



## POLICY BRIEF

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### Gender Based Education

**1. Introduction:** The Vision 21 supports quality Education for the citizens of Bangladesh. The education sector's goal is to achieve equitable access to relevant and quality education and training that enhances efficiency and effectiveness at all levels for all Bangladeshis irrespective of caste, race and sex. The SDG (SDG-4) advocated for quality education for all the citizens. Government of Bangladesh has formulated the National Education Policy 2010, taking various projects to educate the people of all race, class and sex as per provisions of the Constitution. The education policy 2010 is formulated to equip the nation to acquire the qualities and skills that will strengthen Bangladesh to work with equal capacity and pace with the global community. But mere educating the boys alone and keeping aside about 50% of the population is not a way to develop the country and make it educated. Therefore, initially a stipend program is initiated throughout the country which intends to promote girl's attendance at schools.

**2. Background:** Gender equality in education sector in Bangladesh has progressed tremendously over the past decades. After the independence of Bangladesh, the number of girl's enrolment in different educational institutions was very low. Different attempts were made to increase the percentage of enrolment in different educational institutions. The first piloting was initiated by UNDP in 1982 in Shaharasti Upazila in Chandpur District. One Upazila was added in the list each year and soon development partners, NORAD, USAID participated in the stipend program with their own policy and guidelines. In this way, the program continued upto 1993 and all the Upazilas were included in the list. The success of the piloting of USAID, NORAD and USAID encouraged major development partners like World Bank and Asian Development Bank. In 1993, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Government of Bangladesh took different projects and included the whole of Bangladesh in three different programs.

**3. Enrolment situation in Bangladesh:** The stipend policy for the female students had amazing impact on female students' enrolment rate in Primary and Secondary schools.

**(a) Enrolment in the Primary Schools and Ebtedayee Madrassa:** Table 1 below shows that the annual gross enrolment ratio (GER) and net enrolment ratio (NER) for the period has been increasing steadily. The NER, both for male students and female students, increased over the period 2005 to 2018. A close look through table-1 reveals that the NER for female students was always higher than the male students. In 2005, the NER for boys was 84.6%, which is increased to 97.55% in 2018. The NER for girls was 90.1% in 2005, which was increased to 98.16% in 2018. The situation is not significantly different in the Secondary Schools.



**Table – 1**, below also gives a picture of primary equivalent madrassa level throughout the country. If we compare the percentage of girls enrolled in the ebtadyee madrassa, the percentage is slightly different. Girls' enrolment is slightly less there, yet it is much nearer to half of half of total ebtadayee enrolment. Another difference is that the percentage is almost stagnant and remains within the range, 47.27% to 50.94%. It is increased initially, which was again come down below 50% after 2015. The number of students is increased continually. This indicates that the females students in all the educational institutions at the Primary and equivalent level is increasing throughout the country.

**Table - 1**

<b>Enrolment rate in Primary Education and Ebtedayee Madrassa 2005-2018</b>										
Sl #	Year	Gross Enrolment Rate (%)			Net Enrolment Rate (%)			Ebtedayee Madrasa		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Total	Girls	% of Girls
1	2005	91.2	96.2	93.7	84.6	90.1	87.2	844523	399259	47.28
2	2006	92.9	103	97.7	87.6	94.5	90.9	846092	399947	47.27
3	2007	93.4	104.6	98.8	87.8	94.7	91.1	847661	400635	47.26
4	2008	92.8	102.9	97.6	87.9	90.4	90.8	849230	401323	47.26
5	2009	100.1	107.1	103.5	89.1	99.1	93.9	850799	402011	47.25
6	2010	103.2	112.4	107.7	92.2	97.6	94.8	852368	402699	47.24
7	2011	97.5	105.6	101.5	92.7	97.3	94.9	676498	344580	50.94
8	2012	101.3	107.6	104.4	95.4	98.1	96.7	676398	344580	50.94
9	2013	106.8	110.5	108.6	96.2	98.4	97.3	676398	344580	50.94
10	2014	104.6	112.3	108.4	96.6	98.8	97.7	676398	344580	50.94
11	2015	105	113.4	109.2	97.1	98.8	97.7	519997	261328	50.26
12	2016	109.3	115	112.1	97.01	98.8	97.96	572962	277086	48.36
13	2017	108.1	115.4	115.4	97.66	98.29	97.97	619185	301138	48.63
14	2018	110.32	118.3	114.23	97.55	98.16	97.85	688169	344078	49.99

**Source-** (a) Directorate of Primary Education (APSC 2018) and  
(b) Bangladesh Education Statistics, 2018.

The Bangladesh Education Statistics (BES) shows the percentage of rural girl student in the government primary schools is less than the urban primary school. This indicates that the need to support the rural student should be continued.

**Table – 1 (a):** Rural-Urban primary distribution shown in BES 2018

<b>Rural-Urban primary student distribution</b>			
Area	Govt. Primary School		
	Total	Girls	% Girls
Rural	70544	40159	56.93
Urban	21732	12417	57.14
Total	92276	52576	56.98



The percentage of boys in both Primary and Secondary level is less than the girls. It is the opinion of the policy makers in the Ministry of Education and development partners that continuation of stipend for a large number of students encourages the poor girls. But the poor boys do not get a similar chance to be educated, and so some of the extremely poor boys fails to be educated. To overcome the situation, Government of Bangladesh, in consultation with the development partners has developed a questionnaire containing 45 questions. Government is planning to include the ultra-poor boys and girls in the stipend list. However, students living in the Island, Haor and Hilly areas will get 100% support. In this list, the all the Upazilas (26) in Hilly areas and 16 Upazilas from different Char, Haor and Islands are included.

**Table – 2: Enrolment of girl students at Secondary School by Gender 1995 – 2018**

<b>Enrolment and Teachers at Secondary School by Gender 1995-2018</b>							
<b>Sl #</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Teachers</b>			<b>Enrolment of girls (%)</b>		
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Female %</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Girl</b>	<b>% of Girls</b>
1	1995	140059	19436	13.88	5115461	2402784	46.97
2	1996	145188	20198	13.91	5585806	2627073	47.03
3	1997	157077	22334	14.22	6124325	2921560	47.70
4	1998	165213	24106	14.59	6769078	3464742	51.18
5	1999	173897	25867	14.87	7236939	3758823	51.94
6	2000	174146	26290	15.10	7646885	4020237	52.57
7	2001	183277	30196	16.48	7887010	4196097	53.20
8	2002	186949	31311	16.75	8162134	4360778	53.43
9	2003	206557	39580	19.16	8126362	4322568	53.19
10	2004	214673	47255	22.01	7503247	3925110	52.31
11	2005	238158	48290	20.28	7398552	3868014	52.28
12	2006	239431	48615	20.30	7419179	3876914	52.26
13	2008	209496	46788	22.33	6819748	3661457	53.69
14	2009	213482	53363	25.00	7356793	3796538	51.61
15	2010	218011	50334	23.09	7465774	3979676	53.31
16	2011	223555	52001	23.26	7510218	4026374	53.61
17	2012	221043	53862	24.37	7937235	4229292	53.28
18	2013	229575	55846	24.33	8501442	4519091	53.16
19	2014	232994	58969	25.31	9160365	4875084	53.22
20	2015	243117	61701	25.38	9743072	5193962	53.31
21	2016	243553	62496	25.66	10184364	5476354	53.77
22	2017	243880	62511	25.63	10330695	5580387	54.02
23	2018	234165	60070	25.65	10475100	5655381	53.99

**Source:** Bangladesh Education Statistics 2018



**(b) Enrolment in the Secondary Schools:** A close look through Table 2 above reveals that in 1995, the percentage of female students in the Secondary School was 46.97%, while male students were 53.03%. Although both the number of boys and girls enrolled in the primary schools were increased, the rate of increase of girls is much faster compared to boys. The percentage of female enrolment exceeded boys in 1998, which is continued till 2018. This indicates that the stipend system has a positive impact in the increase of girls' enrolment, but the impact of level of awareness is no less important. In 2018, the percentage of girls' enrolled was 53.99%.

**Table – 3: Enrolment of girl students at College (class xi-xii) 2006 – 2018**

<b>Number of College student (class xi-xii) by Gender 2006-2018</b>						
<b>Sl #</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>All College male and female students</b>				
		<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>% Male</b>
1	2006	1371657	570510	41.59	801147	58.41
2	2008	1855633	820810	44.23	1034823	55.77
3	2009	2145880	956050	44.55	1189830	55.45
4	2010	2394275	1074946	44.90	1319329	55.10
5	2011	2915851	1383334	47.44	1532517	52.56
6	2012	3044320	1384643	45.48	1659677	54.52
7	2013	3194787	1500520	46.97	1694267	53.03
8	2014	3506383	1667839	47.57	1838544	52.43
9	2015	3678869	1709171	46.46	1969698	53.54
10	2016	3767784	1785190	47.38	1982594	52.62
11	2017	3872960	1873619	48.38	1999341	51.62
12	2018	4278441	2046479	47.83	2231962	52.17

Source: Bangladesh Education Statistics 2018

**(c) Enrolment in the College:** The enrolment situation in the college is different. The numbers of both the male and female students were increased in colleges, but unlike the Primary Education and Secondary level, the percentage of female students is always less than the number of male students. Percentage of female and male students was 41.59% and 58.41 respectively in 2006, which were changed to 47.83% and 52.17% respectively in 2018. This reveals that over all enrolment in Primary Schools, High Schools and Colleges did not change in the same scale. This indicates that the number of female students is decreased for different reasons.



**(d) Drop-out at Different level:**

**Table-4: Percentage fail/drop out from Secondary to College 2008-2018**

<b>Percentage fail/drop out from Secondary School to College 2008-2018</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>All College students</b>		<b>Secondary School students</b>		<b>Drop out</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>% Total</b>	<b>% Female</b>
2008	1855633	820810	6819748	3661457	72.79	77.58
2009	2145880	956050	7356793	3979676	70.83	75.98
2010	2394275	1074946	7465774	4026374	67.93	73.30
2011	2915851	1383334	7510218	4229292	61.17	67.29
2012	3044320	1384643	7937235	4519091	61.65	69.36
2013	3194787	1500520	8501442	4875084	62.42	69.22
2014	3506383	1667839	9160365	5193962	61.72	67.89
2015	3678869	1709171	9743072	5476354	62.24	68.79
2016	3767784	1785190	10184364	5580387	63.00	68.01
2017	3872960	1873619	10330695	5580387	62.51	66.42
2018	4278441	2046479	10475100	5655381	59.16	63.81

**Table – 4** above details the percentage of drop or fail from Secondary to College over the period from 2008 to 2018. The percentage of fail/drop-out over the period decreases continually. Although there is no available data about the percentage of students (male and female) fail in SSC and HSC, the SSC and HSC results of different indicates that the percentage of students fail varies least. In that case, it can be safely concluded the percentage of drop out decreased over time. It was 77.98% in 2008, which has been decreased to 63.81%. It is seen from the different BISE results of different years that the comparative result of girls is better than the boys. If it is taken that the percentage of students fail are as same for boys and girls, yet the percentage of girls' drop out is more. This needs a policy measure to improve the over all situation.

**Table-5** below shows the percentage of drop in Primary Education, Secondary and Higher Secondary level. The Primary Education does not have separate data for girls. But it can be assumed that the drop-out is same for both boys and girls, as the schools are closely set, the question of safety and security for girls is not acute. But the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) has been increasing from 2009 (93.90% in Primary Education, 54.01% in Secondary Level, and 17.81% in Higher Secondary Level) to 2018 (97.85% in Primary Education, 74.68% in Secondary Level, and 33.90% in Higher Secondary Level). In spite of improvement, it is clearly seen that only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the female gets chances to continue their education at the higher secondary level. On the other hand, the drop-out situation has also been improved over the period from 2009 (45.10% in Primary Education, 64.94% in Secondary Level, and 42.48% in Higher Secondary Level) to 2018 (18.60% in Primary Education, 40.19% in Secondary Level, and 21.21% in Higher Secondary Level). A deep analysis of the figures reveals that when a girl crosses her puberty, a large number of them are dropped. This dropping may be caused due to poverty, early marriage, communication and/or accommodation problem, safety and security issue and societal and religious outlook.



**Table-5: Percentage drop out in Primary Education, Secondary and Higher Secondary Level from 2008-2018**

Percentage drop out in Primary Education, Secondary and Higher Secondary level						
Year	Primary Education		Secondary Level		Higher Secondary	
	NER Total	% Drop	NER Girls	% Drop Girls	NER Girls	% Drop Girls
2009	93.90	45.10	54.01	64.93	17.81	42.48
2010	94.80	39.80	55.09	53.57	19.60	37.88
2011	94.90	29.70	59.94	56.43	21.40	34.80
2012	97.70	26.20	63.58	52.36	24.98	23.29
2013	97.30	21.40	64.16	48.89	28.40	23.16
2014	97.70	20.90	67.74	47.67	27.82	17.05
2015	97.70	20.40	71.85	45.92	26.24	24.60
2016	97.96	19.20	73.10	42.19	36.25	23.83
2017	97.97	18.85	74.38	41.52	36.37	22.99
2018	97.85	18.60	74.68	40.19	33.90	21.21

**Source:** Bangladesh Education Statistics (BES)

**(e) Enrolment in University and similar institution:** The situation at the University and other similar Institutes are detailed in Table 6. The data for the private and public Universities are not available in Bangladesh Education Statistics throughout the period, except 2018. It is natural that the number of students in the Technical Institute be less than male students, but percentage of female student in the professional educational education is less than the male raises question. Because, it is the believed that Teaching and Professional education position as a profession is attractive to girls. But figures in Table 6 reveal that the number of students is increasing over times. This indicates that the number of female students is decreased for different reasons, which requires a thorough study.

**Table-6: Enrolment at Post Graduate level**

Nature of Institution, Enrolment at Graduation level 2006-2018						
Year	Professional & Teacher		Technical		University	
	Number	% Female	Number	% Female	Number	% Female
2008	25717	41.16	107094	23.62	N/A	N/A
2009	21657	34.48	113078	23.76	N/A	N/A
2010	23873	34.13	102581	22.90	N/A	N/A
2011	25856	36.42	136853	27.02	N/A	N/A
2012	34127	37.23	165474	27.21	N/A	N/A
2013	43795	38.45	182662	28.28	N/A	N/A



2014	47685	39.03	189174	27.43	N/A	N/A
2015	47990	39.07	208874	23.94	N/A	N/A
2016	48030	35.28	209656	23.95	N/A	N/A
2017	76711	45.53	216376	24.26	N/A	N/A
2018	55881	46.00	264262	24.76	349045	33.94

A close view of the overall situation indicates that as the students are progressing to higher class, the number of female student decreases. The figures from Table 1 to Table 6 reveal that in spite of increase of number in absolute number, the percentage of female student is decreased significantly after Higher Secondary level. Though identification of possible causes requires a thorough study, the possible causes may be (a) unavailability of educational institution nearby their accommodation, (b) safety and security of female student at higher level, (c) Guardians tension to get their daughter married, and (d) scarcity in the job market and religious and societal outlook.

The total number students at College level is 4278441 of which 2046479 are female, i.e., 47.83% of the total. Though the number is a little less than 50%, the number of female student in rural areas is more in percentage (49.15%), compared to total female students in the urban colleges (47.35%). The possible causes may be that the male students at higher classes gets better accommodation facility, ensured safety and security, partial earning scope compared to female student. The societal and religious outlook is a major extra hurdle for the female students. This is revealed in Table – 6(a).

**Table 6(a): Rural and Urban Distribution.**

	Total	Female	% Female
Rural	1136158	558469	49.15
Urban	3142283	1488010	47.35
Total	4278441	2046479	47.83

**4. Facts about gender gap:** Pamela Jakiela & Susannah Hares worked to find out the causes behind gender gap and identified 5 facts. These are:

**Fact 1: Worldwide, women are more educated today than at any point in history, but we are still not as educated as men,** which indicates that the level of education attained by women has gone up but the education in gender gap still remains.

**Fact 2: Gender gaps rarely persist in educated countries:** there is a negative relationship between the education and gender gap.

**Fact 3: Gender gaps often get worse before they get better,** which indicates that gaps widen substantially before they start to close.

**Fact 4: Test scores don't tell us enough about gender gaps,** which indicate that the girls do not get similar support like boys even though they score better in the tests.



**Fact 5: Gender equality in education is not enough**, which indicates that the elimination of the gender gap in education does not produce equal life outcomes for women.

The above facts clearly mention that the education should be targeted to the whole nation, not to a part thereof and gender equality should be ensured at all levels.

**5. Need for Policy attention:** The Academic facilities in a country facilitate education, make its population efficient in technical and general education, but cannot ensure their employment. A good number of male are now working abroad both in technically expert position and as general labor. Bangladesh is now enjoying the high **Demographic Dividend** and a good number of its population is at working age. To keep the female education at least at the existing position, policies should be framed to educate girls in such areas, where female students can have their education in the area of interest. The data from the “Labour Force Survey 2016-17” published by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2018, reveals that a number of gaps have been chalked up where the country should focus on to gain a boost in economic productivity making the most of the “window of opportunity” (Seikh Farid, Daily Star, June 11, 2020). Seikh Farid cited three areas to pay attention. These are:

(a) The labor force supplies in Bangladesh declined gradually from 59.3 percent in 2010 to 58.2 percent in 2016-17, but the absolute number of unemployed persons increased from 2.6 million in 2010 to 2.7 in 2016-17.

(b) The labor force participation in Bangladesh is not focused on the basis of gender, which hinders getting the benefit of demographic dividends. Out of 58.2% labor force, only 48.7% are from people aged 15-29, which contains 31.6% share in the total labor force. That means over half of population is doing nothing and about 10.6% unemployed are youth. It may be mentioned that the percentage of unemployed person is less than 4.19%<sup>1</sup> in 2019.

(c) The women are not getting much scope of being employed. Only 36.3% women participate in the labour force compared to the 80.5% participation rate of men. Nearly 81% of women who do not participate in the labor force are not being able to work outside the home because of their role as homemakers.

**6. Policy issues:** Policy Issues are essential for female education and their overall development. The suggested policy issues are:

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<sup>1</sup> [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com) >international.Bangladesh



- (a) Bangladesh has a good progress in female education at junior level. So, if Bangladesh wants to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, the government should prioritize expansion of labor market and creating mass employment through formulation of economic policies targeting the female population.
- (b) Over half of young population (aged 15-29) is doing nothing. They do not even take the opportunity to get employed by availing the opportunities. These are mostly from the tertiary level students. Policy matter should be aimed at creating opportunities so that this class gets chances to be employed, and education should be designed in that area.
- (c) Different teaching position in the Primary, High, College and University level, both at rural and urban areas showed a low number of women employed. Policy level should think over it, look deep into the problem and take policy so that women are employed in positions suitable to them.
- (d) The students at the tertiary level are in most of the cases do not get chance proper opportunity to be employed. This is because; they do not have quality internship. So the universities should focus more on "subject related organizations", so that both the students and the organizations are well benefitted and contribute to the country's economic output.
- (e) It is an accepted fact that there exist gender gaps in terms of nature of employment. Addressing the gender gaps in terms of these economic indicators is a must, if we want to harness maximum benefits of the demographic dividend in Bangladesh.
- (f) Introduction of Special Need Education (SNE) may be looked to provide gender responsive services for Needs Based Education. Government should provide support supervision for energizing and institutionalizing gender sensitive services in educational institutions and provide guidance on gender sensitive policy formula on and implementation.
- (g) Policy makers should pay due attention to the importance of need based education for female students and arrange facilities with gender focus. There should have proper monitor and gender sensitive support supervision to educational institutions.
- (h) Need based education does not entail optimum output unless there exist proper guidance and counseling. Guidance and Counseling should provide support supervision for energizing and institutionalizing gender sensitivity. These Guidance and Counseling should be associated with balanced recruitment considering special opportunity of the female educationist.
- (i) Females should be empowered with quality and efficiency in the delivery of education at all levels through Information Communication Technologies. Trained and skilled teachers and trainers in ICTs keeping gender balance should be recruited.
- (j) Every educational program should include an ICT component in all new education development programs and plans including in donor supported projects.





- (k) There should have policy objective to segregate the occupation and promote career and professional development for the female, which are suitable to them. There should have target to increase women in employment at all levels of education and service by 2031.
- (l) There should have gender analysis of education policy and ensure appropriate actions to address the gaps, promote representation and participation of women and other special groups in policy processes, strengthen the capacity of policy makers on gender and policy analysis and utilize sex and gender disaggregated data to inform policy and program processes.
- (m) Generate sex and gender disaggregated data to inform policy and program design, implementation and evaluation and support stakeholders to appreciate the existing gender gaps. Policy makers should interpret, package and disseminate data and information to deferent stakeholders, define and integrate new indicators on gender equality into the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and conduct research on the drivers of gender gaps and barriers to girls' education to inform policy and program interventions.



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Disclaimer: This policy brief covers only general education but with the primary education Ebtedayee Madrasa education has been included.

### For more information

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