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Globalization and the Future of Youth in Asia

---Towards the Creation of a Society where Young People
Participate actively in the Working Life and Demonstrate Their
Fullest Potential---

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Executive Summary

Globalization has currently gained momentum with the growing economic integration of the developing countries in the global economy. Bangladesh adopts policies to take advantage of the new opportunities offered by the economic integration process. In this regard, policy makers of Bangladesh acknowledge the role of youth in exploiting the global opportunities to intensify the national development efforts. For obvious reason, its seriousness of bringing the youth in the mainstream of development initiatives was reflected in the 1980s when the Ministry of Youth and the Department of youth were established with the objectives of creating positive environment for youth by confirming the proactive involvement of youth through improved education, skill development, micro-credit programmes and other means.

In this respect, the recently declared National Youth Policy also put much emphasis on self-employment and adopted the strategy of establishing networks through GO-NGO partnership for imparting training and offering technical assistance to develop the skill of the youth at grass root. Currently, there are as many as 776 training centers run by the Department of Youth. There is also a good number of Technical Training Centers (T.T.C) of the BMET (Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training) under the Ministry of Labour and Employment to offer training for various skill developments. Many other Ministries and NGOs are also involved in youth development in the country. Apart from Government direct interventions through the relevant ministry, Government has successfully created a policy and institutional environment through creation of institutions and supply of resources for rapid employment in private sector. Bangladesh has now the biggest microcredit sector in the world with a coverage of 14 million clients, around 70% of whom are youth. Creation and supporting PKSF, a national apex fund for promoting NGO-MFIs played a crucial role in this regard. Total outstanding loan, mostly employed in non-crop sector, is about USD 1 billion at the moment.

However, along with some institutional, natural and operational limitations for youth development, the training programmes for self-employment and skill development of youths in the country confront two very popular criticisms. The critiques point out that some of those programmes are not 'need based' and also not 'updated' to the mark.

Despite the criticisms, there is global acknowledgement that Bangladesh has huge potential in enterprise development for which huge number of skilled labour can be utilized to take the advantage of fair globalization. However, for ensuring 'fair

globalization and redressing the inherent weakness of the Government in properly implementing the Youth Policy of the country, there is a prime need of enhancing international economic and technical cooperation among the countries.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars, now a days, widely recognize that globalization offers both opportunities and challenges to the world. But these opportunities and challenges appear to emanate from two different sources. On the one hand, opportunities spring from the growing interdependence involving economic relations, and social and political interactions among nations. On the other hand, difficulties stem from the flaws in governance due to the absence of corresponding developments of economic and social institutions, which are indispensable to ensure their proper operation to exploit the benefit of ever expanding global market. But due to the difficulties, the developing countries, like Bangladesh in particular, are becoming victim to the current process of globalization mainly in the forms of growing unemployment, growing poor-rich gap etc. as in free trade, competition is the rule of the game.

Against this backdrop, it is appropriate to review the labour market situation for the youth of Bangladesh and its national policy for the youth to see how the country is prepared to confront the current process of globalization. For this purpose, this paper is divided into several sections. The paper begins with a section on how Bangladesh, from policy perspective, defines the term 'youth'. Then the second section gives a brief picture on the status of youths in Bangladesh, which includes demographic, education and employment profiles. The third section deals with the national policies and programmes of the Government involving youth development. Finally, the paper ends with a few concluding remarks.

I. HOW BANGLADESH DEFINES YOUTH

Different legal, economic or social dimensions of the definition on youth amongst the countries and even between genders within countries is the example of ambiguity on the part of the policy makers about the role of youth in the economy and the society. However, legal status of a youth can differ for various purposes like marriage, voting rights, land rights, criminal offences, and eligibility of military service or consent to medical services. In South Africa, a young man at the age of 17 can vote, but can possess land at 21.ⁱ

But most of the international instruments and organizations for policy purpose accept quantitative definition. The qualitative definitions also vary. According to ILO Convention No. 138, youth hood begins when a person reaches the age of 15. Some countries recognise the United Nations General Assembly's definition of youth as those persons falling between the ages of 15 and 24 years inclusive, while many others use the Commonwealth definition referring to age category of 15 to 29 years.

However, Bangladesh has its own official definition of youth. According to the National Youth Policy of Bangladesh, adopted in 2003, the persons who fall in the age category of 18-35 are youth.

II. STATE OF THE YOUTH IN BANGLADESH

This section undertakes three indicators- demographic profiles, educational profile and employment profile to examine the state of the youth in Bangladesh. Demographic profile has been considered for finding out the size of the youth population in urban and rural areas so that one can understand where major focus for youth development should be aimed at. Likewise, educational profile shows how many youth are formally enrolled in educational institutes around the country. However, this does not take the quality of education into consideration.

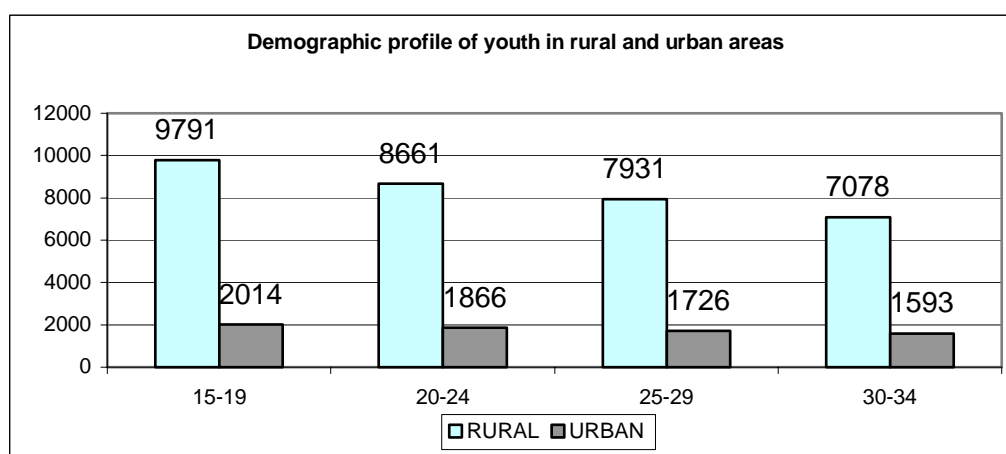
A. Demographic profile

As the majority of Bangladesh population live in the rural areas so does the majority of youth population. The following table indicates that 33.29% of the total population falls within the age group of 15-34. Among them 27.38% live in the rural areas and only 5.89% in urban areas.

Table. 1: Numerical and Percentage Distribution of the Youth Population of 1996 by Sex and Residence of 1996

(In Thousand)

Age Group	Bangladesh			Rural			Urban		
	Both Sexes (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Both Sexes (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Both Sexes (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
All Ages	122125	62712	59413	103022	52411	50611	19103	10301	8802
15-19	11804 (9.66)	5979 (4.89)	5826 (4.77)	9791 (8.01)	4912 (4.02)	4878 (3.99)	2014 (1.65)	1066 (.87)	947 (.78)
20-24	10527 (8.62)	5393 (4.42)	5134 (4.20)	8661 (7.09)	4374 (3.58)	4287 (3.51)	1866 (1.53)	1019 (.83)	847 (.70)
25-29	9657 (7.91)	4869 (3.99)	4789 (3.92)	7931 (6.49)	3978 (3.26)	3953 (3.23)	1726 (1.41)	890 (.72)	836 (.69)
30-34	8671 (7.10)	4433 (3.62)	4238 (3.48)	7078 (5.79)	3559 (2.91)	3519 (2.88)	1593 (1.30)	879 (.72)	719 (.58)
Total	40659 (33.29)	20674 (16.93)	19987 (16.36)	33461 (27.38)	16823 (13.77)	16637 (13.61)	7199 (5.89)	3854 (3.16)	3349 (2.73)



Source: Computed from BBS, *Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2000*, Ministry of Planning, Dhaka, January 2002, P-136]

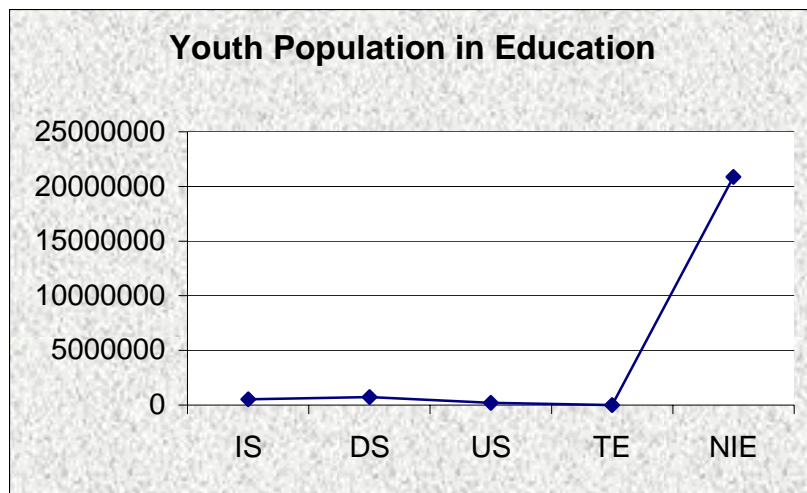
B. Educational profile

For this section, we accept the academic year 1996-97 as base year to making a comparison between the youth who are in education and the youth who are not within the age category of 15-24. The following table shows that only 6.53% of youth population have access to education at the level of higher secondary and above.

Table. 2: Percentage of youth population (within 15-24 age category) in education

CATEGORY	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Intermediate students (IS)*	724489	3.24%
Degree students (DS)**	512421	2.29%
University students (govt. & pvt) (US)***	210482	0.94%
Technical education (TE)	12788	0.06%
Not in education (NIE)	20870820	93.47%
Total youth (15-24 yrs)	22331000	100%

It also includes Alim Madrasah students; ** Fazil; *** Kamil



Source: Computed from, BBS, *Statistical Pocketbook of Bangladesh 2000*, Ministry of Planning, Dhaka, January 2002, P-136 and Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning, *The Fifth Five Year Plan 1997-2002*, Dhaka, June 1997, P-XX-21—XX26

C. Employment Profile

Growth in employment opportunities has fallen behind the growth in the pool of youth in Bangladesh. In a study "*Poverty Implications of Trade Liberalization in Bangladesh: A General Equilibrium Approach*" it was commented that the labour force grew at a much faster rate than the growth in population and the demand for labour thereon. The trend in employment since the mid-1980s can be seen in following Table. The figures show that between 1985/86 and 1995/96, total employment in the country increased by around 10 million with an employment level between 40.3 million and 54.6 million in 1995/96 in terms of the alternative statistical definition of employment. During the period, the non-agricultural sectors were the principal engine for creating jobs, which contributed nearly 60 per cent of the additional employment. Moreover, the bulk of the employment generation between 1989 and 1995/96 took place in the informal sector and currently nearly 60 per cent of the urban employment and about two-thirds of the rural employments outside agriculture are estimated to be in the informal sector.

Table: Development in Employment in Bangladesh

(in million)				
	1985/86	1989	1990/91	1995/96
A. Usual definition				
Employed population	30.5	32.7	34.9	40.3
Male	27.4	29.4	30.4	33.2
Female	3.1	3.3	4.5	7.1
B. Extended definition				
Employed Population	...	50.1	50.2	54.6
Male	...	29.4	30.5	33.8
Female	...	20.7	19.7	20.8

Note: The usual definition refers to any person aged 10 and over employed (worked at least one hour in a week) with/without pay or profit during the reference period excluding own household economic activities. The extended definition uses a similar concept but includes some household economic activities e.g. care of poultry and livestock; threshing, boiling, drying, processing and preservation of food, and similar other activities.

Source: Mustafa Mujeri, *Poverty Implications of Trade Liberalization in Bangladesh: A General Equilibrium Approach*, August 2002, Internet Edition, accessed on 25 November 2004.

Table: Underemployment in Bangladesh, 1995/96

(Persons aged 15 and over)

Category	Total	Urban	Rural
Absolute unemployed persons (' 000)	1,266	401	865
Unemployed persons (Unpaid workers < 15 hrs/week; ' 000)	1,802	163	1,639
Underemployed persons (<35 hrs/week; ' 000)	18,903	1,942	16,961
Total unemployed and underemployed (' 000)	21,971	2,506	19,465
Underemployment rate (% of total labor force)	38.5	22.1	42.1
Male	13.7	10.9	14.5
Female	79.0	54.2	82.4
Unemployment and underemployment rate (% Of total labor force)	39.2	24.6	42.5

Source: Mustafa Mujeri, *Poverty Implications of Trade Liberalization in Bangladesh: A General Equilibrium Approach*, August 2002, Internet Edition, accessed on 25 November 2004.

Despite the overall increase in the level of employment, significant imbalances in the labour market remain. The total civilian labour force increased from 50.7 million in 1989 to 56.0 million in 1995/96 (that is, by more than 10 per cent) while the number of employed persons during the period rose by about 9 per cent – from 50.1 million to 54.6 million. This indicates that the unemployment rate more than doubled over the period from 1.2 per cent to 2.5 per cent.

According to the Labour Force Survey 1999/2000, total number of the labour force in the country has reached 60.30 million. Of them, as many as 37.50 million are male and 22.80 million are female labour force. 62.30%

of the total employed labour force is engaged in agricultural sector, 10.40% in industrial sector and 27.30% service sector.

However, the Bangladesh labour market has several other unpleasant features as well. For example, disproportionately high unemployment rates for the youth, labour market discrimination against women and low education and skill level of the labour force.

III. NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

A. National Policies

The government of Bangladesh, acknowledging the contribution of the youth in national building, established the Ministry of Youth and the Department of Youth Development in 1978 and 1981 with the objective of creating a positive environment for youth by ensuring the pro-active involvement of youths through improved education, skill development, micro-credit and other means.

However, the National Youth Policy 2003 contains provisions, which put much emphasis on self-employment by means of technical education in order to prevent the exodus of rural youth to urban areas of the country and aims at rendering assistance for creating appropriate opportunities to effectively engage the youth of the country in ICT sector. The policy also plans to initiate advocacy programmes for creation of awareness among the youth who intend to go abroad for employment. To implement the national policy of self-employment, the Government of the country has adopted the strategy of establishing networks through GO-NGO partnership for imparting training and offering technical assistance to reach the youths at grass roots.

B. Employment Programme and Facilitation Services

Government's policy of offering different kinds of training in poultry business, aquaculture, agricultural farming etc. for self-employment has so far proved to be effective, although due to the shortage of both material and human resources, training programmes can not ensure the participation of the majority of youth population. In one estimate of the Department of Youth, it is found that as many as 341,677 youths have been able to get engaged in self-employment out of a total of 555,004 youths, who received training from as many as 301 training centers run by the Department of Youth between October 2001 and March 2004. These training centers offer training in pisciculture, poultry rearing, beef fattening, livestock rearing, food processing, kitchen gardening, handicrafts, leather works etc. There are also a total of 475 mobile training centers functioning at Upazila level. Also, There are as many as 15 TTC and one Bangladesh Institute of Marine technology under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, which offers training to 15000 trainees each year. Three more development projects are under way to set up 20 more TCC in the country. When these projects will end, as many as 40,000 trainees will be able to receive training on various skills.

However, to make sure that the youths can be engaged in self-employment after receiving training for self-employment, the Government also offers micro-credit and donations from the Youth Welfare Fund to youths. During the last three years, the Department has disbursed an amount of Tk. 107,08000 to its graduated trainees. Apart from Government direct interventions through the relevant ministry, Government has successfully created a policy and institutional environment through creation of institutions and supply of resources for rapid employment in private sector. Bangladesh has now the biggest microcredit sector in the world with a coverage of 14 million clients around 70% of whom are youth. Creation and supporting PKSF, a national apex fund for promoting NGO-MFIs played a crucial role in this regard. Total outstanding loan, mostly employed in non-crop sector, is about USD 1 billion at the moment. This

MFIs has identified Microenterprise as the thrust sector for their future program expansion, which will play very significant role in creating employment for the youths. Moreover, government has encouraged promotion of microenterprise loan through commercial banks by creating special fund in the central bank.

Success Story of Sagorika Bhadra

Sagorika Bhadra hails from Faridpur. Her family consists of her husband and two children. Two children are engaged in studies. However, she could not manage her family well with the small income of her husband's earnings. After knowing the success in self-employment from some of her relatives who received training from Youth Development Center of Faridpur, she decided to do a six-month training in block boutique. Then she had a consultation with her husband and he gave consent to her for doing the training. After graduating from the training, she took a loan of TK. 25,000 from the Center and she established a training center herself. Now she has 6 trainees in the center and she earns Tk.10,000 a month.

Source: Youth Department, 2001

However, other than the massive effort of the government through the ministry of youth and the ministry of labour and employment and PKSF, there are obviously other ministries and also NGOs and private universities which facilitate youth development in the country. But due to limited scope of the paper-detailed information is not provided.

But the training programmes for self-employment and skill development of youths in the country confront two very familiar criticisms. The critiques point out that some of those programmes are not 'need based' and 'updated' to the mark. In other words, the programmes in which the trainees receive training do not reflect the real demand of the job market in the country or abroad. As a result, the said training programmes are not succeeding to ensure employment extensively for the youths. Moreover, there are other notable factors that hinder the prospect of employment. These factors include illiteracy, inadequate knowledge for choosing appropriate enterprise, identifying proper marketing facilities and many

more. From institutional point of view, lack of coordinated and consistent efforts by the different agencies of the government is causing hindrance to bringing a significant impact on the overall development of the youth, compared to so far adopted initiatives of the government.

Agencies Involved in the Development of Youth Enterprise

Government Agencies

- Department of Youth Development, Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Department of Women Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
- Bureau of Training, Labour and Manpower, Ministry of Labour and Manpower
- Pally Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)
- Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), Ministry of Local Government
- Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Ministry of Local Government
- Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Ministry of Industry
- Karma Sangsthan Bank

Some Major Non-Government Agencies

- Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)
- Association of Social Advancement (ASA)
- Grameen Bank
- Swanirvar Bangladesh

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Government of Bangladesh since the early 1980s is endeavoring to bring the youth of the country to mainstream of overall development strategy. The government realizes that without their effective participation, the country will not be able to experience sustainable development. As a result of this realization, the Government of late President Ziaur Rahman established a separate Ministry for the youth. The present Government led by the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is also expanding its youth development programmes for mainstreaming the youth and their effective participation. However, dearth of resources, increase in population and disproportionate growth in the pool of the youth make it difficult for the Government to provide as many job opportunities as are needed for the unemployed youth of the country. However, there is a one very widely acclaimed positive character of the common people of Bangladesh. Despite many odds as a resource-constrained country, resilience of the people attracts global attention. Therefore, as the concept of 'fair globalization' has now gained a currency in various international forums, it is expected that affluent countries and various

international institutions would meaningfully contribute to creating more employment opportunities for the youth of the developing countries by enhancing international economic and technical cooperation and cashing on the resilience of the common people of Bangladesh.