

**Intergovernmental Group of Experts on
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Contribution by

Bangladesh

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Written Contribution from Bangladesh

Theme: Recovering from COVID-19 in an increasingly digital economy: Implementation for sustainable development

For Session 3: Lessons learned from policy responses to the pandemic

28 April 2022 (11:00 am – 01:00 pm)

1. Bangladesh has an impressive track record of growth and development. It has been among the fastest growing economies in the world over the past decade, supported by a demographic dividend, strong ready-made garment (RMG) exports, remittances, and stable macroeconomic conditions. The country made a strong economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic too.
2. Bangladesh, like other countries, has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has constrained economic activities and reversed some of the gains achieved in the last decade. Real GDP growth accelerated to 6.9 percent in FY21 as pandemic-related restrictions were eased, led by a rebound of manufacturing and service sector activities. On the demand side, exports and private consumption-led growth. So far, more than 75 percent of the population have been inoculated with the first dose of the vaccine in total.
3. To achieve its vision of attaining upper middle-income status by 2031, Bangladesh has been striving to create jobs and employment opportunities through a competitive business environment, increased human capital and skilled labor force, efficient infrastructure, and a policy environment that attracts private investments.
4. Other development priorities include diversifying exports beyond the RMG sector; deepening the financial sector; making urbanization more sustainable and strengthening public institutions. Addressing infrastructure gaps would accelerate growth and reduce spatial disparities in opportunities across regions and within cities. Addressing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters will help Bangladesh to continue to build resilience to future shocks. Pivoting towards green growth would support the sustainability of development outcomes for the next generation.
5. Like all other countries in the world Bangladesh had to suffer the setback caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 8 March, 2020 when first case was detected Bangladesh faced three waves of COVID infection. Till today number of infected people reached to 718,950 and 10,385 people lost their lives. Bangladesh rolled out its vaccination drive for the frontline health workers on 27 January 2021, and for the public, on 7 February 2021. As of 11 November, 19 percent of the country's target population

have been fully vaccinated. The target for vaccination is 138,247,508 or 80 percent of the country's population.

6. Digitization helped Bangladesh's vaccination greatly. Bangladesh had had its National Identification (NID) database of its citizen prepared before the pandemic started. Later for vaccination the government successfully used that database to enroll and administer vaccines among the citizen cluster by cluster based on age group and necessity. Thus, the digital system helped the country to be vaccinated systematically. A web portal named as "Shurokhhkha.gov.bd" was created and vaccination continued through the portal.
7. The pandemic disproportionately affected various sectors of the Bangladesh economy. Among the three broad sectors, manufacturing sector was hard hit followed by service sector while agriculture sector remained relatively insulated from the shock waves of the pandemic. Particularly, the readymade garments, real estate, tourism, health, education, airlines, transport and SME sector have been largely affected. Bangladesh government with development partners has made coordinated efforts in various fronts by combining fiscal and monetary stimulus, regulatory and supervisory measures and financial policy innovations to overcome the adverse impacts of the pandemic on our economy. The Government of Bangladesh announced a series of stimulus packages and refinance schemes equivalent to BDT 1284.4 billion which is 4.59 percent of GDP to recover from the Covid-19 related economic losses. Government used digital system to distribute the incentives to the respective personnel.
8. The government announced a Tk 3,200 crore relief package for the ultra-poor and destitute families and the tourism sector -- segments that were dealt a fresh blow by the latest round of hard lockdown to contain the second wave of Covid-19 cases. The Government distributed Tk 2,500 each in cash to about 17.2 lakh day laborer through MFS.
9. During lockdown E-Commerce played a vital role to reach people with essential products and medicines. Many online portals were created to offset the in person market into digital market. There were no online whole sale market in Bangladesh. To ensure sale of agro products from the farmers online platforms were used successfully and helped farmers to get the good process of their products. Education system was fully disrupted due to pandemic. Later on online systems were developed to support the educational institutions to continue regular sessions.
10. Government of Bangladesh declared its Vision 2021 to the country a digital Bangladesh. Government has established 6686 digital centers in the extreme rural areas of the country to make the ICT services available to the rural people. Almost all the government services are made available through digital platforms. Its to be mentioned here that the government of Bangladesh has been maintaining the biggest web portal with 540 million services for the people. The government has established 12 High Tech Parks to encourage investors in the high-tech sector. This year the Government has declared the ICT products as the product of the year.

11. The perspective Plan 2041 has enumerated that Bangladesh will be developed country by 2041 with more than US\$ 12500 per capita income. Full implementation of SDGs by 2030 and becoming a higher Middle Income country is also the milestone to be achieved. Bangladesh will be graduated from the LDC status by 2026 and ICT will play vital role for the smooth transition of the country. IOT, Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence are under active consideration to be implemented in the country. The Government has prepared a Artificial Intelligence Strategy Paper and has been implementing the blockchain technology in different field of financial administration. Sustainable green growth also in active consideration of the government where ICT will play a major role. Presently 500 RMG industry has achieved LEED certificate from the World Green Building Council. Among the top ten Green Industries 7 are in Bangladesh.
12. Thus it is expected that the country will continue its journey to sustainable development through digitization