

## Success in Human Capital Index

*Invest more in healthcare and education*

WE are happy to learn that Bangladesh has outperformed its largest South Asian neighbours, India and Pakistan, in the World Bank's Human Capital Index. The ranking, as the World Bank puts it, measures the human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by his or her 18th birthday depending on the condition of health and education sectors of a particular country where he or she lives. Bangladesh's progress has also outpaced both the South Asian average and lower-middle-income average in all but one criterion.

We recognise hard works and contributions of all stakeholders concerned, in spite of numerous constraints.

While we performed better than most of our neighbours, there's no room for complacency. We still lag behind countries like Sri Lanka that has done an impressive job in terms of having quality education and healthcare for its kids, thus, allowing them to unlock greater potentials than any of their South Asian counterparts.

In addition, Bangladesh's performance in tackling stunting—impaired growth and development of children—is also a matter of concern. A robust government intervention is needed to ensure that children receive sufficient and proper nutrition in their earliest age.

Despite our success, we have more work to do in order to allow our children to achieve their full potential. We have to invest heavily in our vast human capital by improving our healthcare, education and training systems, thus, preparing them in a better way for the challenges that they would face later. Our leadership should understand that such investment never fails to yield proportionate benefits.

## Bangladesh should seek ICCs intervention

*Myanmar "unwilling" to hold unbiased probe*

IN a report published recently, a UN special rapporteur—who has been barred from entering Myanmar since last December—said that the Myanmar government is "unable and unwilling" to investigate its abuses against Rohingyas. This just reinforces the fact that is already known—that the Myanmar government is not serious about holding the perpetrators of the heinous crimes, committed against the Rohingya community, accountable. It was clear from the very beginning, when Suu Kyi's government rejected independent international investigations into the alleged abuses and has commissioned its own probe. It was evident when they outright rejected the allegations made by a UN fact-finding committee which called for investigating Myanmar's top brass for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Although when the Japanese prime minister called Suu Kyi to hold a credible investigation into alleged human rights violations, Suu Kyi agreed on the importance of an "accurate and appropriate" investigation, we are not sure precisely how that would be done as the steps they have taken by far are limited and insufficient. Is there any other way for us but to request the International criminal court to intervene?

Meanwhile, the international response to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh remains severely underfunded. According to Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), USD 579 million is required to meet the urgent needs of the Rohingya refugees and the local host communities, who have opened up their homes to the refugees, until the end of the year. Thus, we hope the international community will gear up efforts to raise more funds for these refugees to cope with the many challenges they are facing.

# Creating a skilled girlforce

ASA TORKELSSON, SATHYA DORAISWAMY and ESHANI RUWANPURA

INTERNATIONAL Day of the Girl Child (IDGC), is commemorated on October 11 every year, to highlight the challenges girls face, promote their empowerment and fulfil their human rights. This year, under the theme "With her: A skilled girlforce", the day is dedicated to bringing together partners and stakeholders to advocate for, and draw attention and investments to, the most pressing needs and opportunities for girls to attain skills for employability. Globally we have witnessed too often that young girls are not given the same opportunities as boys, are excluded from political, economic and social arenas more and have little or no say in matters which impact on their lives. Many girls cannot realise their right to work, not only because they are not allowed to do so by their society, but also because they do not have the necessary skills which are sought after by different employment sectors.

Reflecting on how this year's theme for the International Day of the Girl Child applies to Bangladesh, it is easy to identify several points of convergence. To begin with, Bangladesh has a very young population with approximately 33 million girls below the age of 18 years. These girl children (as well as boy children) present a demographic window of opportunity for the country where, if the right investments are made

in their education, health and skills, Bangladesh can reap a demographic dividend in the near future. We also know that many of these girl children have limited opportunities to make decisions regarding their lives because of structural as well as personal factors: they often do not have the required skills to communicate, negotiate, think critically and stand up for their fundamental rights.

If we look at some key indicators for Bangladeshi girls, we see that while much has been achieved, more remains to be done: the enrolment rate for girls in secondary schools is relatively high at 66 percent but of this, approximately 38

to their families, communities and societies. However the world of work which these young girls will be entering into is heavily automated and requires a specific set of skills—skills which most of these girls unfortunately do not have. With such high levels of unemployment among female youth, it is clear that as duty bearers we have a responsibility to ensure young girls have the necessary skills to make an effective transition into the world of formal work as skilled workers, instead of those who will continue to work in the informal sector where they will be paid minimum wage and be vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

imparting life skills needs to begin at a very young age. It is only if these skills are ingrained in people that we can expect to see individuals who have a skills-set which can be used in a variety of settings: individuals who are able to negotiate when faced with challenging circumstances, individuals who can communicate effectively, individuals who are respectful of each other and individuals who will have the courage to stand up for their rights. In other words, individuals who have the necessary skills to fare well in an adult world and in the world of work.

The Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) module, approved by the Ministry of Education, is the first effective step that has been taken to reach young people when they are most impressionable. Imparting these skills to adolescent girls, coupled with basic livelihoods skills training, is even more important because not only will these girls have a set of transferable skills, but also some technical skills with which they can earn an income and support their families while continuing with their education. This holistic approach through which young adolescent girls will be given both life skills education and livelihoods training through the adolescent resource centres established by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs plays an important part in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage. Imparting life skills education to adolescent girls, especially through a structured setting—so that it becomes part and parcel of her everyday life—will no doubt contribute to a skilled girlforce. A skilled girlforce who will become active "agents of change" in their own communities and contribute to the economy, social justice, inclusive growth and overall development.

Wilber Wright said, "it is possible to fly without motors, but not without knowledge and skill". Giving adolescent girls knowledge and skills will make it possible for them to make that flight and reach their full potential.

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percent drop out without completing their education (BANBEIS 2016); the unemployment rate among female and male youth aged 15-29 years is 11 percent and 7 percent respectively (LFS 2016); similarly, the proportion of female and male youth aged 15-29 years, Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is heavily skewed at 51 percent and 9 percent respectively (LFS 2016); and finally, nearly 60 percent of women aged 20-24 years were married before the age of 18 years (BDHS 2014).

Young girls, especially those who remain in secondary and tertiary education, should ideally be preparing to enter the world of work, so that they can realise their full potential and contribute

It is against this backdrop the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provides life skills education, with a focus on preventing gender-based violence and providing information on sexual and reproductive health and rights through secondary schools and club-based interventions. The Generation Breakthrough (GB) project, funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) and the Global Programme to End Child Marriage funded by the European Union (EU) and the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom, targets young people, specifically very young adolescent girls and boys, based on the premise that

# Bangladesh and the World University Rankings

MILAN PAGON and SARWAR J MINAR

WITH unprecedented internationalisation of higher education, the world university rankings have become prominent globally and have significant impact on students' higher study decisions. Rankings portray the comparative position of a university nationally, regionally and internationally. The students, guardians, fresh and seasoned academics take rankings seriously to decide where to apply and the donor and funding agencies whom to award the fund as rankings reveal vital information on performance, strengths, and weaknesses of universities around the world.

There are various rankings, some are rigorous and professional while others are ad-hoc. The most popular professional rankings are the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU, also called Shanghai Ranking), the Quacquarelli Symonds Ranking (QS), the Times Higher Education Ranking (THE), the Ranking Web of Universities (RWU).

Unfortunately, most of the rigorous and popular world university rankings publish only the list of the top 500 or 1,000 universities in the world. On the other hand, the RWU publishes a list of almost all the universities in the world. Therefore, for countries like Bangladesh, the RWU is more relevant because other than Dhaka University and BUET, no Bangladeshi universities are included in the top 1,000 in other rankings.

All the rankings have critics (for instance, QS rankings are being criticised for relying too heavily on opinion survey as opposed to hard data). Despite various criticisms these rankings do converge to a large extent. Among the top 25 universities listed in the RWU, 18 are among the ARWU's top 25, 12 are among the QS's top 25, and 16 are among the THE's top 25. As the rankings of the RWU are very similar to the other rankings at the top, it is safe to assume that they would be similar in the other parts as well. In July 2018, the RWU included more than 27,000 universities worldwide. Given a high degree of convergence among these rankings we can thus consider the RWU to be a good approximation of what the rankings of other universities would be according to ARWU, QS and THE, if those rankings went below 500 or 1,000 top universities.

The RWU has been published by the Cybermetrics Lab, the largest scientific institution in Spain, sponsored by the European Commission since 2004 and claims to be the only ranking that is not done for commercial purposes. The RWU is not a ranking of university websites

and web design is totally irrelevant, taking web presence and visibility as indicators of global performance of a university in teaching, research, and perceived international prestige. The RWU measures the performance of universities with 4 key indicators: Presence—5 percent, Visibility (Impact)—50 percent, Transparency (Openness)—10 percent, and Excellence—35 percent, compiling data from reliable open data sources (Majestic, AhRef, Google Scholar).

Now that we have established that the RWU is the most useful ranking in our context, let's have a look at how Bangladeshi universities are doing according to this ranking. In July 2018 edition, 146 Bangladeshi universities and medical colleges were included. A closer

discontinued. Bangladesh was initially included in the ranking and then dropped from the list. When contacted, the Cybermetrics Lab responded that there were so many unclean profiles and duplicate entries that they had no choice but to drop Bangladesh's name. While this was embarrassing for the country, the problem doesn't end there. Individual researchers' profiles are still counted towards the rankings of the universities to which they belong. The unfortunate consequence is that some Bangladeshi university rankings are inflated due to unclean profiles or duplicate entries of their faculty members.

To better understand the issue, let us go into some details. The RWU uses GS database to measure scholarly work and

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serves as an example of what might happen if we do not pay adequate attention to our public profiles. The reason is that the author did not disable automatic updating in their GS profile. As a consequence, the system added others authors' works to their profiles, as long as those authors had the same last name and same first initial.

As previously mentioned, opening profile in GS database is voluntary, maintaining the profile is the responsibility of the author. The authors must be cautious about bad practices and clean their profiles periodically. Additionally, the institutions should monitor their members' profiles for intended (or unintended) incorrect or duplicate records. According to the RWU, any institution with these problems will be excluded from future editions of the ranking.

Rankings are useful and serve their purpose only if they are based on valid data. Following the rankings for 5 years, we can say that Bangladesh is waking up to the importance of rankings and GS profiles. The number of GS profiles has increased dramatically. Unfortunately, there are still many Bangladeshi scholars who create their profiles but do not keep them clean or even have duplicate profiles. It is in our own interest not to misrepresent our achievements. Only then the rankings will make sense and the students, guardians, academics, governments, and funding agencies can use the rankings confidently.

We are urging all Bangladeshi academicians to contribute to the validity of the RWU rankings by creating Google Scholar profiles and keeping them clean.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Awareness campaign to save Hilsa

The Hilsa—the national fish of Bangladesh—is a very important fish for us. Besides its great taste and flavour, it is also a great source of Omega 3 fatty acid. Large quantities of Hilsa have been seen available in the local markets the last few years.

However, once concern remains that fishermen are often catching Hilsa before they have matured properly. This, despite the government imposing various restrictions.

In order to ensure that this species of fish is not endangered, fishermen should stop catching Hilsa before they have properly matured.

For that, large scale awareness campaigns are badly needed.

Md Zillur Rahaman, Bhola



PHOTO: STAR



look at the top 10 Bangladeshi universities reveals that there are three private universities among them, the first is BRAC, the second is IUB, and the third is NSU. The other 7 are public universities (in order of the rank): BUET, University of Chittagong, Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Khulna University of Engineering & Technology, and Shahjalal University of Sciences & Technology. Dhaka University has traditionally been in the top 3 but it has now dropped to 28th position. We are confident that the DU authorities will look into the matter closely.

The data Cybermetrics Lab gathers in the process of rankings may also be used for other purposes. For instance, the RWU used to publish a "Ranking Web of Researchers" that ranked the top researchers by country according to their Google Scholar (GS) Citations. It ranked 56 countries worldwide, up until a year ago, when this ranking was

citations. A citation is a reference to a published research work. If a researcher uses another researcher's work as a source, the latter gets a citation. This is acknowledgement of others' work which upholds intellectual honesty and reflects the impact of research.

While GS is a very useful reference, both for publications and citations, it depends on the authors to create and maintain their public profiles. The problems can occur due to academic dishonesty or, more likely, a simple negligence. It is important and a matter of academic integrity to maintain a clean GS profile. Bad practices can have very negative consequences for the reputation of the individual, the institution, and the country. We came across a lecturer at a Bangladeshi private university, a PhD student, whose profile included 2,992 entries with 12,739 citations. That was more entries and citations than many Bangladeshi universities have as a whole. While this has since been corrected, it