



Improving the Human Development Index: The Bangladesh perspective

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than countries like India and Pakistan. One of the major achievements in education is reducing the drop-out rates from around 50 percent in 2005 to below 18 percent in 2019. Even though over the past 50 years, Bangladesh has made impressive progress in overall human development, the achievements have been uneven across several planes – socio-economic groups, regions, gender, and rural-urban divide, and so on. Such disparities are also prominent in various human development areas. Thus, in 2019, while 85 percent of the babies born to the richest 20 percent of the population were delivered by a skilled professional, the corresponding figure for the poorest quintile is only 32 percent. The same year, the literacy rate for the population aged 7 years and more was about 75 percent in Barisal, but only 60 percent in



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challenges, the Covid-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented human development crisis for Bangladesh. In the future, pandemics may appear as another emerging challenge. The global economic system has become more fragile and inward-looking because of the COVID-19 pandemic, global conflicts, and extreme nationalism. Bangladesh may adversely be affected by these emerging challenges. Similarly, while we celebrate the graduation of Bangladesh from a low-income country into a middle-income country, we should also be aware and mindful of its implications – lesser tariff advantages; higher imports, increased non-concessional aid or grant. These would be emerging challenges for enhancing human development in Bangladesh.

In conclusion, human development for everyone in Bangladesh is not a dream, but a reality. In January 1972, while he was returning from his captivity to an independent Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman described his homecoming as a journey from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from desolation to hope. Today, hopes are within the reach of Bangladesh to realize. The nation can build what has been achieved and can attain what once seemed unattainable. For days to come, the country will ensure a journey from deprivation to prosperity, from challenges to opportunities, from ideas to actions. And in this journey, if those who are the farthest behind are reached first, no one will be left behind.



gender disparities in human development. Even though gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary level enrolment, drop-out rates remain higher for girls than boys. At the tertiary level of education, the female rate of enrolment in 2017 was 17 percent, as opposed to 24 percent for their male counterparts. The female labor force participation rate in the country is only 36 percent, while that of males is 81 percent. The women's share of employment in senior and middle management was just about 12 percent in 2017.

Sylhet. In 2019, the mean years of schooling among girls in Bangladesh was slightly over 4 years, but that of boys was 6 years. Like any other country, Bangladesh also experiences

Even with all the phenomenal human progress over the years, Bangladesh still faces several human development challenges. Some of the challenges represent lingering challenges, like poverty; some deepening challenges, like climate change;

and some emerging challenges like pandemics.

In terms of lingering challenges, over the years, Bangladesh has been able to quantitatively expand its basic social services, yet the quality of such services has remained a lingering concern. This is true of health and educational services. Thus, expansions of services in many cases have been achieved with qualitative compromises. Given the current situation and the projected demographic dividend till 2030, ensuring jobs for people, particularly young people remain a lingering challenge. Over the years, even though remarkable progress has been made in the area of women's empowerment, women still face several deprivations. About 58 percent of women face domestic violence by their intimate partners. Furthermore,

for every 100 unemployed male youths, there are 150 female youths. Of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) graduates, only 8 percent are women. One in every three women does not have access to financial institutions with mobile banking services.

In terms of deepening challenges, inequality has become the defining issue of the Bangladeshi society. In Bangladesh, the Gini index of income, a measure of income inequality, has increased from 0.39 in the early 1990s to 0.48 in 2016, suggesting an increasingly uneven income distribution over time. But the inequalities have also expanded in non-income areas, such as health, education, ownership of natural resources, etc. as well. Furthermore, there are inequalities not only in terms of outcomes but also in terms of

opportunities – opportunities in health and education, as well as in productive resources, such as credit. Climate change-induced extreme weather events are estimated to have caused an estimated yearly loss of GDP of \$1.7 billion. Loss of arable lands and livelihoods, displacement of people, loss of agricultural production, and food insecurity are caused by an increased frequency and intensity of various natural disasters, induced by climate change. In the ultimate analysis, climate change is not only an environmental challenge, but it has become a deepening human development challenge for Bangladesh. The issue of governance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the institutional structure of Bangladesh remains a deepening challenge.

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will be left behind.



BGMEA SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIC VISION: 2030



BGMEA's Sustainability Strategic Vision 2030 outlines the key ESG priorities for the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh on its path towards sustainability. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this vision underscores BGMEA's commitment to fostering a more environmentally conscious and socially responsible future for the country's garment industry.

