SECTOR ASSESSMENT (SUMMARY): EDUCATION

Sector Road Map

1. Sector Performance, Problems, and Opportunities

1. Secondary education in Bangladesh is divided into two major levels: secondary education (grades 6–10) and higher secondary education (grades 11–12). Over 11 million students are now enrolled in about 20,000 secondary education schools and 10,000 madrasahs, which are Islamic religious schools, 1 99% of which are nongovernment schools. Bangladesh has made considerable progress in improving access to education at all levels. Since 1980, enrollment in secondary education has more than tripled, as has the number of secondary education institutions. Significant expansion of secondary education is due to (i) demand for secondary education reflecting a sharp increase of primary education enrollment and (ii) stipends given to 3 million poor students. The growth in girls’ enrollment is commendable, rising from 500,000 in 1981 to more than 5 million by 2011. Girls now constitute 54% of secondary enrollment, outnumbering boys.

2. The high dropout rate is a major challenge in secondary education. Only 46% of students complete the 5-year cycle of secondary education, reflecting a huge waste of financial resources and an inefficient education system. A gender gap sees 51% of boys completing the 5-year cycle but only 43% of girls. Multiple challenges related to gender and poverty causes the high dropout rate for girls. One factor is a traditional value structure that favors early marriage for girls. Regarding learning outcomes, boys slightly outperform girls, with 83% of boys and only 80% of girls earning secondary school certificates in 2011.

3. The government recognized in 2010 the madrasahs as part of the mainstream education system. Madrasahs now use the core curriculum subjects and examinations of secondary schools. Qualitative gap of education remains between secondary school and madrasah because of the madrasah’s lower quality of educational inputs: (i) the lack of qualified teachers reflecting madrasah’s own teacher recruitment system with its qualification standards, (ii) insufficient instructional hours allocated to core subjects including English and science, and (iii) the shortage of educational facilities such as science laboratories and information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. Modernizing madrasahs has become a government priority.

4. Gaps in quality and relevance. Despite impressive achievements in enrollment, secondary education does not equip students with the knowledge or skills the economy needs. The quality and relevance of secondary education are low. Constraints on the provision of high-quality secondary education are (i) an acute shortage of trained secondary school teachers; (ii) inconsistent curricula across all types of primary and secondary education; (iii) an inadequate teacher management system for recruitment, registration, and performance evaluation; (iv) the lack of teaching standards; and (v) shortages of teaching equipment.

---

1 There are two types of madrasah: Aliya and Qoumi. Aliya madrasahs are under government supervision, and Qoumi madrasahs are not recognized by the state. Madrasahs referred to in this assessment are Aliya. They provide religion education in addition to core subjects defined in the National Education Policy. There are only 4 government-owned Aliya madrasahs, but more than 10,000 Aliya madrasahs exist, mainly in rural areas.
5. Links between the curriculum and the needs of the economy are insufficient. Outdated teaching methods and examinations that test rote memory do not equip students with the analytical skills or creative thinking the economy needs. The effective teaching of science and mathematics can enable these skills, but students’ interest in enrolling these subjects is low. In particular, enrollment in science in grade 10 fell from 48% in 1980 to 20% in 2011.\(^2\) This is caused by (i) a shortage of qualified teachers, (ii) teaching that emphasizes theory, (iii) a lack of science laboratories and equipment, and (iv) business studies’ attracting more students. English is seen as an essential skill but is poorly taught in secondary school.

6. ICT is an effective tool for improving quality and relevance of education. Although using ICT in education is a government priority, only one-third of secondary schools and madrasahs have at least one laptop computer and about 7,000 schools do not have electricity. The lack of qualified teachers is a significant concern. To respond to the needs of economy, prevocational and vocational courses offered at secondary schools and madrasahs need to link with market demand and enable graduates to demonstrate marketable skills.

7. **Gaps in access and retention.** Critical issues for affecting access and retention are as follows:

   (i) Classrooms are overcrowded and school buildings unsafe and inadequate. In underserved areas, there are shortages of schools and classrooms. As efforts to improve the quality of primary education bear fruit, the number of students who complete primary education is expected to increase, requiring more classrooms in secondary schools and madrasahs.

   (ii) Segments of the population—including the poor, ethnic minorities, residents of urban slums, and those living along rivers on vulnerable lowlands—face financial or social barriers to attending and completing school.

   (iii) Bangladesh has no established system that allows students to transfer credits among secondary schools, madrasahs, and vocational schools. Offering various pathways of learning to students in secondary schools in Bangladesh will be a long-term challenge.

8. Stipend assistance programs undoubtedly have contributed to the dramatic reversal of inequity in female enrollment in secondary schools, as 70% of stipend recipients are girls. Studies show that children from poor households, especially boys, have not fully benefited. In addition, three stipend programs have so far failed to harmonize their rates of stipend, its methodology, or targeting.\(^3\) Toward encouraging more poor students to enroll and complete secondary education, these assistance programs must be examined to enable better targeting of needy students, both boys and girls, using improved methodology.

9. **Gaps in sector management.** The capacity of the Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to supervise and monitor the secondary education sector has not kept pace with the rapid increase in the number of secondary schools and madrasahs. The secondary education system has weak organizational and supervisory competence. Improving the quality and relevance of secondary education would require good sector management. Key challenges are as follows:

---

\(^2\) Science is mandatory in grades 6–9 but optional in grades 10–12.

\(^3\) Stipends are provided by (i) the government, (ii) the Secondary Education Sector Development Program supported by the Asian Development Bank, and (iii) the World Bank’s Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project.
(i) As part of ongoing education reform, the DSHE has gradually decentralized responsibility for education management, including academic supervision in schools, to local education offices, whose limited capacity remains a great concern.

(ii) A number of organizations, including teacher training colleges, higher secondary teacher training institutes, and the Bangladesh Madrasah Teacher Training Institute, engage teacher training in secondary education in different aspects (e.g., planning, implementation, and administration). However, coordination and institutional linkages among them are lacking, leaving the quality of education offered by teachers in the classrooms low and uneven. In addition, the rapid growth of nongovernment teacher training colleges, which operate commercially without the government’s proper quality control, has further undermined the quality of training.

(iii) About 98% of all schools are nongovernment, their administration overseen by school management committees. These nongovernment schools and madrasah receive substantial government subsidies to pay the salaries of teachers of selected subjects, as well as block grants for construction and maintenance of school buildings. Given the enormous growth in nongovernment schools, their performance and accountability requirements are few. Government administrative and supervision capacity is not up to the task.

(iv) Teachers in government schools are recruited by the DSHE, while teachers in nongovernment schools are recruited directly by schools in accordance with the government’s set regulations and procedures. However, corruption and nepotism have clouded the transparency of the system, especially regarding teacher recruitment and salaries in nongovernment schools funded by the government. More transparent systems are needed. Further, rural schools face hurdles recruiting teachers, as many candidates prefer to live in Dhaka and its environs.

(v) In the last 10 years, a series of examination reforms took place. It included a unified examination provided by 8 regional education boards and the Madrasah Education Board. Challenges remain to improve methods and procedures, as the results of the public examination must be reliable and valid.

(vi) Projects funded by the government and development partners have been major drivers of secondary education development. Capacity development provided by projects is often lost when projects end, with minimal institutionalization of long-term strategic planning for the continued professional development of government officials. In particular, monitoring and evaluation is generally a project-supported activity and not institutionalized, leaving the system reliant on self-reporting without adequate verification. Evidence-based forward planning is rare. Sector planning needs to be strengthened with prediction of future demand. There is a need of improvement of current education management and information system and planning practice.

2. Government’s Sector Strategy

10. The government’s aims, objectives, and goals for education are reflected in the Sixth Five-Year Plan and the National Education Policy (NEP), 2010.4 The NEP emphasizes the holistic and balanced development of a whole education sector. Its proposed reforms to secondary education are to (i) facilitate teacher development; (ii) improve science, English, mathematics teaching, and the use of ICT; (iii) modernize madrasah education; (iii) provide

---

teaching and learning materials that are more relevant; (iv) improve examinations and assessment; and (vi) strengthen sector governance and administration, which include effective planning and monitoring and evaluation at all levels.

3. **Asian Development Bank Sector Experience and Assistance Program**

11. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has played a major role in education, supporting access, and quality improvements through various projects and programs in the school sector (primary education and secondary education sectors). In the ongoing Third Primary Education Development Project, reforms in education quality have been emphasized on (i) an integrated curriculum framework with greater focus on core competencies; (ii) bridging formal and nonformal education, which targets mainly the rural and urban poor; (iii) textbook renewal, with improvements in instructional design; and (iv) developing a teacher education and professional development framework. There is a strong need of enhancing students’ learning across the primary-secondary school transition. The following technical areas need to be improved: (i) curriculum, (ii) learning assessment, (iii) teaching, and (iv) school environment.

12. ADB has provided substantial assistance to the development of secondary education currently funding two projects. The Secondary Education Sector Development Program, which will close in 2013, helps the government to further advance critical sector reforms. They affect (i) examinations, (ii) a decentralized management system, (iii) the teacher training program, and (iv) the pro-poor stipend program. The Second Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project intends to build on reform initiatives started under the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project. It intends to improve the quality of teaching in secondary education institutions by strengthening a quality assurance system. Outputs of the project include: (i) strengthened teacher development and institutional and organizational capacity; (ii) enhanced delivery systems for teacher training programs, pre-service, in-service, and for continuous professional development; and (iii) targeted support for inclusive education.

13. ADB has provided policy advisory technical assistance to help the government prepare its NEP implementation strategy in secondary education. The strategy presents the pathways to realize the vision and goal of the NEP. It highlights long-term reform initiatives with a phased approach to lift learning quality, make learning opportunities more inclusive, and develop a more integrated secondary education system. Based on the strategy, concrete targets and goals were further developed into the secondary education sector road map.

14. ADB makes a long-term commitment through the Secondary Education Sector Investment Program, in line with guiding policies such as the NEP, its strategy, and the sector road map. The investment program will support the government’s reform of secondary education (grades 6–12) into a system that builds the foundation for a skilled labor force and prepares youths to meet the requirements of a rapidly developing economy. It will support advanced teaching and learning programs that use ICT, as well as prevocational and vocational programs, teacher development, and examination reforms. It will promote gender-equitable and pro-poor stipends for students. It will help establish more decentralized and efficient allocation and use of resources, as well as strengthen sector performance monitoring.
PROBLEM TREE FOR EDUCATION

Effects

Limited skills in the workforce

Low productivity and income

Secondary education system that is inefficient and inequitable and does not prepare graduates to meet the needs of the economy.

Core Problem

Low quality and relevance of secondary education

Inequitable access to secondary education and low retention

Weak institutional management and governance

Causes

No comprehensive curriculum framework for grades 1–12 and outdated teaching methods

Poor families unable to afford school fees

Lack of management oversight to ensure quality standards applied to all schools and teacher training colleges

Lack of policy that defines teachers’ qualification standard and competencies

Early marriage, particularly for girls

Complex process and slow delegation of management responsibilities to zones, districts, and subdistricts

Inadequate capacity in science, English, mathematics, and ICT, particularly among madrasah teachers

Shortage of classrooms

Lack of reliable data for monitoring secondary education performance, and monitoring and evaluation not institutionalized

Poor quality and fragmented public examination system and lack of standardized assessment of learning outcomes

Poor quality of school infrastructure and lack of teaching equipment such as ICT and science laboratories, especially in madrasahs

Lack of an adequate mechanism for recruiting and managing teachers in nongovernment schools

Limited use of modern teaching methods using ICT and laboratory-based practical science teaching

No mobility in education streams across secondary schools, madrasahs, and technical schools

Over-reliance on projects and PIUs, weak regular functions at the central level in the MOE and the DSHE, and fragmented sector planning and management

Weak linkage between school education and the labor market

No mobility in education streams across secondary schools, madrasahs, and technical schools

Lack of forecasting of sector needs; budget planning and allocation not based on sector needs

Support

Partial support

Lack of systematic fiduciary oversight

No support

Intervention

Main focus of ongoing government projects on stipends and school construction to improve access

Ongoing ADB project focusing on teacher development, including the development of teaching competency (quality) and M&E of teacher performance (management)

Ongoing World Bank project focusing on improving math teaching (quality), stipends (access), and M&E (management)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country Sector Outcomes</th>
<th>Indicators with Targets and Baseline</th>
<th>Outputs with ADB Contribution</th>
<th>Indicators with Incremental Targets</th>
<th>Planned and Ongoing ADB Interventions</th>
<th>Main Outputs Expected from ADB Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved access to high-quality education and higher educational attainment for all</td>
<td>Grade 5 completion rate rises from 57% for girls and 53% for boys in 2010 to 75% with gender parity in 2015</td>
<td>Primary Human resources development plan and institutional analysis concluded School-level improvement plan prepared by all eligible schools More children with special needs attending school</td>
<td>Primary Pupil–teacher ratio decreasing from 52:1 in 2009 to 45:1 in 2015</td>
<td>Planned key activity areas Pipeline projects Third Primary Education Development Program ($320 million) Second Teaching Quality Improvement ($60 million) Secondary Education Sector Development Program (multitranché financing facility for $90 million) Skills for Employment Project ($100 million) Public–Private Partnership in Higher Education ($130 million) Ongoing projects Second Primary Education ($100 million) Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project ($68.9 million) Secondary Education Sector Development Program ($30 million) Secondary Education Sector Development Project ($85 million) Skills Development Project ($50 million) Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project ($65 million) TA for madrasah education ($1 million)</td>
<td>Primary 65,000 new teachers recruited, 60% women 28% of government primary schools to run in single shift by 2015 65,000 new classrooms; 15,000 improved toilet facilities for girls and boys; 15,000 tube wells Full set of textbooks provided to all eligible primary students Secondary Secondary school textbooks for grades 9–10 privatized Compulsory bachelor of education training implemented for all new secondary teachers TVET Employment rates of graduates improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net enrollment rate in secondary education rises from 50.8% for girls and 39.5% for boys in 2009 to 75% with gender parity in 2015 Dropout rate reduces by 2% yearly, with gender parity</td>
<td>Secondary Continuous professional development training for secondary teachers, 20% women</td>
<td>Secondary Continuous professional development training delivered to 200,000 teachers by 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>