

Good Governance, Democracy and Development: Challenges for Digital Bangladesh

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Abstract

Considering Bangladesh's history of unbridled politics, the country is gradually improving in terms of political stability and governance. Unfortunately, development has not been stable, mainly due to political will and commitment. Democracy and governance in Bangladesh, still plagued by violence, corruption, outdated laws, abuse of human rights, absence of rule of law, non-accountability, and heavy politicization of all government institutions including the judicial system. It is observed that we need strong political leadership with commitment to fight against deep rooted corruption, non-accountability, non-transparency and inefficiency is imperative for establishing good governance and to ensure democracy. The concept of "good governance" often emerges as a model to compare ineffective economies or political bodies with viable economies and political bodies. Good Governance aims to contribute to overall development of a country. Since independence, the attainment of good governance has been a far cry. A number of constraints and challenges stand as barriers for establishing good governance. But the political and bureaucratic segments of the society can play an effective role. This paper also examines political developments in the country over the recent past years to assess progress towards a transparent, accountable, and participatory democratic system. The broad objective of the study is to make an extensive study on good governance and democracy according to politics in Bangladesh. In addition, this thesis discusses present condition, importance and our expectation about good governance in politics of Bangladesh. This research study is descriptive as well as suggestive in nature. Sources for research data for this study mainly includes secondary resources consisting of books, newspapers, periodical articles from national and international level. Internet sources have also been used for research. An attempt has also been made to include the latest information whenever available. Qualitative primary data were collected through interviews and discussions with some officials and experts on governance. Quantitative primary data has been collected through survey on respondents.

Key Words: *Governance, Good Governance, Democracy, Development, Challenges, Digital Bangladesh*

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a densely populated country in South Asia. Its topography is dominated mainly by its low-lying riparian aspect. It has 1,47,570 square kilometers land area, bordered by India on all sides except for a small border with Myanmar (Burma) to the Southeast and by the Bay of Bengal to the South. Capital is Dhaka. For smooth administration, it is divided into 7 Divisions and 64 Districts. Since Independence, Country is being governed by 'Presidential' form of Government system till 1990. From 1991 it has embarked on 'Parliamentary Government' system, where 'Head of the State' is the President and 'Head of the Government' is the Prime Minister. GDP is \$324.6 billion and per-capita income stood 1314 \$ (2015). Bangladesh has an estimated population of 160.4 million (2015). About 87% of Bangladeshis are Muslims, followed by Hindus (12%), Buddhists, Christians and others (1.0%). 26% of its population lives under the national poverty line (*Wikipedia, Poverty in Bangladesh*). Literacy rate is total 78.56% estimated in 2015 (Male-85.09% and Female-72.03%). Bangladesh shares its history of political development with the British and Pakistan era. As the independence movement throughout British-controlled India that began in the late 19th century gained momentum during the 20th century, Bengali politicians played an active role. British India was partitioned and the independent states of India and Pakistan were created in 1947; the region of Bengal was divided along religious lines. The predominantly Muslim eastern half of Bengal became the East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan and after 1971 Bangladesh) state of Pakistan and the predominantly Hindu western part became the Indian state of West Bengal.

Pakistan's (East and West Pakistan) history from 1947 to 1971 was marked by political instability and economic difficulties. In 1956 a constitution was at last adopted, making the country an "Islamic Republic within the Commonwealth". The nascent democratic institutions foundered in the face of military

intervention in 1958, and the government imposed martial law between 1958 and 1962, and again between 1969 and 1971. Almost from the advent of independent Pakistan in 1947, frictions developed between East and West Pakistan, which were separated by more than 1,000 miles of Indian Territory. East Pakistanis felt exploited by the West Pakistan-dominated central government. Linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences also contributed to the estrangement of East from West Pakistan. Great differences began developing between the two wings of Pakistan. While the West had a minority share of Pakistan's total population, it had the largest share of revenue allocation, industrial development, agricultural reforms and civil development projects. Pakistan's military and civil services were dominated by the fair-skinned Pakistanis'. Only one regiment in the Pakistani Army was Bengali.

When Awami League (AL) won all the East Pakistan seats of the Pakistan's National Assembly in the 1970-71 elections, West Pakistan opened talks with the East on constitutional questions about the division of power between the central government and the provinces, as well as the formation of a national government headed by the Awami League. The talks proved unsuccessful, however, and on March 1, 1971, Pakistani President Yahya Khan indefinitely postponed the pending National Assembly session, precipitating massive civil disobedience in East Pakistan. On March 7, there was a historical public gathering in Paltan Maidan to hear the guideline for the revolution and independence from Shaikh Mujib, the frontier leader of movement that time. Although he avoided direct declaration of independence as the talks were still underway, he influenced the mob to prepare for the separation war. The speech is still considered a key moment in the war of liberation.

After the military crackdown by the Pakistan Army began during the early hours of March 26, 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested by Pakistan Army and was taken to West Pakistan. Political leaders dispersed, mostly fleeing to neighboring India, where they organized a provisional government afterwards. During that devastating situation and leaderless moment, the then Bengali Army Major (Shahid President Ziaur Rahman) revolted (in Chittagong Cantonment) along with other Bengali Officers and Soldiers, killing his Pakistani Battalion Commander. On 27th March, under the leadership of Major Ziaur Rahman they captured Kalurghat Radio Station in Chittagong and the first declaration of independence of Bangladesh was announced by him as the Head of the Provisionary Revolutionary Government of Bangladesh. Following the declaration of Independence, the entire nation moved up and participated enthusiastically in the War of Liberation. After 9 months gallantry fight, on 16 December 1971, Lt. Gen Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi, General Officer Commanding Eastern Command of Pakistan Army located in East Pakistan signed the 'Instrument of Surrender' and the nation of Bangla Desh ("Country of Bengal") was finally established.

Bangladesh's journey towards democratization started with great expectations when in 1972 it adopted the Constitution of the country with four guiding principles of nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism. The Constitution had all the democratic ideals – a unitary and parliamentary form of government, multiple parties, and elections on the basis of universal adult franchise, fundamental rights, and freedom of the judiciary (*Jahan, 2000: 5*). But within a few years in 1975, the then Sheikh Mujib government amended the Constitution to switch over to one party presidential form of government in the place of multi-party system with restrictions on the freedom of the press and the judiciary. That was the first major blow to the Constitutional history or democratic journey of Bangladesh. In fact, this amendment or the 4th amendment generated far-reaching consequences on the political process and governance of Bangladesh. With this amendment the basic democratic institutions like political parties, constitution, executive, legislature and judiciary, press and media, Election Commission and such other democratic organizations turned into autocratic ones. The process of constitutional amendment for political maneuvering continued for a long period. For instance, in 1977, through a martial law ordinance, secularism was dropped from the guiding principle of the state and socialism was redefined to mean economic and social justice. Again in 1988, Islam was declared as state religion (*Amran, 2002*). After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August, 1975, the country was ruled by the military rulers. President Ziaur Rahman restored multiparty democracy, freedom of press, and a sense of national unification. General Ershad unseated democratically elected President and ruled for about a decade. The democratic governance was resurrected again with the toppling of General Ershad and the coming of Begum Khaleda Zia into power through a free, fair and democratic election in 1991. With this a fresh start of Parliamentary democracy and Constitutionalism became operative in Bangladesh. Since 1991, five elections were held and four Parliaments served their full time.

In the years since independence, Bangladesh has established a reputation as a largely moderate and democratic majority Muslim country. But this status has been under threat for series of political violence, weak governance, poverty, corruption, and religious militancy. In more recent years religious and anti-religious thoughts have been vigorously pursued by the government. Opposition parties always seek to regain control of the government through Hartals (strike), demonstrations, labor strikes, transport blockades and different forms of political turmoil. Political violence has long been part of the political landscape in Bangladesh.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the paper is to make an extensive study on good governance and democracy according to politics in Bangladesh. In addition, this paper discusses present condition, importance and our expectation about good governance in Bangladesh politics of Bangladesh. The objectives are:

1. To discuss on the aspects and requirements for good governance and democracy, and the role of government machineries in ensuring such from a holistic point of view.
2. To scrutinize the roles and contributions being made by the government machineries in the existing condition of governance and democracy of Bangladesh.
3. To seek through public opinion for the appropriate roles of the challenges of the government machineries as pillars of the true democracy and good governance in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research study is descriptive as well as suggestive in nature. Sources for research data for this study mainly include secondary resources consisting of books, newspapers, periodical articles from national and international media. Internet sources have also been used for research. An attempt has also been made to include the latest information whenever available. Qualitative primary data were collected through interviews and discussions with some officials and experts on governance. Quantitative primary data has been collected through survey on respondents. The report also presents simple figures on governance models. Due to the nature of the study, the findings are written in a more qualitative manner rather than in quantitative terms.

Research Design

Both qualitative and quantitative research designs have been employed to conduct the study. The qualitative study contributed mostly in establishing the conceptual framework of the study. The quantitative study, in the form of survey has compiled benchmark data on the issues of the study. For the qualitative study, case studies, focus groups and secondary data analysis have been employed. For the quantitative part of the study, surveys were conducted on a selected group of stakeholders i.e. politicians, bureaucrats, public etc.

Definition of Population and Geographic Coverage of the Study

The population of the study is primarily comprised of the stakeholders of the democracy and governance in the country. The stakeholders consist of the politicians, bureaucrats, professionals, activists, civil society and general public. Due to the nature of the study, the obvious geographic coverage remained the boundary of Bangladesh. However, instances have been collected and mentioned in study from the rest of the world also.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Convenience sampling technique was used for the study due to its suggestive nature. As most of the analyses of the study have been qualitative, the sample size for survey was also kept small. Pre-screened respondents were chosen as sample elements on which the primary data collection procedures were executed.

Sources of Primary Data

Qualitative primary data were collected through interviews and discussions with some officials and experts on governance. Quantitative primary data has been collected through survey on respondents (Government Servant, Non-Government Servant, Politician, Businessmen, Entrepreneur, Lawyer, Teacher, Student etc)

Sources of Secondary Data

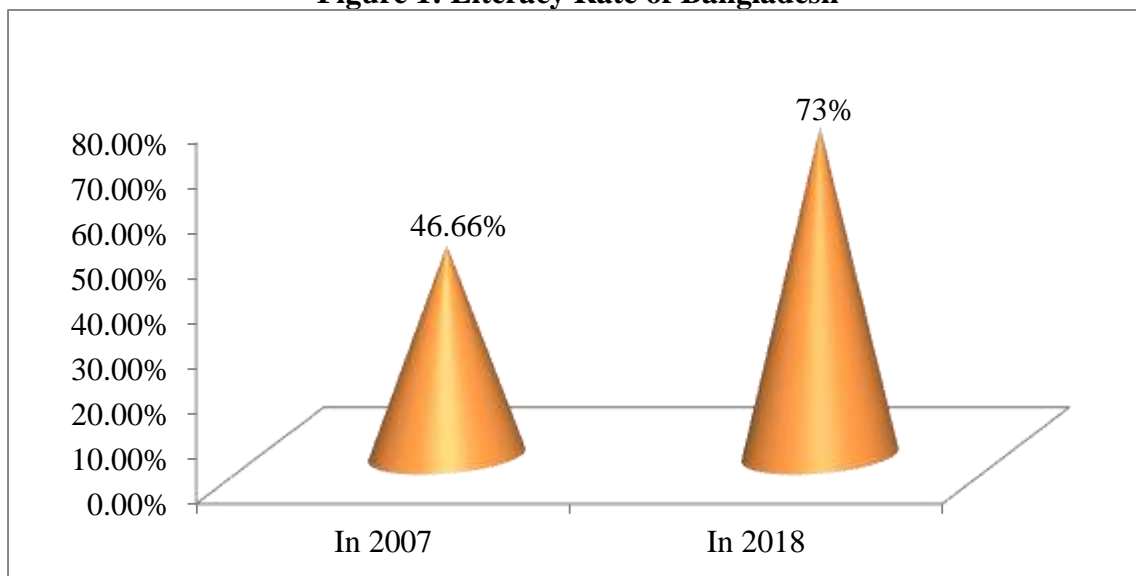
The sources of secondary data for the study shall be referred journals, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, industry reports, research reports, internet and other governmental and non-governmental publications.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Mostly descriptive statistics has been employed on a large scale to analyze the survey data and drawing results of the study. Other qualitative methods were employed as per requirement of the study. After completion of data analysis and finding generation, a thorough research thesis was prepared and submitted for evaluation. However, regular reporting to the supervisors, taking notes and fulfilling their requirements was very judicious, which made the research work effective one.

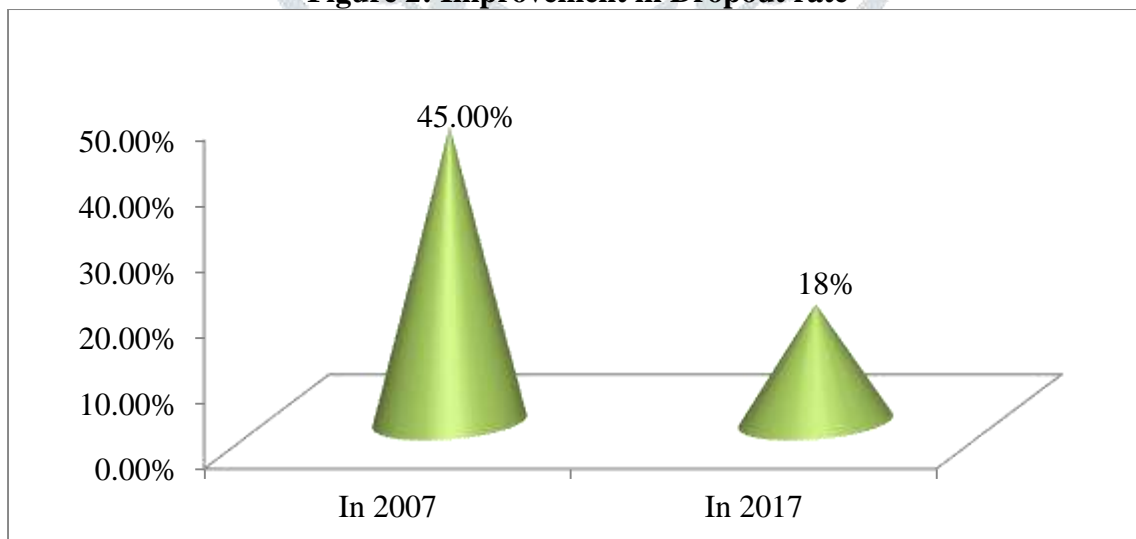
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Literacy Rate of Bangladesh



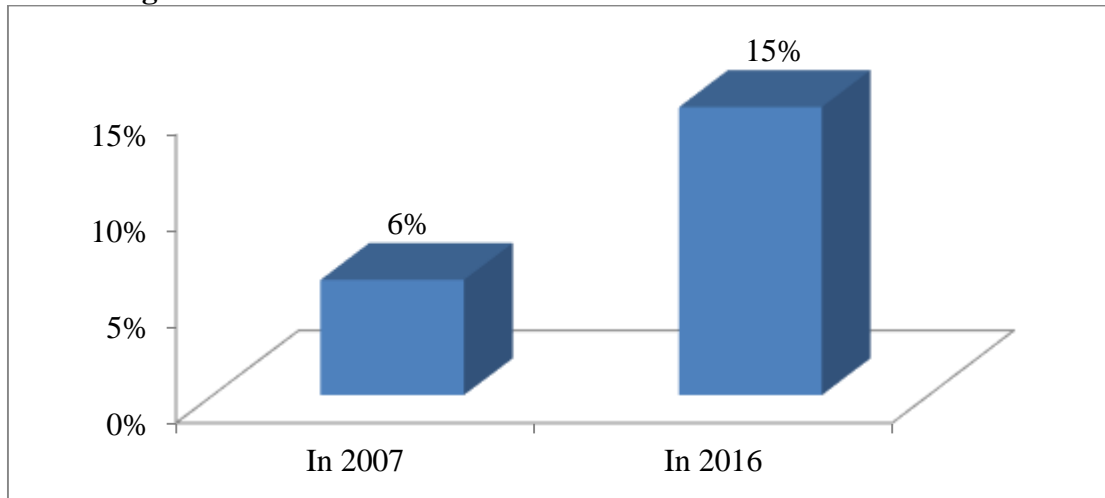
Literacy Rate of Bangladesh is increasing day by day. In 2007 the literacy rate was 46.66% but in 2018 it increased to 73%.

Figure 2: Improvement in Dropout rate



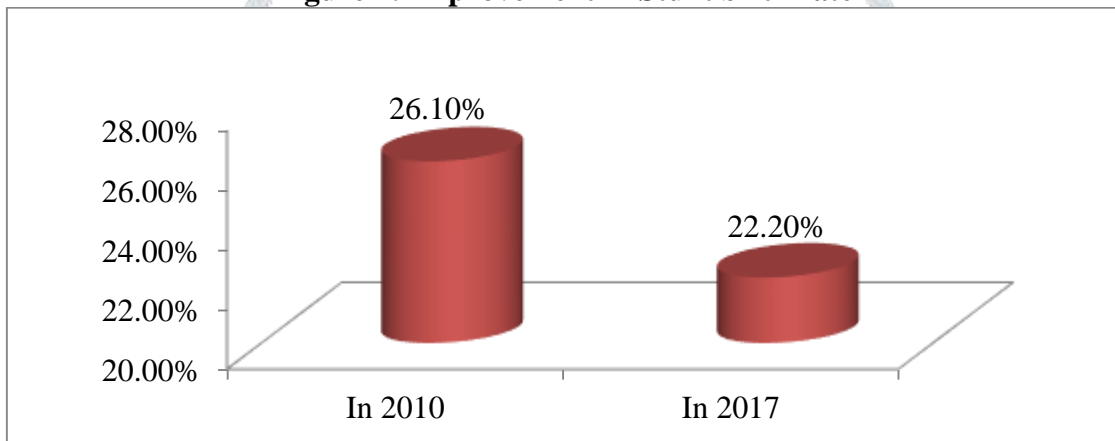
Dropout rate Improved during Awami League regime. In 2007, the dropout rate was 45% but in 2017 the dropout rate decreased to 18%.

Figure 3: Enrollment rate at Technical and Vocational Education



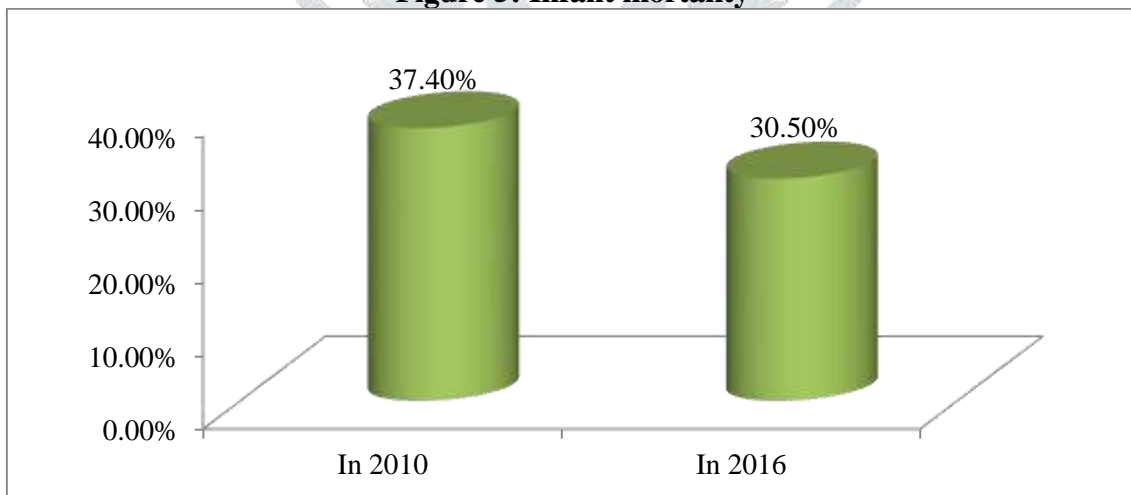
Enrollment rate at Technical and Vocational Education Improved during Awami League regime. In 2007, the Enrollment rate at Technical and Vocational Education was 6% but in 2017 the dropout rate increased to 15%.

Figure 4: Improvement in Stunt birth rate



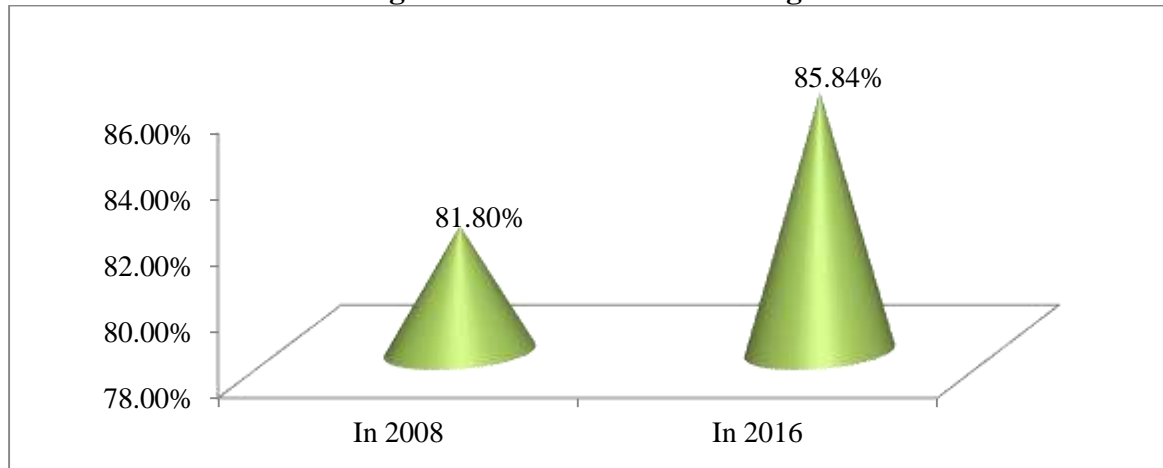
Improvement of stunt birth rate occurred. In 2010 the stunt birth rate was 26.10% but in 2017 it decreased to 22.20%

Figure 5: Infant mortality



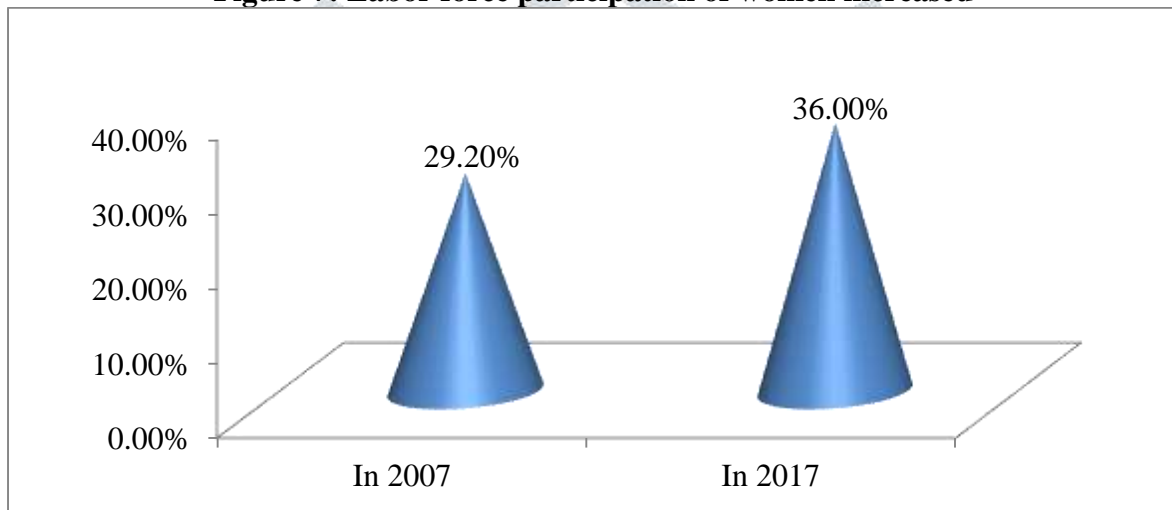
Infant mortality rate is decreasing. In 2010 the infant mortality rate was 37.40% but in 2016 it was 30.50%.

Figure 6: Immunization coverage



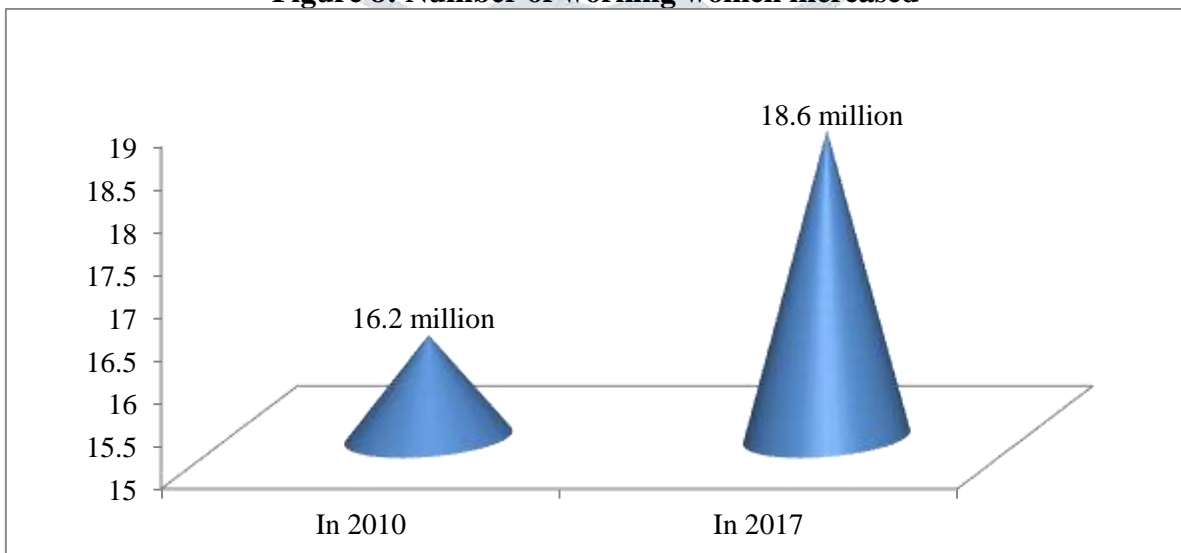
The Immunization coverage rate of Bangladesh is increasing. In 2008 the immunization coverage rate was 81.80% but in 2016 it increased to 85.84%

Figure 7: Labor force participation of women increased



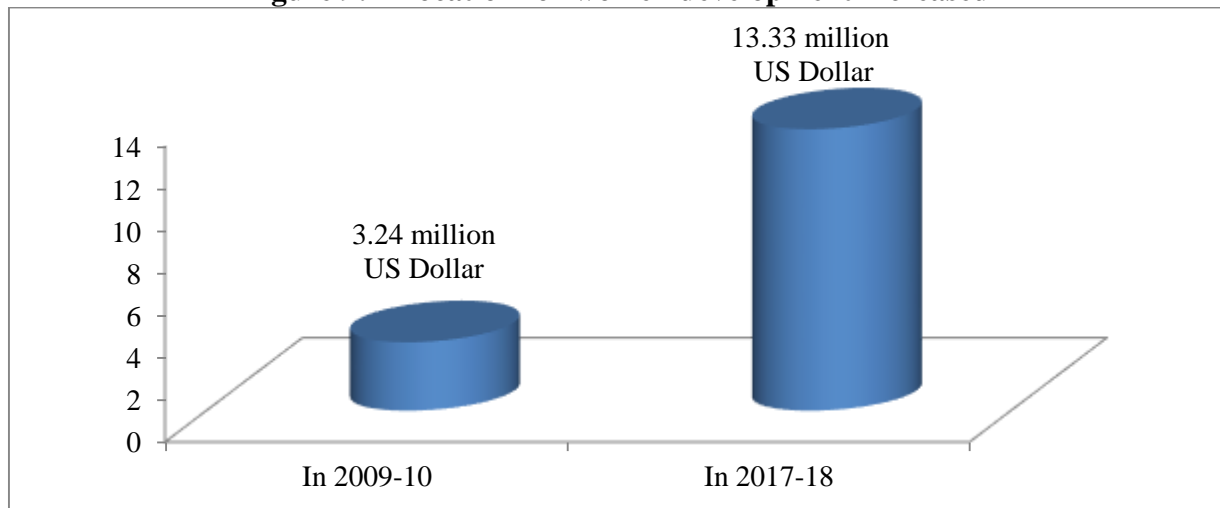
The Labor force participation of women increased. In 2007 Labor force participation of women was 29.20% but in 2017 it increased to 36%.

Figure 8: Number of working women increased



Number of working women increased. In 2010 the Number of working women was 16.2 million but in 2017 it was 18.6 million.

Figure 9: Allocation for women development increased



Allocation for women development increased. In 2009-10 the allocation for women development was 3.24 million US Dollar but in 2017-18 it increased to 13.33 million US Dollar.

Table 1: Comparison of Power Sectors

Indicators	2006	2009	2016
Power generation capacity (Megawatt)	3,378	4,942	15,000
Highest generation (Megawatt)	4036 (2007)	4296	9,036
Power plants	42	27	107
Electricity Coverage	38%	47%	78%
System Loss	16.26%	13.49%	10.49%
Prepaid Meter	None	None	97,893
Electricity production per capita (Kilowatt)	176	220	371

The power sector is improving in each and every year. In 2006 power generation capacity was 3378 megawatt but in 2016 it increased to 15000 megawatt.

Table 2: Comparison of Progress in Communication Sectors

Indicators	2006	2009	2016
National Highway	3570 KM	3477 KM	3813 KM
National Highway (4 lane)	---	73.4 KM	368.62 KM
Bridge/Culvert	964,919 Meter	1,028,319 Meter	1,291,703 Meter
River Dredging (million cubic meter)	6.49	---	15.62

Progress in Communication Sectors is occurring last 10 or more years. In 2006, national highway was 3570 Kilometers but in 2016 it increased 3813 Kilometers. In 2006 Bridge/Culvert was 964919 meters but in 2016 it increased to 1291703 meters.

SUMMARY

A number of key sectors will play a pivotal role in materializing the Vision 2021. It begins with a focus on explicit goals, challenges, and strategies for the agricultural and rural sectors which account for a significant proportion of the country’s GDP and employment. The primary goal is to eliminate food deficiency by

improving production that will enable citizens to meet their nutritional requirement. More specifically, for ensuring food security by 2021, strategic goals need to be addressed in the crop sector, fisheries, livestock and poultry, and forestry. In order to enhance employment generation and rural development, adequate policy attention must be given to rural-non-farm activities. The government must also help farmers in marketing agricultural products and accessing rural credit by pursuing policies that establish powerful autonomous local government bodies for coordinating public and private development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The current wave of globalization holds both opportunities and challenges for Bangladesh. The Bangladesh economy today is more integrated with the global market largely due to the rapid growth in trade, substantial out-migration of labour and remittance inflows, financial sector reform, and creation of favorable FDI regimes. The Vision 2021 also constitutes a goal that is eloquently described by the Prime Minister as 'Digital Bangladesh' to rapidly address the lack of capacity to generate productivity improvements from technological progress, which has long been undermining Bangladesh's growth potential. To minimize such constraints, the government has implemented the national ICT Policy 2009 in order to enhance the usage of information communication technologies in both private and public sector.

On the whole, the 'Digital Bangladesh' agenda is likely to aid the creation of a knowledge-based society, which is necessary for Bangladesh to move up in the development ladder. For Bangladesh to emerge as a 'middle income country', we need a vibrant and effective transport and communication network. The strategy is to develop an efficient, sustainable, safe, and regionally balanced transportation system in which various modes roads, railways, inland waterways, air transport, ports and shipping, urban and rural transport complement each other, interface appropriately, and (when possible) provide effective competition to each other. The progress in the telecommunication network and digital media are also noted to be fundamental in advancing economic growth. This is because these sectors play a fundamental role in facilitating the diffusion of information, which in turn reduces associated transaction costs in the economy.

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