development



**37,000** teachers have been given ICT training in the year 2017-2018



**163,000** audio-visual contents available in the Teacher's Portal - [www.teachers.gov.bd](http://www.teachers.gov.bd)

In recent years, ICT is being used in learning and to improve the quality of education in the country. The government has created ICT training facilities for teachers. Projects are in operation to establish multimedia classroom to promote ICT-based education in primary and secondary schools. Teachers are getting training, at Primary Teachers Institutes (PTIs), for improving their ability to develop quality contents. Country's 55 Primary Teachers Institutes are equipped with modern ICT labs.

The government has given one laptop, one multimedia projector and internet facility to every primary school. Computer labs have been installed at primary schools of selected upazilas (sub-districts). "Teacher's Portal," a digital space has been created where teachers upload, extract and exchange multimedia contents and blogs. The government has also taken steps to create digital technology friendly environment for children. Indigenously produced tabs will be provided to the children at primary level of schooling.

## 2.4 Improved curriculum and learning materials

Competency-based curricula have been introduced at the primary and secondary level. Continuous efforts are underway to match the secondary curriculum with the skill requirement for local and global job market. Curriculum from pre-primary level to Class-V will be refined within 2019-2020. The curriculum will match with the educational needs and aspirations of the 21st century learners. Under PEDP-4, there will be a thorough review of the current curriculum, the textbooks and the supplementary learning materials.

The government has already introduced multi-colored textbooks for early grades. In recent years, sexual-reproductive health and career related contents in the textbooks of lower secondary grades have been introduced.



### 3. Emphasizing technical and vocational education and training

The National Skills Development Policy (NSDP 2011) aims to improve the quality and relevance of education programs. It establishes flexible and responsive delivery mechanisms to improve access to skills.

In the recent years, the country has prioritized Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) reform. For example, a new TVET Act along with the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF), the National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) 2011, Industry Skills Councils (ISC), Competency-based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) are currently in effect. The National Skills Development Authority (NSDA), led by the Honorable Prime Minister, has been formed to accelerate the skills development initiatives for the market. The government, with assistance from development partners, is financing a number of projects to develop infrastructure, human resource, and overall quality of the system. The GoB has recognized 6 priority sectors for skills development:

64

Technical School and Colleges (TSCs) in operation

329

Technical School and Colleges (TSCs) in the pipeline

Enrolment rate in TVET now stands at 16%, from 1.8% in 2008

Since 2010, enrolment of girls in TVET increased by 44%

Diploma level seats have been increased from 25,000 to 57,780

12

Skill Councils were established to strengthen linkages between the industry and the training system

ready-made garment (RMG) and textile, leather, information technology (IT), construction, light engineering and shipbuilding.

The 'Skills 21 – Empowering Citizens for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth' project, funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO), was launched in 2018. The project aims to reform the National Skills Development System by working with the government and TVET institutions. The project will introduce the entire reform package of new quality, train management and introduce services for career placement.

Vocational education programs at both secondary and higher secondary level are regularly being updated. Traditional courses are converted into competency-based training. Several initiatives to update

curriculum, evaluation and monitoring framework are currently under implementation. Scope has been created for youth with low levels of education to avail formal skill development courses. Pre-vocational qualifications have been designed, under TVET Reform project, to improve basic skills of youth seeking entry into TVET.

The GoB encourages female enrollment in TVET. The target is to increase female ratio in the overall TVET, from 27 percent in 2015 to 40 percent in 2020. Strides taken for incentivizing female enrollment in TVET are establishment of 8 Technical School & Colleges for girls in all 8 divisions; establishment of 4 new polytechnic institutions for girls; provision of stipend to all female students and increase in female quota for admission from 10 percent to 20 percent.





## 4. Towards relevant and quality higher education

Strategic Plan  
for Higher Education in  
Bangladesh (2018-2030)  
is now functional

Currently 3.9 million students  
in the tertiary level

Upgrading postsecondary and higher education to better respond to the national and global demands is a top priority for the government. Access to higher education in the country has rapidly expanded in recent years. Student enrolment in higher education increased to 2.57 million in 2016. This is evident, particularly, from the remarkable growth of private universities over the last two decades. The focus has now shifted to quality of higher education 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 at the tertiary level. Initiating “Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)” in public and private universities is one major initiatives under the HEQEP. So far, IQACs have been

activated in 69 universities. The IQACs have already started promoting quality assurance culture within universities.

Most recently, the UGC has initiated the next generation Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation (HEAT) project to establish a regional network of higher education institutions. The project will help improve teaching, learning and research to support graduate employability. Students, teachers and researchers at tertiary level are expected to be immensely benefited from the HEAT project.

The UGC has already provided the public universities with internet facilities and modern virtual classrooms. The public universities are connected through the Bangladesh Research



and Education Network (BREN), whereby they can establish contact with any university or research organization. Through the university digital library facility (UDL) of the UGC, all universities, both public and private, have access to academic journals and reference books from internationally reputed publishers.

Government has been supporting the College Education Development Project (CEDP) since 2016. The project is providing students with an improved teaching-learning environment for better outcomes. CEDP promotes professional development of teachers through the establishment of a Training Consortium.

The allocation for science studies, research and innovation has steadily increased in consecutive budgets. Various agencies, including the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UGC, are offering funds and grants to promote research. The Academic Innovation Fund (AIF) component under HEQEP has introduced a competitive grant mechanism for the first time in Bangladesh. The AIF is accessible to all public and private universities of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is also on track to achieve gender parity in tertiary education.





## 5. Moving forward

The education sector of Bangladesh has taken big strides in creating access, aiming for gender parity, reducing dropout rate, ensuring completion, and securing greater success rate in examinations. The country continues to face the dual challenge of ensuring equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The quality of education is a major concern at all successive levels of education. New challenges shall emerge as the country reaches the upper middle-income status. Bangladesh has to further strengthen its efforts to raise the standard of primary and post-primary education. Specific measures need to be taken to enhance early learning so that every child can achieve optimum level of competencies in basic disciplines.

Attention is required to make skill training programs more suited to the demands of the 21st century. To be precise, the quality and relevance of higher education and TVET need to be upgraded to match with contemporary market demands. If academia is informed about the demand, they can craft a better curriculum and course contents. Further efforts could be taken to strengthen the linkage between academia and the job market. The private sector could initiate the process of creating better linkages with the academia.

Bangladesh has one of the largest school systems in the world. The school system largely depends on public sector funding. The

allocation for education has remained below 2.4% of GDP. Although the allocation in education sector is noteworthy, more resources are needed to strengthen school and college education system, teacher education, assessment system, monitoring and supervision mechanism.



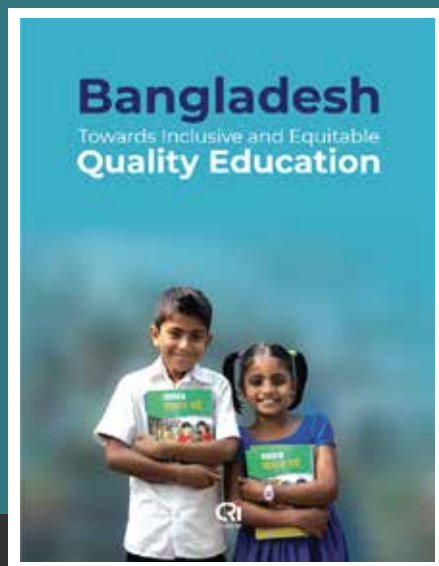
## Conclusion

Bangladesh has made significant progress in education. It has reached various global targets, such as the ones set under MDGs. To deliver quality basic education, GoB has put into implementation a number of programs including development and distribution of learning materials, capacity building of teachers, and construction and reconstruction of educational institutions. The introduction of modern ICT for learning is one of the smart measures taken to improve the quality of education in the country. The non-government organizations (NGOs), the private sector and the development partners have significantly contributed to the progress of the sector.

The government has introduced changes in the madrasa curriculum. The syllabuses, the course outlines and the textbooks have been modernized in order for the students to develop as competent human resources. Quality of TVET and higher education has also improved due to various interventions in the past decade.

For the last decade, the country has benefitted from a healthy education policy environment. Current Awami League government has been emphasizing on the improvement of the quality of education by focusing on technical and vocational education, increasing research funds, and enhancing the role of science and technology. The future looks even brighter because the country is poised to achieve the education related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).





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H 2, R 11(New), 32(Old), Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka- 1209

Email: [info@cri.org.bd](mailto:info@cri.org.bd)

[www.cri.org.bd](http://www.cri.org.bd)

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