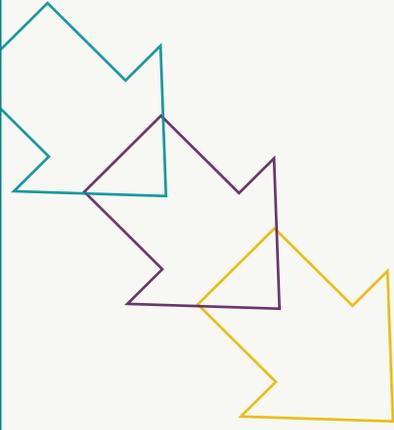
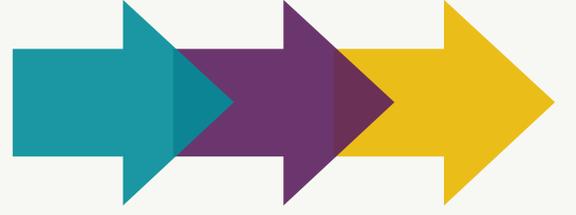


**CLEAR**

Covid-19 Learning, Evidence  
and Research Programme

**ক্লিয়ার**

কোভিড-১৯ লার্নিং, এভিডেন্স  
অ্যান্ড রিসার্চ প্রোগ্রাম



Research Briefing

# **The Impact of Covid-19 on the Education of School Children in Bangladesh**

April 2022

# The Impact of Covid-19 on the Education of School Children in Bangladesh

This briefing summarises priority areas for future research and key stakeholders with whom to engage, as identified in the scoping paper *The Impact of Covid-19 on the Education of Primary and Secondary School Children in Bangladesh* by Marjan Hossain and Dr Khandker Wahedur Rahman from the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). The scoping paper and this briefing were commissioned for the Covid-19 Learning, Evidence and Research Programme in Bangladesh (CLEAR). CLEAR aims to build a consortium of research partners to deliver policy-relevant research and evidence for Bangladesh to support the Covid-19 response and inform preparation for future shocks.

## Education in the context of Covid-19

Prior to the pandemic, Bangladesh had made significant progress in some areas of education, increasing primary enrolment and cycle completion, reducing student drop-out rates, and improving student to teacher ratios. However, issues with teacher training, teacher quality, and low student-teacher contact hours prevailed. Student test scores from various learning assessments indicated that children in primary and secondary levels were performing below their core grade-level competencies even before the start of the pandemic.

Abrupt school closures during Covid-induced lockdowns disrupted learning for more than 30 million students in primary and secondary education, further worsening the situation. The government undertook a series of initiatives to minimise learning disruption through, for example, broadcasting pre-recorded lessons on television and radio. Evidence suggests that the most marginalised and vulnerable learners, those from poorer households, remote rural areas, informal urban settlements, women and girls, and those living with disability, were disproportionately impacted.

Uptake of remote education services among rural students was limited predominantly due to lack of access to the devices for remote learning, whilst rural girls incurred further learning loss as a result of increased care work, lower aspirations, and lower educational support. Even when schools re-opened, instruction time was much reduced compared to pre-pandemic times, across all grade levels.

Pre-pandemic education for children with special needs already had scope for improvement and the adoption of blended learning methods raised concerns about how inclusive these were for different impairments. There is still not enough research to provide conclusive evidence on the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on children with disabilities, but it is likely that pandemic-driven

challenges will further exacerbate existing barriers around access to learning resources.

Teachers also experienced learning loss and disengagement during school closures and whilst subject-based training programmes for teachers were delivered online, there was a lack of specific interventions to support teachers.

Household financial difficulties, low student motivation, and institutional constraints, encountered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, may all impede learning recovery.

## Existing data gaps and research opportunities

Many Covid-19 effects on marginalised people are assumptions based either on pre-pandemic estimates or global evidence. Very few studies to date have actually explored the reality on the ground for Bangladesh. Based on the literature review, interviews, and a group discussion with key stakeholders, the following are the suggested areas for future research grouped according to the CLEAR programme themes.

## Poverty and vulnerability

Following schools reopening in Bangladesh, a nationally representative survey outlining students' current enrolment status, reasons for non-enrolment, attendance status, and reasons for non-attendance would be useful to understand the effect of Covid-19 school closures. This will also help determine the areas where schools have shut down completely, and how this has affected students in those regions.

A nationally representative database on students' levels of learning including disaggregated data on poverty, vulnerability, and other social indicators would also be of value for decision makers.

## Rights of the marginalised population and disadvantaged groups

There is a clear evidence gap on the impact of the pandemic on the education of marginalised student groups, including those with disabilities and those living in remote areas, among others. This evidence will be critical to ensure the adoption of inclusive strategies for learning recovery.

## Service delivery, accountability, and governance

Surveys conducted during school closures provided evidence that the digital divide has been a significant impediment to ensuring effective learning continuity, resulting in inequitable learning recovery. Further research is needed on the use of low-tech remedial education approaches to ensure student inclusion.

## Key stakeholders

Some of the key government stakeholders involved in the primary and secondary education sector are the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM), the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE), the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and very recently, Access to Information (a2i), due to the acceleration of digital education initiatives during the pandemic.



A young boy holding up his text book in rural Bangladesh.

PHOTO: ZEHAD AL MEHEDI

International stakeholders with an interest in education are the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Non-government actors include the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), the BRAC Education Programme (BEP), the BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC IED), and the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD).

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## Reference

Hossain, M. and Rahman, K.W. (2022) *The Impact of Covid-19 on the Education of Primary and Secondary School Children in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: BRAC Institute of Governance and Development

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This Research Briefing was written by Aurin Huq and edited by Alan Stanley at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) based on original work by Marjan Hossain and Dr Khandker Wahedur Rahman from the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD).

The Covid-19 Learning, Evidence and Research Programme in Bangladesh (CLEAR), coordinated by IDS, is building a consortium of research organisations in Bangladesh to generate policy-relevant research and evidence to support Covid-19 recovery and increase resilience to future shocks. CLEAR is funded by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

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✉ [clear.bgd@ids.ac.uk](mailto:clear.bgd@ids.ac.uk)

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DOI: [10.19088/CLEAR.2022.003](https://doi.org/10.19088/CLEAR.2022.003)



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