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البنك الإسلامي للتنمية
Islamic Development Bank

Country Youth Profile

BANGLADESH

Women and Youth Empowerment Division
Resilience and Social Development Department
February 2019

1. Socio-economic Profile

1.1. The People's Republic of Bangladesh is located on the North-eastern part of South Asia, with a projected population of 167,414.566 in 2019[1]. The country experienced a steady economic growth rate between 2010-2017 with its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) averaging over 6% annually reaching a peak of 7.3% in 2017, the highest in the country's history[2]. Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in reducing poverty. The population living below the national poverty line dropped from 31.5% in 2010 to 24.3% in 2016[3]. The proportion of the employed living below the $1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) a day dropped from 44.2% in 1991 to14.8% in 2016/2017[4]. In parallel, the country achieved a lower middle-income status in 2015 and qualified for graduation from a Least Developing Country in March 2018 and is on track for graduation in 2024[5].

1.2 Bangladesh's position on the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) 2017 Human Development Index (HDI) moved up three positions from its 2016 rank of 139th to 136th out of 189 countries[6]. However, Bangladesh's HDI of 0.608 is below the average of 0.631 and 0.645 for the medium human development category and South Asian countries respectively[7].

1.3. The official characterization of youth in Bangladesh refers to persons between ages 18-35. However, the youth data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) is based on the 15-29-years age range. The United Nations and the Asian Development Bank classify youth as persons aged 15-24 years and, the Commonwealth Secretariat identifies people aged 15-29 as youth. The youth population in Bangladesh in 2016 was 52 million, which is more than 33% of the country's population[8]. Bangladesh's rank on the Commonwealth Global Youth Development Index (YDI) in 2016 stood at 146 out of 183 countries[9]. Although its scores between 2010-2015 have fluctuated during this period, it had the same score in 2015 showing no net in its YDI score[10]. The country is ranked among the ten lowest countries in the Employment and Opportunity domain compared to their overall YDI score[11].

1.4 Although child marriage is prohibited, the practice is rampant and affects three out of five Bangladeshi girls[12]. The share of 113 deaths per 1,000 live birth by women aged 15-19 is the highest in South Asia and more than 300,000 women, and girls are affected by maternal morbidities, including obstetric fistula[13].

Table 1: Youth at Glance in Bangladesh

Categories	Females	Males
Age of marriage (GoB, 2017)	18	21
Labor force participation (ILO 2017)	26.4%	54.9%
Unemployment (ILO 2017)	16.8%	10.8%
NEET (ILO, 2017)	44.6%	9.8%
Net enrolment (UNESCO, 2017)	66.55%	56.78%

1 World Population Review (2019), Bangladesh Population, http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bangladesh-population/
2 Asian Development Bank (2018), Asian Development Bank and Bangladesh, https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/27753/ban-2017.pdf, P. 1
3 ADB (2018), Poverty in Bangladesh, https://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/poverty
4 World Bank (2018), Bangladesh Overview, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview
5 Ibid
6 UNDP (2018), Bangladesh Country Notes, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/BGD.pdf, P.3
7 Ibid:3
8 Emerging Rating (2017), Unemployment Outlook-A Challenging Time for the Youth of Bangladesh, http://emergingrating.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Unemployment-Outlook-A-challenging-time-for-the-youth-of-Bangladesh.pdf
9 Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), 2016 Global Youth Development Index, http://cmydiprod.uksouth.cloudapp.azure.com/sites/default/files/2016-10/2016%20Global%20Youth%20Development%20Index%20and%20Report.pdf, 126
10 Ibid:33
11 Ibid:44
12 UNFPA (2016a), Bangladesh 9th Country Program 2017-2020, https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/CPD%20approved%20by%20Executive%20Board%20%281%29.pdf
13 Ibid:2

Literacy Rate (UNESCO, 2017)	94.38%	91.54%
Out of school (WEF-GGGR 2018)	53.3%	55.5%

2. Youth in National Development: Institutional and Policy Framework

2.1. Youth as a social category was first acknowledged by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) as early as 1978 with the establishment of the Ministry of Youth Development, renamed the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 1981[14]. The ministry is responsible for the formulation of policies, programs, and projects. The Department of Youth Development (DYD) was created in 1981 to act as the implementing agency for youth issues in the country[15]. The DYD provides vocational skills development training and micro-credit support to facilitate the employment or self-employment of youth. It also involves youth in the mainstream of national development[16].

2.2 The primary legal framework for youth in Bangladesh is the National Youth Policy (NYP) which was formulated in 2003, revised in 2016 and enacted in 2017. In broad terms, the NYP is based on two pillars: empowerment and development on which opportunities for employment, self-employment, and entrepreneurship for the youth will be created[17], and encourages engagement in voluntary activities[18]. The 2017 NYP calls for the development of specific action plans for different categories of female and male youth such as the unemployed, illiterates, homeless, living with special needs, rural and entrepreneurs, among others[19]. It can be argued that the NYP is gender-sensitive as it addresses the need to create opportunities for women to participate in mainstream development activities and decision-making processes[20].

2.3. A situation analysis of child marriage in Bangladesh notes that the country has the fourth highest prevalence rate of child marriage in the world, and the second highest number of absolute underage girls brides globally after India at 4,451,000[21]. Approximately, 22% of girls in Bangladesh marry before age 15[22]. Besides, a World Bank study in 2017 estimates that ending child marriage in Bangladesh could lead to a 12% rise in earning and productivity[23]. The country has committed to eliminate child, early and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At its Voluntary National Review in 2017 High-Level Forum, the government stated that women's empowerment has a prominent place in the country's Constitution, the National Women Development Policy and the Child Marriage Restraint Act[24].

2.4. Bangladesh is a focus country of the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Program to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, a multi-donor, multi-stakeholder program working across 12 countries over four years[25]. During its 2013 Universal Periodic Review, Bangladesh supported recommendations to improve efforts to protect children from forced marriage and to effectively implement the Child Marriage Restraint Act and the Dowry Prohibition Act[26]. At the 2014 Girl Summit, the government signed a charter committing to end child marriage by 2020[27]. The enactment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 2017 to reduce the incidence of child marriage in Bangladesh was commended for its inclusion of stronger law enforcement mechanisms and stringent punishment for violations.

2.5. The Commonwealth Youth Charter (2005), Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2006-2015), National Adolescent Health Strategy (2017-2030), the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (amended in 2003), and the Human Trafficking Prevention and Deterrence Act (2012) all focus on different seg-

14 GoB (2016), Department of Youth Development, http://www.dyd.gov.bd/site/page/57f039b0-3112-4b5c-a071-2b300e8317af/-
15 Ibid
16 Ibid
17 GoB (2017b), National Youth Policy 2017, https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/policies/21e565b2_252f_4f80_bfce_31a1cb33163d/Draft%20English%20Version%20of%20National%20Youth%20Policy%202017%20(1).pdf
18 GoB (2017b), National Youth Policy 2017, https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/policies/21e565b2_252f_4f80_bfce_31a1cb33163d/Draft%20English%20Version%20of%20National%20Youth%20Policy%202017%20(1).pdf
19 Ibid
20 Ibid
21 Girls Not Brides (2018), Bangladesh Country Profile, https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/bangladesh/
22 Ibid
23 Ibid
24 Ibid
25 Ibid
26 Ibid
27 Ibid

ments of Bangladesh's youth population.

3. Education

3.1. Bangladesh achieved near universal enrollment in primary education and gender parity in both primary and secondary education before the 2015 Millennium Development Goals deadline. It is observed that despite the high enrollment rate of 97.94% at the primary school level, only 80% of registered students complete grade 5, leaving 20% of children out of the school system[28]. Female participation in secondary education was given a boost with the introduction of the female stipend program (FSP), which started as an experiment in 1982, is now a national education project after it was adopted by the GoB and the World Bank in 1994[29]. The primary objective of the nationwide project, the female secondary school program (FSSP) was to increase female enrollment and retention in secondary school to widen the pool of educated women who could have access to better opportunities of employment.

3.3 The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for female enrolments is high and at par with males at secondary and primary school levels, but a drastic reduction occurs when transitioning from secondary to tertiary education. Based on this situation, the World Bank argues that the female workforce entering the labor market are unequipped as they lack the necessary skills and training for higher productivity and better paid formal sector jobs[30].

3.3 The World Bank in another study pointed out that the relevance and quality of Bangladesh's education are low, as 87 million of its workforce is uneducated, and that the quality of its human capital is low as only 4% of the personnel has a post-secondary education[31]. Furthermore, it was observed that the national learning assessments conducted by the GoB reveal poor literacy and numeracy skills among students. Only 25% to 44% of students in grade 5 through 8 have competencies in Bangla, English, and math[32]. In addition, students have weak reading skills because the curricula, teaching approaches, and examination systems are based on rote learning than on competencies, critical thinking, and analytical skills[33].

3.2. Skills-Based Training

3.2.1. The GoB aims to achieve middle-income status and reduce poverty by half in 2021. To this end, the following developments were instituted in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sub-sector a) the formation of the National Skills Development Council (NSDC) and its committee; b) the establishment of the NSDC Secretariat; c) the approval of the National Skills Development Policy and Gender Strategy in 2012 and d) the formation of a cabinet committee headed by the minister of finance[34]. The TVET sub-sector comprises of formal and non-formal providers. Institutions in the former are operated by the GoB, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other private establishments[35]. Almost, 95% TVET institutions in the formal sector are privately-owned and account for 75% of total enrollment in the sub-sector[36]. Furthermore, around 1600 accredited private sector TVET providers receive a monthly subvention from the government covering 100% of teachers' salaries[37]. Also, TVET institutions primarily target male students, and the minimum educational requirement of Grade 8 means that young people who dropped out of school before then, cannot participate in the vocational skills programs[38].

3.2.2. Bangladesh has about 8,000 public and private TVET institutions overseen by various ministries, agencies and private entities[39]. The formal TVET system program is operated at three levels of skills development namely

28 Bushra et. la. (2018), Inclusive Education in Bangladesh: Digging Deeper into Education Prospect of Children with Disabilities, http://journals.euser.org/files/articles/ejed_v1_i1_18/Bushra.pdf, P.40
29 UNESCO (2003), Female Secondary School Stipend Program in Bangladesh, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000146803, P.3
30 Ibid:19
31 World Bank (2016), Ensuring Education for All Bangladeshi, http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/10/07/ensuring-education-for-all-bangladeshis
32 Ibid
33 Ibid
34 ADB (ND), Sector Assessment (Summary): Skills Development, https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/42466-014-ssa.pdf, P.3
35 ADB (2015), Innovative Strategies in Technical and Vocational Training in Bangladesh, https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/167320/tvet-hrd-south-asia-bangladesh.pdf, P.7
36 ADB ND, op.cit:1
37 Ibid:1
38 Ibid:1
39 Knitting Views (2017), DTE Highlights Successes in Making Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Bangladesh, https://knit-

basic, certificate, and diploma[40].

•The Basic Training Program is a 360-hour skills training course that focuses on the development of practical skills and includes some theory courses and last from 3 to 6 months. The minimum educational requirement for entry completion of grade 8, but one year of trade-specific experience qualities for the basic trade test even when applicants do not pass grade 8.

•The Certificate Program largely pertains to SSC Vocational and Higher Secondary Certificate Vocational courses at the secondary level. The entry qualification for SSC Vocational is grade 8 completion. SSC Vocational attracts students of vocational courses because of its equivalency to the general SSC, which provides entry to higher education and complies with National Skills Standard 11 after completion of the 2-year secondary education program for entry into the world of work.

•The Diploma Courses are 4-year postsecondary diploma courses in engineering offered by public and private polytechnic institutes. They offer programs in 42 technological areas, excluding textiles and agriculture. The courses are designed by the BTEB, which also administers the final semester examination. To enhance students' knowledge and skills, and to develop industry linkages, polytechnic institutes also arrange 3-month industrial attachment training. Public polytechnic institutes operate programs in two shifts to cover more students[41].

•Nonformal training is also structured, have organized learning objectives and duration, and are provided with learning supports, but they are not affiliated/accredited by BTEB. These programs offer flexibility and cater to the capacity-building needs of target groups. Many organizations and public and private institutes develop their curricula and keep linkages with prospective employers to make their training programs responsive to the job market. The nonformal TVET or short skills training courses last 1-12 months. Diploma institutes and technical training centers also offer 360-hour courses for students who wish to start their careers either at home or abroad.

•An example of a short course is housekeeping, which lasts 21 days and requires a minimum entry qualification of grade 5 completion. This course attracts rural people who intend to work abroad, especially in the Middle East. Mainly located near Dhaka City, these training institutions have linkages with overseas employment agencies but not affiliated with BTEB. They develop their own course curricula. Another example is The Mirpur Agricultural Workshop and Training, that offers various modular courses for people who intend to go abroad. Finally, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs operates short courses in poultry, dairy, livestock, food processing, plumbing, and electronics for women in areas with local demand[42].

3.2.3. Due to low female participation in TVET programs, the GoB in partnership several stakeholders developed and adopted the TVET Gender Strategy in 2012[43]. Overall female enrollment in all TVET programs was 24% (from a low of 9% to 13% in public institutions and 33% in private institutions)[44].The core of the strategy is the promotion of equal opportunities through gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting principle throughout the program[45]. Some of the objectives of the Strategy include:

•Increase female participation in formal TVET institutions by 16% from the present 24% to 40% by 2020;

•Increase female employment by 30%;

•Increase quotas for female teachers (30%) and female staff (20%);

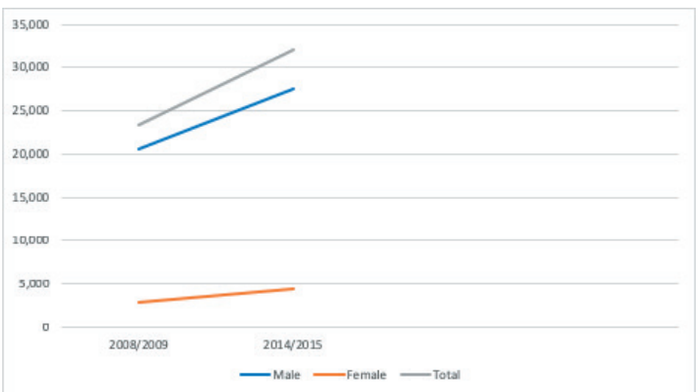
•Quotas for females in TVET management should be at least 10%; and

• Enhance positive attitudinal shifts in views regarding female trades and employment[46].

tingviewsbd.com/dte-highlights-successes-in-making-technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-in-bangladesh/
40 ADB 2015, op.cit:7
41 Ibid:7-8
42 Ibid:11
43 ILO (2012), National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_222688.pdf, P.6
44 Ibid:6
45 Ibid:8
46 Ibid: 14

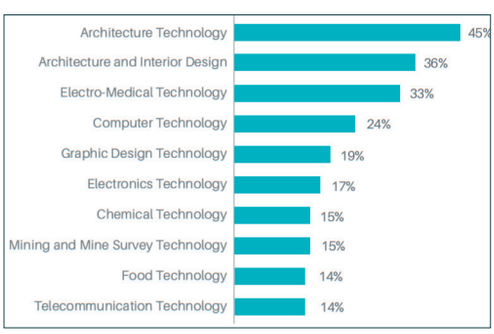
3.2.4. An increase of almost 60% from 2,835 to 4, 441 female students occurred in the diploma program between 2008/09 and 2014/15 (see figure 2)[47]. The increase was attributed to the higher number of female secondary school graduates, higher intake capacity of the polytechnics and the introduction of universal stipends for female trainees[48]. Stipend recipients are expected to maintain a 75% annual attendance rate and 50% pass marks in annual examinations. By June 2017, 144, 615 students have benefited from the stipend program. Female recipients increased from 10% to 26% as a result of the universal female stipend policy instead of poverty targeting. Around 73,753 trainees received short course training, of whom 27% are females[49]. In general, female students enrollment is higher in softer skill areas such as architecture and design, electro-medical, computer applications, graphic design and other technologies that require desk work. On the other hand, female enrollment in technologies that involve heavy machinery and tools was minimal (Automobile (1%), marine technology (2%), aircraft maintenance (5%), shipbuilding (8%) and mechatronics (8%))[50].

Figure 1 : Change in Polytechnics Enrolment by sex



Source: Adapted from Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Challenges to Female Participation in Technical Diploma Education in Bangladesh

Figure 2: Top Diploma Programs in Terms of Female Enrollment Share



Source: Adapted from Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Challenges to Female Participation in Technical Diploma Education in Bangladesh

3.3 Inclusive Education

3.3.1 There are numerous policy initiatives in Bangladesh in support of inclusive education (IE). IE is entrenched in Articles 17 and 28 of the constitution which prohibits discrimination in all its forms and recommends the establishment of a uniform, mass education and compulsory free education to all children[51]. Furthermore, Bangladesh

47 World Bank 2017a, op.cit:19
48 Ibid:19
49 World Bank (2017b), Bangladesh: A STEP Towards Better Employability, http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/06/14/a-step-towards-better-employability
50 Ibid:22
51 Malak, S (1993), Inclusive Education Reform in Bangladesh: Pre-Service Teachers' Responses to Include Children with Special Education

is a signatory to all international treaties and conventions on IE. For example, UNESCO's (1990) Education for All Declaration; Salamanca Declaration (1994); the Dakar Framework for Action (2000); the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the UN Millennium Development Goals (2000)[52]. These international initiatives were followed up with policy formulation and legislative enactment for implementation at the national level Examples of such policies and legislation to promote IE include the compulsory primary Education Act. (1990); the National Education Policy for the Disabled, (1995); Bangladesh Person's with Disability Act (2001); the National Education Policy, (2010); Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, (2012); and the National Policy for the Disabled (1995), now integrated into the Persons with Disability Act, 2001[53].

3.3.2 All GoB-funded primary school became officially inclusive with the implementation of the Second Primary Education Development Program (PEDP II)[54]. PEDP is the major IE initiative in the country, and IE is operationalized through the education of vulnerable children, including those who are working or living in poverty, those who have special needs, and those from ethnic communities[55]. PEDP II timeframe was 2004- 2011. Two other projects, the Primary Education Stipend (PES) project and Reaching Out-of-School Children (ROSC), also support the GoB's goal of Education for All[56].

•The IE framework of PEDP II highlights four areas: gender, children with special needs, ethnic children, and vulnerable groups (e.g., children living in urban slums, street children, refugee children, children from impoverished families). Action plans were also developed based on these four themes. The plans were developed to be implemented at three levels: central (ministry and directorate level), district (the middle administrative level), and school. To achieve the goals of the PEDP II, two significant interventions were introduced: the PEDP II innovation grant and a decentralization plan.

• The major goal of ROSC was to reduce the number of out-of-school children through improved access to quality education. The project was designed to complement the PEDP II by identifying children who are not yet in school. It aimed to take the initiative in areas that are relatively substandard, considering the net enrolment rate, primary cycle completion rate, level of poverty, and gender parity. The project was implemented in 60 sub-districts in 34 districts of Bangladesh[57].

3.3.3 IE is implemented at a smaller scale at the secondary school level. The secondary education sub-sector comprise two levels-secondary school (grades 6-10) and higher secondary school (grades 11-12)[58]. The GoB's programs in this sub-sector include the FSSP in Section 3.1 and Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP).

•The TQI-SEP was committed to enhancing the quality of secondary education through four components. These were improving teacher quality through organizational development and capacity building, improving teaching training facilities, strengthening in-service and pre-service teacher training, and increasing equitable access and improving community involvement. IE is one focus of this project, and the defined target group is Bangladesh girls not enrolled in secondary school, children of both sexes from ethnic communities, children working either with their families or outside the home, and children with special needs[59].

3.3.4. Bangladesh has about 3.2 million disabled youth[60]. The National Skills Development Policy (NSDP) 2012 has a 5% admission requirement for persons with disabilities[61]. In 2014, the Draft National Strategy for Disability Inclusion in Skills Development was developed by the DTE, three ministries followed in its footsteps[62]. In 2015, DTE issued its

Needs in Regular Classrooms, http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/59733, P.198
52 Ibid:198
53 Ibid:198
54 Ahsan, T. and Mullick, J., op.cit:156
55 Ibid:156
56 Ibid:156
57 Ibid:157
58 Ibid:158
59 Ibid:158
60 ILO (2017), Disability Inclusion in Bangladesh 's Skills System, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_543298.pdf, P.1
61 Zero Project (https://zeroproject.org/policy/a-target-and-a-push-for-inclusive-skills-training-and-employment/
62 GoB (2017), A Target and a Push for Inclusive Skills Training and Employment https://www.google.com/search?q=DTE+and+disability+employment+in+bangladesh&ei=PTlyXIH2LuKm_QamtpW4Bg&start=0&sa=N&ved=0ahUKEwjBiLvP3tPgAhViU98KHSZbBWc4ChDy0wMIeQ&biw=1163&bih=554

departmental policy for a 5% admission quota for persons with disabilities; and it encouraged all TVET institutes to partner with disabled people's organizations and to include disability issues in their plans, budgets, procurement, and appraisals. The quota is part of the five-point plan for disability inclusion in TVET proposed by the International Labor Organization and approved by the MoE[63]. As a result, the number of students of enrolled students in DTE 118 TVET institutes increased significantly from 56 students in 204-2015 to 328 in 2015-2016[64].

3.3.5. Although Bangladesh's education support for Rohingya's refugees in registered camps started in 1996, the support was fraught with problems[65]. Firstly, the education provided to refugee children was limited to those in registered camps, excluding those living in makeshift settlements[66]. Secondly, the informal Myanmar curriculum was not linked to the Formal Bangladesh National Curriculum for children in grades 1 to 5. As such, refugee children who completed their education cannot further their education as they were not allowed to sit for the Primary Certificate Examination[67]. However, through the advocacy of UNICEF and Save the Children International, the GoB expanded education to refugee children to grades 6 and 7 in the second half of 2013[68].

3.3.6 In addition, in March 2015, the National Task Force on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Undocumented Myanmar Nations agreed to provide informal education to Rohingya children in makeshifts settlements[69]. UNICEF and its partners responded to the policy change by setting up early learning and informal basic education program[70]. Unfortunately, these changes did very little to absorb the new refugees that arrived in Bangladesh in 2017. For instance, out of the 620,000 children that needed education, only 138, 000 (50% girls) gained access due to lack of funding and the non-prioritization of education at the initial stage of the emergency[71].

3.3.7 In response to the situation above, the GoB and its partners applied for funding from the Global Partnership for Education to extend education access to Rohingya children and youth, who were not included in the earlier program. The new program's interventions are aligned with the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya refugee crisis launched in March 2018[72]. The strategic objectives are:

1. Provide immediate access to equitable learning opportunities in a safe and positive environment and protective environment to crisis-affected refugee and host community children and youth age 3-24 years;

2. Improve the quality of teaching and for refugee and host community children and youth, aligned with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Primary Education and Education and Sector Standards, and increase teaching-related professional development opportunities; and

3. Increase refugees and host community participation and engagement in children's education[73].

4. Economic Empowerment

4.1 Employment and Unemployment

4.1.1. The youth unemployment rate of 12.8% in 2017 is almost three times higher than the national rate of 4.4%[74]. Of the 12.8% unemployed youth, females accounted for 16.8% compared to male youths 10.8%. In relation to youth not in employment, education, and training in 2017, the NEET rate of 44.6% for female youth is 4.5 times higher

63 ILO (2015), MoE approves 5% Admission Quota for Persons with Disabilities in TVET Institutions, https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_395789/lang--en/index.htm
64 Knitting Views, op.cit
65 World Bank (2018), Education for Rohingya's and Host Communities' Children in Cox Bazaar: Bangladesh, https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/education-rohingya-refugee-and-host-communities-children-coxs-bazar-district-bangladesh, P.9
66 Ibid:9
67 Ibid:9
68 Ibid:9
69 Ibid:9
70 Ibid:9
71 Ibid:10
72 Ibid:11
73 Ibid:11
74 ILO (2018), Bangladesh Country Data, https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx?_adf.ctrl-state=l5ngzb61p_4&_afrLoop=2026592543

than male youth at 9.8%. As per the Bangladesh labor force survey 2015-2016, more than 20.8 million youth aged 15-29 were in the labor force between 2015 and 2016, with 13.7 million and 7.1 million being male and female respectively[75]. The youth employment rate was 33.5% of the labor force[76]. There was more employed youth in rural areas, at 34.1% than in urban areas at 32. %[77]. Furthermore, 90.5% of the youths aged 15-29 in employment were in the informal sector[78].

4.1.2 Young people's unemployment rate of 8.6% in the rural areas comprised of 11.2% females and 7.3% males[79]. As indicated in Figure 3 below, female youth irrespective of age accounted for higher unemployment rates than males. In all, despite Bangladesh's economic growth of over 6% in recent times, an analysis of the jobs created between 2013-2017 shows that only 0.9% were generated or less than one-eighth of the rate at which the economy grew[80]. It was also noted the lack of quality of the jobs created as 85% of employment in 2016-2017 were in the informal sector, and therefore could not be qualified as decent work and that guarantee freedom, equity, security and human dignity for all workers.

4.1.3 Youth entrepreneurship is promoted by the state and non-state actors as BRAC and the Grameen Trust, among others. Their goal is to turn unemployment into entrepreneurship by providing microfinance loans to start new enterprises and to expand existing ones. BRAC's youth employment program, the Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR), is in line with the National Technical Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF) in the informal sector. The STAR project offers a dual apprenticeship in the informal market. The project also provides classroom-based soft skills training once a week. Training sessions focus on financial literacy, market assessment, basic communicative English, and other core skills. The project links participants with potential employers after the training. Those interested in self-employment, are offered information, guidance, and technical assistance[81].

The Grameen Trust's program Nobin Uydokta (New Entrepreneur) is for the children of Grameen Bank borrowers. The program encourages young individuals to create employment for themselves and others by using their creative, innovative and entrepreneurial skills. Potential entrepreneurs will be provided with training to upgrade their skills through design development, extending working capital and introducing new channels and market. Priority may be given to an entrepreneur who has completed diploma, vocational training or technical education in the related business[82].

Female youth are actively involved in the Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited's Rural Development Scheme were 84% of the loan beneficiaries in 1996, and by 2012 they accounted for 94% the borrowers of whom 41% were aged between 18 to 30 years[83].

4.1.4. The DYD runs the GoB's entrepreneurship program. The DYD's program includes skills development, youth enterprise development, and self-employment and credit support. The primary objective of these initiatives is to reduce poverty and unemployment through entrepreneurship and skills development[84]. Trainees are taught agriculture skills, technology, office operations, fashion design, textile manufacturing and so forth. The DYD skills development program runs two streams: residential and non-residential. The duration of the residential course is between 1 to 6 months depending on the course of study. The non-residential course takes about 7 to 15 days depending on the program and, all DYD trainees are provided with business loans to start their businesses[85]. The DYD has provided services to 5,501,590 youth since its inception in 1981 to June 2018[86]. Of this number, 2,098,247 are

75 GoB (2017), Report on Quarterly Labor Force Survey (QLFS) 2015-16, http://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/96220c5a_5763_4628_9494_950862accd8c/QLFS_2015.pdf
76 Ibid: P. 79
77 Ibid:xvi
78 Ibid:xvi
79 Ibid:79
80 Daily Star (2018), An Anatomy of 'Jobless Growth' in Bangladesh, https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/economics/anatomy-jobless-growth-bangladesh-1572829
81 GCYE (2017), #1NGO for 2017: GCYE Featured Member February 2017, http:// hgcyerti.com/2017/01/11/feb2017/
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84 GoB (2018), Activities of the Department of Youth Development, 2018 https://dyd.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/dyd.portal.gov.bd/page/130d0ab8_d9e5_4272_b1ed_35d2d7b1126f/Brochure%20English.pdf, P.
85 Ibid:3
86 Ibid:1

self-employed, 298,247 were trained in 2017/18, with 74, 743 in self-employment[87].

4.1.5 The government provides micro-credit loans to trainees to support them in establishing their businesses. Since the inception of the credit program until June 2018, a total of Tk 1, 719, 929 has been disbursed as loans to 909, 033 trainees. The average rate of repayment of the loans is 95.23%[88]. The income of the trainees ranges from TK 6000 to TK 50, 000 monthly, with a handful earning TK 100, 000[89]. Also, some of the trainees got jobs in different organizations both in Bangladesh and overseas[90]. In addition, the DYD has a Credit Program for individuals, groups and entrepreneurship development[91].

Figure 3 : Unemployment Rate of Youth by Age and Sex

Source: BBS 2015/16 Quarterly Labour Force Survey

4.2 Entrepreneurship and Ecosystem

4.2.1 The GoB established Startup Bangladesh in 2017 to turn Bangladesh into an innovation- driven nation. The government was founded to create a national entrepreneurship platform to enable the country to innovate faster, create new opportunities, develop technical skills, and contribute to realize the vision of Digital Bangladesh. Through its iDEA (Innovation, Design and Entrepreneurship Academy) program, was implemented an Accelerator and its accompanying ecosystem offering mentoring, funding, co-working spaces, marketing, and legal support to selected startup entrepreneurs to support realize their goals[92]. Startup Bangladesh-iDEA project selected 37 startups after its Digital World-w017 four-day long event in 2017[93]. The goals of Startup Bangladesh are:

a) To create an accelerator and its accompanying ecosystem of entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, advisors to promote Bangladesh as a global hub for tech entrepreneurship;

b) To actively collaborate with entrepreneurs, industry, academia, financial institutions, and government to stimulate innovation; and

c) To create the appropriate business, operational and regulatory frameworks to support bold dreams[94].

Other accelerators/incubators include:

•GP Accelerator is the benchmark of accelerator programs in Bangladesh. They accepted their fourth batch of applications in 2017-taking five startups at a time. They organize a 4-month boot-camp that provides seed-funding, mentors, curricula, in-house development resources and investor access to the founders and their teams[95].

87 Ibid:1
88 Ibid:1
89 Ibid:1
90 Ibid:1
91 Ibid:8
92 Bangladesh Startup (2017), Mission and Vision, http://startupbangladesh.gov.bd/about/mission-vision/
93 SD Asia (2017), 37 Startups Receive Funds from Startup Bangladesh-iDEA ICT Division, https://sdasia.co/2017/12/11/43950/
94 SD Asia (2017), ICT Division Launched "Startup Bangladesh" Website, https://sdasia.co/2017/02/13/43132/
95 LightCastle Partners (2017), Startups Accelerators New Horizon: A New Horizon for Bangladesh's Startup Ecosystem, https://www.lightcastlebd.com/insights/2017/07/27/startup-accelerators-new-horizon-bangladeshs-startup-ecosystem

•Jolpi is a technology company that sells home-based IOT (internet-of-things) devices, i.e., gas leakage alarm, appliance control, access control and so on. The company received the 'National Demo Day Award 2017'and the 'Top Investable Startup 2017" by the ICT Division of the Bangladesh Government[96].

Unnoty is an initiative of LightCastle Partners Ltd, which aims to shift the focus away from the Dhaka, the capital into the semi-urban and rural regions where there is an acute scarcity for infrastructural support for small and medium businesses (SMBs). In partnership with USAID, LightCastle Partners Ltd is employing standard accelerator models and curricula in the Unnoty platform, which focuses on the agriculture sector. The beneficiaries will be equipped with education on how to improve their businesses.

•Unnoty is a peer to peer Accelerator Network Program (P2PAN) that works to enable growth of high potential SMBs. Their platform has three distinctive features-first is the assimilation of a group like-minded Traders/NGOs, second is the transfer of specialized and structured knowledge and skills, and third is the facilitation of future market linkage and access to finance[97].

5. Youth Engagement and Civic Participation

5.1 Youth civic engagement in Bangladesh is promoted primarily by the government. However, NGOs such as Civic Bangladesh, JAAGO Foundation, Plan International, ActionAid, among others mobilize youth to build their capacities to engage in civic participation. The GoB's youth engagement and civic participation include the National Youth Day, Young Bangla and the National Youth Service program. The National Youth Day is celebrated on 1st November with awards given to successful male and female youth and youth organizers in recognition of their efforts in creating self-employment and social services[98].

•The Young Bangla was launched in 2014 by the Center for Research Information, an NGO with close ties with the Awami League, Bangladesh's current ruling party. It is currently the country's largest youth platform, acting as a flexible space for the youth to come together into a network and collectively strive to achieve personal and national goals through sharing and cooperation. Young Bangla aims to unlock the potential of youth, give them opportunities to shine, recognize their talents and achievements and help then shape the future of the nation. Young Bangla shares Bangladesh's vision of becoming a middle-income country in 2021 and a developed country in 2041. The organization envisions itself as an inclusive platform that harnesses and enables the youth at the forefront of the country's comprehensive transformation. Young Bangla strives to empower the youth to build future leaders who can contribute to local and national development. Its long-term mission is to ensure sustainability for youth-led initiatives and the dissemination of winning ideas and endeavors. To this end, Young Bangla introduced the following three initiatives, namely -Joy Bangla Youth Award in 2015, the Joy Bangla Concert in 2015 and the Youth Bangla Vision 2021 Internship Program in 2016[99].

•The National Service Program is a two-year work placement initiative launched in 2009/10 fiscal year (FY) in fulfillment of the GoB's electoral promise to create employment for educated unemployed youth. The program aims to provide training and temporary employment to participants in nation-building activities. The age range for the pilot program is 15-35 with a minimum of a senior secondary certificate. Each recipient participates in the three months course of ten modules and was entitled to two-year temporary employment. Awardees are given a stipend of Tk 100 daily allowance during the training and Tk 200 as daily service allowance during employment. An additional financial benefit in the program is that each youth must deposit Tk 2,000 as savings for every working month, and Tk 6,000 will be taken from the account and kept as surety and refunded upon completion of the assignment. A total of 193, 985 youth have been trained since the inception of the program to June 2018. The educational requirement for participants increased from secondary school certificate to a high school certificate[100].

•The Sheik Hasina Youth Development Center (SHYDC) was established in 1998 as part of the DYD. Among its aims and objectives are to develop youth leadership, skills, and social awareness, to transform youth into human resourc-

96 Ibid
97 Ibid the
98 GoB 2018, op.cit:1
99 Young Bangla (2017), The Story of Young Bangla, https://youngbangla.org/about/
100 GoB 2018, op.cit:9

es and strengthen youth club activities and upgrading youth work. The Sheik Hasina National Youth Development Institute Act 2017 was enacted to transform the SHYDC into a statutory organization with authority to confer diploma, graduate and post-graduate degrees[101].

•The JAAGO Foundation aims for the betterment of Bangladesh by improving the educational needs of children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds and empowering the youth by inspiring them to engage in transformational volunteerism. The organization's Youth Development Program provides an opportunity to empower the youth, facilitate volunteerism, foster self-resilience and growth as well as equipping them with the necessary tools to shape them for a meaningful future. The organization operates in 32 of Bangladesh's 64 districts and has 30,000 volunteers[102]. Its diverse program portfolio covers education, environment, health, human rights, civic participation and democratic engagement for societal as well as community development.

6. Development Partners in the Youth Sector

- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- World Bank
- Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
- UN System
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)
- Plan International
- Save the Children.

7. Recommendations

i. The IsDB should work with the GoB to advocate for age and sex-disaggregated data in all programmes and projects related to the youth sector, including harmonised definition of youth (age intervals following UN definition);

ii. The IsDB should directly support or work in coordination with other development partners to strengthen the DYD;

iii. The IsDB should support the Islami Bank Bangladesh and other Islamic banks to promote targeting female and male youth owned/led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises including comprehensive package of measures (loan, business support, collateral, ,mentoring, incubators etc);

iv. The IsDB should work with the ministry of education to integrate youth, and in particular girls, who did not complete primary school and secondary school into relevant skills program that could lead to employment or entrepreneurship ;

The IsDB should provide technical support to assist the GoB implement SDG target 8b (develop and operationalize a national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy) .

101 Dhaka Tribune (2018), Parliament Passes Sheikh Hasina National Institute for Youth Development, https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2018/02/25/parliament-passes-sheikh-hasina-national-institute-youth-development-bill

102 Jaago Foundation (ND), About Us, https://jaago.com.bd/about/

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