

# RESILIENT BANGLADESH **TOWARDS RECOVERY AND PROGRESS**

— 2020 —



Resilient Bangladesh:  
Towards Recovery and Progress  
2020

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# Introduction

Firm economic management and strong political leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina helped Bangladesh achieve the Lower Middle-Income threshold in 2015 and meet all criteria for graduation out of Least Developed Countries (LDC) status. Buoyed by these successes, the government is now set to launch a program to realize the dream of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to have a country that is free of poverty, where economic and social justice prevails, and where there is shared prosperity.

The Awami League government returned to power in 2009 led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She expressed her solidarity with the people and commitment to fight poverty by announcing the Vision 2021 and the associated Perspective Plan 2021 that sought to achieve middle income status by 2021, improve human development and sharply reduce poverty. Astute political leadership and deft economic management allowed Bangladesh to enjoy an uninterrupted 10 years of economic prosperity between 2009 and 2020. This period saw per capita income rise from \$754 to USD \$2065, life expectancy increased from 67 years to 73 years, adult literacy expanded from 58% to 75%, poverty incidence fell from 35% to 20% and extreme poverty rate declined from 18% to 10%.

Growing at an average pace of 7% per year during this period, Bangladesh is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world. As a result, Bangladesh moved out from the World Bank-defined list of Low-Income Country (LIC) to

Lower Middle-Income Country (LMIC) in 2015, much earlier than the targeted date of 2021, and in 2018 it met the UN criteria to graduate from the list of Least Developed Countries (LDC).

Encouraged by these successes, the people re-elected Sheikh Hasina and her party the Awami League with an overwhelming mandate for a third consecutive term in 2018. To achieve this, the government adopted the Vision 2041 and the associated Perspective Plan 2041 that sets the roadmap to become an Upper Middle-Income Country (UMIC) and eliminate extreme poverty by 2031, and to achieve a High-Income Country (HIC) status by 2041. The Perspective Plan 2041 is targeted to be implemented through 4 medium-term development plans, from one starting with the Eighth Five Year Plan in 2021.

As preparations were underway to enhance the development strategy, the unforeseen and unprecedented global pandemic COVID-19 struck Bangladesh and the rest of world from first quarter of 2020. Lockdown measures necessitated to slowdown the growth of COVID-19 spread and the fall in demand have badly damaged the world economy. Bangladesh has also been hit both on the human health front and on the economy. Fortunately, the level of known infections and deaths are modest in relation to many parts of the world. On the economic front, losses have been unprecedented. Bangladesh Government moved swiftly to contain the damage taking actions on both the human health front and on the economy.

On the health front, policy responses have sought to contain the spread of the virus through full and partial lockdowns, providing safety gears and other support to protect the healthcare workers and other essential staff, strengthening healthcare facilities with supplies and equipment, undertaking testing, and educating the masses on the adoption of health safety measures including physical distancing, use of face masks, hand washing and personal hygiene and other support measures. On the economic front, the government has adopted a series of relief and economic stimulus packages estimated at 4.3% of GDP with a view to protecting the income of the poor and vulnerable and helping the revival of economic activities.

Consistent with the practice elsewhere in the world, Bangladesh has decided to open up the economy to avoid a sustained long-term damage to livelihoods. The government inferred that there is no necessary trade-off between human health and health of the economy; rather they are correlated and complementary. The main task is to develop a balanced mix of policies and programs that address both goals. The government has worked closely with local epidemiologists and other health experts to find ways to keep workers and families safe while economic activities revive. The strategy has been flexible and adaptable to the lessons of international experience and the results in Bangladesh.



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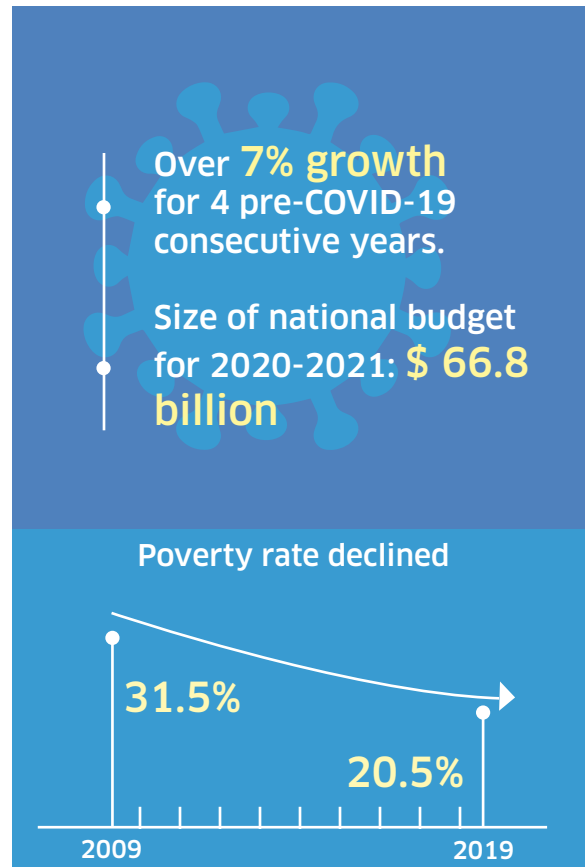
## State of the Economy

### Closing the second decade of the century

	2009-2010	2019-2020
<b>GDP growth rate</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>
<b>Export earnings</b>	<b>\$16.2 billion</b>	<b>\$33.7 billion</b>
<b>Investment (of GDP)</b>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>31.8%</b>
<b>Per capita income</b>	<b>\$843</b>	<b>\$2064</b>
<b>Consumer Price Index growth (Inflation)</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Remittance inflow</b>	<b>\$10.9 billion</b>	<b>\$18.2 billion</b>
<b>Revenue-GDP ratio</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>
<b>National Budget</b>	<b>\$10.3 billion</b>	<b>\$50.2 billion</b>
<b>Import value</b>	<b>\$22.5 billion</b>	<b>\$50.7 billion</b>
<b>Foreign Direct Investment</b>	<b>\$1 billion</b>	<b>\$2.4 billion</b>
Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics		

Bangladesh's economic development in the last decade has been among the best in the world. The growth highlights the fact that Bangladesh is one of the top performing economies in the world. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Bangladesh is now the 43rd largest economy in terms of nominal GDP. According to IMF, Bangladesh's per capita GDP will overtake that of regional powerhouse India this year. While its position is 32nd in terms of purchasing power parity. Bangladesh was included in IMF's list of top-ten fastest-growing economies in 2017. The IMF has projected that Bangladesh's growth in 2021-2022 will be 9.5%. The PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) projects that Bangladesh will be the 28th largest economy by 2030, and the 23rd largest by 2050. The Goldman Sachs forecasts Bangladesh as one of the countries in 'N11' after BRICS who will dominate the future world economy.

Bangladesh has shown a very prudent macroeconomic management. It has had a solid track record of expenditure control and debt management. It has consistently adhered to prudent fiscal and debt management strategy under which fiscal deficits have been contained within 4-6% of GDP. Bangladesh has been rapidly reducing its foreign debt burden. The foreign debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio declined over the last decade.





2020-2021 is very important in Bangladesh's national life. The birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is being celebrated this year. The year 2021 will mark the Golden Jubilee of independence. The Economist has published in 2020 a list of 66 emerging stable economies ranking them according to four measures of financial strengths, namely public debt as a percentage of GDP, total foreign debt, costs of borrowing and foreign exchange reserves, and Bangladesh was ranked 9th from the top. Their estimate reflects a stronger position compared to most of the other emerging countries.

## Year in review

As the second decade of the 21st Century closes, the strides made by the Bangladesh economy are noteworthy. Over the past decade, Bangladesh's economic growth has steadily increased from 6% to 8%. The pre-COVID-19 fiscal year GDP growth for 2018-2019 was 8.13% setting a record. Unfortunately, Bangladesh could not end strong: the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the economy. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) estimates that GDP growth in 2019-2020 stood at 5.2%, compared to 8.13% in the previous fiscal year. As a surprise to many, remittance inflows grew by 10.9%. At the same

time, the increase in capital and financial account inflows has led to a surplus in the overall balance of payments. As a result, the foreign exchange reserves have increased significantly.

The surplus in the overall balance helped to maintain the foreign exchange reserve up. The foreign exchange reserves reached \$43 billion at the end of 2020. It is noteworthy that annual remittance inflow has recently gone up to a record \$18 billion in 2019-2020.

To keep the country's economy afloat in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, extra spending on healthcare, emergency humanitarian assistance has been materialized. The Bangladesh government has already announced a financial package for economic recovery. Some of the notable activities of this package are: create special funds for export-oriented industries; provide working capital facilities to the affected industry and service sector organizations; provide working capital facilities to small (including cottage industries) and medium industrial enterprises; increase the benefits of the Export Development Fund; increase coverage of social security; direct cash transfer to targeted people, formulate various funds for the agricultural sector. As a result of these actions taken by the government, the economy is expected to turn around.

According to Asian Development Bank (ADB), Bangladesh economy will grow at 7.1% in 2020-2021, while the developing Asian economies are expected to contract by 0.7% in 2021.

According to International Monetary Fund's projection, Bangladesh's growth in 2021-2022 will be 9.5%.

According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in 2018, Bangladesh was the second largest FDI recipient in South Asia.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's report, Bangladesh was ranked 9th from the top list of 66 emerging stable economies in 2020.

According to Goldman Sachs, Bangladesh is one of the countries in 'N11' after BRICS.



## Summary of budget

	2018-2019	2019-2020e	2020-2021b
GDP (in approximate billion \$)	295	326	369
<b>As percent of GDP</b>			
Total Revenue	9.9	12.4	11.9
Total Expenditure	15.4	17.9	17.9
Revenue Expenditure	8.6	9.8	9.8
ADP Expenditure	5.8	6.9	6.5
Overall Balance (including grant)	5.5	5.5	6

Source: Ministry of Finance

## Stimulus to address COVID-19 induced slowdown

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh has taken various steps to combat its fallout. A comprehensive plan to overcome the possible negative impacts of pandemic was charted out. Under this plan, measures were taken for immediate term and medium term recovery. Some initiatives that will be implemented in longer term to achieve full economic recovery have been undertaken.

The plan includes four main strategies. First, discourage luxury expenditures and prioritize government spending that creates job. Due to sound macro-fiscal operation by the government during the last ten years, the debt-to-GDP ratio is low at 34%. This provides a cushion against any negative macroeconomic implication to increase public spending to overcome the crisis. Second, creating loan facilities through commercial banks at subsidized interest rate for the affected industries and businesses. Third, to expand the coverage of the government's social safety net programs to protect the extreme poor and low paid workers in the informal sector. Fourth, increase money supply to the economy while making a delicate balance between increased money supply and possible inflationary pressure.

The stimulus has been provided in consecutive packages – amounting to 21 packages by the end of 2020. These packages comprise some 4.3% of the GDP of Bangladesh. By the end of 2020, 40% of the stimulus had already been disbursed and have already reached 36 million citizens.

## Future outlook

Bangladesh economy is also set to continue expanding at a fast pace in the near term, above 7% per year, amid strong fixed investment, vigorous private consumption and accommodative monetary policy. In 2019-2020 Bangladesh was projected to be achieving a record growth of 8.3% if it was not for COVID-19. There are challenges such as the rise in non-performing loans. The Awami League government is keen to address the menace of non-performing loans (NPL) in Bangladesh. The government understands that restoring the financial health of the banking sector is critical to securing the GDP growth and poverty reduction targets of the national plans such as the Perspective Plan 2041.



***Bangladesh will become the world's 25th largest economy by 2035, from its 41st position in the World Economic League.***

***World Economic League Table 2020 by Centre for Economics and Business Research***

Eradicating poverty by accelerating economic growth and generating employment opportunities through industrialization is a key policy priority for Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh has decided to establish 100 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for creating 10 million jobs and generating an additional \$40 billion exports. By offering attractive fiscal and financial incentives, and serviced industrial plots, these economic zones are expected to mobilize investments from both domestic and foreign sources.

- ▶ **100** Economic Zones by 2030
  - ▶ **10** million new jobs
  - ▶ **\$40** billion exports
- Economic zones scheme**

The downside risks to the investment projections have recently increased across Bangladesh and South Asia, because of domestic and external factors. On the domestic side, political uncertainties, setbacks in the implementation of reforms and, in some countries, security problems can affect investment prospects. This is a crucial issue, as Bangladesh needs to tackle the infrastructure bottlenecks for promoting productivity growth, encouraging further poverty reductions and adjusting to climate change.

Bangladesh has become a hot prospect for global investors due to its growth momentum, its favorable demographics and hard-working labor force, and its track record of export dynamism. In the 2016 World Investment Forum, Bangladesh was given an exclusive platform among world business leaders whereby it was highlighted as a role model due to its readymade garment (RMG) sector progress.

## An economic darling

The global economic outlook is facing mounting uncertainties and vulnerabilities. Declining policy coordination among the advanced economies and the fraying of international trade relations are contributing to the deteriorating international climate and the softening of growth prospects. The IMF's World Economic Outlook (WEO) October 2020 report offers a glimpse of how difficult rekindling economic activity will be while the pandemic surges. During May and June 2020, as many economies tentatively reopened from the Great Lockdown, the global economy started to climb from the depths to which it had plunged in April. The global economy's long ascent back to pre-pandemic levels of activity remains prone to setbacks. Despite the global economic uncertainty, Bangladesh economy has been growing steadily clocking at more than 5.2% growth already. This has surprised many.

The economic performance is broadly based on a strong agricultural sector rebound, large-scale manufacturing growth momentum, growth of domestic trade and a recovery of export growth. Growth of major manufacturing sectors such as garments, textiles, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and leather were the main

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*In the past year, the economy continued its march on a high growth trajectory, albeit with some emerging vulnerabilities, along with opportunities across the domestic and global economy to continue to give credence to the notion of a “Bangladesh surprise”.*  
.....

drivers. There are emerging signs of diversification in production and exports as Bangladesh is now exporting over 1,600 distinct tradable products.

In July 2015, Bangladesh's rising per capita income pushed it out of the lower income country bracket and into the lower middle-income bracket for the first time since its independence in 1971. Within ten years, Bangladesh's per capita income increased from \$759 to \$2,064. Now, Bangladesh is aiming for attaining the higher middle-income bracket by the year 2021, but that would likely be pushed forward by the pandemic. The strategy to reach the status has been formulated under the Perspective Plan 2041.

In March 2018, Bangladesh reached another development milestone as the United Nations Committee for Development Policy announced Bangladesh's eligibility for graduation from a least developed country (LDC) to a developing country. According to the UN, Bangladesh has fulfilled all the eligibility requirements for this graduation and can seek official approval for this advancement, which could take place by 2024.

Since 1975 – Bangladesh had the Least Developed Country status

In 2015 - Bangladesh was recognized by World Bank as Low-Middle Income Country

In 2018 - United Nations recognized Bangladesh as a Developing Country

Per capita income rose by 125% in last 10 years, the highest increase in the region

In 2020, the Asian economic growth rate stands at -2.2, while Bangladesh growth performed at 5.2%.





02

## Human and Social Development

### Education for all

Bangladesh has been successful in creating skilled human resource, reducing discrimination in education and achieving qualitative excellence during the last decade. The progress in the education sector is being applauded by the international community. The sector, despite numerous challenges, made giant strides in the recent past. The government of Bangladesh has been implementing well-devised plans and channeling resources to enhance access and quality at all levels of education. Over the years, the allocation share of budgetary spending in the education sector has increased significantly. The government has successfully integrated various ICT initiatives within the education sector.

Bangladesh stands out for its achievements in expanding opportunities at primary level. The objective has been to improve teaching-learning, provide equitable opportunity and strengthen the administration of school-system. To that end, the government is implementing a number of programs such as the 4th primary education development program (PEDP-4); the school stipend program; reaching-out-of-school children (ROSC) project and the school feeding program.

Few other notable programs are the second-chance education program and basic literacy program which are being implemented in all districts of the country.

The country is at the threshold of reaching universal access in primary education. The current completion rate is over 80%. Since 2012, the government has extended pre-primary education at rural areas. The participation rate in formal learning (one year before the official primary entry age) is 77.4% with 76.1% for males and 78.8% for females.

The secondary education sub-sector consists of over 12 million students. 20,300 general schools, technical institutions and 9,400 Islamic schools constitute the secondary education network of Bangladesh. Both public and private schools receive public funds for teachers' salaries, free textbooks, stipend and tuition for disadvantaged students - particularly female students in rural areas. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is currently implementing Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) under its sector-wide approach. The SEDP is designed to improve the quality of education through capacity development of teachers, and systemic assessment of students.



## New curriculum in the offing

To improve the quality of education, the government is focusing on reforming the curricula. A process of upgrading the curricula from pre-primary to higher secondary level is currently underway. The government will develop textbooks in light of the new curriculum, and initiate distribution from the academic year 2022. A detailed training guideline for teachers would be provided from 2021 in order to prepare them for the new curriculum.

Since the 2010, the government has provided free textbooks to students. Around 42 million school children across the country received free textbooks at the start of 2020 academic year. Over 353 million textbooks were distributed among 4,26,19,865 students of pre-primary, primary, secondary schools and vocational institutions in the academic year 2020.

## Extended stipend program

The government continues to allocate millions in stipend for underprivileged students. Stipend disbursement system has been reformed in the recent years. Primary school students now receive stipend directly into their mother's mobile account. Students of secondary schools receive stipend in their own mobile accounts. In the year 2020, about 13.7 million primary school goers received financial assistances under the stipend project. The amount of stipend is increased by 50 percent from this year. They also receive a yearly amount of BDT 1,000 each for school uniforms and other supplies.

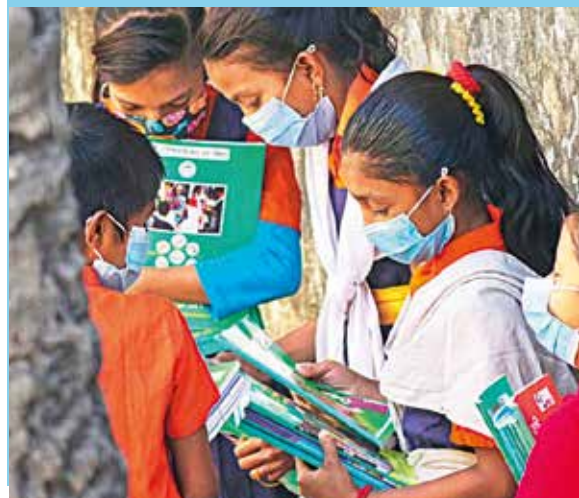
Secondary Education Stipend Program (SESP) is the largest stipend scheme managed by Ministry of Education to reduce the dropout rate of school students. Around 4 million students of secondary schools have already received stipends through mobile accounts in 2020.

## Free-of-cost textbook distribution, 2020

**353 million textbooks** were distributed among students of pre-primary, primary, secondary and vocational institutions

**9,504 braille textbooks** were provided to visually impaired students

**97,572 children from ethnic minority communities** received textbooks in their mother languages



## Focus on school feeding

The government, in collaboration with World Food Program is implementing a school feeding program in poverty-prone regions of the country. The program focuses on ensuring nutrition, reducing dropouts and increasing attendance. Under this program, packets of fortified biscuits are provided, to nearly 3 million children in 15,800 primary schools. School authorities and government officials have started home-delivering the fortified biscuits during the COVID-19 shutdown.

## E-learning opportunities

Digital classroom system is in operation in primary, secondary and madrasahs as part of the plan to implement e-learning for several years now. Project is 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 digital contents. The government already purchased and distributed some 53,689 laptops and some 22,000 multimedia projectors for primary schools. Digital versions of textbooks for first to fifth graders are now available online. A digital space- 'Teacher's Portal' has been created where teachers can upload, extracts and exchange digital contents and blogs.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government decided on the closure of educational institutions. Soon, state-run Sangsad Bangladesh Television started broadcasting lessons for students of lower secondary level.

## TVET reform

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector in Bangladesh has received thrust as part of an upskilling policy. Selected conventional courses are being converted into competency-based training modules. TVET curriculum is also being updated to align with the market demand. As part of the reform, the government has also lifted the previously capped age-limit to study diploma courses at polytechnic institutions. Young people who have not availed higher education are directed to the formal skill development courses.

With concerted policy efforts, the enrolment of TVET has increased significantly. Total number of students has increased from 0.41 million in 2008 to 1.26 million in 2018/19. At present, the number of female students pursuing TVET accounts for some 27%. Currently, about 17% of students are availing TVET programs. The government's target is to achieve 30% enrolment in TVET by 2030.

Multimedia classroom in over **33,000 secondary, higher secondary schools**

Computer labs have been set up in **3,544 primary schools**

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

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



A total of  
**114,697 students** of  
technical institutions  
received stipend  
through mobile  
accounts in 2020.



Female quota for  
admission has been  
raised from **10% to  
20% in 2020.**

## Quality higher education

Bangladesh has made progress in enhancing the quality of higher education. Timely interventions are being taken as part of the broader education reform strategy. Bangladesh Accreditation Council (BAC) has been established which guides and monitors the academic programs of the universities. The University Grant Commission (UGC) has set up Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) in 69 universities. The IQACs have already started promoting quality assurance culture within the universities. Besides, a thirteen-year (2018-2030) Strategic Plan for Higher Education (SPHE) is under implementation; the goal is to help universities raise the standard of education to global level.

Due to COVID-19, the government has decided to provide internet bandwidth to the students of universities at nominal price. The support has helped resource-restrained students cope with the move towards digital classes. Students of all registered public and private universities have been provided access to the newly developed Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN) platform.

## Women's empowerment



Women's participation in politics and labor force is one of the main drivers of Bangladesh's development story. The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has continued its priority of women's holistic development and participation in the mainstream socio-economic

activities. The main aim is to remove all the impediments to women's development starting from empowering girl-children. In the past decade, the country's achievements in girl's education, healthcare, financial inclusion, social security and political participation were the most noteworthy among South Asian countries. Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in attaining SDG 5 which focuses on gender equality, and has closed 72.6% of its overall gender gap, according to the Global Gender Gap Index 2020.



***Bangladesh ranks 50th out of 153 countries. Bangladesh (overall score of 72.6%) is the only one of the seven South Asian countries to feature in the top 100. Bangladesh is the only country in the world where that number of years with a female head of state exceeds the number of years with a male head of state (25.6 compared with 24.4).***

***Global Gender Gap Index 2020***

Fiscal spending on women's empowerment has also expanded in the last 10 years. Since 2011-2012, 43 ministries have been declaring gender responsive budget. A set of guidelines was issued to ensure that development projects are designed in a gender-sensitive way. In 2019-2020, the country saw record allocation of about \$19 billion (5.56% of the GDP) for women development activities. The share of expenditure on women development as proportion of total budget increased to 30.8% from 24.7% in 2009-2010.

Access to human services has been extended during the present government's tenure. Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education. This positive development occurred due to public interventions focusing on girl students such as education stipends and exemption of tuition fees



for girls in rural areas. The gender parity in tertiary education stands at 0.70 in 2018 which was only 0.52 in 2005. The government now focuses on reducing attrition rate of girls at the secondary level so that participation at tertiary level could be increased.



*Bangladesh has the least gender monthly pay gap; women earn only 2.2% less than men per month. When considering hourly wages, women in Bangladesh make 4.7% more than their male counterparts.*

.....  
**UN World Economic  
Situation and Prospects  
2020**

Bangladeshi women's role in the economy has been instrumental. A large number of women entrepreneurs have started their own business, creating employment opportunities for other women. Women's participation has been increasing in many non-traditional and emerging sectors such as hospitality, transportation, and food processing. An internet-based e-commerce sector is thriving where women are participating neck to neck with their male counterparts. Of the total SME credit, women entrepreneurs received \$534.58 million in January-September 2019, up 9.6% from the same period of the year 2018. More than 80% of the micro finance beneficiaries of Bangladesh are women. Even with the notable strides, access to finance remains a big concern for the women entrepreneurs.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) is the primary focal entity for women's empowerment. It has been implementing various programs for creating employment of rural insolvent women. Currently, the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) provides training to rural disadvantaged women through its women training centers (WTCs) in every district.

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*In 2019-2020, the government of Bangladesh allowed Value Added Tax (VAT) exemption on showroom rent for women entrepreneurs.*

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Joyeeta Foundation, a publicly financed organization to support women entrepreneurs, has been working to commercially engage grassroots women in the supply chain from production to distribution. About 18,000 women entrepreneurs affiliated with 180 registered associations are directly involved with the foundation's work.

Bangladesh has one of the highest representation of women in the national parliament. At present, 21% of the national parliament members are women. The proportion of seats held by women in local governments is 25%. In terms of political empowerment, according to the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, Bangladesh is ranked 7th out of 153 countries.

While Bangladesh came a long way in women empowerment, it has miles to go. Challenges, including child marriage, and various forms of gender-based violence are prevalent in the society. The country has two special laws dedicated to prevent violence against women. The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000 is a unique special statute, establishing special tribunals with the speedy-trial procedures and stringent punishments.

There is a central cell to prevent violence against women in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA). The cell monitors and coordinates the different initiatives to address violence against women and children. MoWCA has a mobile application named 'Joy,' through which a victim can call for help. The National Helpline Center for violence against women and children provides support to women at risk. They can get necessary information and support by calling the helpline number 109. Another call centre-333 also provides service in cases of eve-teasing, early marriage, and dowry related incidents.

## Healthcare

Bangladesh healthcare sector is witnessing the implementation of long-term action plan coupled with increased financing. In order to improve the wellness of the people, the government has been implementing number of notable projects within the health sector. In health sector indicators, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides. For instance, the average life expectancy has significantly increased and child and maternal death rate has notably decreased.

Bangladesh's most innovative initiative in the health sector is a grassroots intervention by the government: the community clinic. The community clinic is a public health initiative to deliver primary healthcare services to the doorstep of rural people. Currently, around 14,000 community clinics are providing healthcare services at the grassroots level all over Bangladesh.

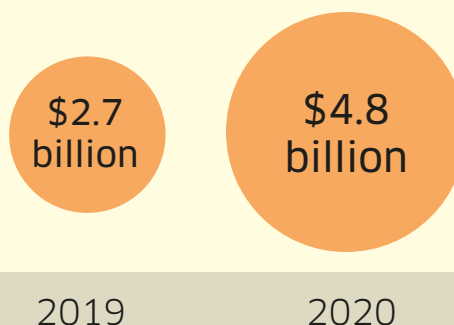
Bangladesh government is also running its extensive vaccination program against vaccine preventable diseases (VPD). Under the Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI), the government is protecting children from diseases such as tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, hepatitis-B, haemophilus influenza type-B, pneumococcal pneumonia, measles and rubella.

As a major boost to the public healthcare sector, the government increased the budgetary allocation in 2020-2021 by some 23%. The government has allocated \$4.8 billion for the public health sector in 2020 which is 1.3% of the GDP and 7.2% of the total budget.

## Improved maternal and child healthcare services

In a bid to improve the maternal child healthcare services, the government has undertaken certain training programs namely, Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) training for doctors and Community-based Skilled Birth Attendant (CSBA) training for the frontline healthcare professionals.

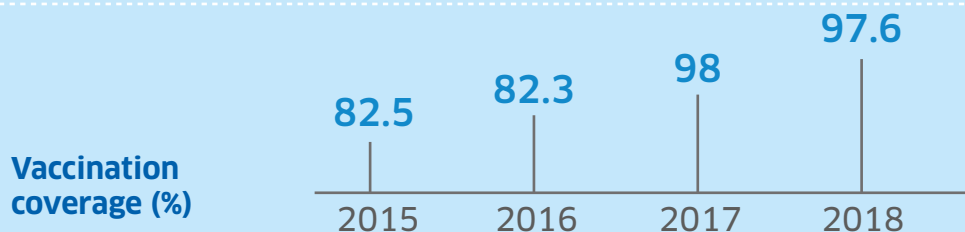
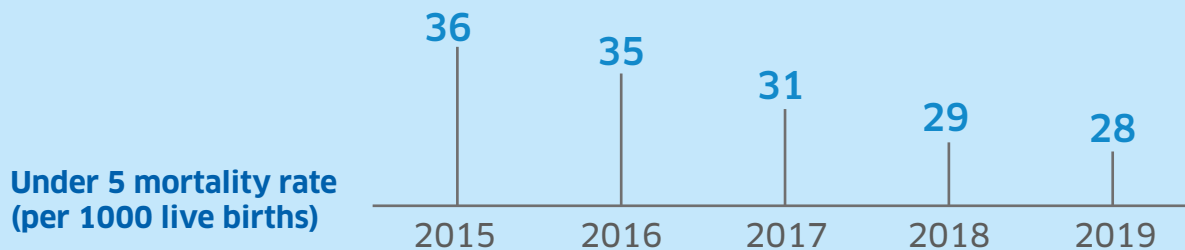
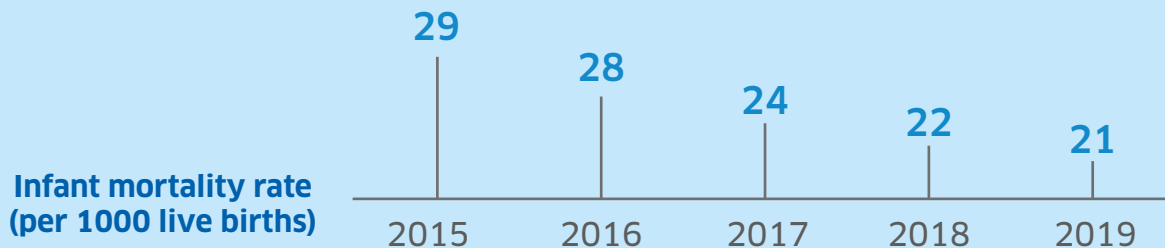
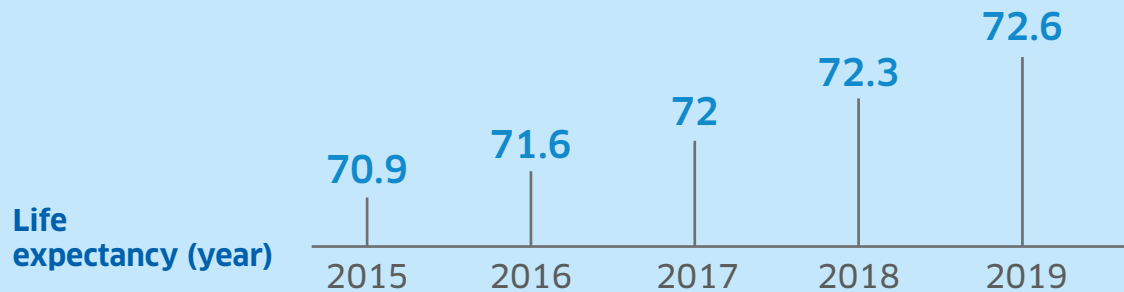
### Health budget



*As of November 2020, the government has trained 12,480 Community based Skilled Birth Attendants (CSBAs) who would provide maternal healthcare services in rural areas.*



## Public health indicators of Bangladesh



### Putting health sector policies in place

Bangladesh government has prioritized the health sector, which had previously lagged behind. It is putting concerted effort in transforming the health sector by introducing new policy instruments and revising existing ones. In the COVID-19 hit scenario, the

government has realized the swathe of the policy reform scope. Improving the last-mile service delivery will be absolutely essential. In this backdrop, 'Medical Services Act' and 'Mental Health Act' has been formulated to translate the realization into action.



03

## Poverty Reduction and Social Security

### Poverty reduction

Bangladesh will halve its poverty rate by 2030. It is already on track, according to its poverty reduction targets stipulated in various national development plans. The country has lifted around 19 million people out of poverty between 2014 and 2019. Pragmatic interventions by the government and the cooperation of the people, have been essential for such a record-breaking poverty reduction performance - especially when Bangladesh needs to move up the ladder in the middle-income bracket. Under the decade-long leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, remarkable progress in socio-economic development was achieved. Inclusive growth policies, firm fiscal management, domestic and overseas employment generation, and broad-arching social security program, have resulted in reduction in both moderate and extreme poverty.

The poverty rate as per upper poverty line dropped on an average by 1.25 percentage points per annum during 2017 and 2018, while extreme poverty rate declined annually by 0.80 percentage points in the period. Between 2010 and 2016, income per household increased by



*The poverty rate in Bangladesh in the 2018-2019 was 20.5% (which fell from 31.5% in 2009). The ratio of people in "extreme poverty" came down to 10.5%.*

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)



39%. Per capita income has grown more than 3.5 times to \$2,064 in 2019-2020 from \$543 in 2005-2006.

Over the decade, the rise in living standard of people is noteworthy. Life expectancy at birth has increased to 72.3 years in 2018 from 66.5 years in 2006. The literacy rate was 52.5% in 2006, which is now 73.2%. Bangladesh has fared significantly better than other South Asian countries in human development indicators. Bangladesh graduated to be a lower-middle income country from a low-income country status in 2015 by fulfilling the three United Nations stipulated criteria for graduation.

### **The main poverty reduction strategies followed by Bangladesh government are:**

- **Promoting growth by sustaining increase in labor productivity**  
.....
- **Enhancing the access of the poor to production inputs and to institutional finance, expanding employment opportunities**  
.....
- **Investing in human capital**  
.....
- **Stimulating women's participation in the labor force**  
.....
- **Promoting overseas employment**  
.....
- **Strengthening coordination between stakeholders**  
.....
- **Extending the coverage of the social protection programs**

In recent years, the government heavily invested on skill development, particularly of youth and women. More than twenty government agencies have livelihood training programs. The government envisages creating 30 million additional jobs by 2030. The plan to set up 100 special economic zones by 2030 would help create 10 million additional jobs. The government also aims to secure around 8 million jobs abroad for workers every year.

Drastic improvement in information networks has taken place during the last decade. Digitalization and improvement in connectivity has helped spur rapid decrease in poverty levels. Cell phones are bringing the market closer to the poor and the remote regions of the country. The emergence of mobile banking has introduced new options for opening saving accounts. It is also helping create entrepreneurship at the grassroots level.

The Perspective Plan 2021-2041 and the 8th Five Year Plan (2021-2025) consider poverty reduction as a major target for transforming Bangladesh into a high-income country by 2041. A strategy has been incorporated to reduce poverty rate to single digit by 2030. The plans have already been adopted across sectors and by government bodies, and they ought to be diligently implemented.



Like most other developing countries, Bangladesh's economy received fatal blows under COVID-19. The pandemic has threatened to derail the country's impressive achievements in poverty eradication. Bangladesh has rather witnessed a temporary spike in poverty levels, which is expected to renormalize. The shutdown of economy in the wake of the pandemic has left millions without jobs. The government was quick to stand beside the low-income groups to help them cope with the adverse circumstances. It has rolled out both short and mid-term recovery plan to help those who have lost livelihood. Regaining the momentum in poverty reduction to pre-pandemic levels is a priority target of the policymakers.

## Social protection

For Bangladesh, focusing on social protection is a key to promote human development, inclusive growth and reduce inequalities. To ensure economic benefits for all, both the coverage and the budget allocation have been increasing every

year since the last 10 years. About 25% households have been brought under the social safety net.

In 2020-2021, the government has allocated \$9.6 billion for the social security. It is 16.8% of the total budget and 3% of the GDP. The proposed allocation is a 28.5% increase from the last budget. The additional funds will be used to expand the coverage of various social security programs.

Bangladesh has been following a "leaving no-one behind" policy under the National Social Security Strategy of 2015. Disadvantaged groups of the population particularly senior citizens, destitute women, at-risk children and persons with disabilities have been given priority under this strategy. The strategy is designed to be implemented gradually by addressing the lifecycle risks.

The government has taken a special program for improving the living standards of disadvantaged



Source: Ministry of Finance

## Beneficiaries of allowance programs, 2019-2020



<b>4.4</b>	million senior citizens
<b>1.7</b>	million widows, deserted and destitute women
<b>0.77</b>	million women who need maternity support
<b>0.27</b>	million working lactating mothers
<b>1.54</b>	million people with disabilities

communities such as Dalit, Harijan and Bede. The program is being implemented all over the country. In addition, the government provides special stipends to the students from these communities. In FY2019-20, a total of \$5.45 million was allocated for the welfare of these communities. Sixty-thousand people were directly benefited through this program in the period.

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the government had to widen coverage to the vulnerable who are out of the social safety net. On May 14, 2020, the government launched a digital cash transfer scheme to deliver cash to 5 million households. Each of the family received around \$30 (an amount which has considerable purchasing power in rural Bangladesh) through mobile financial services. The recipients were daily wage earners, and service workers such as hawkers, construction workers, agro-laborers, and transport workers. Around the same time, the government issued 5 million ration cards to poor people as an emergency measure for them to buy subsidized rice.

To enhance the effectiveness of social safety strategy, operations of all programs have been digitizing. Payments are being made directly from the government to the beneficiaries through the government-to-person (G2P) system. So far 9 prioritized cash transfer programs have been brought under the G2P system. The process of finalizing a National Household Database (NHD), to streamline the selection of beneficiaries of social security programs, is underway. The government will soon disburse social safety net allowances to elderly, disabled and widows through mobile financial services. Under the move, the Department of Social Services would initiate a pilot involving 13,845 beneficiaries from two districts.





04

## Agriculture and Food Security

### Agriculture

In Bangladesh, 63% of the population resides in the rural areas where the agriculture sector plays a critical role in livelihood generation. Agriculture directly provides livelihood to 41% of the total population. The sector contributes 14% to the total GDP. Bangladesh's agriculture sector has made remarkable strides in terms of agricultural production, food self-sufficiency, and food security since 2009 with Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government at the helm. The government's long-term policies have focused on creating food security for Bangladesh.

With a target to sustain a hunger-free Bangladesh, the government has given topmost priority to the development of crop, fishery, livestock production, along with the welfare of the farmers. The government has been maintaining constant robust growth in the agriculture sector as the growth strategy framed aligning the goals set out in Vision 2021, seventh and eighth Five Year Plan (FYP), National Agricultural Policy 2018, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Delta Plan 2100; the principal policy documents of the country.

Additionally, the government formulated a number of agriculture and food security sector centric policies in a major boost to maintain the robust growth. National Agriculture Policy 2018, National Agricultural Extension Policy 2015, National Seed Policy 2018, Open Market Sell Policy 2015, Internal Procurement Policy 2010, Food Friendly Program Policy 2017, National Crop and Forest Biodiversity Policy-2012 are among the most notable policy developed in the last one decade at the crux of the population it employs and the contribution it makes in the GDP.

Eventually, with prudent policies interventions, steady increase in budgetary allocation, public and private investment, infrastructure development, Bangladesh has witnessed a persistent growth in agricultural development leading to long term food security. The multidimensional intervention facilitated the progress of green revolution and resulted in the adoption of high-yielding crop varieties, better irrigation infrastructure, competitive market and mechanization in the agriculture sector.

Bangladesh became the 4th largest rice producer and 3rd largest vegetable producer in the world. Bangladesh also ranked 3rd in inland fish production in the world. Besides, with the

increase in agricultural production, government is implementing different social safety net programs for the low income population using the surplus agricultural produces. These landmark accomplishments speak volumes of the government effort invested in the sector.

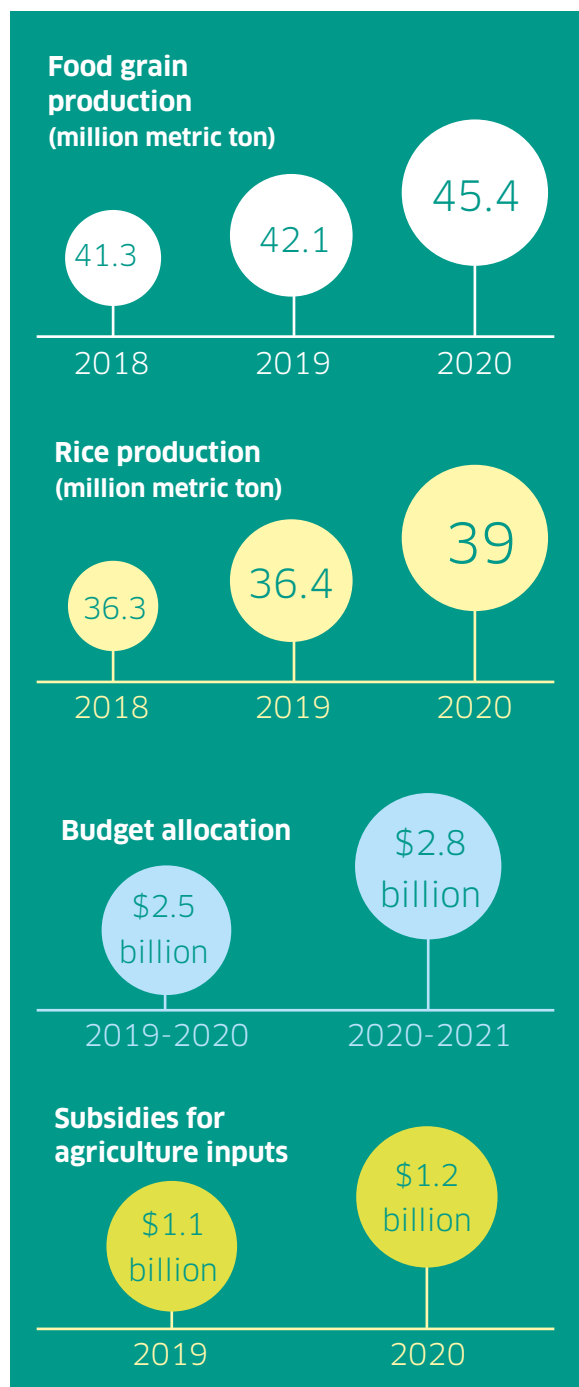
Like other countries, Bangladesh's agriculture sector took a hit from COVID-19 pandemic due to mandatory lockdown. During the pandemic, Bangladesh government gave the top priority to ensure food security, protect the farmers and overcome the pandemic induced setback in the agriculture sector. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given directives not to leave any land uncultivated to avoid food scarcity in the post COVID-19 situation.

With a view to offset COVID-19 induced crisis in the sector and increase agricultural production, the government intervened through a stimulus package, increased budgetary allocation and subsidies, and expansion of agricultural credit disbursement. The government has announced \$581 million stimulus package to contain the adverse impact of coronavirus induced economic impediments. Small, medium and marginal farmers in rural areas will be the primary beneficiary of the scheme.

The government has increased subsidy amount on agricultural inputs like fertilizers, seeds, and seedlings. It allocated \$1.1 billion in 2020-2021 to provide subsidy on fertilizer and other agricultural inputs during COVID-19. The government has also announced an immediate allocation of \$23 million for harvest and farm mechanization. In 2020-2021, the government is set to provide agricultural inputs to 20.8 million agricultural assistance cardholders. Farmers of 7 Haor (expansive wetlands) regions faced difficulty in harvesting due to labor shortage amid nationwide lockdown. Quick intervention by the government ensuring smooth transportation of agricultural goods and agricultural workers allowed bumper harvest during the lockdown. The smart intervention has been one of the most successful labor mobility management of COVID-19 era.

Moreover, the government has launched an online platform "Food for Nation" to contain

COVID-19 impact on supply chain. The small-holding farmers can sell their agricultural products through this platform to get fairer prices. Government has also innovated new ways to ensure food security during pandemic through supply-chain intervention mechanisms.





## Fisheries

Bangladesh is among world's leading fish producing countries with 4.5 million metric ton production against 4 million metric ton domestic demand. The fisheries sector contributes 4% to the GDP. Despite shrinking water bodies for fish cultivation, sustained growth has been possible due to improved technological inputs. Bangladesh has achieved a move up the nutritional security ladder by increasing the per capita fish consumption, which is now 62.6 gram/day per capita consumption. The COVID-19 impacted the fishery sector. The government came up with few policy interventions to sustain the growth trend from last few years. It has taken short, mid and long-term measures to help save the sector from the pandemic fallout. The measures include exemption of interests against bank loans and giving incentives to fish farmers, fishermen and shrimp exporters to keep the production wheel turning.

### Fish production (million metric ton)



*Bangladesh secured 2nd position as one of the highest freshwater fish producing countries in the world. Additionally, Bangladesh ranked 5th in aggregate fish farming in the world. In 2019, Bangladesh ranked 3rd in inland fish production in the world.*

*The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture-2020 by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN)*

## Livestock

The livestock sector makes a notable contribution in meeting animal protein intake. The sector contributed 1.4% to the GDP in 2019. A number of initiatives have been taken by the government for livestock development. The most important initiative has been the breed up-gradation through artificial insemination using superior quality frozen and liquid semen. The number of livestock and poultry was 55.8 million and 353 million respectively in 2019. The production of animal protein like milk, meat and egg has been increasing over the past several years. As a result, per capita intake of animal protein has been consistently rising.



## Number of livestock (million)

55.1

2018

55.5

2019

55.8

2020

## Food security

The government has been vigilant about the food security and supply chain situation as soon as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. The government has taken several measures to ensure the adequacy of the food grain supply. Government procured 798,000 metric ton grains from the Aman (rice variety) harvests season of 2020. Besides, the government has set the target of procuring 800,000 metric ton paddy and 1,150,000 metric ton rice from the Boro (rice variety) harvests season of 2020. The target is twice of the last year's target. In 2018-2019, the public food grain procurement target was 2,181,000 metric tons. The government procured 2,374,000 metric ton rice domestically. In 2019-2020, the public food grain procurement target was 2.27 million metric tons. The government has also taken infrastructure development initiative to increase its public food grain storage capacity. As of February 2020, the total food grain storage capacity sharply rose to 2.17 million metric tons from 2.14 million metric tons in 2019.

Bangladesh government runs special programs under its different food security initiatives. To help low income households, food grains are

distributed under the Public Food Distribution System. Subsidized distribution programs like Open Market Sale (OMS), Food Friendly Program, Food for Work, Test Relief, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Vulnerable Group Development and Gratuitous Relief, are vital to ensuring food to the vulnerable. These along with few other extensive food assistance programs during the COVID-19 pandemic have helped in avoiding food scarcity.





05

## Power and Infrastructure

### Power sector at a glance

Bangladesh economy has been booming with a pre-COVID-19 growth rate reaching more than 8%. Bangladesh's power sector is one of the major contributors to the economic growth. The power sector of Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing in South Asia. Bangladesh is committed to achieving universal access to affordable and clean electricity. Moreover, Bangladesh is inspiring the comparator countries to decarbonizing the power sector.

In 2009, there were only 27 power plants with 4,942 MW capacity. Currently, the power generation capacity is 23,548 MW. A master-plan adopted by the policymakers aims to generate 24,000 MW electricity by 2021, 40,000 MW by 2030 and 60,000 MW by 2041, which is matched with the demand from the projected GDP growth. In a major boost to the power sector, the government has augmented the power generation capacity, and expanded transmission. The government has set a target to construct 23,000 circuit km transmission lines across the country by 2023.

Currently, the number of power consumers are 36 million and the per capita electricity generation is now 512 kWh. The government has successfully brought down system loss to 8.73% in 2020 from 14.33% in 2009.

The growth in electrification, as access to electricity, has reached 98% in 2020 from 47% in 2010. In the last 10 years, \$6 billion has been provided as subsidy to the power sector. Sustainable strategies have been adopted to ensure energy security and energy supply system. To reduce carbon, the government has set a target of getting 10% of the total electricity from renewable sources by 2021.

Bangladesh government has committed to delivering 100% electricity coverage by 2021, an embarkation target set for the Mujib Borsho (Mujib Year).

#### Power generation capacity

**18,961 MW**  
2019

**23,548 MW**  
2020

**Currently, there are 48 power generation projects under construction with 16, 875 MW capacity**

### System loss brought down

**14.3%**

2009

**9.4%**

2019

**8.7%**

2020

.....  
With view to improve power distribution system and reduce system loss, **3.23 million prepaid meters** have been installed and installation of **20 million smart-prepaid-meters** is underway.  
.....

## Power System Master Plan

Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), the national body that oversees power sector planning, has addressed the surge in power demand by developing power system master plans. BPDB rigorously updates its Power System Master Plan. According to Power System Master Plan (PSMP) 2017-2030, the government has set a target to increase electricity generation as per demand.

## Capacity building and training programs

Under the “Implementing Renewable Energy Targets in Bangladesh” project, government officials of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) receive training on various aspects of operation and project implementation in the renewable energy sector. The training helped develop planning capacity using the World Bank’s Electricity Planning Model (EPM), which is tailored to Bangladesh needs. The power planners of Bangladesh now have the tools and expertise to independently conduct technical studies for planning investments in grid stability and storage technologies for scaling up renewable energy deployment. Moreover, the government will train up 70,000 power sector professionals in the next five years. The Power Division under the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources will provide training to unskilled or semi-skilled unemployed youth in various power sector trades. The first phase of the training program was inaugurated in 2019.

## Efficiency in the government’s energy planning

The Power Division under the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources (MoPEMR) has been the most efficient and dynamic among different government agencies, according to their annual performance report which every government agency has to publish. The Energy and Mineral Resources Division in the same ministry secured the third position in the performance ranking. The Power Division has implemented 94.4% of project work which is a very high mark for any government agency.



## Flagship mega-projects in power sector



*Matarbari Power Plant*

The Matarbari Ultra Super Critical Coal Fired Power Project is located in the southern district of Cox's Bazar. It is one of Bangladesh's fast-track projects to be implemented by the Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh Limited (CPGCBL). The implementing agency is set to complete the project by June 2023. As of August 2020, over 37% of the construction work of the power plant has been completed. The power plant will ensure 42% energy efficiency against an average 34% efficiency in coal fired power projects.



*Payra Coal-fired Power Plant*

The 1,320 MW Payra coal-fired power plant in southern Patuakhali district has been readied for operation. The plant has been set up at \$2 billion. After undergoing test runs for about five months, the first unit of the power plant started commercial operation in May 2020.



*Rampal Power Project*

Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company is implementing the fast-track mega power project in Rampal locality in southern Bangladesh. The power plant with 1,320 MW super thermal power capacity is half completed.



*Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant*

Bangladesh government has initiated the country's first-ever nuclear power plant on the banks of the mighty Padma river in Pabna district. The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant will meet 9% of the country's electricity requirement. The plant will have 2 units with power generation capacity of 1,200 MW each. The first unit is expected to go into commercial operation by 2023 and the second one by 2024. A third-generation technology is being used in the plant which has a five-layer security system. The construction of the power plant began in November 2017. As of August 2020, the project has made 37% progress.



## Renewable energy

Bangladesh is shifting its policy towards clean energy and decarbonization. To this end, the government has set a target of getting 10% of the electricity from renewable sources by 2021. Walking the talk, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in renewable sector by adding 8% power from off-grid solar solutions. According to the Renewables Global Status 2020 Report by Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21), Bangladesh secured second position in providing renewable energy to its people.

**Bangladesh is one of the top six countries with electricity access from off-grid solar solutions.**

Global Status Report (GSR) 2020  
by Renewable Energy Policy  
Network for the 21st Century  
(REN 21)

## Solar home system

Bangladesh has one of the world's largest domestic solar energy programs. Solar powers is changing the lives of 20 million people in rural areas, who can now work, study and go out after dark. The country is now generating 628 MW electricity from renewable sources of which 394 MW power comes from solar system. Currently, there are 5.8 million solar home systems in the country, the largest in the world. As part of its decarbonization strategy, Bangladesh is opening new solar parks in addition to expanding the use of solar home system. The program has also introduced 1,000 solar irrigation pumps and 13 solar mini-grids. These solar irrigation pumps are

already edging-up crop yields. The government has now taken up an initiative to install roof-top solar panels at every educational institution.

Currently, there are 32 grid-connected solar projects which are in the pipeline in different part of the country. The projects will cumulatively generate 2,000 MW electricity when operation begins.

“**Bangladesh has created around 137,400 jobs in solar home systems, according to the latest figures released by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). Bangladesh stands 5th among 161 countries in renewable energy jobs. Currently, around 10,000 people are employed in module assembly.**

*Renewable Energy and Jobs: Annual Review' by International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)*





Padma Multipurpose Bridge

## Infrastructure

Bangladesh has made commendable progress in terms of infrastructure development in the last decade. The energy, transport and communication sectors were the main focus of the push. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) estimates that the transport and communication sectors contribute 11% (and increasing) to the GDP, which is the reason the policymakers have been focused on mobilizing resources into the sector. The contribution of infrastructure enhancement in the Bangladesh's economy will be instrumental in years to come. To this end, the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), Dhaka Elevated Express way, are some of the major fast-track mega projects which are being implemented. New plans and policy measures are being taken-up for the development of non-road transports such as water ways, railways, and airways.

## Notable communication projects

### *Padma Multipurpose Bridge*

The Padma Multipurpose Bridge is a fast track mega project undertaken through domestic financing, the first of its kind political decision by the Awami League led government. It is the largest infrastructure project in Bangladesh, a 6.15 km structure with a double-decker bridge which is set to be functional in 2021-2022. The bridge is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by 1.2% once it opens. The Padma Multipurpose Bridge is now visible as its 41st and final span is installed during the early December 2020. More than 81% of the total construction work has been done and 91% of the construction work of the main bridge is complete.

### *Rural communication and physical infrastructure*

The rural road network has been expanding. The rapid expansion has allowed the growth of the rural economy where non-farm activities have taken over farm activities. Currently, the policies on rural communication infrastructure are: upgradation of high-use roads into two lanes, sustainable maintenance of existing roads and making new roads within villages. Moreover, the government has built and rebuilt about 350,396 meters of bridges and culverts across rivers and streams. In last 10 years, 1,615 Union Parishad Complex (local government office): and 225 Upazila Complex buildings were constructed. 2,287 growth centers (rural market bases) and 881 cyclone centers have been built in the last one decade. The rural infrastructures are the key drivers of rural economy of Bangladesh.



*Elevated expressways and roads-highways network*

Even a decade ago, the state of roads and highways was poor. The poor state of the infrastructure and the bottlenecks in the sector became the top factor inhibiting economic growth. The new government in 2009, realized the problem. Today, the Bangladesh government has completed its first expressway, an uninterrupted four-lane road with service lanes on both sides, stretching from the center of Dhaka city to the upcoming Padma Multipurpose Bridge in the west. Moreover, construction work of the 24-kilometer Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway towards the north has begun.



*Mass Rapid Transit and Bus Rapid Transit*

To create an integrated modern public-transport system around Dhaka city, construction of the first metro rail network (MRT Line-6) is reaching near-completion and set to be functional by 2021. The construction work of two more metro rail networks (MRT Lines-1 and 5), which will connect all nodal points of the city including the airport, bus stations, business centers and some selected high-mobility neighborhoods is going to start soon.



*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel*

In order to establish an uninterrupted communication network from Dhaka to all the way to the southern tip of Bangladesh, the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel under the Karnaphuli river, in the port city of Chattogram is being built. It is a 9.5 km tunnel, which is the first river tunnel in Bangladesh. The tunnel is expected to increase the efficiency between the high-productivity oriented southeastern belt.



## Railway communication

Bangladesh railway communication system is one of the most public-friendly mode of communications across the country. In a bid to improve the services to the commuters, the government has undertaken some prudent and timely policy measures and infrastructure development initiatives. Bangladesh Railways formulated Railways Master Plan 2016-2045, a policy and planning instrument, in order to overhaul the railway system of Bangladesh. The government has already started implementing the plan and the progresses are on track.

### The ongoing mega development endeavors of railways include

- Expanding railways
- Procuring new coaches
- Renovating old rail lines
- Constructing new rail lines
- Constructing new railway stations
- Reopening closed railway stations
- Introducing new trains and coaches
- Converting single gauges into dual gauges



In 2020, the government has implemented the following railway sector development projects

Procured  
**136 new coaches**

Renovated  
**25 km old rail lines**

Introduced  
**6 new train services**

Constructed  
**30 new rail bridges**

Reconstructed  
**14 old rail bridges**

Constructed  
**25 km new rail lines**

Expanded  
**4 existing train services operation**



06

## A Digitized Bangladesh

Since 2009, Bangladesh government's 'Digital Bangladesh' initiative has played a key role in attaining high and inclusive growth. Digital Bangladesh has been ensuring prompt public services eliminating major red tapes in the public service procedures. Driven by widespread digitization across sectors, the country has seen drastic growth in its internet connectivity, mobile phone usage, IT export earnings and incorporation of ICT components in education. The digital market in Bangladesh is full of potential with its 160 million mobile users, 100 million internet subscribers and millions of ICT professionals.

### E-governance for efficiency

One of the drivers of Digital Bangladesh initiative is the e-governance, commonly called Digital Governance. Assertive implementation of e-governance is paving way for quality public service delivery.

Expansion in ICT infrastructure and connectivity have transformed public service delivery. The government is working to bring all viable services under online platforms by 2021. Two notable service digitization successes are, people can already apply for passport and submit tax

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The **E-Government Master Plan for Digital Bangladesh** provides a strategic guideline of government innovation using ICT and the implementation plan.

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returns online. Public service application forms such as job application can be downloaded from official websites. Services like Smart NID, the biometric database of unique IDs, fingerprints and iris scans have been successful in making citizen services run more smoothly. In 2019, the government launched an online service delivery gateway called 'Eksheba.' The gateway has 167 government services on board. Users can apply and pay for the services online.

The government has introduced e-filing (e-Nothi) solution for faster movement of files through different tiers in government offices. The solution is designed to increase transparency and accountability in governance. This single online platform for government entities aim to make administrative duties more efficient and paperless.

## e-filling for government services



In February 2019, the government launched Digital Municipality Service System, a pilot project to establish a digital platform for urban governance. Once the project is implemented, the municipality operations will become more cost effective and transparent. The government has also brought the land mutation services under digital platform for simpler service delivery. The e-mutation system has been rolled out to 243 government offices which deal with land issues.

Effort is ongoing to extend internet network to the lowest tier of the local government. Info-Sarker Phase-3 project will expand the network of 20,000 km optical fiber cable to 2,600 selected unions (the micro-unit of local government). The government has already set up 5,286 digital centers in union offices to deliver basic services at the grassroots. Some of the public services include land records, birth registration, telemedicine, passport and overseas job application. The private services offered by the digital centers include mobile financial services, insurance, and vocational training.

The government has transformed its post offices into e-centers. 8,500 post offices are now providing the rural people opportunity to browse the internet, transfer remittance, see academic results, and fill-up different application forms.

## 5,286 Union Digital Centers for e-service

Over 422 million services provided through Union Digital Centers

333 call-center received 3.2 million calls

243 land offices implementing e-mutations

The National Portal now houses over 45,000 websites which are mostly service delivery focused

## Digital economy for inclusive growth

Digitization drives innovation in service industry and fuels domestic job opportunities enabling faster economic growth. Flourishing of the ICT infrastructure and greater connectivity have fostered e-commerce in the country.

Growing smartphone usage with high-speed internet and rising purchasing power of consumers are two main factors propelling the e-commerce industry in Bangladesh. Bangladesh's e-commerce market stands at \$1.6 billion currently and will double to \$3 billion by 2023. On the back of a foundation laid down by the government coupled with a young tech-savvy population, the potential of e-commerce industry is immense. According to the e-Commerce

Association of Bangladesh (e-Cab) 2019 report, there are 700 e-commerce sites and 8,000 social-media based e-commerce groups. The rise of e-commerce became a strong tool for empowering women, because the entry to the market has been easier for women.

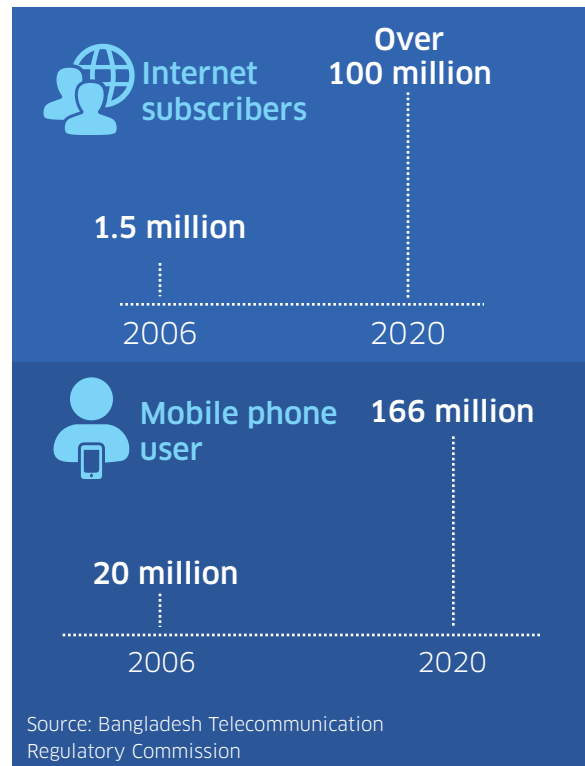
National Digital Commerce Policy 2018 aims to restore trust in e-commerce websites in Bangladesh by making safer digital transactions.

The country has seen a rapid rise in the outsourcing, owing to the measures to equip the youth with IT skills. Due to easier access to the market, freelancing is now a popular career option for many youth. About 500,000 active freelancers are working regularly, out of 650,000 registered freelancers in the country. According to the government's ICT Division, the freelancers are generating \$100 million annually.

In the recent years, mobile financial services (MFS) have become another soaring sector. The increase in active MFS subscribers also pushed up business transactions through the mobile-based digital payment system. Consumers have incrementally been moving towards cashless transactions. The sector is showing immense potential with competitive market players like bKash and Nagad.

## Internet and cellular connectivity

The number of internet users in Bangladesh has grown at an unprecedented rate in comparison to other developing countries. The government has already brought 2,400 unions (micro-units of local government) out of total 4,554 unions under optical fiber connectivity. The rest of the unions are also coming under coverage. Under 'Connected Bangladesh' project, 772 remotely located unions will come under internet connectivity by 2021. There are over 100 million internet subscribers in the country. For online



access, mobile internet, wireless broadband and fixed broadband are facilitated according to geographic reach and consumer choices. Of the three types, mobile internet is the most pervasive with nearly 94% of the users.

Over 95% geographic area of Bangladesh has been brought under mobile telecommunications coverage. The number of mobile phone users has also risen exponentially in the last ten years. There are now more than 166 million mobile users which was only 20 million in 2006. Bangladesh is moving into expanding 5G mobile technology, after the first experimental transition in 2018.

## ICT manpower development

Bangladesh is building a workforce of highly skilled ICT professionals, who can help in implementing the Digital Bangladesh strategy by 2021. The government has been training youths and women through different projects and programs.





## ICT training

**2,500 people** participated in the Fast Track Future Leader program

**16,740 people** received basic IT and specialized outsourcing training

**20,000 people** received training on Basic IT literacy

**57,683 received** training on IT-ITES

Source: ICT Division

More than **120 local companies** exported ICT products valued nearly **\$1 billion** to **35 countries** in 2019.

## Hi-tech parks

Bangladesh is building a number of hi-tech parks to boost the IT industry and create decent youth-centric jobs. Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority (BHTPA) was established in 2010 as the regulatory body to develop large-scale ICT parks. The under-construction and the pipeline high-tech parks are among the most attractive investment centers in Bangladesh. Since its inception, the High-Tech Park Authority has successfully established Janata Tower Software Technology Park, Jessore Sheikh Hasina Software Technology Park in different parts of the country. Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City (BHTC) is the first full-fledged special economic zone for hi-tech industry in Bangladesh. The four-tier National Data Centre at BHTC is now fully operational.



## 07

# Climate Change Preparedness

Bangladesh has one of the richest bio-diversity due to its deltaic topography located between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean. Global environmental degradation is a crucial challenge for Bangladesh. Stable economic growth depends on the stability of its natural ecosystems. Due to its low-lying lands, Bangladesh is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. Like many other developing countries, Bangladesh's economic development is highly inhibited by the effects of climate change.

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**According to the Climate Change Vulnerability Index 2019 by German Watch, Bangladesh ranks 7th in the list of countries affected by climate change.**

.....

Bangladesh has the world's largest river delta system which is vulnerable to climate change. The rise in sea level poses a big threat to the lives and livelihood of the population of the coastal areas. Floods during the monsoon affect at least 5 million people and put around one-third of the delta region underwater. Besides, continued river erosion displaces about 10,000 people every year.

Providing Regional Climates for Impact Studies (PRCIS), the regional climate modelling system, has projected that Bangladesh's annual average rainfall will increase about 4% by 2030. Moreover, the General Circulation Model (GCM) has projected that Bangladesh's annual average temperature will increase by 2.4 degree Celsius, while the annual average rainfall will increase by 9.7% within 2100.

A World Bank study noted that up to two-thirds of Bangladesh is inundated by floods in every three to five years. The situation ends up causing massive damage to the agriculture, and livelihood of the people. According to the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Bangladesh will lose 17% of its land by 2050 due to climate change. Bangladesh has put in place mitigation and adaptation strategies to deal with climate change induced environmental crisis and natural disasters.

## Policy instruments for coping climate change

Bangladesh government is relentlessly addressing issues of environmental protection, pollution control, protection of biodiversity and most importantly the broader challenge of climate change. A number of policies, plans and strategies have gone into action to tackle the environmental hazards and ensure an eco-friendly environment.

### Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009 (BCCSAP 2009)

Bangladesh government is implementing the 'National Environment Policy 2018'. The policy instrument has identified the roles and activities of the different ministries and agencies. Based on the policy, Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009 (BCCSAP 2009) is being implemented by the government. BCCSAP 2009 addresses the impact of climate change issues identifying realistic adaptation and mitigation activities. Bangladesh is the first country among the developing countries to formulate an integrated action plan where 44 activities within 6 thematic areas are identified.

### Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF)

The government has formed Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) in 2010 to implement the activities identified in the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2009. The Government has also enacted Climate Change Trust Fund Act 2010 in order to give proper legal framework for the action plan. Moreover, Bangladesh government has

formulated Climate Change Trust Fund Guidelines with a view to smoothen the operation of BCCTF. The government has also formed Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF). Between 2009-10 and 2019-20 fiscal year, \$430 million has been allocated from the budget for the Climate Change Trust Fund (CCTF).



Developing countries like Bangladesh are the hardest hit by climate change. The work taking place here to help adapt to its impacts and build resilience is an example for the world to follow. The UK is proud to support it.

**Lord Zac Goldsmith**

Former Minister of State for Environment, United Kingdom

### NAP and NDC

Bangladesh is developing a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in order to tackle the long-term impact of climate change. Bangladesh has already prepared the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which outlines the intended actions for achieving lower emissions. The plan is to reduce 15% carbon emission with international cooperation and decline 5% carbon release by 2030. The government is formulating a NDC implementation roadmap and action plan in order to provide the necessary tools and guidelines for implementation of the plan.

### Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100

Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, a long-term integrated mega plan, aims to tackle the impact of climate change. The plan integrates environment sensitive finance for all development projects and sustainable practices within the design of all projects under government regulation. It is one of the most comprehensive climate-resilient development strategies, which other countries are looking into as a reference for their development policy formulation. The first phase of the plan involves

80 projects on land reclamation, construction of embankments and creation of safe navigation channels. Implementation of the plan will require about \$38 billion in investments by 2030. Bangladesh currently invests 0.8% of its GDP in water related projects which will have to rise to about 2.5% by 2030.

### Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 has 6 specific goals

**Ensure safety from floods and climate change related disasters**

**Enhance water security and efficiency of water usages**

**Ensure sustainable and integrated river systems and estuaries management**

**Conserve and preserve wetlands and ecosystems and promote their appropriate use**

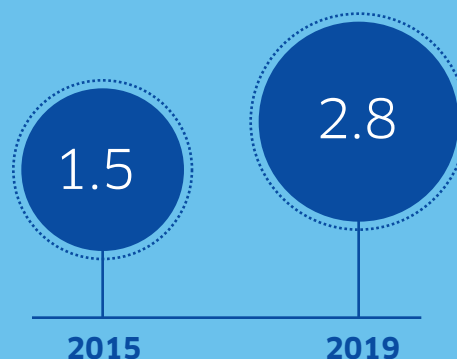
**Develop effective institutions and equitable governance for in-country and trans-boundary water resources management**

**Achieve optimal and integrated use of land and water resources**

### National climate budget

Bangladesh is the pioneer among the developing countries regarding finance for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The government has published its first climate budget report in the 2017-18 fiscal year. Since then government regularly publishes climate budget report. The climate budget allocation increased from 6.6% in fiscal year 2015-16 to 8.7% in 2019-20.

### Climate budget allocation (\$billion)



### Climate governance

Bangladesh government firmly regulates industry operation on the environmental clearance criteria. Bangladesh has made establishment of Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) mandatory to ensure that industrial waste is being discharged after proper treatment. Legal actions are taken through environment courts and mobile courts, guided by the penal code under the 'Environmental Conservation Act, 1995' (revised in 2010).



## Development projects

Bangladesh Climate Change Trust (BCCT) has taken 720 development projects to combat the vulnerability posed by climate change. BCCT has been implementing projects on river bank preservation, forestation, canal excavation, solar installation, biogas installation, drainage system development and construction of cyclone tolerant houses in the coastal regions. BCCT has already successfully implemented 375 projects.

### Climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and preparedness

- **720 projects** implemented
- **86.1 million** trees planted
- **4,291** cyclone shelters and **523** flood shelters built
- **56,000 volunteers** for cyclone preparedness
- Extreme climate tolerant crops and floating agriculture technology developed or in R&D pipeline
- **\$2 billion** average spending for climate adaptation since 2010
- **\$ 430 million** publicly-financed for Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund since 2009

## Bangladesh leading the Climate Vulnerable Forum

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the President of the prestigious intergovernmental consortium, the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF). Bangladesh has been chosen to lead the CVF for the second time. The CVF represents over one billion people of the world's most climate vulnerable countries. In 2020, Bangladesh chaired the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) leader's virtual event. Bangladesh is also hosting the Global Centre on Adaptation (GCA). Bangladesh's policy has been to strictly implement the Paris Agreement. Bangladesh clearly underscored that Paris Agreement is the only way to arrest the rate of damages caused by climate change.

In our war against nature, we will only lose. All our actions manifest that we are consciously destroying the very support systems that are keeping us alive. So, the time to take action to save the planet is not tomorrow, but today.

**Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina**  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



To regionalize the effort, Bangladesh also launched the South Asian regional office for Global Center of Adaptation in Dhaka on September 2020. This will act as the Secretariat, to support South Asian countries enhance climate resilience.



08

## Tackling COVID-19 Challenges

Bangladesh put together a number of policy actions to tackle the COVID-19 impact on people's life and the national economy. From February 2020, the government started screening for COVID-19 symptoms at all entry ports to the country. In a swift move, it arranged quarantine facilities adjacent to international air and land ports. With the detection of the first case, the government closed all education institutions and encouraged all non-essential businesses to move their activities online. As part of its efforts to contain the spread of the Coronavirus, the government announced extended Public Holiday, a form of soft shutdown.

*In April 2020, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued 31 fast-track directives on health safety, awareness, restrictions in public spheres, food security, supply chain management and commodity prices regulation.*

### Health sector responses

The COVID-19 testing began in Dhaka and expanded nationwide as soon as the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) completed its crash-training of technicians. The emphasis was to increase the number of tests to an optimal level. The government also decided to fully subsidize all testing. The Ministry of Finance released \$5.9 million for the DGHS to facilitate Coronavirus response.

Initially, six public hospitals were converted for exclusively treating COVID-19 patients. The regulators directed all public hospitals to prepare isolation units. The government also ramped up measures to increase testing kits and PPEs. New ICU beds and extra ventilators for critical patients were set up. The government also announced health insurance for frontline workers, a policy that has been duplicated in other countries later on.

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, the health sector budgetary allocation grew by 29% for 2020-2021, the highest sectoral increase. \$1.5 billion has been allocated to the sector from the

annual development program. A block allocation of over \$ 1 billion was set aside to meet the emergency requirements for battle against the pandemic.



**2,000 doctors and 5,054 nurses** were publicly recruited to fight the pandemic

**3,625 doctors, 1,314 nurses** and technicians received training for COVID-19 treatment

**80+ laboratories** are operational for testing

A web platform

**www.corona.gov.bd** launched for corona related information

**'COVID-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness Project'** formulated to strengthen the health system

## Reviving the economy

In a smart move, the policymakers announced a series of stimulus packages as soon as the pandemic hit. The first package was some \$588 million directed at paying the labor wages of export-oriented industries. The government rolled out a total of 21 stimulus packages worth \$14.2 billion to rescue the economy. The amount is equal to 4.3% of the country's GDP. A total of 18 economic sectors including export industries, services,

cottage-micro-small-medium enterprises (CMSMEs), and agriculture have been targeted by the stimulus.

To support the implementation of the stimulus, the central bank initiated a number of refinancing schemes. Under the credit schemes, enterprises are allowed to borrow at a halved subsidized interest. The central bank also eased the borrowing conditions to ensure all the affected enterprises get access to working capital.

In June 2020, the government took the decision to reopen economic activity in phases. The Health Ministry issued health safety guidelines for commercial bodies. These measures helped the economy gradually gain momentum.

## Employment creation

The government announced a \$294 million fund to help the youths and expatriates who lost jobs during the pandemic. Three specialized banks and the rural development organization Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) started distributing loans for employment generating enterprises which focus on youth and rural poor.

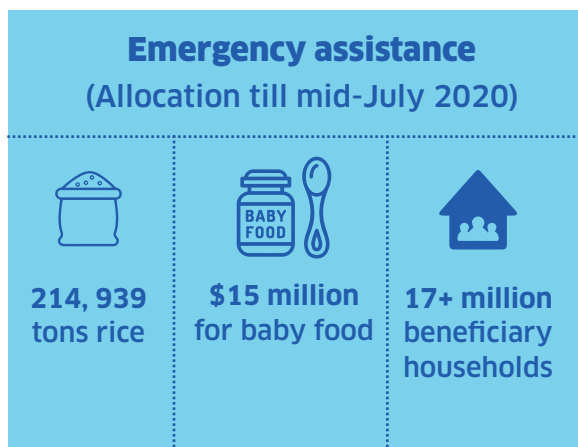
A significant number of migrant workers returned to home due to corona induced job-loss. The government created two separate funds totaling to \$ 82 million for assisting the returnee migrants. Under the allocation, the returnees would get loans at a low interest rate for self-employment activities. The government announced another project worth \$824 million to create self-employment opportunities for those who have left cities amid shutdown.

## Extended safety net

The shutdown took its toll on the income and livelihood of millions working in informal sectors. To mitigate the effects on the vulnerable, in an immediate response, the government launched a comprehensive assistance program. The Ministry

of Disaster Management and Relief in coordination with local government bodies, distributed food and cash aid to the poor and low-income people, particularly those out of the social safety net. In May, the government decided for a one-off direct cash transfer to be disbursed through the mobile banking channel. The recipients were low-wage earners, rickshaw-van pullers, hawkers, construction workers, agriculture workers, transport workers, and restaurant workers.

*In May 2020, the government launched digital cash transfer by disbursing \$148 million to 5 million households.*



Bangladesh government expanded its innovative Open Market Sales (OMS) scheme to ensure rations at subsidized price for low-income people. The government provided assistance to low-income people under the "Return-to-Home" program for the homeless and landless people. Under the program homes free of cost, six month's food and cash assistance were provided to the recipients.

## Introducing distance learning

In the wake of the pandemic, the government closed down all educational institutions. Thereafter, the state-run Sangsad TV channel started broadcasting pre-recorded lessons for students of secondary level. It allowed

under-privileged children without access to computer continue their education. Later, the channel started broadcasting lessons for primary school students through the "Learning from Home" program. At the tertiary level, arrangements were made for online classes.

To ensure financial support for under-privileged students amid COVID-19 crisis, the Ministry of Education digitized all its stipend programs.

Education stipend money transfer has been digitized during the pandemic. It is now being sent directly to the student's mobile banking accounts. This was a timely move; it allowed transfer of financial assistance by reducing pandemic era risks.

## Ensuring agro production and food security

A stimulus of \$588 million for agriculture sector was announced. The main aim was to boost production and help offset the impact of the pandemic. A program with allocation of \$23 million for farm mechanization was immediately undertaken upon the onset of COVID-19. Subsidy on fertilizers and seeds and seedlings distribution was expanded.

To ensure food security during pandemic, the government has made supply-chain interventions. To link the farmers with the producers, the government digitized the marketing of certain agriculture produces by introducing an open platform called 'Food for Nation' platform. The public food grain procurement was significantly expanded. The timely interventions were helpful in ensuring the supply of essential goods and keeping their prices affordable for the low-income people.



# Conclusion

The remarkable development and progress made in last decade is a testament to the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The country is now well placed to push forward and secure Bangabandhu's dream of a poverty free Bangladesh and achieve HIC status by 2041. Bangladesh has developed strategies, policies and programs that will guide it to this inspiring development path. The challenges are steep but not insurmountable. The foundation stone has already been laid and a road map has been developed under Vision 2041 and Delta Plan 2100. The next step is to strengthen the institutions, develop an implementation plan and move full steam. As illustrated, Bangladesh already has a strong track record that shows how strong leadership, a sound strategy and determined efforts can take the country forward.

We are living in a world that is transforming at speeds almost incomprehensible to the average mind. Unlike historical growth rates experienced in the past centuries, it is now possible for developing economies like Bangladesh to grow at 7, 8, 9, or 10 percent annually. This is because of the enabling effect of a rapidly integrating global economy. Provided an economy has some competitive edge - and Bangladesh does -- it can basically grow as fast as it can invest and build productive capacity. According to Klaus Schwab, the founder and head of World Economic Forum, the digital age will bring change "unlike anything humankind has experienced before." Properly harnessing these global forces is enabling Bangladesh to grow at higher rates that were simply not possible before.

Bangladesh can feel justifiably proud of its achievements in the fight against poverty. In the early 1970s following independence poverty was rampant with head-count poverty in the range of 80%. In 2019, moderate poverty declined to 20.5% while extreme poverty fell to 10.5%. This rapid progress in reducing poverty has emboldened policy makers to aim to secure the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to free Bangladesh of the incidence of poverty by 2041.

Sustained rapid GDP growth is essential for sustained poverty reduction in the future. The target is to eliminate extreme poverty by 2030 and by 2041 Bangladesh will be a high-income country with absolute poverty approaching extinction. All citizens will be guaranteed a minimum quality of life based on employment income for all who seek work and social protection benefits for the vulnerable population who cannot participate in the labor market owing to age and physical disabilities.

The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) recognizes the challenges of poverty eradication and incorporates new strategies, programs and policies that address them and make social protection much more focused on the poor. The importance of access to finance for poverty reduction is well demonstrated by poverty reduction experience in Bangladesh.

Agricultural growth has accelerated from less than 2% per year during the first two decades after independence to an average rate of about 4% per annum in the last decade. Whereas Bangladesh began its journey as a rice deficit country, perennially dependent on food aid to feed its population, that dire situation has been turned around by Bangladesh's toiling farmers supported by effective policies of the Government. With 70% of the population still living in rural areas, rural development in the future will be synonymous with a highly efficient and productive agriculture.

The top priority given to infrastructure development in the mid-term developmental plans, which has paid off well in boosting GDP growth during the past 10 years. The progress is particularly remarkable in power supply where the country has moved from a power deficit country to a self-sufficient position owing to a massive expansion program funded through public and private enterprises. Progress was also made in implementing power trade and in initiating a diversification of primary energy to LNG and coal. The LNG and imported coal fuel

options-based investments are ongoing and will start production during 2023. The power sector master plan 2016 (PSMP) will be updated and power expansion programs will be based on updated demand projections, better use of existing capacity and selection of least-cost options for new generation.

The transport sector strategy follows an emphasis in areas where performance gaps exist. Thus, the strategy would be to develop an efficient, sustainable, safe and regionally balanced transportation system in which various modes complement each other, interface appropriately and, where possible, provide healthy competition to each other. Special emphasis will be placed on the introduction of modern technology for increasing capacity and improving quality and productivity of the system, development of the two seaports with smooth transport links to Dhaka, establishment of effective railway linkages between the east and west zones of the country, integration of road, rail and inland water transport, and participation in global and regional transport connectivity initiatives that help develop the land route links between South Asia and East Asia through Bangladesh.

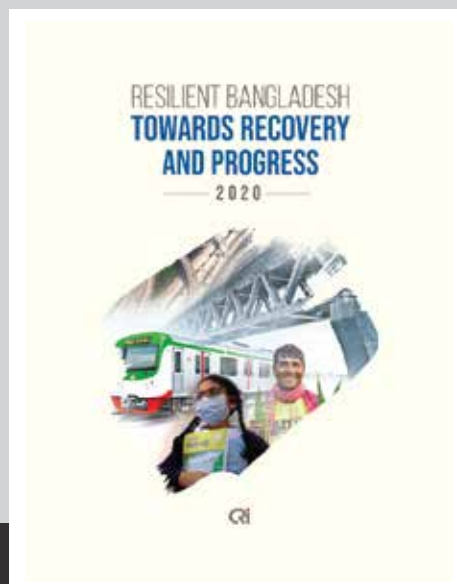
The global map is being altered at a much faster rate than anticipated due to the disruption created by digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and blockchain. Having driven growth with labor advantage over last two decades, Bangladesh is now riding over the technology, innovation and digital opportunities to attain higher growth acceleration to reach upper middle-income status by 2030 and to reach the advanced economy status by 2041. The vision of "Digital Bangladesh" has created an innovation economy which focuses on the creation of knowledge, so that the quality keeps going up and the cost keeps going down, while causing less pollution and creating high paying jobs in the local economy. The development of ICT Division in the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication has increased emphasis on ICT led progression of the economy.

The evidence from global experience as well as the experience from Bangladesh suggests that climate change is a real threat to global and national level prosperity. Owing to the deltaic

formation of the country, the configuration of the rivers and climate change, Bangladesh has been ranked as the 5th most vulnerable country among 171 countries in terms of risks from natural hazards. Rising temperature threatens to increase monsoon rains causing river overflow and higher incidence of flooding; temperature rise also threatens to damage crops and contribute to health problems. The global attention to climate change and the risks presented to Bangladesh have caught the imagination of the policy makers at the highest level and there is a much more serious effort now underway to come to grips with this long-term challenge. Bangladesh participates actively in all global discussions on climate change and is a signatory to all related global action programs.

Many laws and regulations have been enacted over the years to protect the environment and programs and policies are in place to adapt and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. To bring attention and highlight the importance of climate change, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has been renamed to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, in 2018. An important breakthrough on the climate strategy and policy front happened with the adoption of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 in 2018. This is a comprehensive strategy for managing the risks posed by the deltaic formation of the country along with the incidence of natural disasters and climate change.

The effects of COVID-19 are still unfolding as the pandemic has taken a toll on human lives, health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 reinforces the importance of speeding up many of the reforms where a performance gap has emerged. This includes revenue performance, private investment climate, export diversification and domestic job creation. The COVID-19 effects also bring in new challenges. In addition to the short-term recovery, strategic changes will be needed in several areas relating to healthcare, social protection and access to safe water and sanitation. The health and social protection systems came under pressure during COVID-19. Bangladesh has demonstrated its resolve to address the challenges emerging from COVID-19 swiftly and comprehensively with a view to minimizing the loss of lives, restoring the health of those affected, removing fear and building confidence, and putting the economy on a path of economic recovery while taking care this is consistent with the restoration of human health and confidence.



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