

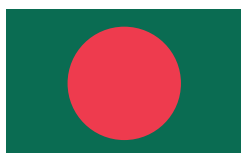
DEVELOPING SKILLS IN YOUTH TO SUCCEED IN THE EVOLVING SOUTH ASIAN ECONOMY



BANGLADESH COUNTRY REPORT

Bangladesh is a country with young population

At present, 20% of the total population of Bangladesh is in the age group 15-24 years



**Total Population
164.6 million**



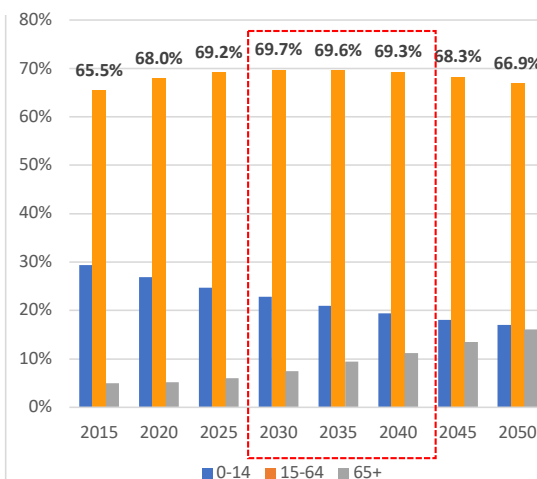
20% of the total population is young (15-24 years)



Over 65% of the total population is in working age group (15-64 years)

How will the future look?

The working age population in Bangladesh will reach its peak in the period between 2030-40



People in age group 0-14 years and 15-24 years (very young and young population) will outnumber old-age people (65+ years) in the period between 2030-2040

Share of working age population (15-64 years) in the total population will reach its peak (69.7% during the same period)

The window of demographic dividend will begin to close after 2040

Bangladesh's growing population is an opportunity for national transformation

This demographic dividend is a window of opportunity to accelerate the economic growth of the nation. A large working population means that if decent employment opportunities are available, the country can be more productive collectively, as more people contribute to overall economic activity (ADB Briefs, 2016). At the same time, it also creates the need to invest in youth to equip them with the skills required to compete in the labour market.



Recent and Near Future Socio-Economic Performance

Where has Bangladesh fared well?

Bangladesh has made strides in several social indicators in the last few years and has been projected as a new "Asian Tiger" by the World Economic Forum. The country has averaged an annual GDP growth of above six percent and recorded highest ever growth of 7.9% in the year 2017-18. The per capita income has increased to USD 1,751 as against USD 405 in 2000. Based on the international poverty line of \$1.90 per person per day, poverty has been reduced from 44.2% in 1991 to 14.8% in 2016-17. Life expectancy, literacy rates and per capita food production have also shown an impressive growth. Owing to this unparalleled economic growth, Bangladesh reached the lower middle- income country status in 2015. In 2018, Bangladesh fulfilled all three eligibility criteria for graduation from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list for the first time and is on track for graduation in 2024 (The World Bank, 2019).

Vocationalisation at secondary and tertiary levels is a significant feature of the education system in Bangladesh. At grade 8 or 10, the students can voluntarily choose to either enter the vocational stream or stay and complete the general education. At the tertiary level, an individual can enter college to get an advanced degree or a training institution to obtain a diploma. However, the popularity of TVET programmes is lesser than the general programmes and it is often viewed as second-class education in Bangladesh. As per data from UNESCO, fewer than 9% of all upper-secondary students were enrolled in vocational programs in 2017.



Highest ever GDP growth rate of 7.9% recorded in 2017-18



Poverty reduced from 44.2% in 1991 to 14.8% in 2016-17



Achieved the lower middle- income country status in 2015

Fulfilled eligibility criteria for graduation from the UN's Least Developed Countries list in 2018



Life expectancy increased to 72 years in 2017 from 65.32 years in 2000



Per capita income has increased to USD 1,751 as against USD 405 in 2000



Gross Enrolment ratio increased at primary and secondary education level



Achieved parity for educational access in both primary and secondary education



Vocational preparation added to the education curriculum at all levels

Where is Bangladesh challenged to improve?



High number of out-of-school children and adolescents



High drop out rates leading to low GER at secondary and tertiary education levels



Poor learning outcomes at the primary education level



Low participation of females after secondary level



Prevalence of high unemployment rates among youth



Under-representation of women in labour force



Discouraged and disadvantaged youth are Not in Education, Employment or Training [NEET]



The number of NEET women is increasing due to household responsibilities and social barriers



Slow down in job creation in the industry sector



Lack of skilling opportunities for informal sector workers

Where will jobs be created?

Overseas employment and migration

Migration is a major source of employment for Bangladeshi workers and is expected to remain so in the future. With a sizeable number of emigrants, Bangladesh was the fifth largest migrant source countries as per the World Migration report 2018. Between 1976 to 2018, a total of 12.2 million workers from Bangladesh have migrated overseas for employment (BMET, n.d.). Migrant workers' remittances to Bangladesh are an important source of foreign exchange for the country. According to Bangladesh Bank, migrants remitted around USD 15.54 billion in 2018 which was 15% higher than the remittances of 2017. (Labour Migration from Bangladesh, 2018- Achievements and Challenges, 2018). Most of the migrants from Bangladesh go to the Gulf and other Arab States for employment. In 2018, the highest number of Bangladeshi workers migrated to Saudi Arabia (35%), followed by Malaysia (24%) and Qatar (10%).

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs can play important role in job creation outside the agricultural and informal sector. Between 2009 and 2014, around 1.5 million (15 lakh) jobs were created by the SME sector.

Readymade Garments (RMG) industry

RMG sector employs around 4.2 million people in the country and majority of those are women. The sector faces acute skill shortages at all levels. The SEIP-BIDS study report estimates that there will be a demand of additional 3.66 million skilled workers by 2021 and 5.3 million by 2026 in the RMG sector.

Agro-processing industry

The agro-processing sector is a labour-intensive industry that has an important role in employment generation in Bangladesh. The BIDS-SIEP study has also projected a demand of 4.4 million workers in this sector till 2025.

IT-enabled Services

Freelancing jobs in the IT sector have emerged as a suitable career option for the unemployed youth in Bangladesh. As per the data of the ICT division of Bangladesh, about 500,000 active freelancers are working regularly out of 650,000 registered free-lancers in the country and are generating USD 100 million annually.

Telecommunication

The mobile ecosystem contributed 6.2% or around USD 13 billion economic value to the GDP in 2015. The industry directly and indirectly generated more than 765,000 jobs in the same year. It is expected that the industry will generate USD 17 billion of economic value and the employment opportunities are also set to increase by about 9%, from 780,000 jobs in 2016 to 850,000 jobs in 2020 (GSMA, 2017).

Healthcare Services

In Bangladesh, the overall sector development is facing challenges possibly because of shortage of trained health workers like nurses and medical technicians. There is a huge opportunity in the sector as World Bank has predicted a shortage of 80.2 million workers globally by 2030. According to the SEIP BIDS study report, there will be a demand of 145,920 nurses and 243,200 medical technicians in public and private healthcare facilities in Bangladesh by 2020.

Challenges and Recommendations

The trust on skill trainings is very low and it has an undervalued social image in Bangladesh

Despite the increasing importance of new technical skills in the global as well as national economy, technical and vocational training is highly undervalued in Bangladesh. A strong branding of skill development trainings needs to be created so that it is seen at par with the general school and college education. It is imperative to build the trust of the society in skill trainings, to ensure higher participation from youth.

Media campaigns using traditional and new media should be developed to raise employers' and society awareness about the value of skill trainings and build faith in the skill development ecosystem.

Bangladesh can take inspiration from a South Asian success story. In India, the National Skill Development Corporation with Ministry of Skill and Entrepreneurship Development commissioned a mass media campaign for the Skill India initiative. The campaign “Fark Dikh Raha Hai” (which means the difference of skill development initiatives is visible) was aimed to increase awareness about Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana – flagship skill development scheme in India, National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme and Industrial Training Institutes. The campaign communicated the changing attitude towards skill development in India and was aimed at motivating the youth of the country to take up skill development trainings. After the launch of the campaign in July 2015, more than 10 million people [1 crore] have been benefitted annually by various schemes under the Skill India campaign

Collaboration between the industry and skill training systems is weak in Bangladesh

There exists a necessary relationship between the training system and industries as the latter are the employers of the youth trained in the system and therefore the final consumer of the skills supplied by the skill development ecosystem. However, there has been a gap in development of effective partnerships between the skill training systems and industry in Bangladesh

Participation of the industries is essential to enable the skills training system to deliver relevant training to the students.

JMS Holdings is Bangladesh’s leading manufacturer of ready-made garments that was experiencing a skill gap in line supervisors and line chiefs in areas of production techniques, technical understanding of machines, leadership and communication skills. JMS organized training courses for providing practical training for new hires and refreshers sessions for existing employees (DEG, 2016)

Majority of the migrants from Bangladesh are unskilled/low-skilled and they end up in jobs that are low paid and have negligible workplace protection

The skill composition of the migrant workers of Bangladesh has not been very impressive. In 2016, more than 56% of Bangladeshi migrant workers were classified as unskilled or semi-skilled. The share of skilled workers amongst migrants have been in the range of 30-40% over the past decade (World Bank, 2018). Various studies have shown that lower technical and linguistic skills are associated with lower pay and human right abuses in the destination countries. In the Middle East, most of the female migrant workers who are exposed to physical and verbal abuse by employers have been found to lack required work skills and ability to maintain communication with the employer.

Skilling programmes are required for the Bangladesh’s migrant workers to enhance their skills and secure higher paying job with better workplace protection.

The Government of Bangladesh has promoted compulsory skills training among aspirant migrants in the domestic housekeeping trade. Similar initiatives could be undertaken to train workers in other sectors also.

Skills training of migrant women workers in the Technical Training Centres (TTCs)
Migrant women workers are trained in the housekeeping trade in a 21-day training workshop. To meet overseas demand for women domestic workers, 36 TTCs are providing the training for potential migrant workers. Potential migrants are trained in the use of electrical appliances used in houses overseas; in the culture, laws and regulations, language, etiquette, and manners of the destination country; and safety and security. It is expected that through this training migrant women workers will take up the skills, attitude, and capability to perform their job and to protect themselves from problems in the workplace (ILO, 2015)

Cognitive and non-cognitive/soft skill trainings are largely missing in Bangladesh

Leadership skills, problem-solving skills, team work, critical thinking and communication skills have been identified as important skills desired by the employers. Soft skills have also been associated with wage premiums among workers in low and middle-income countries (Adhikari, 2017). An enterprise-based survey has also found that soft skills have been prioritised over cognitive skills, by employers in Bangladesh (World Bank, 2013). However, training to develop these skills is rare and inconsistent in quality.

Good practices to develop soft skills among youth can benefit from proven successes already developed within Bangladesh.***Bangladesh Youth Leadership centre***

provides a platform for young people to develop leadership skills and participate in the country's development process. It offers 5 leadership programmes aimed at students of different age-groups and diverse backgrounds. All programs focus on building critical thinking, problems solving, and communication skills by using experiential teaching methods.

BRAC University's Residential Semester Program

at Savar Campus, Bangladesh is a unique initiative that offers a holistic curriculum based on the principle of experiential learning. It cultivates a broad range of soft skills and qualities, to compliment the theoretical development that students undergo. The curriculum's intensive programs help to develop rounded individuals with improved leadership skills, ability to face challenges and proficiency in English that ultimately gives them a competitive edge in the job market.

(BRAC University, n.d.)

Centre for Skills Enhancement is a sub-project of Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project, a University Grants Commission Project of Bangladesh. CCSE at aimed at creating students who can think clearly, imagine boldly, argue precisely and implement efficiently. The education system in Bangladesh lacks formal training in logic and

more focussed towards making the students acquire knowledge without capturing their imagination. The project aims to change this by introducing the students to the exciting world of logic, rationalization and decision making through games, applications and research (Independent University, Bangladesh, n.d.)

There is a lack of skilling initiatives for informal sector workers in Bangladesh

The informal sector has been overlooked most of the times in the skills development agenda in Bangladesh, despite the fact it accounts for 85% of the total employed population of the country. Majority of the population (more than 90%) employed in informal sector are workers with primary education or less. They are also excluded from the skill development initiatives and very few training opportunities have been made available to them. Due to poor education status as well as negligible training, the productivity of workers in the informal sector is very low, i.e. almost one-sixth of the workers employed in formal sector (Asian Development Bank, n.d.). The informal sector workers and employers also lack adherence to legal and regulatory frameworks and are mostly unaware of decent work practices.

Workers in the informal sector are required to be trained in job relevant skills to make them employable and need to be made aware of their fundamental rights at workplace

B-SkillFUL (Building Skills for Unemployed and Underemployed Labour), an initiative of Swisscontact aims to facilitate training and job placement of young men and women in both formal and informal enterprise, while safeguarding their fundamental rights at work. More than 27,000 people have been provided job specific training in 18 occupations and around 18000 people have gained employment from the project. As a part of the project, a cell has been established within Informal Sector Skills Council to promote Labour Rights and Decent Work issues among informal enterprises and mainstream it in the national curricula. Around 2600 enterprises have been sensitized on LRDW issues (www.swisscontact.org, n.d.)

Social, legal and financial barriers coupled with lack of training, are discouraging youth from pursuing entrepreneurship

Young entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are facing multiple barriers in starting their own ventures. They face problems of inadequate capital, sales promotion, legal permissions for starting a business, lack of knowledge and business acumen, unavailability of entrepreneurial training programme and lack of managerial experience. It is important to create an enabling environment for aspiring entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, so that they can set up their own enterprises and create employment opportunities for other unemployed youth.

PROMISE (Promoting Incubation Support to Enterprises) is a project implemented by BRAC that supports young entrepreneurs in Bangladesh to successfully develop their businesses. The project aims to create employment opportunities by establishment of youth-led enterprises in local communities. The programme includes activity-based classroom training, tailored mentoring support, and access to finance.

