



Technical Assistance Report

INTERNAL

Project Number: 56088-001
Transaction Technical Assistance Facility (F-TRTA)
September 2022

People's Republic of Bangladesh: Supporting Education Sector Projects

Distribution of this document is limited until it has been approved by the Board of Directors. Following such approval, this document will be reclassified as public and disclosed in accordance with ADB's Access to Information Policy.

Asian Development Bank

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(as of 17 August 2022)

Currency unit	–	Taka (Tk)
Tk1.00	=	\$95.0314
\$1.00	=	Tk0.0105

ABBREVIATIONS

4IR	–	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ADB	–	Asian Development Bank
COVID-19	–	coronavirus disease
HSC	–	Higher Secondary Certificate
ICT	–	information and communication technology
MOE	–	Ministry of Education
MOPME	–	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NASS	–	National Assessment of Secondary Students
NER	–	net enrollment rate
NSA	–	National Student Assessment
SSC	–	Secondary School Certificate
STEAM	–	science, technology, engineering, arts, and math
WASH	–	water, sanitation, and hygiene

NOTES

- (i) The fiscal year (FY) of the Government of Bangladesh and its agencies ends on 30 June. “FY” before a calendar year denotes the year in which the fiscal year ends, e.g., FY2022 ends on 30 June 2022.
- (ii) In this report, “\$” refers to United States dollars.

Vice-President	Shixin Chen, Operations 1
Director General	Kenichi Yokoyama, South Asia Department (SARD)
Deputy Director General	Manmohan Parkash, SARD
Director	Gi Soon Song, Human and Social Development Division (SAHS), SARD
Team leader	Asako Maruyama, Senior Education Specialist, SAHS, SARD
Team members	Ma. Cristina S. Bardos, Operations Assistant, SAHS, SARD
	Joana Custodias, Counsel, Office of the General Counsel
	Uzma Hoque, Principal Social Sector Specialist, SAHS, SARD
	Zhigang Li, Senior Social Sector Specialist, SAHS, SARD

In preparing any country program or strategy, financing any project, or by making any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area in this document, the Asian Development Bank does not intend to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area.

CONTENTS

	Page
I. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FACILITY	1
A. Justification	1
B. Outputs and Activities	4
C. Cost and Financing	5
D. Implementation Arrangements	5
II. THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION	6
 APPENDIXES	
1. Cost Estimates and Financing Plan	7
2. Projects under Technical Assistance Facility	8
3. List of Linked Documents	9

TRANSACTION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AT A GLANCE

1. Basic Data		Project Number: 56088-001	
Project Name	Supporting Education Sector Projects	Department/Division	SARD/SAHS
Nature of Activity	Project Preparation, Capacity Development, Policy Advice	Executing Agency	Ministry of Education
Modality	Facility		
Country	Bangladesh		
2. Sector	Subsector(s)	ADB Financing (\$ million)	
✓ Education	Pre-primary and primary		0.650
	Secondary		0.850
		Total	1.500
3. Operational Priorities		Climate Change Information	
✓ OP1: Addressing remaining poverty and reducing inequalities		GHG Reductions (tons per annum)	0
✓ OP2: Accelerating progress in gender equality		Climate Change impact on the Project	Low
✓ OP3: Tackling climate change, building climate and disaster resilience, and enhancing environmental sustainability		ADB Financing	
		Adaptation (\$ million)	0.030
		Mitigation (\$ million)	0.000
		Cofinancing	
		Adaptation (\$ million)	0.000
		Mitigation (\$ million)	0.000
Sustainable Development Goals		Gender Equity and Mainstreaming	
SDG 1.5		Effective gender mainstreaming (EGM)	✓
SDG 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.a, 4.c			
SDG 5.5		Poverty Targeting	
SDG 13.a		General Intervention on Poverty	✓
4. Risk Categorization	Complex		
5. Safeguard Categorization	Safeguard Policy Statement does not apply		
6. Financing			
Modality and Sources		Amount (\$ million)	
ADB		1.500	
Transaction technical assistance: Technical Assistance Special Fund		1.500	
Cofinancing		0.000	
None		0.000	
Counterpart		0.000	
None		0.000	
Total		1.500	
Currency of ADB Financing: US Dollar			

I. THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FACILITY

A. Justification

1. **Expansion of education systems and challenges.** Bangladesh's pre-primary, primary, and secondary education systems are large and complex, involving two ministries and over 34.2 million students in more than 206,000 government and nongovernment educational institutions in 2020.¹ The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) oversees pre-primary (age 5) and primary (grades 1–5) education, whereas the Ministry of Education (MOE) looks after junior secondary (grades 6–8), secondary (grades 9–10), and higher secondary (grades 11–12) education. MOE is also in charge of madrasa,² technical and vocational, and tertiary education. With concerted efforts to increase access to pre-primary, primary, and secondary education during the last decade, the systems have expanded significantly from about 16.9 million students enrolled in around 120,000 educational institutions in 2011.³ Nonetheless, high student dropout rates and absenteeism, weak learning outcomes, and lack of skills for employment and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) are remaining and emerging challenges yet to be addressed. Moreover, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed that the systems remain highly vulnerable to multiple hazards, including health and natural hazards and extreme weather events.

2. **Lack of age-appropriate pre-primary education and disparities in access.** Since almost all government primary schools and government-funded primary schools now offer pre-primary classes, access to one year of pre-primary education for 5-year old children has improved considerably. According to the annual primary school census, the net enrollment rate (NER) for pre-primary education has increased from 86.3% in 2016 (87.4% for girls) to 94.3% in 2019 (94.9% for girls). In 2020, 86.8% of grade 1 students (87.4% for girls) had attended pre-primary education compared to 42.3% in 2010 (43.9% for girls).⁴ However, lack of age-appropriate pre-primary education is a concern, including inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, play and teaching-learning materials, and teachers specifically trained in pre-primary education. With the planned expansion of pre-primary education to 2 years starting at age 4, these issues will be aggravated. Moreover, children from disadvantaged groups, including those from poor families and ethnic communities in rural areas, and those with disabilities, have limited access even to one year of pre-primary education. Without addressing the pre-existing issues, gaps in access would further widen.

3. **Quality challenges in primary education.** Despite the complexity of the primary education system, comprising over 42.0% privately run schools and involving 25 different types of primary schools in 2019, Bangladesh has nearly achieved universal primary education with a 97.8% NER (98.3% for girls) in 2020 (footnote 3). Though improved from 39.8% from 2010, the overall dropout rate for primary education remains high at 17.2% in 2020, with higher shares of dropouts in grade 4 (7.6%), grade 3 (4.6%), and grade 5 (2.2%) (footnote 2). The National Student Assessment (NSA) 2017 showed that the share of students who attained grade level proficiency in Bangla and math increased from NSA 2015, but it was lower among grade 5 students (44% in Bangla; 32% in math) than among grade 3 students (47% in Bangla; 34% in math) (footnote 3). The gains in reducing

¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, Ministry of Education (MOE). 2021. *Bangladesh Education Statistics–2020*. Dhaka.

² Madrasa education emphasizes religious studies of Islam in addition to the core subjects of general education.

³ Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, MOE. 2012. *Bangladesh Education Statistics–2011*. Dhaka.

⁴ Directorate of Primary Education, MOPME. 2021. *Bangladesh Annual Primary Education Statistics–2020: Annual Primary School Census 2020 Report (Final Draft)*. Dhaka; Directorate of Primary Education, Fourth Primary Education Development Program. 2020. *Bangladesh Primary Education Annual Sector Performance Report 2020*. Dhaka.

dropouts and improving student learning outcomes have apparently been offset by learning loss due to the school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵

4. **Constraints to improving student learning in primary education.** The major constraint in improving student learning outcomes before the pandemic was the lack of qualified and well-trained teachers, compounded by the lack of a comprehensive system for their continuous professional development. The need for such system has become more acute with the introduction of the new curriculum starting 2023, which emphasizes student competencies and formative assessments that require changes in pedagogy and teaching-learning and assessment approaches. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged teachers' skills to quickly adopt remote and virtual teaching and assessments, provide social and psychological support for students, and address learning loss. Other key constraints include inadequate teaching-learning environments (e.g., information and communication technology [ICT] infrastructure, WASH facilities, libraries); and weak systems for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), quality assurance, and teacher support at decentralized levels. These also make primary education inaccessible for children with disabilities (students with disabilities accounted for 0.5% of the total primary students in 2020).

5. **Low levels of access and student learning in secondary education.** The system complexity increases in secondary education. Government schools account for less than 6.0% of all schools, with a wider variety of educational institutions offering secondary education. Moreover, 10 boards of intermediate and secondary education separately manage high-stake public examination systems (Secondary School Certificate [SSC] and Higher Secondary Certificate [HSC]). Additionally, students are streamed into different disciplinary areas (e.g., science, humanities, business). Access to secondary education has improved during the last decade—the transition rate from primary (grade 5) to secondary (grade 6) rose from 95.4% in 2016 to 96.4% in 2019, NER for secondary education (grades 6–10) from 49.5% in 2010 to 71.9% in 2020, and NER for higher secondary education (grades 11–12) from 19.1% in 2010 to 36.4% in 2020. However, the dropout rates in 2020 remain high at 35.8% among grade 6–10 students and about 21.2% among grades 11–12, which have apparently increased during the school closure in 2020–2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion of students with disabilities in secondary and higher secondary education is lower (0.3% in 2020) than that in primary education (para. 4). There were improvements in the results of the National Assessment of Secondary Students (NASS) between 2017 and 2019, but NASS did not provide information on the proportion of grade 6, 8, and 10 students who attained grade level proficiency in math, English, and Bangla.⁶ Negative impacts of the school closure on student learning are likely to be significant.

6. **Challenges in implementing new initiatives in secondary education.** To better prepare students for the rapidly changing requirements and demands of jobs in the context of 4IR, new initiatives have been ongoing in line with the strategies of the 8th Five Year Plan (July 2020– June 2025), including the (i) introduction of new competency-based curriculum and continuous assessments as part of the SSC and HSC examinations; (ii) delayed streaming of students into different disciplinary areas until grade 11; (iii) strengthening of science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) education and blended learning approaches; and (iv) introduction of pre-vocational and vocational education programs.⁷ The implementation of these initiatives requires an adequate number of qualified and well-trained teachers. Despite a significant increase in the

⁵ Schools in Bangladesh were physically closed in March 2020–September 2021 and January–February 2022. Various remote teaching-learning activities were organized at the national, local, and school levels during the school closure.

⁶ Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, MOE. 2021. *2019 National Assessment of Secondary Students (NASS): Public Reports*. Dhaka.

⁷ Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Planning Commission, General Economics Division. 2020. *8th Five Year Plan, July 2020–June 2025: Promoting Prosperity and Fostering Inclusiveness*. Dhaka.

number of students and secondary education institutions, the number of teachers has grown only moderately, resulting in shortages of qualified teachers especially for math, science, English, ICT, and business, particularly in rural areas.⁸ To enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession and quality of teachers, the Secondary Teacher Development Strategy was approved in 2019 but has yet to be implemented due to delays caused by the pandemic.⁹ Moreover, teaching-learning environments, M&E, quality assurance, and teacher support systems need to be improved to effectively implement the initiatives. Better alignment and coordination with madrasa education, and technical and vocational education is also crucial.

7. **Issues with special education for children with severe disabilities.** National education policies and programs promote the participation of children with mild and moderate disabilities in mainstream education under MOPME and MOE through early identification of special needs, adoption of specialized pedagogical techniques, creation of inclusive learning environments at school and in classroom, and liaison with parents and specialized services. By contrast, children with severe disabilities receive special education through programs managed by the Ministry of Social Welfare that cater to physically, visually, and hearing-impaired children, and through special education schools for those with autism and intellectual impairment run by nongovernment and private organizations. These programs and schools use curricula that are not aligned with those used in mainstream education nor standardized, limiting the possibility of scaling up and access to further study and training programs. Moreover, teachers' competencies, teaching methodology, school infrastructure and facilities are often found inadequate to meet individual needs of children with different types and degrees of disabilities.

8. **Asian Development Bank's assistance.** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been supporting pre-primary, primary, and secondary education in Bangladesh since the 1980s through a series of loans and technical assistance (TA) projects. Building on its long-term engagement in the sector, ADB's assistance has fostered systemic reforms to enhance learning outcomes, gender equality, system efficiency, and decentralized management, and has contributed to the introduction of results-based and sector-wide approaches into the sector, together with the other development partners.¹⁰ Against a background of the structural transformation driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and 4IR, the country partnership strategy for Bangladesh, 2021–2025 emphasizes the importance of improving human capital and employability with the support of digital and new technologies, while promoting inclusiveness and resilience. The strategy also stresses the need to enhance project readiness and timely implementation through continuous capacity building, knowledge exchange, and best practices.¹¹

9. This transaction TA facility will provide capacity building and policy advice to the ongoing Secondary Education Sector Investment Program Tranche 3, as well as project preparation support to ensuing projects, comprising (i) NextGen Secondary Education Program, (ii) Supporting Education for Children with Special Needs, and (iii) Supporting Fifth Primary Education Development Program. These projects are all in the education sector and require similar sector, technical, and due diligence assessments, and support for system strengthening and capacity development. The TA support is justified because the risks and weaknesses in the systems and

⁸ The number of students increased from about 7.9 million in 2010 to about 11 million in 2020 and secondary education institutions increased from about 20,200 in 2010 to 21,600 in 2020. The number of teachers increased from about 251,000 to about 297,000 in the same period.

⁹ Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education. 2019. *Secondary Teacher Development Strategy*. Dhaka.

¹⁰ ADB. 2013. *Proposed Multitranches Financing Facility to the People's Republic of Bangladesh: Secondary Education Sector Investment Program*. Manila.

¹¹ ADB. 2021. *Bangladesh, 2021–2025–Sustain Growth, Build Resilience, and Foster Inclusion*. Manila.

capacity, especially for procurement, financial management, safeguards, gender equality and social inclusion, identified during project preparation can be addressed more consistently throughout the project cycle. Moreover, it can facilitate timely access to knowledge and expertise, and advance practices and technologies particularly in new and emerging areas.

10. **Lessons from previous technical assistance operations.** Given the scale and complexity of Bangladesh's pre-primary, primary, secondary education systems, differentiated approaches to address capacity and knowledge gaps of various agencies and institutions at the national and decentralized levels are necessary. In the secondary education subsector, there are more than 10 directorates, departments, boards, and institutions under MOE, each assuming specialized functions. Specific needs of these organizations should be dealt with while strengthening system-level management, coordination, and governance. Additionally, flexibility should be built into the TA design to respond to evolving needs in rapidly changing environments.

B. Outputs and Activities

11. **Output 1: Design quality and readiness of ensuing projects strengthened.** The TA facility will support sector, technical, and due diligence assessments to conceptualize the ensuing projects and strengthen their design quality and readiness. Sector and technical assessments to be conducted include primary, secondary, and inclusive and/or special education sector assessments covering (i) education access, retention, and completion; (ii) qualifications, competencies, and professional development of teachers; (iii) curriculum, teaching-learning materials and practices, including blended learning approaches; (iv) student assessments and examinations; (v) school infrastructure and facilities, including digital infrastructure and facilities for children and people with disabilities; (vi) school and education system management and governance, including M&E and management information systems; and (vii) national education policies and strategies. Poverty, social, and gender analyses will be incorporated into these sector and technical assessments, and measures to promote gender equality and social inclusion will be identified. Moreover, social and environmental safeguards, climate change, fiduciary and governance, economic and financial due diligence will be carried out, and safeguard plans and/or frameworks, climate adaptation and mitigation measures, risk management and capacity development plans for the ensuing projects will be prepared. Additionally, feasibility studies of technical designs for school infrastructure and facilities will be undertaken, considering findings of climate and disaster risk and safeguards assessments and measures to promote gender equality and social inclusion, and support for preparing bidding documents will be provided.

12. **Output 2: Education sector programs, strategies, systems, and institutional capacity enhanced.** The TA facility will assist national level institutions involved in primary, secondary, inclusive and/or special education in formulating and updating gender-sensitive and socially inclusive sector programs and strategies which will be implemented under the ongoing and/or ensuing projects, in areas such as blended learning, education technologies, STEAM and climate education. The TA facility will also support the strengthening of systems (e.g., secondary, and higher secondary student examination systems; management information systems; teacher education, qualification, and professional development) and capacity of teachers and various institutions at the national and local levels to improve education quality, management, and governance which will be linked to the ongoing and/or ensuing projects. Seminars, workshops, training, and national and overseas study visits will be organized to introduce advance practices and technologies in the preparation of education sector programs and strategies, and the development of systems and institutional capacity. Support will also be provided to enhance project management capacity of executing and implementing agencies of the ongoing and ensuing projects.

C. Cost and Financing

13. The TA facility financing amount is \$1,500,000, which will be financed on a grant basis by ADB's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF-7). The key expenditure items are listed in Appendix 1. The government will provide counterpart support in the form of counterpart staff, meeting facilities, data and information, and other in-kind contributions. The government was informed that approval of the TA does not commit ADB to finance any ensuing project.

D. Implementation Arrangements

14. ADB will administer the TA facility. The TA activities for an ensuing project will start only after ADB approves the project concept paper for the ensuing project. The South Asia Social and Human Development Division (SAHS) will work closely with the executing and implementing agencies of the ongoing and ensuing projects for TA facility implementation. SAHS will select, manage, and evaluate consultants and supervise the consultants' outputs to be delivered for the ongoing and ensuing projects. The implementation arrangements are summarized in the table.

Implementation Arrangements			
Aspects	Arrangements		
Indicative implementation period	September 2022–September 2025		
Executing agency	Ministry of Education		
Implementing agencies	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Directorate of Technical Education, Directorate of Madrasa Education, Ministry of Education; Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education; Ministry of Social Welfare		
Consultants	To be selected and engaged by the Asian Development Bank		
	International consultants ^a	54 person-months	\$733,500
	National consultants ^a	111 person-months	\$576,800
Disbursement	The TA resources will be disbursed following the Asian Development Bank's <i>Technical Assistance Disbursement Handbook</i> (2020, as amended from time to time).		

^a The selection method will be indicated in the concept paper for each project.

Source: Asian Development Bank.

15. **Consulting services.** The TA facility will initially provide 165 person-months of consulting services to support the preparation of ensuing projects and implementation of ongoing projects. The technical expertise and duration of engagement in Appendix 2 are indicative and will be finalized prior to approval of each project concept paper in consultation with the government. Most consultants will be recruited using individual consultant selection method and deployed based on the requirements of each project. Individual consultants rather than consulting firms are considered appropriate because the timing and duration of deployment vary and coordination among consultants should be provided by ADB. Consulting firms will be recruited using quality- and cost-based selection method and simplified technical proposal, or for small assignments, using consultants' qualification selection method and simplified and/or biodata technical proposal. ADB will engage the consultants following the ADB Procurement Policy (2017, as amended from time to time) and its associated project administration instructions and/or staff instructions.¹²

¹² Terms of Reference for Consultants (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 3).

II. THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION

16. The President, acting under the authority delegated by the Board, has approved the provision of technical assistance not exceeding the equivalent of \$1,500,000 on a grant basis to the People's Republic of Bangladesh for Supporting Education Sector Projects, and hereby reports this action to the Board.

COST ESTIMATES AND FINANCING PLAN
(\$'000)

Item	Amount
Asian Development Bank^a	
1. Consultants	
a. Remuneration and per diem	
i. International consultants	733.5
ii. National consultants	576.8
b. Out-of-pocket expenditures	
i. International and local travel	71.8
ii. Surveys	30.0
iii. Training, seminars, and conferences	30.0
iv. Reports and communications	22.0
2. Training, seminars, and conferences	20.0
3. Contingencies	15.9
Total	1,500.0

Note: The technical assistance (TA) is estimated to cost \$1,600,000, of which contributions from the Asian Development Bank are presented in the table. The government will provide counterpart support in the form of counterpart staff, meeting facilities, data and information, and other in-kind contributions. The value of the government contribution is estimated to account for 6.3% of the total TA cost.

^a Financed by the Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance Special Fund (TASF-7).

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

PROJECTS UNDER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FACILITY

Indicative Consultants' Input Allocation (person-month)

Item	Total	SESEP complex	NSEP complex	ECSN low risk	PEDP complex
A. International					
Teacher development specialists	13.0		10.0	3.0	
Student assessment specialist	4.0	4.0			
Institutional development specialists	8.0		3.0	5.0	
Digital information technology specialist	3.0		3.0		
Primary education specialist	3.0				3.0
Education economist	3.0				3.0
Education technology specialist	3.0				3.0
Inclusive/special education specialist	3.0			3.0	
Curriculum development specialist	2.0			2.0	
Civil engineer	3.0			3.0	
Equipment specialist	3.0			3.0	
Monitoring and evaluation specialist	3.0			3.0	
Pool of experts	3.0		1.0	1.0	1.0
Subtotal (A)	54.0	4.0	17.0	23.0	10.0
B. National					
Teacher development specialists	20.0		15.0	2.0	3.0
Student assessment specialist	10.0	10.0			
Secondary education specialist	10.0	7.0	3.0		
Public finance specialist	7.0	4.0	3.0		
Institutional development specialists	14.0		7.0	7.0	
Digital information technology specialists	7.0		4.0		3.0
Inclusive/special education specialist	3.0			3.0	
Monitoring and evaluation specialists	6.0			3.0	3.0
Civil engineer	3.0			3.0	
Equipment specialist	3.0			3.0	
Procurement specialists	5.0	2.5	1.0	1.0	0.5
Financial management specialists	5.0	2.0	1.5	1.0	0.5
Environment specialists	6.0		2.5	2.5	1.0
Climate change specialists	3.0		1.0	1.0	1.0
Social development and gender specialists	3.0		1.0	1.0	1.0
Social safeguards specialists	3.0		1.0	1.0	1.0
Pool of experts	3.0		1.0	1.0	1.0
Subtotal (B)	111.0	25.5	41.0	29.5	15.0
Total (A + B)	165.0	29.5	58.0	52.5	25.0

ECSN = Supporting Education for Children with Special Needs, NSEP = NextGen Secondary Education Program, PEDP = Supporting Fifth Primary Education Development Program, SESIP = Secondary Education Sector Investment Program (Tranche 3).

Source: Asian Development Bank estimates.

LIST OF LINKED DOCUMENTS

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/LinkedDocs/?id=56088-001-TAReport>

1. Terms of Reference for Consultants
2. Periodic Financing Request Report: Secondary Education Sector Investment Program (Tranche 3)