



সম্মেলন ২০২২

যুব সমাজ ও এমডিজি

আজকে দাঁড়িয়ে, আগামীর ভাবনা

১ সেপ্টেম্বর ২০২২, স্থানীয় ইন্সটিটিউশন বাংলাদেশ, ঢাকা

Youth Declaration 2022

We the youth of Bangladesh, are the vanguard of the progress of our country. We have met here today to demonstrate our commitment and determination to spearhead the future journey of Bangladesh by providing leadership and pursuing innovation. We, the students from various universities across Bangladesh, have gathered here today for the conference "Bangladesh Youth Society and SDGs: Standing Today and Thinking of Tomorrow" convened jointly by the Citizens Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bangladesh, and the United Nations Poverty-Environment Action.

When it comes to the future of a country such as Bangladesh, young people have a pivotal role to play in steering the progress of development. Studies conducted by several international organizations reveal that developing countries which make adequate investments in the education, health, and decent employment of their youth, achieve accelerated socio-economic growth and are able to eradicate poverty at a faster pace.

According to the National Youth Policy (2017) of Bangladesh, young people belonging to the age group of 18-35 years are included in the youth category. As per the population census (2022), approximately 30% of the country's entire population numbering more than 50 million, falls into this age bracket. This is an indication of the importance of the youth of Bangladesh in the nation-building and socio-economic development of our country.

There is a saying that educated youth are the backbone of a nation. However, in Bangladesh, the number of educated unemployed youth has been on the rise. A recent survey revealed the alarming fact that two-thirds of the graduates of National University-affiliated colleges remain unemployed. Data further show that only 21 per cent of students get jobs following graduation or post-graduation; 7 per cent of the young people continue to pursue post-graduation, technical education or undertake training in some fields; only 3 per cent of the young people are self-employed.

This only shows that the educated youth of Bangladesh are deprived of quality education commensurate with the skills required in the job market. In addition, the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have accentuated the challenges already being faced by the youth, whose lives were negatively affected in a number of ways, including schooling and learning outcomes, employment opportunities, and mental health conditions. Also, the number of school dropouts, those going into child labour and those in child marriage have surged at a disturbing rate because of the pandemic.

Both support of the government and social initiatives are needed to overcome the obstacles that the youth are confronted with, so that they are able to fulfil their promise as citizens and as the skilled labour force that the country needs. Bangladesh will be able to attain an inclusive and balanced development and achieve the SDGs by 2030 if we are successful in transforming our youth into the human resources that Bangladesh needs to attain its vision.

To secure a prosperous future that is both inclusive and sustainable, we would like to put forward the following recommendations for the policymakers on behalf of the youth community of Bangladesh:

Education

1. The growing disparity in the quality of education between urban and rural areas must be eliminated by taking concrete measures.
2. To close the technology gap in education between urban and rural communities, required resources and training facilities must be made available to the young people living in rural areas.
3. To enhance the quality of education, wide-ranging use of technology and digital platforms in the teaching process must be ensured. Trainers and teachers must be imparted with the required training and skill sets in this regard.
4. Students must be able to get work experience and job market information while still in college/university.
5. Policymakers should rethink the policies concerning the higher education system. An educational system has to be put in place which is capable of providing students with a curriculum tailored to the demands of the modern job market.
6. Youth who have dropped out of school consequent to the COVID-19 pandemic should be re-enrolled, with specific attention paid to the needs of the female students.
7. The remit of research at the higher education level must be significantly broadened. To ensure this, proper policies must be designed and budgetary allocations towards this must be increased.
8. While a part of Bangladesh's youth are able to cope with the global competitive environment with their skill and competence, a large part of them remain disengaged from the mainstream. Many fall victim to drug abuse, criminal activities, radicalism, etc. Appropriate measures must be taken to reintegrate these isolated young people into society and harness their potential and vigour.

Health

9. Initiatives must be taken to bring the youth under health insurance.
10. Youth must be educated about mental health issues. Free mental health-related services must be made available to them.
11. 'Mid-day meal' must be made available at primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels of all educational institutions.

Employment

12. Government and corporate sectors must invest in youth-specific training, ICT training, and training programmes to educate the youth about their rights along with job-based skill development.
13. Young entrepreneurs, particularly those who became unemployed due to the pandemic, must be provided with training and other forms of assistance, such as easy-to-obtain financing. They must be

given the necessary support required to enhance their quality of life through self-employment opportunities.

14. To employ a significant number of educated youth, investments in the rural sector must be significantly enhanced.

15. Corporate and industrial institutions must come forward to develop the nation's youth into a skilled workforce through a well-designed training system rather than recruiting people and professionals from overseas.

16. To ensure quality employment opportunities for migrant workers, necessary training must be imparted before sending them abroad.

17. Awareness must be created about the health, rights and safety of youth working in the informal sector of the economy.

18. Young people employed in the labour market on low wages, particularly the tea workers, must be paid a decent minimum wage.

19. To cope with the COVID-19-induced shock and the growing inflation, economically disadvantaged and jobless youth must be provided with a social security stipend of BDT 1000 per month through a self-registration system.

Gender Equality

20. In Bangladesh, men make up about 46 per cent of the youth population, while women account for about 54 per cent. Thus, more than half of the youth group are women. Consequently, special and targeted initiatives should be taken to integrate women more meaningfully into the labour market.

21. Gender prejudice is still evident in many parts of the country. Specific measures must be taken to change this by strengthening women's decision-making capacity and by empowering them adequately.

22. Child marriage must be prevented and efforts must be taken to re-enroll the dropped-out students among these.

Disadvantaged Youth

23. The indigenous, transgender, physically and mentally challenged and Dalit youth must be empowered through wide-ranging initiatives and targeted workshops. Preparatory measures must be taken to meet the quota allocated for such youth. Their development issues must be integrated into the mainstream policy discussions.

24. Disadvantaged youth must be educated as regards their constitutional rights. They must be appropriately informed about the programmes that are earmarked for them.

25. Low-income youth must be provided with access to credit through the introduction of youth credit cards.

26. Freelancing and IT-related training must be arranged for the youth living in remote areas.
27. Special initiatives must be taken for the overall development of the young people living in remote, coastal, haor and river erosion-prone areas and who have to deal with hostile natural environments.

Other Institutional Recommendations

28. The Department of Youth Development must expand its area of operations.
29. Funding for the Ministry of Youth and Sports must be increased, and its effective use must be ensured.
30. Youth should be educated and made aware of corruption and must be provided with opportunities to directly participate in corruption prevention activities.
31. Laws and regulations which have been formulated with the youth in mind must be enforced and updated on a regular basis to reflect the demands of the modern world.
32. Enfranchisement of new youth voters must be ensured. To maintain a fair democratic environment in the country, youth must be encouraged to participate in healthy politics.

We the youth of Bangladesh are the torchbearers of the nation, drivers of the country's progress and catalysts for change. We have been instrumental in many successful democratic movements against injustice in Bangladesh. On the other hand, social degradation, discontent and disengagement will intensify if we are not provided with the right environment, training, and adequate policy support to transform us into productive forces.

We the youth of Bangladesh have tremendous potential and promise, as also amazing ingenuity and innovativeness. Through policy support and concrete actions, we must be helped to realise our full potential.

From this platform today, we pledge to do our best to contribute to Bangladesh's efforts in achieving sustainable and inclusive development.