

# BANGLADESH REVIEW



## Education For All Changing the Face of Bangladesh

Waziha Tasnim



ELCOP  
Bangladesh Review  
Paper Number 04  
2023

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Chief Editor  
Professor Mizanur Rahman, PhD

Co-Editors  
Mohammad Humayun Kabir  
Tapas Kanti Baul (Barrister at-Law)  
Professor Dr. Md Shahriar Parvez

 **EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LAW OF THE  
COMMON PEOPLE (ELCOP)**

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## **Education For All Changing the Face of Bangladesh**

**Waziha Tasnim**

Chief Editor

**Professor Mizanur Rahman, PhD**



**EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LAW OF THE COMMON PEOPLE (ELCOP)**  
House # 10, Road # 12, 1st Floor, Dhanmondi, Dkaka-1209, Bangladesh

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## Foreword

Bangladesh is standing at a crucial crossroads in its history. She has celebrated the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of its independent existence, respectively in 2020 and 2021. Soon she will graduate from the least developed countries (LDCs) group to middle-income countries. A basket case, once called by Henry Kissinger, has recently extended its helping hand to Sri Lanka, struggling in the post-pandemic economic recession. Miracles are taking place in the infrastructural sector and the use of technology is undergoing tremendous change in the last decade or so. However, we have some challenges to overcome, such as climate change, the refugee crisis, etc. We are not overlooking these problems. Nonetheless, we want to celebrate our achievements so that we can reinvigorate ourselves to work further for our motherland.

On November 24, 2026, Bangladesh will graduate from the LDCs list of which she became a member in December 1975. It recognises the fulfillment of all three graduation criteria i.e. gross national income (GNI) per capita, Human Asset Index, and Economic Vulnerability Index. It shows the impressive performance of Bangladesh in the field of the major socio-economic sectors of development. Bangladesh has long ago surpassed Pakistan in terms of GDP and recently left India behind.

The amazing track record of Bangladesh on various social development indicators such as education, healthcare, social safety network, etc has demonstrated its tenacity of purpose. For instance, life expectancy is 72.6 years, a great leap forward from 46.6 in 1972. Moreover, in terms of female literacy, Bangladesh (72 percent) is ahead of India (66 percent) and noticeably more advanced than Pakistan (46 percent). In South Asia, Bangladesh is number one in women's empowerment. In addition to that, the female participation rate in the labor force of Bangladesh is 36 percent which is higher than that of Pakistan (21.9 percent) and India (21.5 percent). Similarly, its infant mortality stands at 26 deaths per 1,000 births, which is lower than India's (28) and Pakistan's (67). In 1971, the infant mortality rate was 158. In this regard, Bangladesh has achieved tremendous progress in the last fifty-two years. Here the fertility rate is also much lower than that of India and Pakistan. World Bank data indicate an astonishing improvement in primary education. Now almost every child goes to school. The dropout rate is also diminishing.

Apart from the worm's eye view i.e. impact on an individual level, if we cast a bird's eye view, that is to say- a broader picture, we will witness a huge leap forward in infrastructure, for instance, Padma bridge, metro rail, highways, etc. No nation could develop economically if its infrastructure is poor. No industrialization is possible without it.

Bangladesh realizes its importance and invests a large amount of the national budget into this sector. Businesses and people, in general, are getting their benefits. A country devastated by the Pakistan Occupation Forces during the Liberation War in 1971 has performed an infrastructure miracle.

The Bangladesh success story has become possible due mainly to the government's policies, incentives, and aid in the past decade and a half to ramp up economic development. On top of that, maintaining political stability for such a long period, creating a business-friendly environment, and extensive diplomatic efforts to bring investment to Bangladesh have come to fruition.

However, Bangladesh is beset with problems that we need to address and solve. That does not mean our situation is as gloomy as it is propagated by certain quarters. We are marching in the right direction- though the pace could be accelerated in some sectors. We could have fared better in health and education which are the backbone of our nation.

Empowerment through Law of the Common People (popularly known as ELCOP) has undertaken a research project titled 'Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh' to evaluate the overall socio-economic development and human rights condition. As a part of this project, we have decided to publish a series of research papers on various socioeconomic issues, the present paper being one of those

Before bidding adieu, we want to emphasize that economic development is a series of wagons of a train, while civil and political freedom is the engine. One is meaningless without the other. Nobel-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen discussed it in his germinal book 'Development as Freedom'. He argues that "[d]evelopment consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency." It seems to be written to theorize the journey of Bangladesh. Economically Bangladesh is trying hard to remove the obstacles of unfreedoms that hinder the progress of its citizens. Politically speaking, Bangladesh is the most modern nation-state in South Asia and fought for its independence in the hope of attaining civil, political, and economic freedoms. So far, she has done a commendable job.

With these few words, I am delighted to introduce this paper to the readers. I believe it will be of interest to anyone who would drive in the domain of the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. I hope it will give a true picture of the progress in Bangladesh. With the needs of general readers in mind, this paper has deliberately tried to keep it as nontechnical as possible. Lastly, I wish for its wide readership.

**Professor Mizanur Rahman, PhD**

Chairman, Empowerment through Law of the Common People &  
Former Chairman, National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh

## **About The Paper**

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has made significant progress in improving access, quality, and equity in education, with a particular focus on marginalized and underprivileged communities. The various initiatives taken by the country in this regard has been accolated by the international community. From this perspective, this paper explores various initiatives, policies, and strategies implemented by the state, civil society organizations, and international partners to promote education for all. In addition, it examines the significant milestones that the country has attained, including the expansion of primary education, increased enrolment rates, reduction in gender disparities, and enhanced learning outcomes. Through an analysis of relevant data and insights, the paper tried to assess the current state of education in Bangladesh. The findings of this paper contribute to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education and serve as a valuable reference for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders committed to advancing the cause of education for all in Bangladesh and beyond.

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## Acronyms

APSC	Annual Primary School Census
ASSET	Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation Project
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
DP	Development Partner
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
FSSAP	Female Secondary Stipend and Assistance Program
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GPS	Government Primary School
HEAT	Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation Project
HRD	Human Resources Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goal's
MOPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MOLJA	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAEM	National Academy of Education Management
NEP	National Education Policy
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFEP	Non-Formal Education Project
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NTRCA	National Teachers Registration and Certification Authority
SMC	School Management Committee
SPESP	Second Primary Education Sector Project
SEQAEP	Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project
TSER	Transforming Secondary Education for Results Operation
TTC	Teacher's Training College
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWB	The World Bank
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UGC	University Grants Commission

## **Abstract**

Education is a fundamental right and a powerful tool for socio-economic development. Recognizing the importance of education, the international community, through the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, set a target to achieve universal primary education by 2015. Bangladesh, a country with a rich cultural heritage and a growing economy, embraced this significant goal and undertook notable efforts to implement this goal of 'Education for All'. The aim of this goal is to ensure sustainable development. Bangladesh has a constitutional obligation to ensure education for all. This paper tries to delve into the success story of Bangladesh in achieving the goal 'Education for all'. Additionally, it explores the strategies and policies implemented by the country and the impact of various initiatives. Then it attempts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the progress made by Bangladesh, the challenges it has faced and the way forward for sustaining educational success in the country.

# 1

## Introduction

***“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”***

**— Nelson Mandela<sup>1</sup>**

Education liberates the intellect, unlocks the imagination and is fundamental for self-respect. It is the key to prosperity and opens a world of opportunities, making it possible for each of us to contribute to a progressive, healthy society. Learning benefits every human being and should be available to all. Bangladesh has made impressive strides in increasing access to education during the past decade. The country has almost universal primary enrollment and gender parity in equal access to education, with 98 percent of children of primary school age enrolled.<sup>2</sup> The gross

***The country has almost universal primary enrollment and gender parity in equal access to education, with 98 percent of children of primary school age enrolled.***

enrolment ratio in primary education in 2021 has reached 105.72% and in secondary education in 2021, it reached 75.52% while net enrolment rate 70.25%. The number of out of school children has been

continuously decreasing both in absolute and relative terms. Bangladesh education system is large, catering to over 40.34 million students (2021), involving many stakeholders.<sup>3</sup> Even though Bangladesh has taken considerable steps towards education for all, many challenges remain to be addressed. Better service provision, especially in education is also key to Bangladesh’s continuing ability to meet the challenges.

<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.futureafrica.science/news-events/news/203-education-is-the-most-powerful-weapon-you-can-use-to-change-the-world-nelson-mandela>>

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank, Bangladesh: Ensuring Education for All Bangladeshis’ (13 October 2016) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/10/07/ensuring-education-for-all-bangladeshis>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), ‘Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021’ <[http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021\\_compressed-1-235.pdf](http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021_compressed-1-235.pdf)> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

### **1.1 Emergence of Bangladesh and the Educational Development**

Half a century ago, Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation after a monumental liberation struggle. The country was left with innumerable challenges after a very lengthy period of exploitation and discrimination both under British colonial rule and as a part of Pakistan. One of those highly important challenges for the nascent state was education. It is a well-established fact that every society needs a strong education base to prosper. The literacy rate of Bangladesh stood at a meagre 18 percent when the country was born in 1971. This clearly indicates how difficult the journey has been for Bangladesh to come to where it is now.

Without education, it is virtually impossible for any nation to achieve effective and sustainable economic growth, social justice, healthy distribution of income, gender equality, a functioning democracy, political stability, scientific and technological advancement, and so on. With less than a fifth of the population being literate, Bangladesh faced a daunting task as a newly independent country. There were only 6 universities in Bangladesh in 1971. This is a clear indication of the dire state of the nation at the time. Immediately after independence, steps were taken to improve the literacy rate. By 1981, the literacy rate was 29.23%. The Private University Act of 1992 paved the way for the establishment of private universities in the country.

Since then, many private universities have been established and they have enabled a large segment of the population to pursue higher education. The overall adult literacy rate stood at 49.6 percent in

***The overall adult literacy rate stood at 49.6 percent in 2002. It rose to 58.6 percent by 2014 and stood at 75.6 percent in 2021.***

2002. It rose to 58.6 percent by 2014 and stood at 75.6 percent in 2021. Presently, there are 43 public universities, 103 private universities, 2 international universities, 31 specialised colleges and 2 special universities. This reflects how much Bangladesh has progressed in the five decades since liberation.<sup>4</sup>

A total of seven National Education Commissions have so far been formed in post-independence Bangladesh. The first Education Commission report in Bangladesh,

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<sup>4</sup> Daily Sun, 'Education in Bangladesh: Achievements and Challenges' (21 April 2022) <<https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/616841/Education-in-Bangladesh:-Achievements-and-Challenges>> Accessed 10 May 2023.

led by Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda, proposed primary education from Grades 1 to 8 and secondary education from Grades 9 to 12 (Qudrat-e-Khuda, 1974). This report emphasised secular education at all levels, future work-relevant technical and vocational education, and an improved assessment system with letter grading in assessment. This Commission report, however, remained largely unimplemented due to an abrupt change of political power in 1975 which saw the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, assassinated (Ministry of Education, 2010). The current education policy document - the National Education Policy 2010 - was eventually formulated and is currently in the process of implementation (Ministry of Education, 2010).<sup>5</sup>



Source: Jaago Bangladesh<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Banglapedia, 'Education Commission'

<[https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Education\\_Commission](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Education_Commission)> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

<sup>6</sup> <<https://jaago.com.bd/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Here-are-10-organisations-that-support-childrens-education.jpg>>

## 2

### **The Aim ‘Education for All’ and Sustainable Development Goal**

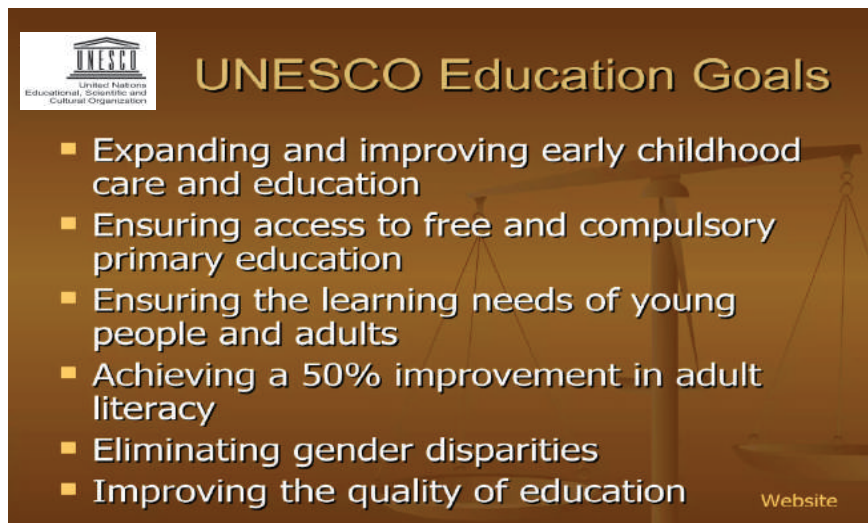
Education for All (EFA) is an international initiative first launched in in 1990 by UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank to bring the benefits of education to ‘every citizen in every society.’<sup>7</sup> Participants endorsed an expanded vision of learning and pledged to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the end of the decade. Ten years later, with many countries far from having reached this goal, a broad coalition of states, civil society groups, and development agencies met again in Dakar, Senegal, and affirmed the commitment to achieving EFA by the year 2015. They identified six key education goals which aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015 (e.g. the Dakar Framework for Action).<sup>8</sup> and the World Bank committed to achieving six specific education goals. They are:

- Goal 1: Early Childhood Care and Education
- Goal 2: Universal Primary Education
- Goal 3: Skills for Youth and Adults
- Goal 4: Adult Literacy
- Goal 5: Gender and Equity in Education
- Goal 6: Quality of Education

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<sup>7</sup> UNESCO-International Bureau of Education, Education for All (EFA) <<https://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/e/education-all-efa>> Accessed on 08 May 2023.

<sup>8</sup> UN World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (11 April 2000) <<https://press.un.org/en/2000/20000411.soc4543.doc.html>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.



Source: United Nations<sup>9</sup>

## 2.1 Aligning Education with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

Education is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 4



of the SDGs aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh's efforts to achieve this goal have been aligned with the broader agenda of sustainable development. It is identified as a stand-alone goal and is also present as targets under other SDGs on health, growth and employment, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change.

Source: United Nations SDG<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <<https://www.slideshare.net/carlapiper/six-goals-for-world-education>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Sustainable Development' <<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

<sup>11</sup> ibid

**SDG 4 in a nutshell:**

- Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all, from early childhood to adult education
- Ensuring equity, inclusion, and gender equality
- Ensuring effective learning and the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and competencies
- Ensuring the relevance of learning, in terms of vocational and technical skills for decent work as well as for global citizenship in a plural and interconnected world.<sup>12</sup>

Bangladesh's steadfast commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on quality education has yielded remarkable progress, positioning the nation as a shining example of success in the global education landscape. Through robust policies, targeted initiatives, and collaborative efforts, Bangladesh has made significant strides in ensuring inclusive and equitable access to quality education for all its citizens.

**Enrollment Rates and Access:**

One of the most notable achievements is the substantial increase in enrollment rates across all levels of education. Primary school enrollment, which stood at 85% in 2000, has now reached an impressive 98.3%. Moreover, the gender gap in enrollment has significantly narrowed, with girls constituting nearly 50% of students in primary and secondary schools.<sup>13</sup> This achievement is a result of initiatives such as stipends and incentives for female students, the establishment of all-girls schools, and advocacy campaigns promoting girls' education. Moreover, the gender gap in enrollment has significantly narrowed, with girls now constituting nearly equal proportions of students in primary and secondary schools. This

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<sup>12</sup> Global Campaign For Education: SDG 4 & Targets <[https://campaignforeducation.org/en/key-frameworks/sdg-4-and-targets?gclid=CjwKCAjw9pGjBhB-EiwAa5jl3J59KdHygsJnq3AHAdOmMN33aSl\\_EveqLVhPxffWM-9qk4HjcuV5hBoCan4QAvD\\_BwE](https://campaignforeducation.org/en/key-frameworks/sdg-4-and-targets?gclid=CjwKCAjw9pGjBhB-EiwAa5jl3J59KdHygsJnq3AHAdOmMN33aSl_EveqLVhPxffWM-9qk4HjcuV5hBoCan4QAvD_BwE)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

<sup>13</sup> 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021'

<[http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021\\_compressed-1-235.pdf](http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021_compressed-1-235.pdf)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.



achievement can be attributed to initiatives such as stipends and incentives for female students, the establishment of all-girls schools, and advocacy campaigns promoting girls' education.



Source: The Daily Star<sup>14</sup>

### **Quality Education and Learning Outcomes:**

Bangladesh's focus on improving the quality of education has translated into enhanced learning outcomes. The nation has undertaken comprehensive curriculum reforms, fostering the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and digital literacy among students. As a result, the learning outcomes of students have shown steady improvement, with recent assessments revealing positive trends in reading and mathematics proficiency. Recent assessments indicate positive trends in learning outcomes, with 87% of primary school students achieving basic competency in reading, and 81% demonstrating proficiency in mathematics.<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>14</sup> The Daily Star, <<https://www.thedailystar.net/education-employment/secondary-education-long-way-go-1366504>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

<sup>15</sup> 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021'

<[http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021\\_compressed-1-235.pdf](http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021_compressed-1-235.pdf)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

state's investment in teacher training programs and the provision of teaching aids and resources have contributed significantly to these improvements.

### **Inclusive Education and Reducing Disparities:**

Bangladesh has made significant strides in addressing educational disparities and ensuring inclusivity within the education system. The country has successfully reached remote and marginalized communities, establishing schools and educational facilities even in the most challenging geographical areas. Notably, the

*The number of out-of-school children has significantly reduced from 3.3 million in 2000 to around 700,000 in recent years.*

number of out-of-school children has significantly reduced from 3.3 million in 2000 to around 700,000 in recent years.<sup>16</sup> Innovative initiatives like the "Education for All" campaign and mobile schools have played a crucial role in providing

education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, promoting social inclusion and empowerment that can break the cycle of poverty. These efforts have resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of out-of-school children and have opened doors of opportunity for the marginalized and underprivileged sections of society.

### **Public-Private Partnerships and Investment in Education:**

A key driver of Bangladesh's success in achieving SDG 4 is its strong emphasis on public-private partnerships and increased investment in education. Bangladesh has collaborated with international organizations, NGOs, and private sector entities to leverage resources, expertise, and innovation to drive educational reforms. These partnerships have led to the establishment of new schools, modernization of educational infrastructure, and the provision of technology-enabled learning tools. The state's budgetary allocation for education has also witnessed a steady increase, reaching 2.2% of the GDP in recent years, reflecting its commitment to invest in the future of its citizens.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Financial Express, 'SDG 4: Coming out of the 2% GDP for education' (21 Jul 2019) <<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/views/sdg-4-coming-out-of-the-2-gdp-trap-for-education-1563634790>> Accessed 8 May 2023.

<sup>17</sup> ibid



Source: The Business Standard<sup>18</sup>

### Looking Ahead:

As Bangladesh continues its journey towards fulfilling SDG 4, the achievements in its education sector provide a strong foundation for future progress. The country's remarkable success in expanding access to education, improving learning outcomes, reducing disparities, and fostering inclusive education has set a positive precedent for other nations striving to achieve similar goals. However, the journey is not without challenges, and sustained efforts are needed to ensure quality education for all, particularly in addressing issues of educational infrastructure, teacher capacity, and curriculum relevance.

Education in Bangladesh is not limited to academic knowledge; it also encompasses the development of life skills, environmental awareness, and sustainable practices. For instance, the country has integrated climate change education into the school curriculum to promote environmental consciousness among students, preparing

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<sup>18</sup> The Business Standard, <<https://www.tbsnews.net/panorama/missing-women-bangladeshs-ict-success-story-72769>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

them to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.<sup>19</sup> With a focus on fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations, particularly Goal 4: Quality Education, Bangladesh has demonstrated commendable progress in improving access to education, enhancing educational quality, and promoting inclusivity. One such initiative is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010, which focuses on competency-based education and aims to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the 21st century. The NEP places emphasis on critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills development. Moreover, Bangladesh has made substantial investments in teacher training and capacity building. Programs such as the Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP) have trained thousands of teachers, equipped them with modern teaching techniques, and improved their pedagogical skills. These efforts have contributed to a more interactive and student-centered learning environment, fostering creativity and innovation among learners.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dhaka Tribune, 'Climate education for Bangladeshi children: Necessity or luxury?' (28 September 2022) <<https://www.dhakatribune.com/tribune-climate/2022/09/28/climate-education-for-bangladeshi-children-necessity-or-luxury>> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

### 3

#### The Education Structure of Bangladesh

The education structure of Bangladesh consists of two sub systems:

- i) **formal sub-system**
- ii) **non-formal sub-system.**

Both the sub-systems also have parallel religious streams. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education is responsible for formal primary and non-formal basic education. The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for secondary and higher education; it also looks after the Madrasah (Islamic) and other formal religious streams of education. NGOs are quite active in non-formal education, with a few of them organising and managing formal primary schools as well. Some 500 NGOs also work as implementing partners of DNFE programs. The private sector manages the English medium schools.

Age	Grade									
25+	20	PhD								
24+	19	MPhil								
23+	18									
22+	17	M/AMBA/MBS/MSc/MCom MEd/MSS/LLM	MBBS/BDS	MSc (Engr/Agr Text/Leath)	MEd	MSc (Engr/Tech Ed)		Kamil		
21+	16	Bachelor (Honours) BA/BBA/BBS BSc/BCom BEd/BSS/LLB		BSc (Engr/Agr Text/Leath)	BEd/BPEd	BSc (Engr)	BSc (Tech Ed)		Fazil (Honours)	
20+	15				Bachelor (Pass) BA/BBA/BBS BSc/BCom BEd/BSS/LLB	DPEd	Diploma (Engr)			Fazil (Pass)
19+	14									
18+	13	Public Examination: HSC								
17+	12	Higher Secondary Education								
16+	11	Public Examination: SSC								
15+	10	Secondary Education								
14+	9	Public Examination: JSC								
13+	8	Junior Secondary Education								
12+	7	Public Examination: PECE								
11+	6	Primary Education								
10+	5	Public Examination: PECE								
9+	4	Primary Education								
8+	3	Primary Education								
7+	2	Primary Education								
6+	1	Primary Education								
5+		Pre-primary Education								

Source: Education in Bangladesh - Changing Contexts and Emerging Realities<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> 'Education in Bangladesh: Changing Contexts and Emerging Realities'

Bangladesh offers **formal education** at **three** levels:

- i. Primary education,**
- ii. Secondary education (comprising junior secondary, secondary and higher secondary) and**
- iii. Tertiary education.**

Madrasah or religious education follows the same structure. Primary education covers a cycle of five years (grades I-V), secondary education covers seven years (grades VI-XII). Bachelor's degree takes two years (pass course) and Honors' degree (3/4 years). Many universities have recently introduced a 4-year bachelor's honours course. It takes two years to get a Master's degree (MSS, M. Sc, M. Com) with a bachelor's (pass) and one year with a bachelor's (honours) degree. Post master's education takes 2-4 years, depending on the discipline pursued.<sup>22</sup> A parallel system of formal religious education (Islamic) is offered through madrasahs. Starting with Ebtedayee (equivalent to primary), it advances through Dakhil (SSC), Alim (HSC), Fazil (Bachelor's) and Kamil (Masters) level. These courses are of the same length as in the primary schools to universities and follow the same curriculum, in addition to religious teachings courses.

<b>Number of Education Institution 2021</b>		
Secondary Education	:	18874 (621)
English Medium School	:	137
School & College	:	1420 (63)
College Education	:	3309 (625)
Madrasah Education	:	9291 (3)
Technical-Vocational (Independent)	:	2489 (309)
Professional Education	:	821 (129)
Teacher Education	:	209 (94)
University Education	:	160 (50)
Total (Post-primary Institution)	:	36710 (1894)
Attached Vocational and B.M to School/ Madrasah/ College	:	5272 (369)
Secondary Education attached to Govt. Primary School	:	666

Figure in the Parentheses Indicates Public Institution

Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021<sup>23</sup>

<[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raqib-Chowdhury/publication/328010382\\_Education\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_Changing\\_Contexts\\_and\\_Emerging\\_Realities/links/5c413ce892851c22a37d62aa/Education-in-Bangladesh-Changing-Contexts-and-Emerging-Realities.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raqib-Chowdhury/publication/328010382_Education_in_Bangladesh_Changing_Contexts_and_Emerging_Realities/links/5c413ce892851c22a37d62aa/Education-in-Bangladesh-Changing-Contexts-and-Emerging-Realities.pdf?origin=publication_detail)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

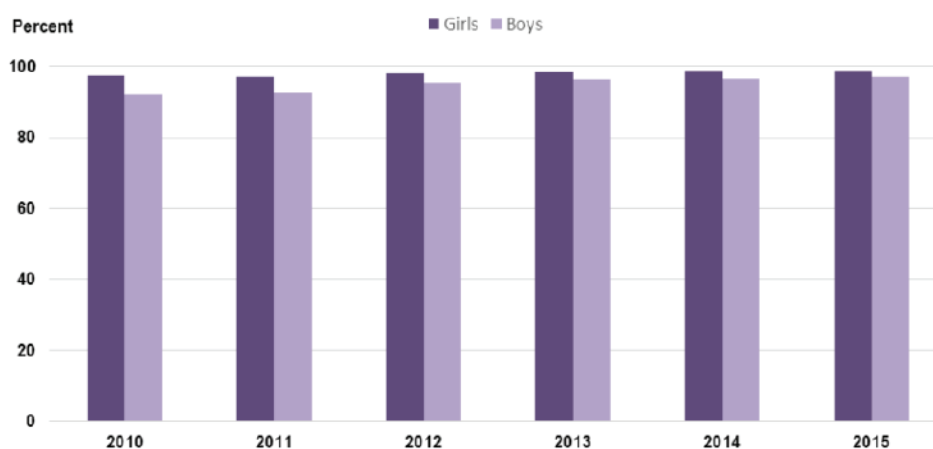
<sup>22</sup> 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021'

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

**Number of Student 2021**

Secondary Education	:	8930245 (54.92)
English Medium School	:	26596 (43.39)
School & College	:	1583050 (52.27)
College Education	:	4303265 (50.25)
Madrasah Education	:	2657252 (54.28)
Technical-Vocational (Independent)	:	762108 (24.68)
Professional Education	:	191409 (62.72)
Teacher Education	:	33996 (43.43)
University Education	:	1233529 (36.30)
Attached Vocational and B.M to School/ Madrasah/ College	:	402772 (31.77)
Secondary Education attached to Govt. Primary School	:	110424 (57.29)
Grand Total (PP + Attached)	:	20234646 (50.95)

Figure in the Parentheses Indicates Percentage of Girls Student  
Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021<sup>24</sup>



Net enrolment rate in primary education 2010 – 2015  
Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021'  
<[http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021\\_compressed-1-235.pdf](http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021_compressed-1-235.pdf)> Accessed on 8 May, 2023.  
<sup>25</sup> ibid

<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
2010	46.69	53.31
2011	46.39	53.61
2012	46.72	53.28
2013	47.00	53.16
2014	46.78	53.22
2015	47.00	53.31

Participation rate in secondary education 2010 – 2015

Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021<sup>26</sup>

The Non-Formal Education (NFE) sub-system in Bangladesh comprises four types of non-formal learning by age groups, namely (a) family and community-based early childhood care and education for pre-school children (age-group 3-5 years), (b) Non-Formal basic education for the un-enrolled and dropout (from early grades of primary school) children and adolescents (age-group 6-10 and 11-14 years), (c) Literacy/NFE for youth and adults (age-group 15-45 years), with special work skills training for 15-24 age group and (d) post-literacy and continuing education/life-long learning opportunities.<sup>27</sup> NFE provides an alternative channel, a second chance to dropout and un-enrolled primary school-age children, adolescents; and adults who missed formal education, to acquire basic literacy and life and employable skills to improve their social and economic conditions. The state and NGOs organise and manage NFE programs for different groups. Many NGOs also work as implementing partners of the state's NFE program.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> Banglapedia: Non-Formal Education <[https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Non-Formal\\_Education](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Non-Formal_Education)> Accessed on 7 May, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Chowdhury and Sarkar, 'Education in Bangladesh: Changing Contexts and Emerging Realities'

<[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raqib-Chowdhury/publication/328010382\\_Education\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_Changing\\_Contexts\\_and\\_Emerging\\_Realities/links/5c413ce892851c22a37d62aa/Education-in-Bangladesh-Changing-Contexts-and-Emerging-Realities.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Raqib-Chowdhury/publication/328010382_Education_in_Bangladesh_Changing_Contexts_and_Emerging_Realities/links/5c413ce892851c22a37d62aa/Education-in-Bangladesh-Changing-Contexts-and-Emerging-Realities.pdf?origin=publication_detail)> Accessed on 7 May, 2023.



## 4

### Policies and Implementations

Bangladesh has undertaken a good number of policy initiatives to provide equity and access of all children to education. The need for universal education for all children, regardless of any special circumstances, has been echoed from the birth of this country through its Constitution in 1972.



Source: The Good Feed<sup>29</sup>

**Article 17** and **28** of the constitution clearly states how the state should provide education to all children without making any discrimination.

**[Article 17 (a)]:** The State shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of – establishing a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law.

**[Article 28 (3)]:** No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with

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<sup>29</sup> <<https://blog.brac.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/bridge-school-fet-1024x682.jpg>> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution.<sup>30</sup>

Bangladesh enters the fifth decade of its independence with a huge population (158,13 million). The education system in Bangladesh is a large one comprising some 150,000 institutions, 40 million students and more than one million teachers. Primary and secondary level institutions naturally form the bulk of the system with approximately 19 million students in primary education and twelve million at the secondary level (including state recognized madrasahs). Basic education development in the country is guided by Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990, EFA National Plan of Action (NPA) I and II, National Non-Formal Education Policy 2006, National Education Policy 2010, National Skills Development Policy 2011, The Sixth Five Year Plan (2011–2015) including Vision 2021/Perspective Plan 2011–21. Various initiatives in basic education like Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) 1 and PEDP 2 were implemented and PEDP 3 has been under implementation to fulfil the relevant EFA Goals and NPA II objectives.<sup>31</sup>

***The education system in Bangladesh is a large one comprising some 150,000 institutions, 40 million students and more than one million teachers.***

The Dakar Framework for Action with six main goals put forward twelve major strategies towards achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015 based on the experience of the previous decade and the changing global context. The strategies included international development targets for education to which national states and the international community were committed. Bangladesh attempted to achieve all six commitments, in line with the constitutional obligation and the commitments made in international forums, putting its utmost effort to fulfil the targets set for EFA 2015. As a result, Bangladesh has achieved commendable successes in expanding education opportunities including increased enrolment, reduction of

<sup>30</sup> The Constitution of Bangladesh, <<http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-367.html>> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

<sup>31</sup> 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021' <[http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021\\_compressed-1-235.pdf](http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021_compressed-1-235.pdf)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

gender parity and drop out with a focus on poverty alleviation. Even though Bangladesh has taken considerable steps towards education for all, many challenges remain to be addressed. Better service provision especially in education is also key to Bangladesh's continuing ability to meet the challenges. The education system will have to play its vital role in this envisioned future.

Sustainability of learning skills, both for the non-continuing primary school leavers and the graduates of the non-formal stream, is highly important for the country to maintain the enhancing literacy and education levels, and the persons themselves for improving their own life and living conditions. Continuing education is assuming greater importance globally, both for the graduates of higher education to keep abreast of rapidly enriching knowledge base, particularly different professions and technologies, and for the non-formal graduates to obtain latest information about their occupational fields and retain their interest in sharpening their learning skills, further learning and applying the newfound knowledge to practical situations for social and economic advancement, and broadening their own mental horizon.

#### 4.1 A Role Model for Free Book Distribution

Bangladesh distributes more than 33 crore textbooks on an average among students free of cost every year.<sup>32</sup> No developed country in the world has been able to

***Bangladesh distributes more than 33 crore textbooks on an average among students free of cost every year.***

distribute such amount of books among the students. Therefore, Bangladesh is now a role model in the world in distributing free textbooks. On the first day of the year, new books were handed

over to all the students and the pace of studies has returned. Giving new books and stipends has reduced the dropout rate. Gender equality has been ensured in primary and secondary. With this, the domestic printing industry has survived by printing a

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<sup>32</sup> The Financial Express, 'Free textbooks: A boost to school education' (26 November 2019) <<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/columns/free-textbooks-a-boost-to-school-education-1574698285>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

huge number of free books every year. As a result, thousands of new jobs have been created.



Source: New Age<sup>33</sup>

One of the biggest achievements of the country in the 50 years of Independence is the distribution of free books among millions of students. New books were given to all the students from the 2010 academic year. On average, more than 33 crore textbooks are distributed free of cost among about four and a half crore students. The last 12 years have been no exception. society in general -- the students and their parents in particular -- has welcomed the massive state project beginning in January, 2010. Since that year school students have been receiving new books on January 1, marking the start of the academic year, amid a festive atmosphere.<sup>34</sup>

New books have been handed over to students on the first day of the year in the 2021 academic year, dispelling all fears when the world is at risk of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. No developed country in the world has been able to do this –

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<sup>33</sup> <[https://www.newagebd.com/files/records/news/202201/158819\\_171.jpg](https://www.newagebd.com/files/records/news/202201/158819_171.jpg)> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

<sup>34</sup> The Financial Express, 'Free textbooks: A boost to school education' (26 November 2019) <<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/columns/free-textbooks-a-boost-to-school-education-1574698285>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

which is also a world record. According to the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), 365,84,45,781 free books have been handed over to the students in the 12 years from 2010 to 2021. In the latest current 2021 academic year, 34,36,62,412 free books have been given to 4,16,55,226 students from pre-primary to secondary level.<sup>35</sup>

Bangladesh distributed free textbooks among children of five minority ethnic groups in their own language since the 2017 academic year. Books are printed in their mother tongue at the pre-primary level for children in five languages — Chakma, Marma, Sadri, Garo and Tripura. Free Braille books are also being given to visually impaired students.



Source: Dhaka Tribune<sup>36</sup>

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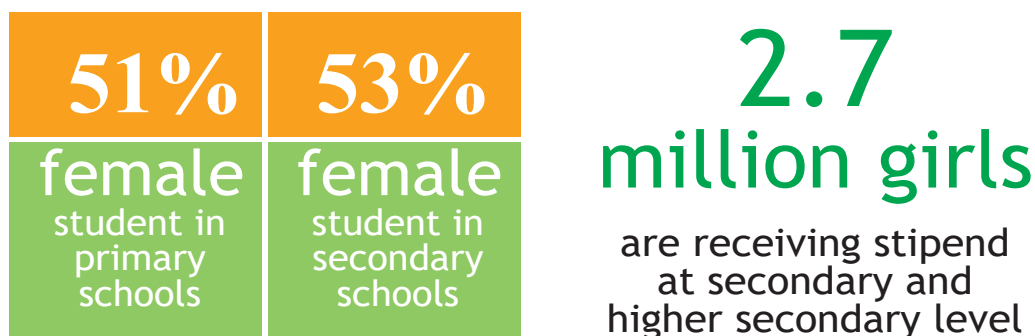
<sup>35</sup> Daily Bangladesh, 'Bangladesh a role model for free book distribution in world' (29 March 2021) <<https://www.daily-bangladesh.com/english/education/58605>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

<sup>36</sup> Dhaka Tribune, <<https://new-media.dhakatribune.com/en/uploads/2023/02/20/file-photo-3.jpeg>> Accessed on 7 May 2023.

# 5

## Girl's Education and The Gender Perspective

The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity (i.e. women and girls) continues to be denied its full human rights and opportunities. Women and girls, therefore, must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. Bangladesh is a girls' education success story. In 1970, just prior to independence, girls made up only about 17 percent of secondary school enrollment (grades 6-12), yet by the turn of the century, girls made up more than half of secondary school enrollment.<sup>37</sup>



Source: Bangladesh Towards Inclusive and Equitable Education- CRI<sup>38</sup>

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has opened a new chapter in the long struggle towards achieving gender equality. Its commitment to 'leave no one behind' expresses the conviction that boys and girls, men and women should benefit

<sup>37</sup> World Economic Forum, 'What Bangladesh can teach and learn about closing the education gender gap' (14 July 2021)  
<[<sup>38</sup> <](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/07/bangladesh-girls-education-women-work-world-bank#:~:text=Bangladesh%20is%20a%20girls%20education,half%20of%20secondary%20school%20enrollment.> Accessed on 10 May 2023</a></p>
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equally from development. It envisages a "world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed."<sup>39</sup> The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development largely depends on the world's success in creating a level playing field for boys and girls, women and men, in education as in other sectors.



Source: Dhaka Tribune<sup>40</sup>

Bangladesh has strong initiatives in place to support girls and women to access education and job opportunities. For example, the World Bank supports retention of girls and children from poor households in secondary schools through the Transforming Secondary Education for Results Operation (TSER). Through two new investment projects financed by the World Bank, the Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation Project (HEAT) and the Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation Project (ASSET), Bangladesh is improving the employability of university graduates, building a network of women's universities and colleges, and strengthening Bangladesh's COVID-19

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<sup>39</sup> 'The Global Goals: SDG Goal 4 Quality Education' <[https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwpPKiBhDvARIsACn-gzDuyGE5Oq6xb1QfX7p1f0L6sdohqoG1gngucv6CdIP6GifyZaoC0IaAmNjEALw\\_wcB](https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwpPKiBhDvARIsACn-gzDuyGE5Oq6xb1QfX7p1f0L6sdohqoG1gngucv6CdIP6GifyZaoC0IaAmNjEALw_wcB)> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

<sup>40</sup> <<https://prod-media-eng.dhakatribune.com/uploads/2020/10/photo-option-1-1602438787533.jpg>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

response in higher education and equipping women with skills needed for the future of work and supporting key industries to re-train workers to accelerate pandemic recovery. Approximately 600,000 female students are expected to benefit from HEAT project activities while over 285,000 women stand to benefit from ASSET project activities. Bangladesh has also committed to policy reforms to strengthen the relevance of skills development, and to help strengthen the regulatory environment for childcare through the Third Programmatic Jobs Development Policy Credit. This support creates opportunities for employment for skilled women, while also supporting services that address the care responsibility constraint that many women face in being active in the labor market.<sup>41</sup>

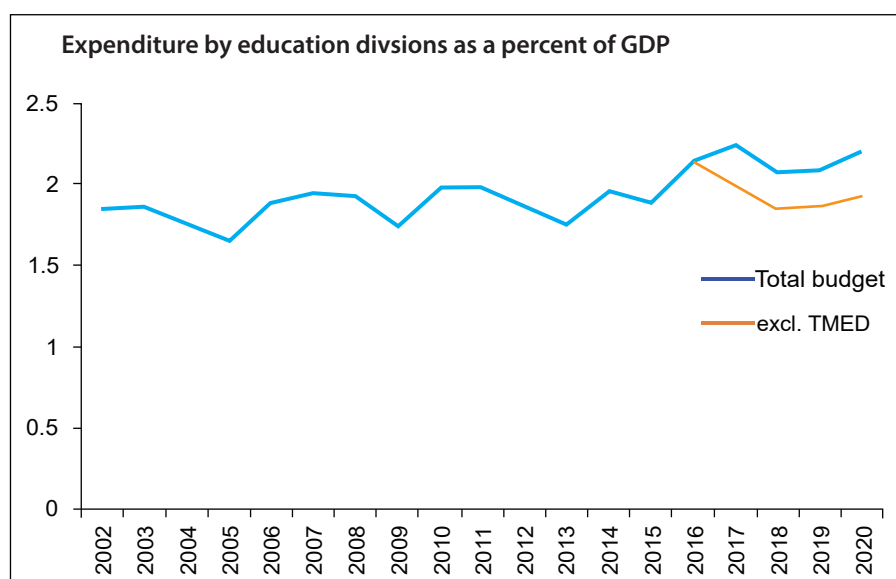
Ensuring that students complete secondary education is at the core of the 2018 – 2022 Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP), which draws on lessons learned from two decades to improve quality and access to education. A key feature of the program is the Adolescent Girls' Program, which aims to improve girls' retention in secondary schools through a unique collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The school-based program will address menstrual management, ensure separate sanitation facilities for girls, and provide female students with cash incentives to attend school. It will also tackle mental well-being, knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and gender-equitable behavior. The successful female stipend scheme will be harmonized through a nationwide uniform targeting strategy, which is expected to complement the efforts of Adolescent Girls Program. More importantly, in the long run, the Female Secondary Stipend and Assistance Program (FSSAP) has been successful in delaying marriage, increasing the probability of self-employment and non-farm employment among employed women, and increasing the probability of their marrying men who are more educated and employed. Bangladesh introduced the stipend in 1994 with the support of development partners to increase female secondary school enrolment. This program continued and further expanded, resulting in girls' enrolment now surpassing that of boys at the secondary level.

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<sup>41</sup> The World Bank, 'How to provide opportunities for all? From girls' education to women's labor force participation in Bangladesh' (8 July 2021) <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/how-provide-opportunities-all-girls-education-womens-labor-force-participation-bangladesh>> Accessed on 16 May 2023.





Authors' calculation using Ministry of Finance and IMF WEO 2021 data. The education budget started to include technical and madrasa education division (TMED) expenditures in 2016-17; orange line shows the trajectory without TMED expenditures.

Source: The World Bank<sup>42</sup>

Over the years, the combined stipend and tuition subsidy for each girl was, on average, BDT 906 for non-government schools and BDT 847 for government schools. The stipend itself accounted for two-thirds of the total outlay used to support the program. This program supported over two million girls each year. The study noted, both school enrolment and attainment of the secondary-level girls exceeded that of boys in the years following the introduction of the stipend. In addition, women's age at first marriage has risen by a full year since FSSAP was introduced.<sup>43</sup>

These study results come at a time when UNESCO estimates that more than half of the world's students are struggling to learn due to full or partial school closures. It was feared that 11 million girls might not return to school in 2020 and 2021, and school closures increase risks for girls on multiple levels. As happened in other

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> Dhaka Tribune, 'Bangladesh's investment in girls' education pays off' (13 March 2021) <<https://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/2021/03/13/bangladesh-s-investment-in-girls-education-pays-off>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

pandemics, a sharp fall in household income may force girls to drop out of schools for domestic work.



Source: The Economist<sup>44</sup>

As countries around the world struggle to bring students back into schools, Bangladesh's success in keeping girls enrolled can provide useful insights to educators and policymakers.

The World Bank remains a committed financing, knowledge, and policy dialogue partner to enhance girls' and women's empowerment through better education, training, and jobs. Coupled with the state's own sustained efforts and investments for children and young people, Bangladesh can continue to be a regional and global success story.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/11/13/bangladesh-is-making-a-serious-attempt-to-improve-its-schools>> Accessed on 16 May 2023.

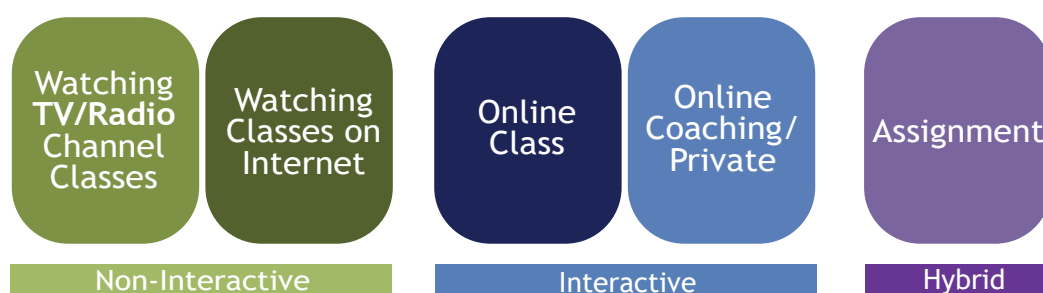
<sup>45</sup> The World Bank, 'How to provide opportunities for all? From girls' education to women's labor force participation in Bangladesh' (8 July 2021) <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/how-provide-opportunities-all-girls-education-womens-labor-force-participation-bangladesh>> Accessed on 16 May 2023.

## 6

### Combating the Pandemic Effect

COVID-19 has forced large-scale closures of schools across the world. The United Nations has called it the "longest disruption to education in history" worldwide. Over 90% of students worldwide have been cut off from face-to-face classroom education.

In Bangladesh, schools remained closed non-stop for 543 days from March 17, 2020 to September 11, 2021. Learning has been disrupted for some 30 million students.<sup>46</sup>



Different learning interventions provided after COVID-19

Initially, when schools in Bangladesh were closed to curb the spread of COVID-19 in 2020, Bangladesh introduced a television programme called Ghore Bose Shikhi (Learning at Home). The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education was behind the programme, with the support of NGOs and other organisations. It broadcasted the primary and secondary school classes on TV. This contributed to developing lesson plans and content and provided resource trainers to conduct classes and groom teachers. They also closely observed the effectiveness of the programme to further inform the national strategy. To extend the reach of remote learning, other platforms such as radio (national, FM and community), mobile phone, and on-line and off-line lessons through Internet are being explored with technical support of “Access to Information” (a2i) of the

<sup>46</sup> The Daily Star, ‘Learning loss from Covid-19: Can a generational threat be averted?’ (13 February 2022) <<https://www.thedailystar.net/recovering-covid-reinventing-our-future/blueprint-brighter-tomorrow/news/learning-loss-covid-19-2960811>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, and development partners. Students joined these classes through radios or mobile phones. In addition, the A2i programme has conducted over 200 interactive radio classes with the help of teachers from the Directorate of Technical Education, along with support from UNICEF. An A2i specialised platform for adolescents, Konnect Kishore Batayon also aired classes for adolescents, Online classes were also broadcasted from the Konnect YouTube channel. As school closures prolonged, teachers started holding online classes, with a few providing private tuition as well. This then eventually progressed to an assignment grading where each week, teachers assigned three assignments based on brief syllabuses that could be completed in 30 days. Due to the online nature of the classes, the authorities instructed teachers to finish the work necessary to receive assignments, grade them, and present them to students with remarks. This was perceived to be a hybrid method.<sup>47</sup>



Source: UNDP<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> TBS, 'The effect of coronavirus on child education' (9 May 2020) <<https://www.tbsnews.net/analysis/effect-coronavirus-child-education-79021>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

<sup>48</sup> UNDP <<https://mptf.undp.org/news/bangladesh-paving-way-bangladeshi-youths-success>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

The World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF have proposed a pathway to recovery, noted above, which emphasises three broad priorities: bringing all children back to schools safely, recovering learning losses, and preparing and supporting teachers. These are in line with our educationists' recommendation as well as the suggestions emerging from other studies and discourses involving the academia, education advocates and civil society.

# 7

## Inclusive Education



Source: The Good Feed<sup>49</sup>

The ultimate philosophy to embrace all learners with equitable access and participation in school is recognized as inclusive education (IE). The goal of IE has been established to act as a catalyst to ensure access, presence, participation and achievement of all students including those from diverse backgrounds.

During the past two decades significant attention has been paid to explore different approaches to education around the world to ensure that diversity is addressed effectively in ordinary classrooms. Since our schools are increasingly expected to be more diverse, meeting the demands of students with diverse learning needs is obligatory. This requires teachers to make a total shift in their pedagogical thoughts from teacher-controlled ideology to student-centred approaches. It is, however, a challenge for schools to ensure that every student is academically engaged in classrooms.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> <<http://blog.brac.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/cover-photo1.jpg>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Rasheda K. Choudhury and Mostafizur Rahaman, 'Education for All Realities, Achievements and Challenges The Story of Bangladesh' <[https://www.waxmann.com/index.php?eID=download&id\\_artikel=ART101695&uid=frei](https://www.waxmann.com/index.php?eID=download&id_artikel=ART101695&uid=frei)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

Agreeing with all the international treaties, Bangladesh has committed to address IE within the existing education system. Like many other countries around the world, Bangladesh has agreed with the declaration of Education For All, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education the Dakar Framework for Action and the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in which education is to be provided to all children with an inclusive approach. In addition, Bangladesh also promised to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which also articulated the rights of all children into education through a uniform system. It is important to note that the trend of enacting IE policy and legislation in Bangladesh is mainly based upon the international treaties.<sup>51</sup>

Sl. No	Level of Education	Gender Parity Index (Girls to Boys) (Parity exists when; $0.97 \leq PI \leq 1.03$ )	Comments
1.	Secondary level (6-10)	1.19	Disparity against boys
2.	Higher Secondary level (11-12)	0.94	Disparity against girls
3.	Post-secondary non-tertiary	0.24	Disparity against girls
4.	Tertiary	0.80	Disparity against girls

Source: Gender Parity Index in Post-Primary Education 2021<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*

<sup>52</sup> 'Bangladesh Education Statistics 2021'

<[http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021\\_compressed-1-235.pdf](http://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202021_compressed-1-235.pdf)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.



Source: Bangladesh Towards Inclusive and Equitable Education- CRI<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> <<https://cri.org.bd/publication/2019/Aug/quality-education-19/Bangladesh%20-%20Towards%20Inclusive%20and%20Equitable%20Quality%20Education%202019.pdf>> Accessed on 8 May 2023.



## 8

### Moving Forward with Challenges

Bangladesh has demonstrated its commitment to achieve EFA goals and visible progress has been made in this regard. A good number of the vulnerable and disadvantaged children i.e., children with disabilities, street children, children from hard-to-reach areas and ethnic communities including children with extreme poor socio-economic condition are still out of the education system. A few of them got the opportunities but could not continue. The EFA 2015 National Review, that the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in Bangladesh prepared, indicated inadequate budget allocation in education as one of the reasons behind it. Though major achievement in primary education is almost universal enrolment, it still has a long way to go in dealing with other concerns. The DPE report has shown that the overall repetition rate is 6.4% and survival rate to grade five is 81.0%.<sup>54</sup>



Source: Primary Education Management Information System Bangladesh<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Primary Education Management Information System Bangladesh, <<https://ipemis.dpe.gov.bd/dashboard>> Accessed on 6 May 2023.

<sup>55</sup> <<https://ipemis.dpe.gov.bd/resources/images/why-ipemis-b603fd51eb0c73df01e6ad161f9e1ad0.jpg>> Accessed on 6 May 2023.

Efficiency remains at the level of 80.0 % and the average number of years' input per graduate is 6.2. In the baseline survey (2005), the overall repetition rate was 10.5 %, the rate of survival to grade five was only 53.9 % and efficiency was 60.6 % (cf. DPE 2014). The fact that almost a quarter of the children, who began their journey to the primary school, could not reach their destination is clearly a major hurdle to achieving the Goal 2 (MDGs) of universal primary completion.<sup>56</sup>

Bangladesh aspires to be a middle-income country within the next decade, which makes it imperative that the vicious cycle or chain of deficiencies in education, skills, productivity, employment and income opportunities is broken. But major challenges remain in respect of skills and capacities for rewarding life and livelihood including improving the quality of primary and secondary education. The Bureau of Non-Formal Education under the Ministries of Primary and Mass Education has to go a long way to be an effective agency for delivering non-formal education and promoting inclusive functional and sustainable literacy. Progress in the literacy rates for youth and adults in the last few years have been very slow. The agenda for adult literacy has not been prioritised by NGOs.

Absence of flexible delivery mechanism, lack of initiatives in developing structures, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning by establishing equivalency frameworks, inadequate training and capacity building measures towards professionalisation of teachers and facilitators and absence of long term, sustainable planning of non-formal, lifelong learning programs and absence of permanent physical set up at the local level are major reasons behind it. Though girls are doing better than the boys in primary level, the frustration is that the percentage of girls completed primary education is not equally seen in the secondary level education. Poverty, early marriage, unawareness of guardians, misapprehension of religion, lack of communication, eve teasing and violence against girls are among the reasons for their lagging behind.

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<sup>56</sup> Primary Education Management Information System Bangladesh, <<https://ipemis.dpe.gov.bd/dashboard>> Accessed on 6 May 2023.

There is also unanimity about higher dropout among girl students in rural areas, confirming prevailing views about early marriage of girls, household role of girls in life and lack of recognition of the need for their education. Gender-based discrimination remains as one of the most difficult hurdles to realising the right to education. Gender based violence often occurs in schools, known as 'school-related gender-based violence' (SRGBV), which UNESCO defines as 'acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics, that can often lead to girls under-performing and/or dropping out of school altogether.'<sup>57</sup>



Source: Light Castle Bangladesh<sup>58</sup>

Inclusive, gender responsive framework, second chance and non-formal education have to be recognized and implemented dynamically to end various forms of disparity and inequity in education. The challenge is to turn education into a rights-

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<sup>57</sup> The Daily Observer, Challenges of women's education in Bangladesh (8 March 2021) <<https://www.observerbd.com/news.php?id=302499>> Accessed on 6 May 2023.

<sup>58</sup> LightCastle BD <<https://www.lightcastlebd.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ICT-Programming-for-Children-1.jpeg>> Accessed on 10 May 2023.

based tool for building a just and equitable society for breaking the cycle of trans-generational disadvantages. Moreover, with the concentration of focus on increasing quantity by decision makers and practitioners, many aspects of quality remain neglected.

Evidence over the recent decades has shown that efforts to expand enrolment should be accompanied by attempts to enhance educational quality, if children are to be attracted to school, kept there and enabled to achieve meaningful learning outcomes.<sup>59</sup> Attention should be ensured for professional development of Primary School teachers and School Managing Committee (SMC) members to improve their skills and capabilities as key elements of quality improvement.

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<sup>59</sup> LightCastle Partners, 'Programming in Primary Education: Addressing the Challenges' (7 July 2021) <<https://www.lightcastlebd.com/insights/2021/07/programming-in-primary-education-addressing-the-challenges/>> Accessed on 6 May 2023.

## 9

### Conclusion

Education is a significant human right and every possible effort must be made to provide education to every single human being. Bangladesh has made significant progress in the last 50 years regarding education. The country has a great opportunity to ensure quality education for all by 2030, there have been signs of this over the last 15 years.<sup>60</sup> The journey towards achieving this aim ‘Education for All’ has been remarkable, marked by substantial progress and significant improvements in access, quality, and inclusivity. The country’s commitment, combined with strategic policies and initiatives, has led to notable achievements in primary and secondary education, gender equality, and skill development. The impact of these efforts is evident in the increased enrollment rates, reduced dropout rates, and enhanced educational opportunities for marginalised groups. Furthermore, the quality of education has witnessed significant improvements, with emphasis placed on teacher training programs, curriculum development, and the provision of adequate educational resources. This holistic approach has elevated the standards of education. Through innovative initiatives and infrastructure development projects, Bangladesh has bridged the gap between urban and rural education, ensuring that no child is left behind. This has enabled millions of children to access education, thereby empowering them with the necessary tools to break the cycle of poverty and build a brighter future. By investing in education, Bangladesh has laid the foundation for a prosperous and inclusive society. However, sustaining and advancing this success requires continuous efforts to address remaining challenges and ensure equitable and quality education for all segments of society. Nonetheless, the achievements and success in the education sector demonstrate the immense potential and resilience of Bangladesh to overcome the obstacles and realize its vision of education for all. Bangladesh dreams of a literate, knowledge-based society which is economically viable, socially just,

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<sup>60</sup> Rasheda K. Choudhury and Mostafizur Rahaman, ‘Education for All Realities, Achievements and Challenges The Story of Bangladesh’ <[https://www.waxmann.com/index.php?eID=download&id\\_artikel=ART101695&uid=frei](https://www.waxmann.com/index.php?eID=download&id_artikel=ART101695&uid=frei)> Accessed on 8 May 2023.

culturally vibrant, and environmentally sustainable. The country has the challenges of tackling the socio-cultural and economic constraints as well as systematic hurdles and other issues at the same time, while creating responsibility among the stakeholders – governments at all levels, international organizations, civil society, academics, and people from all walks of life. Considering the country's positive progress in numerous sectors since 1971, it certainly can achieve success in education. The country along with its citizens, must take the nation forward.

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The Empowerment through Law of the Common People (ELCOP) is an independent, non-political, non-profit non-governmental organization, established in the year 2000. The poor, underprivileged and marginalized segments of the population of Bangladesh woefully lack in knowledge and awareness about their legal rights and duties, often resulting in denial of their access to justice by the more powerful and deceitful and in their inability to become good citizens. This environment of knowledge deficit and lack of capacity of a good mass of people in Bangladesh was crying out for a robust initiative that would fill this void of powerlessness and redeem them from the state of hopelessness and darkness of ignorance. And there was light in the founding of ELCOP. Thus, ELCOP, having been established in fulfillment of a demand of time and situation in Bangladesh, has emerged as Voice of the Voiceless and Power of the Powerless.

In founding the ELCOP, needless to say, the challenge was both intellectual and operational – what portfolio of knowledge and information to develop and how to reach out to the people most of whom are half-literate or illiterate. The founder of ELCOP has made it all easy and simple. The defining feature of ELCOP is that its activities are conducted by law students and teachers from different universities of Bangladesh. It also involves those legal experts in such activities who are concerned, have commitment and are competent enough to deal with human rights and empowerment issues.



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