Country Brief: Bangladesh

EdTech Hub Bangladesh Country Leads
■ Shakil Ahmed (based in Dhaka) ■ Haani Mazari (based in Dubai)
EdTech Hub Bangladesh Team
■ Dr Alison Clarke-Wilson (based in London) ■ Zayan Ahmed Mustafa (based in Dhaka)

The EdTech Hub team in Bangladesh works closely with the Directorate for Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and Aspire to Innovate (a2i) – an innovation unit in the Bangladesh Government's ICT and Cabinet Divisions.

As set out in its Vision 2041 document, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) remains committed to applying information and communication technologies (ICT) in all spheres of public life, working towards a 'Smart Bangladesh'. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education (MoE) had policies in place to revolutionise Bangladesh's education system through the use of ICT and promoting technology-based teaching and learning. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and a2i are some of EdTech Hub's key partners in Bangladesh supporting the government's vision.

As the GoB makes rapid progress in adopting EdTech, EdTech Hub works with partners to ensure these advancements are designed and adapted on the basis of relevant data. The Hub's foundational work in Bangladesh highlighted several challenges in the country's EdTech ecosystem, particularly around the use of data. A country scan identified that the increased availability of data has not translated into data analysis in relation to education quality and learning outcomes. Three reports on a Theory of Change (ToC) (relating to learners, teachers, and parents and caregivers) identified existing gaps in evidence and proposed areas for exploration when designing and monitoring programmes.

EdTech Hub has responded to these findings by focusing the Bangladesh portfolio on the following objectives:

- Supporting the development of the MoE's research and innovation cells to translate data into meaningful analysis on learning outcomes for decision-making.
- Introducing sustainable evaluation and iteration approaches to help improve the quality of blended approaches applied in the national curriculum reform.

EdTech Hub's Helpdesk in Bangladesh

EdTech Hub has responded to four Helpdesk requests in Bangladesh, two for FCDO and two for the World Bank. These requests focused on distance learning, and learning in response to COVID-19.

Examples

- Monitoring Distance Education: A Brief to Support Decision-Making in Bangladesh and Other Low- and Lower-Middle-Income Countries (FCDO, 2020)
- Bangladesh Back-to-School Campaign (FCDO, 2020)

EdTech Hub's work in Bangladesh

Activity	Description
EdTech Hub and UNICEF Bangladesh developed a Theory of Change (ToC) (Completed in October 2022) Medium (GBP 50K–250K)	EdTech Hub developed a ToC that focuses on the use of technology by learners, teachers, and parents and caregivers. Each part of the ToC was developed in consultation with key stakeholders (12 government stakeholders and 27 non-governmental organisations) and can be used as a toolkit for programme designers. For example, EdTech Hub and the European Union (EU) are referring to the ToC to shape GoB's National Curriculum Reform.
EdTech Hub supported the World Bank in designing a USD 700-million secondary education programme (Completed in January 2023) Small (GBP 50K or less)	EdTech Hub, with the World Bank team in Bangladesh, co-authored a report on education and technology by drafting a chapter on digital skills. The report was used to support the development of the World Bank's upcoming 'Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education' (LAISE) programme, featuring the use of technology to support learning.
ASR: 3Mpower – Mobile Learning for the Empowerment of Marginalised Mathematics Educators (Started in July 2022, ongoing) Medium (GBP 50k–250k)	EdTech Hub has commissioned a study led by the Open University (UK) and the Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University, with a range of implementing partners, including the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME), The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), Aspire to Innovate (A2I), and National Academy of Primary Education (NAPE). The study researches TPD courses, especially courses aiming to improve the teaching and learning of foundation numeracy skills in primary schools (Grades 1–8), offered on Muktopaath, a Bangla-language e-Learning platform. The goal is to generate evidence about the validity of every step linking teachers' use of mobile learning to improved student learning outcomes through at-scale, mixed-methods research
Hub-led research: How do EdTech solutions spread? Understanding system-level factors impacting the implementation and scale of EdTech innovations in Bangladesh	This study has been designed in close collaboration with a2i – the GoB's digital initiative, and is aligned with their policy needs while contributing to the wider literature on the role of systems in EdTech. Specifically, the study seeks to understand the system-level factors that could support a rich EdTech innovation ecosystem and the effective implementation of Bangladesh's Blended Learning strategy at the national level.

(Started in July 2022, ongoing) Large (GBP 250k or more)	
EdTech Hub and the EU are supporting the monitoring and evaluation of the Department of Primary Education's National Curriculum Reform Teacher Training (Ongoing) Medium (GBP 50K–250K)	EdTech Hub is working with the EU to support the DPE and National Curriculum Textbook Board in monitoring and evaluating blended teacher training (digital and face-to-face) for the national curriculum reform. This process will be implemented gradually, with the primary sub-sector initiating reforms for Grade 1 in 2023, continuing with Grades 2 and 3 in 2024, and Grades 4 and 5 in 2025. EdTech Hub and the EU are working with the DPE's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team to iterate teacher training for the cycle next year and recommending strategies for embedding an ongoing evidence-generation process within future phases of the reform for subsequent grades
EdTech Hub is working with the Department of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) to support the development of a research and innovation cell (Ongoing) Medium (GBP 50K–250K)	Instilling a culture of research and innovation within the education sector in Bangladesh is pertinent to the pursuit of providing high-quality education. As such, the DSHE is interested in developing a cell currently known as Education Acceleration and Research (EAR). The cell's mandate will be to encourage research and innovation within the secondary and higher education sub-sectors.

Examples illustrating the impact of the Hub's work in Bangladesh

Providing a model and recommendations on effective use of technology-enhanced learning in Bangladesh

UNICEF asked EdTech Hub to produce a working paper to provide cohesion across the different interventions being designed to address technology-enhanced learning in Bangladesh. EdTech Hub created a Theory of Change (ToC) (mentioned above) and evidence-based recommendations in partnership with the government, private sector, and policymakers. The ToC provides a model for how best to invest money in EdTech interventions in Bangladesh to support 57 million children. The ToC was developed iteratively, and at many points, the team pivoted their scope of work to ensure it met the format, content, and timing needs of the users. The model is being shared and used by various stakeholders, including a2i and UNICEF, who are using it to inform their education strategy.

The work here has influenced:

- The sandbox in Bandarban implemented with UNICEF to understand which model works best to improve numeracy outcomes.
- The National Blended Education Masterplan, which is pending approval from the Prime Minister's office, but is being rolled out.