

# Education must have a sea change to meet dev goals

## Says Unesco report's Bangladesh part

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is expected to achieve universal primary education in 2055 and universal lower secondary education in 2075 while universal upper secondary education not until the next century.

The new Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report by Unesco came up with this findings.

The GEM report showed the potential for education to propel progress towards all global goals outlined in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It also showed that education needs a major transformation to fulfil that potential and meet the current challenges facing humanity and the planet.

"Schools, communities and businesses [in Bangladesh] all need to think about

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how they are making sure young people have the skills and knowledge to make the move to greener industries and greener ways of living," Aaron Benavot, director of the GEM Report, told the UNB.

He said floods and cyclones in Bangladesh have destroyed thousands of schools in the past decade, as other climate-related disasters have devastated school systems in many other parts of the world.

"If we want to address our pressing environmental and societal problems, we need to take a long hard look at what and how we are learning," said Benavot, who has decades of experience in global education policy analysis and comparative research.

Responding to a question, he said Bangladesh, like many other countries in the world, are going to be decades late in achieving its global education commitments.

"New policies and innovative approaches must be taken to change this course. But the change in mindset needed to combat the most challenging environmental issues isn't going to happen on its own, and certainly not by hanging all our hopes on today's students," Benavot explained.

Bangladesh is one of the world's most populous and most flood-prone countries. Climate experts project that by 2050, 27 million people will be at risk from sea-level rise.

"With increasing frequency of floods, many environmental migrants from rural areas become slum dwellers in Dhaka, the densely populated capital. Unsurprisingly, the school system is routinely affected by climate-related challenges," Kate Redman, communications and advocacy specialist of GEM Report, told UNB.

"A fundamental change is needed in the way we think about education's role in global development, because it has a catalytic impact on the well-being of individuals and the future of our planet," said Unesco Director-General Irina Bokova.

"Now, more than ever, education has a responsibility to be in gear with 21st century challenges and aspirations, and foster the right types of values and skills that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth, and peaceful living together."

Yet only six percent of adults in the poorest countries, and less than one percent in Bangladesh have ever attended literacy programmes.

In Bangladesh, the National

Curriculum and Textbook Board prepared and endorsed a school manual on climate change and health protection. After that, 1,515 students in 30 schools received classroom training based on the manual while 1,778 students in 30 schools received a leaflet on climate change and health issues.

Six months later, results of a post intervention test performed at both schools showed that the training led to dramatic increases in children's knowledge of the topic.

In Bangladesh, the rise in female educational attainment may have accelerated the country's remarkable fertility decline and contributed to lengthening the interval between births.

The median interval increased by 26 percent between 1991 and 2007, to 44 months. By 2007, birth intervals were about 40 percent longer among women with secondary or higher education than among illiterate women.

Access to electricity has been shown to have a positive impact on education outcomes in many countries, including Bangladesh.

Inequality in education, interacting with wider disparities, heightens the risk of violence and conflict.

A recent study drawing on data from 100 countries over 50 years found that countries with higher levels of inequality in schooling were much more likely to experience conflict.

The report called on governments to start taking inequalities in education seriously, tracking them by collecting information directly from families.

The new global development agenda called for education ministers and other education actors to work in collaboration with other sectors.