

The future of work

Challenges and opportunities for youth employment



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There is no denying the fact that the greatest wealth of a nation is neither its geographical size nor its natural resources, but its skilled human resources. This is even truer in a highly populated, natural resource-scarce country like Bangladesh. Labour and entrepreneurship are two critically important ingredients of economic activities. But simple labour or half-hearted entrepreneurship cannot make economic activities dynamic—one needs human resources and innovative and creative entrepreneurship for that purpose. In other words, labour must become human capital.

There are three distinctive ways in which the human resources of a country contribute to its economic development. First, the skills and capabilities of humans can effectively and successfully utilise other means of production. In the absence of human resources, the mere presence of land, machinery, and raw materials is nothing but a collection of innate things. Second, in the development process, the impact and contributions of technologies are crucial. But one requires appropriate human resources to properly use those technologies. In today's world of technological and digital revolutions, capable and relevant human resources are a must. Third, in the process of human civilisation, the inventive power, creativity, and innovation of humans have played a major role. When the labour force of a country acquires these traits, it transforms itself into relevant human capital.

In developed countries, labour, due to higher labour productivity, enjoys a larger share of national income. For example, in the US, the share of labour income in the country's national income is 62 percent. On the other hand, in Mexico, a developing country, the share of labour income in total national income is only 35 percent—the underlying reason being lower labour productivity. Viewed from yet another angle, in developed countries, labour has been transformed into human capital, while in the developing world, labour is yet to become human resources.

The digital revolution has changed the world of work, creating new demand for newer skills. In recent times, knowledge-intensive commodity trade accounts for nearly 50 percent of the total global commodity trade. Therefore, people with the skills and resources to use technology and create value can thrive in today's digital world. Globally, 133 million new high skill jobs have emerged by 2024, but 75 million jobs might have been displaced by automation and new technologies. Among the new roles expected to experience increasing demand are data scientists and analysts, e-commerce and social media specialists, training and development experts, innovation managers, AI and machine learning specialists, big data specialists, information security analysts, and process automation experts. There is no doubt that in the future world of work, new forms of human resources will be needed.

With that reality in mind, different countries have been remodelling their entire education systems. They are refining their academic programmes, syllabuses, and teaching and learning methods—emphasising science, technology, engineering, and medicine-based education (STEM). In China, 40 percent of graduates are in STEM

skills (70 percent), and creative thinking (63 percent).

Today, the youth labour force in Bangladesh is about 27 million, representing 36 percent of the total labour force of the country. About 2 million young people are unemployed, accounting for 79 percent of the total unemployed population. The unemployment rate

developed in Bangladesh, identifying both opportunities and deficits. In preparing such a report, the ongoing demands of domestic entrepreneurs must be kept in mind. Combining these two, a human resource plan for the country should be formulated and aligned with the overall national plan.

Second, a comprehensive list of future job opportunities that may arise in the outside world needs to be prepared. In that context, the impact of digital evolution must be considered. Along with this, it should be identified what kinds of skills would be needed for those job opportunities.

Third, an evaluation must be conducted on the country's educational structure—academic programmes, syllabuses, teaching and learning methods, physical and educational facilities, and so on. The objective of this assessment would be to determine whether the current educational system can meet the country's human resource demand as outlined in the human resource plan. In light of this, the entire educational system must be overhauled, incorporating information technology as well as artificial intelligence. In developing such an educational structure, on the one hand, focus should be placed on the history, culture, and heritage of Bangladesh, while on the other, lessons should be drawn from the experiences and achievements of other countries.

Fourth, to make human resource development effective, necessary training must be pursued continuously to ensure that knowledge acquired through education and skills built so far are up-to-date, modern, timely, and relevant. Such training is necessary not only for those in jobs but also for teachers and trainers. In education, academic programmes, teaching methods, and educational tools have

been rapidly changing. Therefore, knowledge and experiences from the outside world can play an effective role in these areas.

Fifth, specific programmes may be undertaken to improve skills. These include strengthening industry-academic partnerships, developing on-the-job mentorship, organising affordable in-house training, offering skill-based incentives and bonuses, providing language training programmes, utilising government skill development initiatives, and partnering with local NGOs and training providers.

Sixth, the above framework for human resource development requires regular monitoring, close assessments, and objective evaluations. Based on the results obtained, the human resource development framework needs periodic reviews. Such a review may lead to changes, extensions, and refinements of the framework.

Seventh, over the past 25 years, the education budget of Bangladesh has always been less than 2 percent of GDP, and in 2025, it stands at 1.7 percent of GDP. Similarly, during the same period, the health budget has always been less than 1 percent of GDP. In contrast, India spends 5 percent of its GDP on education and 4 percent on health. In Vietnam, the education expenditure-to-GDP ratio is 4 percent, while the health expenditure-to-GDP ratio is 5 percent. Bangladesh should spend 4-6 percent of its GDP on education and 5-7 percent on health.

The world is changing, and so are societies and humans. Changes have also been occurring in human aspirations and expectations. As a result, the demands for human resources and their supply have also been evolving. Bangladesh must be prepared to effectively utilise its one and only unique wealth—its human resources, which holds the key to our future progress, achievements, and development.



FILE ILLUSTRATION: ORCHID CHAKMA

fields. The relevant figure for India is 30 percent. In the contemporary world, human resource development emphasises five Cs—cognitive skill, communication, connectivity, collaboration, and coordination.

It goes without saying that in the context of the future world of work and the necessary skills for that world, this perspective is extremely important and relevant for Bangladesh. What is the Bangladesh scenario in these contexts? In global comparison, Bangladesh ranked 113th out of 141 countries in the Global Knowledge Index 2024. In the Global Innovation Index, it ranked 106th out of 133 countries. The top five skills rising in demand in Bangladesh are teamwork and leadership skills (93 percent), analytical skills (89 percent), technological literacy (81 percent), critical thinking and problem-solving

among the youth is about 7 percent. About 8 million young people are not in education, employment, or training (NEET)—a lost potential for the country. Joblessness among university graduates is on the rise—from 0.25 million in 2013 to 0.90 million in 2023, a more than three-fold increase. By levels of education, the unemployment rate is the highest among university graduates—the joblessness rate among them is 13 percent.

In tomorrow's world, Bangladeshi youths will have to compete not only with their peers inside the country but also with youths from the outside world. Therefore, with that objective in mind, the following issues must be stressed.

First, an assessment profile must be prepared regarding what kinds of skills are currently being

A community-driven approach to restoring law and order



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The popular uprising that led to the downfall of the former regime has left law and order in a state of decline. Reports indicate an increase in mob violence, extortion, and the rise of unruly factions. The police force, previously aligned with the regime, largely withdrew from its duties following the uprising as a result of widespread public resentment and retaliatory actions against law enforcement personnel.

The key challenge now is how to restore the police force's effectiveness while also exploring alternative measures to address the law enforcement gap.

Public dissatisfaction and fear of retribution have prevented many police officers from returning to duty, particularly those who were directly involved in state-led repression. The first step in addressing this crisis is to rebuild police confidence by ensuring that law-abiding officers are not held accountable for the actions of a few.

Direct engagement with the police force is essential for restoring morale and encouraging participation. Organising interactive, day-long workshops at all sub-district police stations and district headquarters—attended by senior officials, political leaders, and representatives of professional bodies and the community—can facilitate dialogue, provide a platform for police personnel to express concerns, and foster trust between law enforcement and the public.

Historically, rural Bangladesh has relied on self-organised crime prevention mechanisms. *Chowkidars* (watchmen) patrolled villages, with residents often taking turns to monitor security. This informal system, rooted in communal responsibility, ensured safety in areas with limited police presence.

Over time, modern governance has weakened these traditional structures. However, the concept of community-based defence remains deeply ingrained in our culture. Following August 5, citizens

quickly mobilised to protect their neighbourhoods, including guarding Hindu temples during Durga Puja to prevent attacks. This underscores the untapped potential of community-driven security initiatives. Strengthening these efforts through structured programmes can help bridge the law enforcement gap.

Community policing and civilian-led defence strategies are not merely theoretical—they have been successfully implemented in countries like the US, UK, and Australia. International examples from conflict zones further illustrate their effectiveness. During Egypt's 2011 revolution, police abandonment led to the emergence of "popular committees," volunteer neighbourhood watch groups that stepped in to prevent looting. Similarly, in Nigeria, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) mobilised over 26,000 community members to assist the military against Boko Haram, providing intelligence and securing towns.

In Bangladesh, when the regular police force collapsed, Ansar units safeguarded key sites, including police stations, traffic junctions, and Dhaka's international airport. In rural areas, VDP volunteers protected religious minorities from communal violence. Additionally, student-led community networks played a crucial role in maintaining order, stepping in as traffic controllers and night patrols to prevent looting.

These civic initiatives underscore that, with proper motivation and organisation, community members can effectively uphold basic law and order, at least temporarily, preventing anarchy in times of instability. They highlight how community-driven security efforts can reduce crime, protect neighbourhoods, and support overstretched official forces. By leveraging local knowledge and trust, these initiatives respond swiftly and adaptively to security threats at the grassroots level.

In Bangladesh, community

policing structures exist but remain largely ineffective due to insufficient government support. The Gram Police Act of 2006 integrated *Chowkidars* into the Union Parishad as Gram Police, yet their role has been limited by inadequate resources and oversight. In contrast, the Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP)—a well-trained paramilitary force specialising in both urban and rural security—has proven its effectiveness during crises.

A community-driven law enforcement strategy can benefit all key institutions if properly structured. The police, seeking to restore public trust, can enhance their legitimacy through community partnerships. Ansar-VDP, already embedded in local communities, is eager for greater empowerment. The military supports any initiative that stabilises the nation without requiring prolonged deployment. Coordinating their roles—police providing legal oversight, Ansar-VDP handling grassroots security, and the military serving as an emergency strike force—will be essential.

To ensure smooth collaboration, the interim government must clearly define responsibilities—community volunteers and Ansar-VDP should manage neighbourhood watch and basic security, the police should focus on investigations and enforcement, and the military should remain on standby for exceptional threats. Currently, the military is engaged in routine patrols and guard duties—tasks that do not require specialised training and risk overextending personnel. A more effective approach would delegate these duties to civil defence units, allowing the military to focus on rapid-response operations.

Formation of civil defence units: Comprising Village Police, VDP, BNCC, and local volunteers, these units can be stationed in key areas like markets and residential neighbourhoods.

Regular patrolling: Lightly armed Ansar and police personnel can conduct patrols along highways and transport routes to deter crime and ensure safe passage.

Rapid response teams: Military units, special police forces, and armed Ansar battalions can be positioned strategically to intervene swiftly based on intelligence from patrol teams.

This multi-layered security model would restore stability, enhance public confidence, and reduce the military's burden, allowing it to focus on strategic operations rather than routine law enforcement. This clarity will prevent inter-agency friction and ensure institutional support.

Bangladesh's deeply polarised political landscape presents a major challenge. Political factions may oppose community policing, fearing it could be leveraged against them. Additionally, there is a risk that local political groups could exploit community defence forces to target rivals under the pretext of security. Maintaining strict non-partisanship

through transparent oversight and independent monitoring is crucial to preventing the formation of party-affiliated militias.

Globally, civilian involvement in law enforcement has sometimes resulted in mob justice. For instance, Nigeria's CJTF, despite its effectiveness, faced allegations of extrajudicial killings and abuse of power. Continuous monitoring, strict regulations, and immediate enforcement are essential. Community initiatives must be closely supervised, and any misconduct should be swiftly addressed through transparent reporting. The media plays a crucial role in documenting and exposing

violations to ensure accountability.

For this strategy to succeed, widespread community involvement and backing from non-partisan civil organisations are vital. A well-organised civil defence system can help restore law and order, enhance public safety, and promote collaboration between law enforcement and local communities. A community-driven security model is not merely a necessity but an opportunity to create a more accountable, transparent, and effective law enforcement system that serves the people. It can be equally effective during peacetime, times of crisis, and electoral periods.

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যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন আগ্রহী প্রার্থীদেরকে তাদের জীবনবৃত্তান্ত, প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্র এবং পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ০২ (দুই) কপি ছবিসহ আগামী ০৮.০৪.২০২৫ খ্রি. তারিখের মধ্যে ডাকযোগে পরিচালক (প্রশাসন), স্বাধীনতা ভবন, ৮৮ মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা এর বরাবর আবেদন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

আইন উপদেষ্টা পদের জন্য যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা এবং শর্তাবলী:

- ১। আগ্রহী প্রার্থীকে আইনে ডিগ্রিধারী এবং অবসরপ্রাপ্ত সচিব/অতিরিক্ত সচিব হতে হবে; অথবা
- ২। আগ্রহী প্রার্থীকে অবসরপ্রাপ্ত বিজ্ঞ জেলা জজ হতে হবে;
- ৩। আগ্রহী প্রার্থীকে মোকদ্দমার (সিভিল মামলা, রিট মামলা ইত্যাদি) জবাব প্রস্তুতির বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে;
- ৪। আগ্রহী প্রার্থীকে বিভিন্ন প্রকার চুক্তিপত্র বা আমমোক্তার নামার ডাফটিং প্রস্তুতির বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে;
- ৫। সাপ্তাহিক ও সরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত প্রতি কর্মদিবস অফিস করার মানসিক প্রস্তুত থাকবে হবে;
- ৬। আলোচনা সাপেক্ষে সম্মানি নির্ধারিত হবে।

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