Bangladesh

Bangladesh will undertake its 2nd Voluntary National Review in July 2020. With a focus this year on development accelerators and transformative action, it is a key moment to consider activities and tools which can unlock progress, for all, across the board.

Access to information – understood as the physical possibility and right for all to seek and find information, and the skills to use it – can make just such a contribution. This access can help at all levels. It supports individuals to take better decisions about how to farm, where to look for work or how to look after their own and their families' health. It gives governments the possibility to define better policies. It allows researchers to understand the world around us, establish new insights and innovate. Libraries are a key part of the infrastructure for ensuring that this is the case.

But where does Bangladesh stand today as concerns its libraries and access to information? This data sheet provides background based on data from the Development and Access to Information report produced by IFLA in partnership with the Technology and Social Change Group at the University of Washington, as well as IFLA's own Library Map of the World.

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- *Bangladesh does not currently have data available through IFLA's Library Map of the World, but there are strong examples of inidividaul libraries and projects contributing to building skills, promoting connectivity and supporting learning and research.*
- *Bangladesh has progress to make across the pillars of access to information, with good network coverage not matched by numbers of people getting online, suggesting challenges with affordability of connections and devices. Below-average performance on rights and freedoms may also restrict demand by limiting what people can do online. Young people face challenges accessing work and learning, and there is a wide gender digital divide. Libraries could offer a powerful means of getting more people online – especially those at risk of marginalisation – and giving them possibilities to realise their potential. A more favourable framework for free speech and exchange would also help the country make full use of the potential of information.*

LIBRARIES IN BANGLADESH

Data about libraries in Bangladesh is unfortunately not currently available on the IFLA Library Map of the World. However, the country does benefit from active academic libraries working to support students and researchers, including through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, a project led by the British Council alongside parts of government is working to build the potential of Bangladesh's public libraries to become centres for connectivity and digital skills development. Through this, 38 coding workshops have already taken place, and more are planned when possible.

## DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN BANGLADESH

The Development and Access to Information report draws on a range of indicators highlighting where countries stand on four key pillars of access to information: connectivity, equality, skills and rights. For meaningful access to information to be a reality for all, performance needs to be strong across all of these categories.

On **connectivity**, Bangladesh does enjoy high coverage of 3G networks – higher than the averages for both Southern Asia and the world as a whole. However, household internet and computer access fall some way below the regional average, with less than 15% of households having home connections and less than 10% having a computer. While figures for mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 people are higher (27, compared to 19 for the region, but 56 globally), these are likely due to multiple subscriptions for some, as overall internet use stood at only 18.24% of the population in 2016.

Concerning **equality**, Bangladesh is in line with regional averages when it comes to gender equality, but does have a slightly higher poverty rate than the region as a whole. Most concerning is the share of young adults not in employment, education or training, with almost a third in this situation, compared to a regional average of just over 28%, and a global average of 21%. Bangladeshi women face a particularly acute digital gender divide, with barely 5% using the internet.

On **skills**, Bangladesh has a literacy rate that matches that for the region as a whole, although still falls short of global averages. However, it scores worse than the region as a whole on the skills pillar of the ICT Development index. As for **rights**, the country also falls short of global averages on all indicators. Given that the region as a whole tends to be freer than the world as a whole, Bangladesh also stands out for lower levels of protection of rights and freedoms.

As such, Bangladesh requires progress on all aspects of the DA2I framework. More use of libraries can help in this respect, giving people the opportunity to get online and access opportunities for learning, affordably. For women and young people, this can be particularly important. The country will, however, only be able to make full use of these possibilities if better protections for rights and freedoms are passed and enforced.

Bangladesh
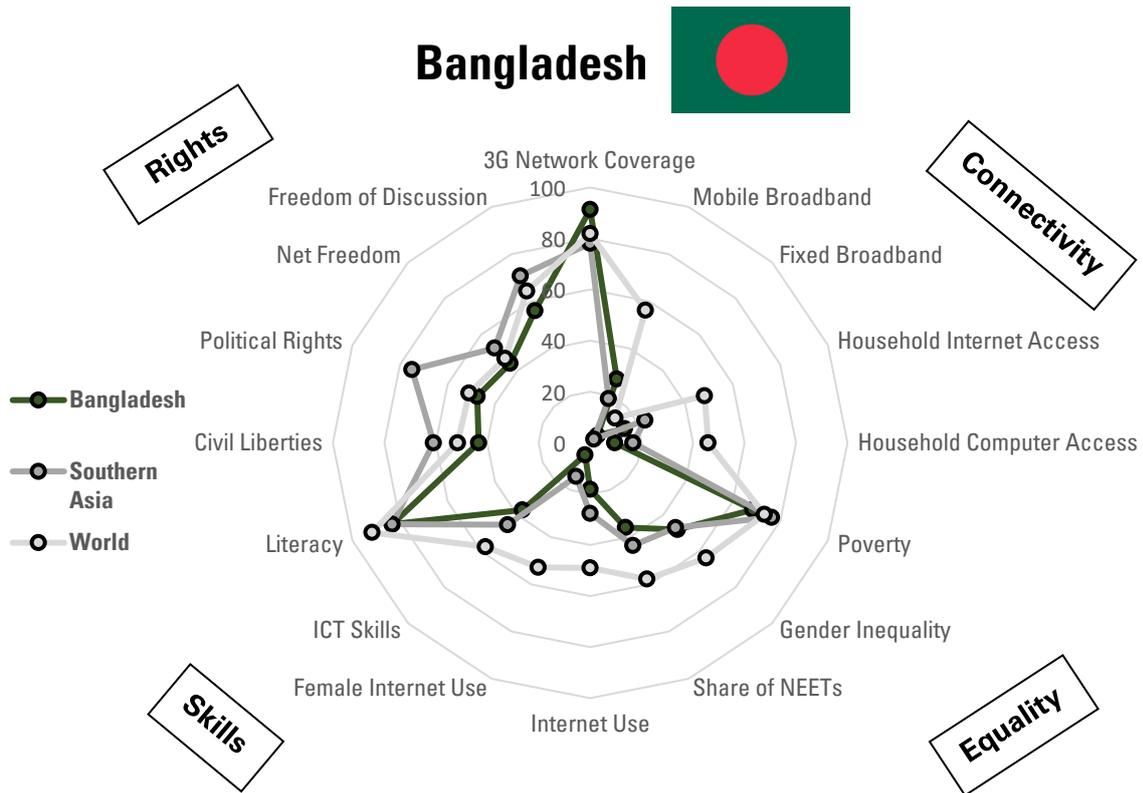
How to read the graph: this graph displays a range of indicators used within the DA2I framework, adjusted to fit on a scale of 0-100, where 100 is the most positive outcome in terms of access to information.

TABLE OF DATA

See below for explanations. * = or latest available year. To note, averages are calculated on the basis of available data.

PILLAR	INDICATOR	BANGLADESH	Year	SOUTHERN ASIA	Year	WORLD	Year
CONNECTIVITY	3G Network Coverage	91.40%	2016	78.13%	2016	81.92%	2016
	Mobile Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	27.07	2016	18.71	2016	56.22	2016
	Fixed Broadband (Subscriptions per 100 People)	4.05	2016	2.03	2016	13.71	2016
	Household Internet Access	14.50%	2016	23.13%	2016	48.16%	2016
	Household Computer Access	9.59%	2016	16.66%	2016	45.88%	2016
EQUALITY	Poverty (Share of pop'n below national poverty line)	31.50%	2010	23.66%	2015*	26.69%	2015*
	Gender Inequality (0 = More equal, 1 = Less equal)	0.52	2015	0.53	2015	0.36*	2015*
	Share of NEETs	32.04	2014	28.24	2015*	21.12%	2015*
	Internet Use	18.25%	2016	27.64%	2016*	49%	2016*
	Female Internet Use	5.10%	2013	14.26%	2016*	52.79%	2016*
SKILLS	ICT Skills	3.72	2017	4.54	2017	5.76	2017
	Literacy	83.20%	2015	83.31%	2015	91.75	2015
RIGHTS	Civil Liberties (0 = least free, 60 = most free)	26.00	2018	36.51	2018	30.9	2018
	Political Rights (0 = least free, 40 = most free)	19.00	2018	29.97	2018	20.37	2018
	Net Freedom (0 = most free, 100 = least free)	56.00	2016	47.52	2016	53.29	2016
	Freedom of Discussion	0.56	2016	0.71	2016	0.64	2016

EXPLANATION OF INDICATORS

3G Network Coverage: this provides a measure of whether one part of the basic infrastructure for connectivity exists, although in itself is not enough to guarantee access (users need a device and a relevant subscription to be able to get online). Source: ITU

Mobile Broadband (Mobile Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how many people can use mobile internet, opening up many – if not all – of the possibilities that internet access brings. One person may have more than one subscription. Source: ITU

Fixed Broadband (Fixed Broadband Subscriptions per 100 people): this provides an idea of how widespread home or business internet access is. Fixed access is often associated with the possibility to connect computers to make more advanced uses of the internet. Source: ITU

Household Internet Access (Share of Households with Internet Access): access to the internet at home allows for access to information at any time without having to go outside, but may be controlled by some members of the family. Source: ITU

Household Computer Access (Share of Households with a Computer): this focuses on access to computers. This is crucial for people to be able to carry out more advanced activities on the internet that might be impossible on a phone, such as writing resumes or analysing data. Source: ITU

Poverty: this indicator measures the number of people living below the national poverty line, which varies from country to country. It is a measure of economic inequality in a country. The indicator is inversed in the chart (i.e. the share of people not under the poverty line). Source: World Bank

Gender Inequality: this is calculated using the Gender Inequality Index. This index uses a basket of indicators in different areas of social development including: reproductive health, proportion of women in parliament, relative shares of men and women with at least some secondary education, and labour market participation in order to provide a broad idea of the extent of gender inequality in a country. The indicator runs from 0 (most equal) to 1 (least equal) and is inversed and adapted in the chart above. Source: UNDP

Share of NEETS (People aged 15-24 Not in Education, Employment or Training): this measures the share of young people cut off from education or the job market. Being 'NEET' can bring long-term scarring effects, and so reducing numbers is a key priority. The indicator is inversed and adapted in the chart (i.e. the share of young people who are not NEET). Source: ILO.

Internet Use (Share of People Using the Internet): looking beyond household access data (which will be affected by the structure of households in general), this gives a figure for the number of people using the internet. Source: ITU

Female Internet Use: this measure, in conjunction with the share of the overall population using the internet, allows us to understand to what extent there is a gender digital divide. Source: ITU

ICT Skills: there are relatively few global metrics of ICT skills, with those that exist only focusing on certain regions. The Skills Sub-Index of the ICT Development Index created by the ITU aims to work in this direction using levels of secondary and tertiary education enrolment, plus mean years of schooling, as proxies. Source: ITU

Literacy: this measures literacy among 15-24 year olds – i.e. people who have finished formal education. While there are online resources available for people with low literacy, being able to read, type, and understand information remains a fundamental skill. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Civil Liberties: this provides an indication of the degree to which citizens of a country enjoy fundamental civic rights, including freedom of expression and association, as well as the strength of the rule of law, based on expert judgements. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 60 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Political Rights: this provides a measure of the rights people have to participate in the political process, including fair and free elections, political pluralism, and the functioning of government in general. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 40 (most free) and have been adapted to fit the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Net Freedom: this metric assesses the level of restrictions on rights online by both public and private actors. It draws on assessments of obstacles to access (legal, economic and practical), limits on content, and violations of rights. Scores run from 100 (least free) to 0 (most free) and so are inverted in the graphic above. Source: Freedom House.

Freedom of Discussion: this indicator looks at whether people are able to hold private discussions without fear of repercussions either from the authorities or society in general due to cultural restrictions or norms. Scores run from 0 (least free) to 1 (most free), and so are adapted to fit int the graphic above. Source: V-Dem dataset codebook.