Digital Education and Online Protection of Young People:

An Input to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding Bangladesh

Type of Stakeholder: Academic institution.
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Can we attribute responses to this questionnaire publicly? Yes.

Introduction

The UN Human Rights Council has adopted a resolution on "Youth and Human Rights" during its fifty-first session, held from 12 September to 7 October 2022. Passed on 6 October and published on 12 October 2022, the resolution highlights the importance of recognizing young people's roles in society and the unique challenges they face. It also underscores the significance of human rights education, digital literacy, and the participation of young people in decision-making processes as essential components for their empowerment and for achieving sustainable development goals. In the resolution, the Human Rights Council specifically requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a detailed study on the solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats, and to submit the study to the Council for consideration prior to its fifty-seventh session. It also requests that the report be carried out in consultation with States and relevant stakeholders, including relevant United Nations agencies, the treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, national human rights institutions, civil society, and representatives of youth organizations[1].
Following the resolution, the UN High Commissioner issued a call for inputs on the solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats, with the objective of informing the preparations of the High Commissioner's future study. The High Commissioner's call is particularly aimed at exploring i) the legal and policy framework concerning the human rights of young people and digital education and protection from online threats; ii) the main gaps and challenges concerning digital education for young people and their protection from online threats; and iii) good practices of solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats. The invitation was extended to all interested States, civil society organizations, representatives of youth organizations, international and regional organizations,

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⊥ Disclaimer: author's views are exclusively on behalf of Facts and Norms Institute.
[1] United Nations Human Rights Council. Resolution 51/17: Youth and Human Rights. Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 6 October 2022. *UN Doc. A/HRC/RES/51/17*, 12 October 2022.

national human rights institutions, academics, and others, and the High Commissioner asked contributors to direct their inputs towards answering a five-questions Questionnaire[2].

The Institute's work

The Facts and Norms Institute is an independent academic institution based in the Global South, with members present in all continents. The Institute's mission is straightforward: to promote a rational, human rights-based approach to social issues.

Since its establishment, the Institute conducted research about varied human rights topics, including human rights and infectious diseases; torture and torture prevention; religious intolerance, violence, and racism; social participation; transitional justice and sustainable development; poverty, post-growth and SDGs; sustainable development and the human rights of persons with albinism; the role of non-state actors (particularly businesses) in transitional justice; memorialization and the Roma; criminalization of persons living in the street and in extreme poverty; the protection of lawyers; the human rights of indigenous and rural communities to water and sanitation; militarization of indigenous and quilombola land; human rights and internet shutdowns; mercury, artisanal and small-scale gold-mining and human rights; contemporary forms of slavery and the informal economy; technology and contemporary forms of slavery; human rights and voluntourism; adequate housing and climate change; the extractive sector, just transition, and human rights; the notion of short-term enforced disappearances; and the present submission on digital education and online protection of young people.

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[2] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Call for inputs on the solutions to promote digital education for young people and to ensure their protection from online threats. *UN OHCHR's Calls for Input*, January 2024.

Executive Summary

- Despite progress in gender parity in education, learning outcomes in Bangladesh remain limited. Despite free tuition costs for schooling and financial support, school success largely depends on private tutoring and extra classes. Young people in Bangladesh face significant barriers in accessing digital education, primarily due to technological inequities, socio-economic factors, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges include a pronounced digital divide, with rural areas and marginalized groups having limited access to internet and digital devices. The pandemic has exacerbated these issues, leading to increased educational disparities and mental health concerns. Difficulties with online education amidst closures and the digital divide negatively affecting students from poor and rural households manifested in both school and university levels. The lack of ICT infrastructure, slow internet speeds, and the absence of comprehensive digital literacy and online safety programs hinder effective online education. The government has initiated various measures to promote digital inclusion, but challenges in implementation and effectiveness persist.

- The National Education Policy 2010 by Bangladesh's Ministry of Education aimed to modernize education through technology and curriculum updates, with a focus on enhancing English proficiency. The government also launched the Digital Bangladesh initiative, prioritizing the transformation of primary schools into e-primary schools. A study covering 800 schools across eight divisions in 2020 assessed the status of ICT implementation, uncovering a mixed scenario of advancements and hurdles. Despite notable efforts to equip schools with ICT tools such as laptops and projectors, a full range of ICT resources and skilled personnel remains sparse, leading to underwhelming utilization of available technology in education. To address these gaps, recommendations include ensuring equal ICT support across regions, providing all schools with comprehensive ICT facilities, establishing model ICT-enabled schools in Upazila or Thana, and focusing on ICT training for teachers.

- The "Digital Bangladesh" initiative aimed to use digital technology to eradicate poverty and enhance societal inclusivity by 2021, despite skepticism and criticism as political rhetoric. The government, partnering with international bodies such as UNDP and USAID, has pursued digitization for economic and social growth, implementing a Public-Private Partnership model to boost ICT infrastructure and public services. The initiative is anchored by the National ICT Policy and the creation of 4,500 Union Digital Centers and the Access to Information program to empower rural areas and decentralize services. With goals stretching to 2041, the government’s strategy seeks to leverage ICT for broad socio-economic development, aiming to eliminate extreme poverty and achieve upper middle-income status by 2030, and high-income, zero poverty status by 2041. A 2020 study found that NIP's policies are overly focused on

technology. It recommended a shift towards skills development and addressing societal issues to achieve genuine digital inclusion.

- The Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041 encompasses "Smart Citizen", "Smart Government", "Smart Society", and "Smart Economy" pillars, targeting education enhancement through blended learning, digital curriculum, and skill development. The a2i Program, supported by UNDP and USAID, focuses on digital education and e-learning. The Blended Education Accelerator (BEA) seeks to innovate in primary and secondary education by promoting technology use. In 2022, the University Grants Commission (UGC) introduced a Blended Learning Policy to improve higher education, alongside multimedia classroom initiatives for interactive learning. Key projects include the Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN) for high-speed internet in academia, Shangshad TV's educational broadcasts during COVID-19, digital textbooks, and the Teacher's Portal for educator collaboration. Government efforts also feature MuktoPaath, an e-learning platform training over 300,000 in healthcare and judiciary sectors, and "Noipunyo", an app for student evaluation developed with UNICEF and the Education Ministry. These initiatives aim to boost education and research, though their overall impact remains to be fully assessed.

- Our research efforts identified several governmental initiatives related to digital connectivity and internet access across the country, such as the "One country, One rate" broadband initiative, the "Digital Bangladesh" initiative and the "Smart Bangladesh" vision laying the groundwork for technological advancement and digital service accessibility. Despite a uniform rate policy, rural broadband access remains scarce, widening the digital divide as rural residents face high costs, limiting their digital engagement. To protect young individuals' privacy online, comprehensive legislation for personal data protection is underway. However, there are severe concerns that this upcoming law intends for the online space may restrict free speech and privacy. A 2021 study highlighted the rapid adoption of social media by over 70% of young Bangladeshis, noting the potential risks of exposure to violent extremism (VE) online. The study underscores the need for effective countermeasures, drawing on global initiatives that blend online and offline efforts to combat VE. Strategies such as the Redirect Method, which guides users towards counter-narrative content, and technological solutions like eGLYPH and AI for detecting and removing extremist content, are cited as impactful, as well as mobile apps like the UNDP Africa Toolkit and GCTF Lifecycle Toolkit, which disseminate positive messages and support community education. CVE strategies encompass, inter alia, the development of online courses, positive messaging platforms, online religious discourse portals, and gaming to engage and educate the youth, alongside information verification platforms to counter misinformation. Ensuring transparent content verification, respecting diverse religious beliefs, and avoiding undue surveillance are crucial to avoid exacerbating digital divides and ensuring that CVE strategies do not infringe on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- Privacy and data protection for young people are also pressing concerns, exacerbated by the proposed legislation for personal data protection which could allow unchecked law enforcement access to personal data. Existing laws reportedly are inadequate to address cyber violence, including cyberbullying and harassment, leaving young people, especially girls and women, vulnerable to online abuse without sufficient legal recourse. A 2019 study highlights the gendered nature of online risks in South Asia, showing that women and marginalized groups face frequent online abuse, including cyberstalking and content leaks. Victims often rely on informal coping mechanisms, such as family support and reducing online presence, due to the ineffectiveness of law enforcement and in-app reporting mechanisms. The study suggests the need for culturally sensitive technology and policies, education on safe online practices, and stronger collaboration between NGOs, legal, and technological entities to improve online safety and ensure gender-equitable digital spaces.

- The government has implemented various laws, regulations, and measures that are relevant to protecting young people from online threats. Key laws include the 2012 Pornography Control Act, which targets the distribution of pornographic material, including through online means; and the 2023 Cyber Security Act almost mirroring the repealed 2018 Digital Security Act (DSA) with provisions criminalizing hacking, tampering digital information, impersonation, use of identity information without lawful authority, and certain kinds of speech under undefined terms with major concerns over its impact on free expression, a significant apprehension on the now repealed DSA and section 57 of the 2006 Information and Communication Technology Act (amended in 2013). To combat online violence and harassment, the government also set up helplines, including one specifically for teenagers. However, the effectiveness of these measures is questioned, with ongoing demands for improved measures in collaboration with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations.
  Moreover, a 2018 review by the Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre (GCSCC) highlighted gaps in Bangladesh's cybersecurity legislation and capacity, noting limited actionable directives and insufficient training for prosecutors and judges in cybersecurity. The review suggests a need for enhanced legal frameworks, better training for law enforcement, and judicial officials in cybercrime management.
  In conclusion, proposed improvements for safeguarding young people online include refining legal frameworks to balance security and freedom of expression, boosting digital literacy, creating efficient reporting systems for abuse, partnering with digital platforms for safer environments, launching awareness campaigns, offering victim support, involving youth in policymaking, and regularly updating safety measures.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are the main challenges that young people in your country face in accessing digital education? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.

The main challenges young people in Bangladesh face in accessing digital education, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable groups, are multifaceted, highlighting systemic issues exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, technological inequities, socio-economic barriers, and mental health concerns.

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Bangladesh has achieved remarkable progress in enhancing educational access for girls, overcoming initial challenges of low attendance rates and significant gender disparities, and becoming one of the first countries in Asia to achieve the Millennium Development Goal targets for gender parity in schooling. Yet, national learning assessments still show poor literacy and numeracy skills. Fewer than 1 in 2 boys and barely 1 in 3 girls who completed primary education were functionally literate. Low learning levels are attributed to multiple factors, including low numbers of school days and hours (among the lowest in the world). Moreover, despite free tuition costs for schooling and financial support – including support for secondary school girls at a higher risk of dropping out due to marriage – school success still entails private tutoring and extra classes[3].

The digital divide in Bangladesh's education sector is a significant issue due to poor infrastructure, lack of devices, and socio-economic challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected educational progress, particularly among adolescent girls in rural areas. One educational assessment examined data from 24 villages in the rural districts of Chapainawabganj, Kushtia, and Sherpur, areas known for high rates of child marriage. A baseline survey was carried out in 2018, followed by an endline survey in July 2021, capturing data on adolescents aged 12-19. Data collection involved in-person interviews using mobile survey tools, assessing mathematical and reading competencies through a set of standardized questions. The results revealed a notable decline in literacy and numeracy scores among girls after one year of Covid-induced school closures. Furthermore, the study highlighted a widening gap in learning outcomes based on household wealth, with children from wealthier households and those owning televisions or smartphones scoring higher both before and after the pandemic. However, these assets did not prevent the observed learning loss. Poverty was linked with a significantly greater reduction in learning scores, suggesting that socioeconomic disparities exacerbated the educational impact of the pandemic. The qualitative findings revealed the anxiety among girls about returning to school, fearing they have fallen behind

[3] Sajeda Amin; Md. Irfan Hossain; Sigma Ainul. Learning loss among adolescent girls during the COVID-19 pandemic in rural Bangladesh. *Population Council*, 2021, p. 1.

academically. Moreover, the pandemic also heightened the risk of child marriage, adding to the challenges faced by disadvantaged adolescents.[4]

A recent survey has shed more light on the profound impact of the digital divide on children's learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the National Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh 2021, conducted jointly by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, only 18.7% of children in Bangladesh engaged in remote learning amidst school closures due to Covid-19. The survey reveals that the most vulnerable children—those with limited or no access to the internet, television, or essential devices such as computers and smartphones—are the most adversely affected. The digital divide is more pronounced in rural areas, where only 15.9% of children could participate in remote learning, in stark contrast to 28.7% in urban settings. The survey also uncovers significant regional disparities in remote learning engagement, with Khulna and Dhaka reporting the highest participation rates (23.4% and 23.1%, respectively), while Mymensingh has the lowest at just 5.7%. Notably, younger children bore the brunt of these challenges, with only 13.1% of primary school students taking part in remote classes, compared to 20.3% in lower secondary and 23.7% in upper secondary.[5]

At university level, a comprehensive survey of 844 university students across Bangladesh, conducted amidst widespread school closures, has unveiled significant challenges in the transition to online education. Despite efforts to continue classes through online platforms, students faced substantial hurdles, including inconsistent access to electricity and the internet, difficulties in maintaining attention, and obstacles in comprehending lessons delivered online. This situation was exacerbated in rural areas, where technological resources and infrastructure are less developed, highlighting a stark disparity in educational access. The findings point to a critical need for strategies that address these barriers, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students in the face of ongoing and future challenges.[6]

Furthermore, the transition to online learning and the overall pandemic situation have led to significant mental health issues among university students. A comprehensive study involving 3,122 Bangladeshi university students revealed a surge in mental health challenges, marked by a significant prevalence of depression (76.1%), anxiety (71.5%), and stress (70.1%) symptoms. Conducted in April 2020, this research utilized the DASS-21 scale to assess these conditions, uncovering that poor sleep, inadequate exercise, excessive internet use, and economic disadvantage exacerbated these issues.[7]

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[4] Amin; Sajeda; Hossain, Md. Irfan; Ainul, Sigma. Learning loss among adolescent girls during the COVID-19 pandemic in rural Bangladesh. *Population Council*, 2021, p. 1-4.

[5] Tribune Desk, 'Survey confirms impact of digital divide on children's learning amid Covid pandemic', Dhaka Tribune, 16 March 2023.

[6] Md. Al-Amin; Abdullah Al Zubayer; Badhon Deb; Mehedi Hasan. Status of tertiary level online class in Bangladesh: students' response on preparedness, participation and classroom activities. *Helyon* 7, 2021, p. 1-7.

[7] Md. Saiful Islam; Md. Safaet Hossain Sujan; Rafia Tasnim; Md. Tajuddin Sikder; Marc N. Potenza; Jim van Os. Psychological responses during the COVID-19 outbreak among university students in Bangladesh. *PLoS ONE*, 15 (12), 31 Dec. 2020.

Despite the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to revolutionize education, implementing it in practice had faced significant challenges in Bangladesh due to the country's developmental status and literacy rate.[8]

In many rural and impoverished areas in Bangladesh, reliable electricity and internet access are lacking, preventing a significant portion of the population from accessing digital education.

The level of ICT infrastructure development varies across universities in Bangladesh, with some institutions still in the process of developing their infrastructure while others have partially developed or are at moderate levels of development. Studies have revealed that rural public universities face difficulties in providing online education due to limited ICT technology and infrastructure. Issues such as slow internet, insufficient power supplies, and inadequate management and planning contribute to these challenges.[9]

Bangladesh has limited and slow broadband internet coverage, and 4G coverage is still in the developmental stage, resulting in inadequate mobile internet infrastructure. As of May 2021, the country ranked 134th in the world for mobile speeds and 96th for fixed broadband speeds. The slow internet speed inhibits effective digital education, highlighting the need for stable minimum 3G coverage nationwide. A significant proportion of informants from public universities are dissatisfied with their internet service providers, often citing high costs, poor internet connectivity, and slow speeds, leading to student dropouts from classes.[10]

Public universities in Bangladesh often face challenges due to inadequate physical infrastructure, particularly in setting up ICT equipment. In contrast, private universities generally possess better physical and ICT infrastructure.[11]

Disparity in digital accessibility and socio-economic challenges intertwine to create substantial barriers to equitable learning in Bangladesh, emphasising the need for comprehensive solutions to address these disparities and improve educational accessibility.

Accessibility in Bangladesh is limited due to the high cost of digital devices and bandwidth charges and internet access, particularly affecting vulnerable children in rural areas who have limited access to the internet, TV, and supportive devices such as computers or smartphones.[12] This has resulted in a participation rate of 15.9% in remote learning in rural areas, in contrast to the 28.7% participation rate among urban children.[13] Although 98% of households have electricity supply, only 49% have access to the internet through any device, with higher accessibility in urban

[8] Mst. Shahnaj Parvin. Integrations of ICT in Education Sector for the Advancement of the Developing Country: Some Challenges and Recommendations-Bangladesh Perspective. *International Journal of Computer Science & Information Technology (IJCSIT)*, v. 5, n. 4, August 2013.
[9] Syed Laden. Digital Bangladesh, digital divide and education sector. *New Age*, 18 April 2021.
[10] Md Aktaruzzaman. 'Adopting online digital education in Bangladesh'. *The Daily Star*, 9 July 2021.
[11] Md Moynul Ahsan, Sk. Safoana Jerin, Md. Ramizul Islam. 'Digital Divide in Education Sector of Bangladesh during COVID-19'. *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, *3*(3), p.96-112.
[12] Md Moynul Ahsan, Sk. Safoana Jerin, Md. Ramizul Islam. 'Digital Divide in Education Sector of Bangladesh during COVID-19'. *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, *3*(3), p.96-112.
[13] UNICEF. 'Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh 2021'. *Statistics and Informatics Division, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)*, p. 76. March 2023.

areas (65.3%) than in rural areas (44%).[14] Additionally, studies reveal that only 10-15% of university students have access to laptops or PCs, and the socio-economic situation exacerbated by the pandemic has led to parental unemployment, student job loss, and increased risk of early marriage for female students, further burdened by the high cost of poor-quality internet.[15]

The digital divide in Bangladesh's education sector affects public and private universities differently, with private university students, mainly from urban areas, having better internet access and adapting more swiftly to online education during the pandemic. In contrast, public university students, particularly those from rural areas, face more challenges due to financial constraints and lack of access to technology.[16] Efforts to reduce the divide have had some effect, but it remains a concern, especially for public university students from rural areas. The digital gap is less pronounced in private universities due to the higher financial status of their students.[17] In urban areas, students from kindergartens to high schools have adapted to online teaching strategies to continue their education during the pandemic and extended lockdown.[18]

There are concerns of a lack of plans in Bangladesh to meet ICT demands in the modern era. Bangladesh has adopted a National Information and Communication Technology Policy in 2023. However, the Government is yet to finalise any action plan and there are concerns of its slow implementation.[19]

Many educators lack the training needed to effectively integrate technology into teaching, hindering their ability to provide digital education for students. The integration of modern ICT infrastructure remains limited among public university educators, with conventional teaching methods still prevailing. The sudden shift to online teaching during the pandemic revealed the unpreparedness of untrained teachers, complicating the situation further.[20]

In addition to these immediate concerns, broader challenges in online education in Bangladesh include the absence of authentic examination systems, lack of suitable software and human resources, and the need for accountability through smart education software.[21] These challenges highlight the obstacles that need to be addressed for the success of online education. Other issues include the lack of digital literacy among young people,[22] gender inequality and cultural barriers,[23]

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[14] UNICEF. 'Survey on Children's Education in Bangladesh 2021'. *Statistics and Informatics Division, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)*, p.12. March 2023.
[15] Md Aktaruzzaman. 'Adopting online digital education in Bangladesh'. *The Daily Star*, 9 July 2021.
[16] Md Moynul Ahsan, Sk. Safoana Jerin, Md. Ramizul Islam, 'Digital Divide in Education Sector of Bangladesh during COVID-19', *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, *3*(3), 96-112.
[17] Md Moynul Ahsan, Sk. Safoana Jerin, Md. Ramizul Islam, 'Digital Divide in Education Sector of Bangladesh during COVID-19', *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, *3*(3), 96-112.
[18] Syed Laden. Digital Bangladesh, digital divide and education sector. *New Age*, 18 April 2021.
[19] Md Moynul Ahsan, Sk. Safoana Jerin, Md. Ramizul Islam. 'Digital Divide in Education Sector of Bangladesh during COVID-19'. *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, *3*(3), 96-112.
[20] Md Moynul Ahsan, Sk. Safoana Jerin, Md. Ramizul Islam. 'Digital Divide in Education Sector of Bangladesh during COVID-19'. *European Journal of Science, Innovation and Technology*, *3*(3), 96-112.
[21] Md Aktaruzzaman. 'Adopting online digital education in Bangladesh'. *The Daily Star*, 9 July 2021.
[22] Tasneem Tayeb. 'Bangladesh cannot become smart with a gaping digital divide'. *The Daily Star*, 21 June 2023.
[23] Sara Kabir. 'Bangladeshi Women in Tech and Digital Education: Challenges and Strides'. *The Daily Star,* 7 March 2023.

accessibility barriers for individuals with disabilities,[24] and resistance towards embracing digital education due to perceptions[25] and parental concerns on quality assurance[26].

2. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that digital education is accessible and promoted among young people? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes directed at ensuring young people's universal access to digital education.

A major example of the government tackling the subject of digital inclusion is the "Digital Bangladesh" initiative. Initially a cornerstone of the Awami League's electoral promise, the initiative aimed at leveraging digital technologies for poverty eradication and societal inclusivity by 2021. Despite its critical role in national development and its adoption as a major political commitment, the initiative faced scepticism, often labelled as mere political rhetoric by opposition parties. To bolster the digital transformation, the government, in collaboration with international agencies such as UNDP and USAID, has adopted policies to enhance digitization as a pathway to economic and social advancement. This included the implementation of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model to improve ICT infrastructure and public services. Central to this digital agenda is the National ICT Policy (NIP), which established a regulatory framework aimed at rural empowerment through a widespread network of 4,500 Union Digital Centers (UDC) and the Access to Information (a2i) programme to decentralize administrative services. With the vision extending to 2041, these initiatives represent a strategic commitment to utilizing ICT as a catalyst for comprehensive socio-economic and human development. Objectives include eliminating extreme poverty and reaching upper middle-income by 2030, and high-income status with zero poverty by 2041[27].
A 2020 study examined the extent to which digital inclusion can be achieved by the NIP strategies. Through a qualitative approach using policy goal-means analysis, the study suggests that NIP-related policies are ambiguous and techno-centric, and that a more skill-based approach and attention to societal challenges are needed to ensure true digital inclusion.[28]

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The National Education Policy 2010 by the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh focused on reshaping the existing teaching-learning pattern by applying technology

[24] The Daily Star. 'Opportunities and Challenges to Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh'. 18 July 2023.
[25] Md Aktaruzzaman. 'Adopting online digital education in Bangladesh'. *The Daily Star*, 9 July 2021.
[26] Masudul Hoque. 'Uncertainty, tension grip students, parents amid raging political crisis'. *The Business Standard*, 6 November 2023.
[27] Abdul Aziz. Digital inclusion challenges in Bangladesh: the case of the National ICT Policy. *Contemporary South Asia*, v. 28, issue 3, p. 304-319, 2020.
[28] Abdul Aziz. Digital inclusion challenges in Bangladesh: the case of the National ICT Policy. *Contemporary South Asia*, v. 28, issue 3, p. 304-319, 2020.

and curriculum renovation. Furthermore, the government emphasized the development of English language skills across all sectors of education.[29]

The government of Bangladesh particularly introduced the concept of Digital Bangladesh. With education being one of the crucial sectors in the making of a digital nation, the government started to convert primary into e-primary schools. A 2020 study aimed at investigating the ICT implementation status in e-primary schools from a sample of 800 schools from 8 divisions.[30]

The findings reveal a mixed picture of progress and challenges. While the government has made strides in introducing ICT and related facilities to most primary schools, the distribution and implementation of these resources are uneven. Many schools are equipped with basic ICT tools such as laptops and projectors; however, a comprehensive set of ICT equipment and support facilities is rare. This scarcity is compounded by a lack of trained personnel and appropriate classroom environments to utilize these technologies effectively. Consequently, despite the nominal presence of ICT infrastructure, the actual implementation and utilization rates of ICT support in schools are low.[31]

In response to these challenges, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the efficacy of ICT in primary education. Equal priority for ICT support across all divisions, the provision of comprehensive ICT equipment and facilities to every school, and the implementation of a model ICT-enabled school in each Upazila or Thana are suggested to ensure a more uniform and effective distribution of ICT resources. Additionally, emphasizing training for teachers in ICT-related subjects is deemed crucial for maximizing the potential of ICT in educational settings. The overarching analysis highlights the significant yet underutilized role of ICT in shaping the future of education in Bangladesh.[32]

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The Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041 focuses on pillars such as "Smart Citizen", "Smart Government", "Smart Society", and "Smart Economy",[33] with the aim to inter alia empower students through blended education, digital curriculum, and smart skill development opportunities.[34]

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[29] Obaid Wali. Future undergraduate English language curriculum framework for sustainable development in Bangladesh. *International Journal of English Learning and Teaching Skills*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2018.

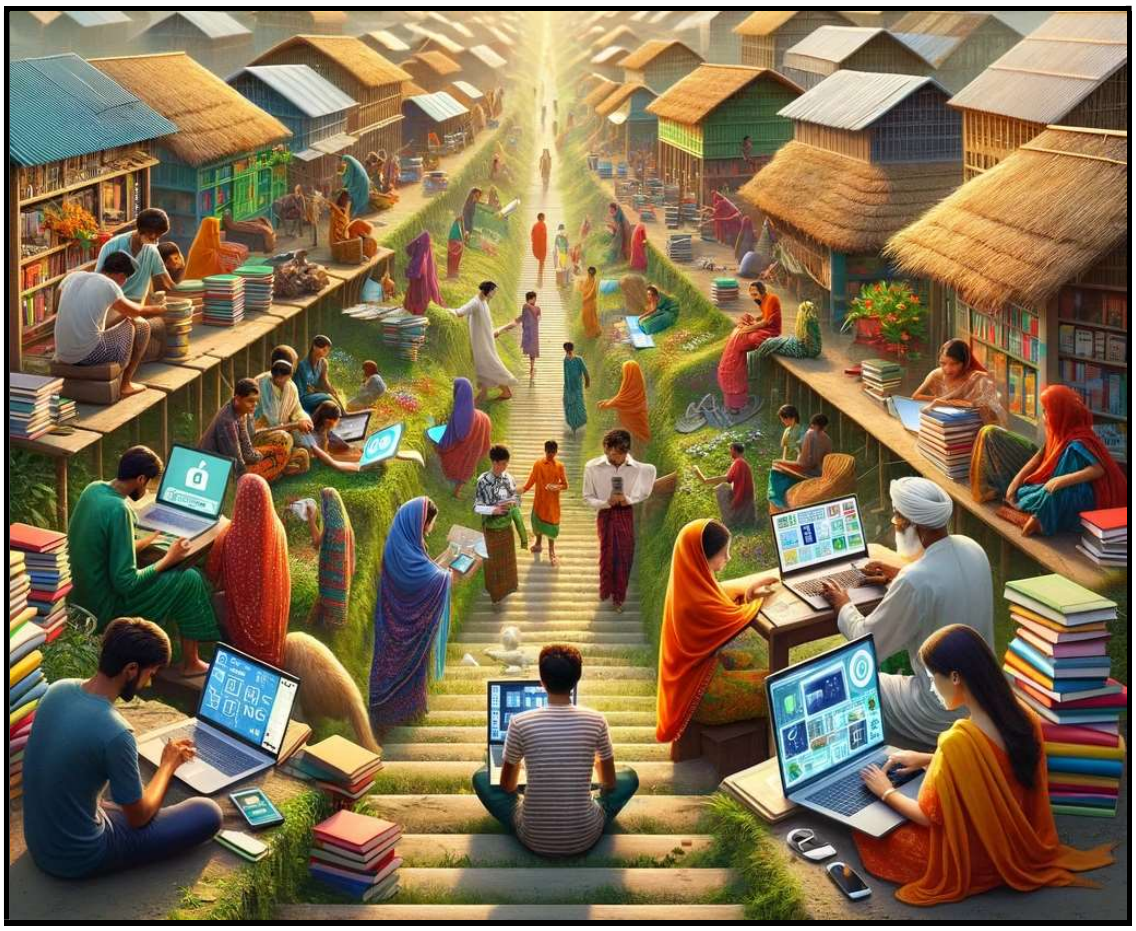
[30] Wahiduzzaman Khan; Md. Mahbobor Rahaman. Measuring the Performance of e-Primary School Systems in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Modern Education and Computer Science (IJMECS)*, IJMECS Vol. 12, No. 1, 8 Feb. 2020.

[31] Wahiduzzaman Khan; Md. Mahbobor Rahaman. Measuring the Performance of e-Primary School Systems in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Modern Education and Computer Science (IJMECS)*, IJMECS Vol. 12, No. 1, 8 Feb. 2020.

[32] Wahiduzzaman Khan; Md. Mahbobor Rahaman. Measuring the Performance of e-Primary School Systems in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Modern Education and Computer Science (IJMECS)*, IJMECS Vol. 12, No. 1, 8 Feb. 2020.

[33] Rashad Kabir. 'Road to Smart Bangladesh'. *The Daily Star*, 22 February 2023.

[34] Md. Afzal Hossain Sarwar, 'What will the future of smart education be like?'. *Bangladesh Post*, 20 December 2023.



The Access to Information (a2i) Program, in partnership with UNDP and USAID, aims to facilitate digital education and e-learning content[35], while the Blended Education Accelerator (BEA) aims to innovate primary and secondary education through various initiatives, including promoting technology adoption.[36]

In 2022, the University Grants Commission (UGC), the statutory apex body for higher education in Bangladesh, adopted a Policy for Blended Learning to enhance university education in the country.[37] The government has also facilitated the implementation of multimedia classrooms in educational institutions to enhance interactive and engaging learning experiences using digital content and resources.[38]

The government has also implemented several key initiatives to enhance education and research, including the Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN) for high-speed internet connectivity for universities and research institutions,[39] the repurposing of Shangshad (Parliament) TV during the Covid-19 pandemic to broadcast educational content for students without internet access,[40] the digitisation of textbooks,[41] and the development of the Teacher's Portal (Shikkhok

[35] Future of Education. Accelerating a Blended Education Ecosystem. *a2i*.
[36] Future of Education. Accelerating a Blended Education Ecosystem. *a2i*.
[37] University Grants Commission of Bangladesh. Policy on Blended Learning for Bangladesh. 2022.
[38] BSS. 'Govt prioritizes IT-based education for Smart Bangladesh'. 11 June 2023.
[39] See < https://www.bdren.net.bd/about/company >.
[40] Future of Education, Accelerating a Blended Education Ecosystem, *a2i*.
[41] BSS. 'Govt prioritizes IT-based education for Smart Bangladesh'. 11 June 2023.

Batayon) as a platform for educators to share content and collaborate, playing a key role in the digital education transformation.[42]
Other key government initiatives include the launching of MuktoPaath in 2016, a government e-learning platform in Bangladesh offering affordable skill-based courses and issuing government certificates upon completion which has trained over 300,000 healthcare workers on COVID-19 management and judges, lawyers, court officials in virtual court proceedings.[43] Moreover, UNICEF Bangladesh and a2i jointly in collaboration with the Education Ministry, and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) developed "Noipunyo", an app digitising student performance evaluation.[44]
These initiatives aim to address educational challenges and improve access to resources and support for students and teachers. However, it is yet unclear the extent to which they have been effective.

3. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people can realize their human rights online in a safe, empowering, and inclusive way?

Online human rights encompass various aspects of online activities, including freedom of expression, privacy, access to information, and the right to participate in digital spaces without fear of repression or discrimination.
The government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives to ensure increase in digital connectivity and access to internet. One notable step for enhanced online connectivity is the “One country, One rate” initiative for broadband users fixing the rate to eliminate the digital divide between urban and rural and rich and poor and ensuring access to information.[45] This initiative aims to ensure equal access to information and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their location or financial status.
The Bangladesh Government's "Digital Bangladesh 2021" initiative was designed to increase digitalization and improve accessibility to digital services,[46] and laying the foundation for further advancement in technology with the introduction of "Smart Bangladesh” to provide opportunities for all.[47]
The Government is also set to pass a comprehensive legislation for protection of personal data to ensure privacy of all including that of young persons.[48]
Concerns have been raised regarding proposed online regulations, such as the Cyber Security Act 2023, due to their potential to infringe upon freedom of expression and privacy rights, including those of young individuals.

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[42] Shikkhok Batayon.
[43] Future of Education. Accelerating a Blended Education Ecosystem. *a2i*.
[44] BSS. ‘PM inaugurates five a2i digital initiatives’. *Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha*, 18 October 2023.
[45] Star Business Report. ‘Global accolade for BTRC’s ‘One Country, One Rate’ initiative’. *The Daily Star*, 29 October 2022.
[46] Lutfur Rahman. ‘Digital Bangladesh: Dreams and reality’. *The Daily Star*, 10 March 2015.
[47] Md Ashikur Rahman and Aupom Sarker. ‘Leaving no one behind in Smart Bangladesh’. *Dhaka Tribune*, 19 January 2024.
[48] Staff Correspondent, ‘Draft Data Protection Act: Cabinet okays it giving free rein to law enforcers’, *The Daily Star,* 28 November 2023.

According to a 2021 study, more than 85% of the global youth use social media daily. The young population of Bangladesh is rapidly embracing social media, with more than 70% of young Bangladeshis being daily social media users. The research article by Sajid Amit, Lumbini Barua, and Abdulla - Al Kafy investigates the escalating issue of violent extremism (VE) in Bangladesh, particularly through the lens of social media utilization, and suggests implementable strategies to counteract this phenomenon. The study underlines the urgent need for effective strategies to halt VE activities using social media in Bangladesh, highlighting the country's young population's rapid embrace of digital platforms and the consequential susceptibility to VE. Drawing on various publications, fifteen expert interviews, and content analysis, the study identifies successful global initiatives in the realm of disruptive online technologies that have shown some success in preventing VE[49].

The findings of the study emphasize the importance of both positive and negative measures in combating violent extremism (CVE) through social media and the internet. Positive measures, like the Redirect Method, focus on undermining extremist ideologies by redirecting users to content that disproves such ideologies, while negative measures involve technological solutions like eGLYPH and AI technology to detect and remove extremist content. Mobile apps developed for CVE purposes, such as the UNDP Africa Toolkit and GCTF Lifecycle Toolkit, also play a significant role in spreading positive messages and facilitating the cooperation of CVE practitioners. These successful initiatives underline the potential of technology-based strategies in the fight against VE, demonstrating the effectiveness of combining online and offline efforts to address the root causes and manifestations of extremism[50].

However, the study also acknowledges limitations, including the reliance on secondary data sources and potential biases in expert interviews. Despite these limitations, the research offers valuable insights into effective CVE strategies for Bangladesh, recommending the development and promotion of online courses, positive messaging, online religious platforms, and gaming as part of a comprehensive approach to CVE[51].

Following the study of Sajid Amit *et al*, the following tables were prepared by the authors of the present input to organize and systematize the information on online-based digital CVE strategies and the strategies perceived by experts to hold more potential for CVE:

[49] Sajid Amit; Lumbini Barua; Abdulla - Al Kafy. Countering violent extremism using social media and preventing implementable strategies for Bangladesh. *Helyon*, v. 7, issue 5, May 2021.
[50] Sajid Amit; Lumbini Barua; Abdulla - Al Kafy. Countering violent extremism using social media and preventing implementable strategies for Bangladesh. *Helyon*, v. 7, issue 5, May 2021.
[51] Sajid Amit; Lumbini Barua; Abdulla - Al Kafy. Countering violent extremism using social media and preventing implementable strategies for Bangladesh. *Helyon*, v. 7, issue 5, May 2021.

Strategy	Description	Origin/Example	Relevance
Redirect Method	*A technique that redirects users searching for extremist content to counter-narrative materials to challenge their views*	*Jigsaw's Redirect Method in collaboration with Moonshot CVE and others*	*Potentially effective in Bangladesh due to high social media usage among youth*
eGLYPH Technology	*Advanced multimedia hashing algorithm designed to prevent the re-upload and spread of known extremist content across platforms*	*Developed by Professor Hany Farid and utilized by the Counter Extremism Project (CEP)*	*Could reduce the availability of extremist materials online in Bangladesh, supporting digital moderation efforts*
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	*AI and machine learning technologies automate the detection and removal of extremist content, analyzing vast datasets for patterns*	*Deployed by major platforms like Google, Facebook, and Twitter under the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT)*	*Could enhance Bangladesh's capacity to monitor and control VE content online, addressing the volume and speed of digital communications*
Mobile Apps for CVE	*Apps designed to support CVE efforts by providing resources, guidelines, and platforms for community engagement and education*	*Examples include UNDP Africa Toolkit and GCTF Lifecycle Initiative Toolkit*	*Could empower Bangladeshi communities with knowledge and tools to counteract radical narratives effectively*

Table I: Online-based digital CVE strategies by category.

Strategy	Description	Implementation ideas	Potential impact
Online Courses	*Courses designed to train teachers and parents on safe technology use, social media, and online platforms.*	*Develop interactive courses with documentaries, quizzes, and case studies on CVE topics.*	*Equip educators and parents with skills to identify and counter signs of radicalization among youth.*
Positive Messaging	*Dissemination of positive, inclusive messages through entertainment and social media to counteract extremist narratives.*	*Utilize popular media and social platforms to showcase stories of successful individuals from diverse backgrounds.*	*Foster a culture of tolerance and understanding, reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies.*
Online Religious Platform	*A digital platform featuring legitimate religious leaders who can provide authentic religious teachings and counter-extremist narratives.*	*Create a portal for religious discourse, offering guidance and debunking extremist interpretations of religion.*	*Enhance religious understanding and counteract radical ideologies by providing credible religious insights.*
Information Verification Platform	*A platform for verifying the authenticity of information encountered online, particularly news or stories that could incite violence or extremism.*	*Establish a website or app where users can check the validity of news, with government agencies overseeing content verification.*	*Combat misinformation and reduce the spread of fake news that can fuel extremism or communal tensions.*
Gaming	*Development of role-playing simulation games that present players with real-life crises to solve, promoting empathy and critical thinking.*	*Design games where players assume roles that require them to address challenges and crises, promoting peace and cooperation.*	*Engage youth in constructive activities, fostering skills in empathy, crisis management, and tolerance through interactive gaming.*

Table II: online/digital strategies perceived by experts to hold high potential for Countering Violent Extremism.

Implementing the cited or like-minded strategies for countering violent extremism also raises concerns regarding freedom of expression, privacy, and other human rights. Any strategy must be carefully designed to avoid bias, censorship, and the suppression of legitimate discourse. Transparency in information verification, respect for diverse religious beliefs, and sensitivity in content creation are essential to uphold freedom of expression and religion. Additionally, interventions should not infringe on privacy through undue surveillance or exacerbate digital divides, ensuring equitable access.
Balancing the aims of CVE with the protection of fundamental freedoms require clear regulatory frameworks and oversight mechanisms to prevent potential human rights overreach, ensuring CVE strategies are ethically implemented and aligned with the values they intend to protect.

4. What are the main gaps and challenges to young people's protection from online threats in law, policy, and practice in your country and the impacts on young people's human rights? Please consider the specific situation of marginalized young people and those in vulnerable situations in your response.

The challenges and gaps for young people's human rights and protection in online space in Bangladesh are multifaceted stemming from the limited access to broadband internet services in rural areas, hindering digital inclusion and exacerbating the digital divide. Additionally, concerns about suppressed freedom of expression, privacy rights, surveillance, and the inadequacy of laws addressing cyber violence further compound these challenges.

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The digital divide is a significant barrier, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable groups, including those living in poverty, rural areas, and girls and women. Limited access to technology, lack of digital literacy, and affordability are key factors contributing to this divide, further exacerbated by socio-economic disparities.
Despite the government's "one country, one rate" policy, rural areas continue to face barriers to accessing broadband internet services. This has led to a widening digital divide between urban and rural communities. While urban areas benefit from low-cost broadband, rural residents encounter limited availability and high expenses, often relying on costly mobile data plans. This creates a significant financial burden for rural communities, further impeding their participation in the digital economy.[52]
Although Bangladesh has unveiled the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041, the nation still grapples with a digital divide due to several factors. High internet costs, limited digital literacy in rural areas, and slow mobile internet speeds contribute to this divide. Additionally, there is a lack of access to digital literacy among rural youth, hindering their awareness of how to use digital devices and the internet for income-generating opportunities such as f-commerce and outsourcing. The government's

[52] Mahmudul Hasan, Md Asaduz Zaman. 'Digital divide points to disparity in rural-urban internet access'. *The Daily Star*, 14 June 2023.

efforts in implementing its digital vision are still at a basic level, leaving a significant portion of the population unaware or unable to access digital services.[53]

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Safeguarding young individuals' privacy and the security of their data are pressing issues. There is insufficient awareness and measures in place for the preservation of their sensitive information. This issue is especially concerning considering the growing volume of personal information that young people share on the internet.
The draft Personal Data Protection Act 2023 raises particular concerns about privacy rights and surveillance. If enacted, it could grant law enforcement unfettered access to citizens' data, raising serious privacy concerns due to the lack of oversight.[54] Furthermore, laws designed for digital content do not adequately address various forms of cyber violence against young people,[55] including grooming, cyberbullying, revenge porn, and other forms of harassment, or provide for their removal. Vague definitions of terms used within laws such as the Pornography Control Act and the Cyber Security Act 2023 (CSA) create a scope for curbing online freedom of expression. Moreover, the CSA bears a close resemblance to the repealed Digital Security Act 2018, which was criticized for vague provisions and creating fear among people, including young individuals, several of whom were arrested during the pandemic for their social media activities, thereby impacting their freedom to express their opinions freely.[56]

* * *

Existing laws may not fully address the breadth of online threats faced by young people, particularly in areas such as cyberbullying, harassment, and privacy breaches. This may leave young individuals, especially girls and women, vulnerable to online abuse without adequate recourse.
A 2019 study on the gendered risks and coping practices online in South Asia examined, from a qualitative lens, the online abuse experiences, and coping practices of 199 people who identify as women and 6 NGO staff members from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Most participants regularly contended with online abuse, experiencing three major abuse types: cyberstalking, impersonation, and personal content leakages. Younger, rural, low-income as well as sexual minorities and women with disabilities reported more abuse. Consequences of abuse included emotional harm, reputation damage, and physical and sexual violence. Participants coped through informal channels such as relying on family, employing safeguards, verifying mutual trust signals, relying on NGOs, and reducing their online presence, rather than through technological protections or law enforcement. Findings point to

[53] Tasneem Tayeb. 'Bangladesh cannot become smart with a gaping digital divide'. *The Daily Star*, 21 June 2023; Tribune Editorial. 'Ensuring internet connectivity for all'. *Dhaka Tribune*, 8 July 2023.
[54] Staff Correspondent. 'Draft Data Protection Act: Cabinet okays it giving free rein to law enforcers'. *The Daily Star,* 28 November 2023.
[55] Md Ariful Islam. 'This is not a man's cyber world'. *Dhaka Tribune*, 6 November 2023.
[56] Editorial. 'Why is our youth too scared to speak out?'. *The Daily Star*. 18 November 2023; Kamal Ahmed. 'Relabelling the DSA won't protect citizens from cybercrimes'. The Daily Star. 21 August 2023.

opportunities for designs, policies, and algorithms to improve women's safety online in South Asia.[57]

Unlike traditional forms of abuse, older generations struggle to grasp online threats due to limited digital literacy, while younger male family members engage in "supportive masculinity" by advising on online safety practices such as changing profile photos. However, such measures may inadvertently restrict women's online presence. Public and viral nature of online abuse introduces challenges in maintaining secrecy, assigning accountability, and facilitating recovery, underscoring the need for educating both young internet users and families about respectful online interactions and the importance of gender-equitable online spaces.[58]

Victims perceived law enforcement and in-app reporting as ineffective, with concerns over reputation damage and victim-blaming. Cultural incongruities between platform policies and local norms further complicate the efficacy of these measures, as seemingly harmless content can have severe repercussions in tightly-knit communities. The study suggests that more sensitive and culturally aware approaches, automatic detection, and timely intervention are necessary to make the online environment safer for women. NGOs are increasingly recognized for their role in connecting those in need with formal assistance services. However, the challenges they face with visibility and capacity underscore the importance of forging robust partnerships with legal and technological sectors.[59]

Designing technology and policies that cater to regional sensitivities, advocating for user education on safety features and the adoption of flexible user identity models to navigate the cultural landscape is also considered to be critical. Participants in the study noted that they often resort to alternative non-facial imagery for profile pictures and establish protected environments such as single-gender groups as tactics to reduce the threat of harassment, albeit sometimes at the cost of limiting women's visibility online. These practices underscore the delicate balance between fostering a secure online environment and ensuring women's freedom of expression and participation in the digital realm.[60]

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[57] Nithya Sambasivan; Amna Batool; Nova Ahmed; Tara Matthews; Kurt Thomas; Laura Sanely Gaytán-Lugo; David Nemer; Elie Bursztein; Elizabeth Churchill; Sunny Consolvo. "They Don't Leave Us Alone Anywhere We Go": Gender and Digital Abuse in South Asia. *CHI '19: Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Paper No. 2, p. 1-14, May 2019.

[58] Nithya Sambasivan; Amna Batool; Nova Ahmed; Tara Matthews; Kurt Thomas; Laura Sanely Gaytán-Lugo; David Nemer; Elie Bursztein; Elizabeth Churchill; Sunny Consolvo. "They Don't Leave Us Alone Anywhere We Go": Gender and Digital Abuse in South Asia. *CHI '19: Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Paper No. 2, p. 1-14, May 2019.

[59] Nithya Sambasivan; Amna Batool; Nova Ahmed; Tara Matthews; Kurt Thomas; Laura Sanely Gaytán-Lugo; David Nemer; Elie Bursztein; Elizabeth Churchill; Sunny Consolvo. "They Don't Leave Us Alone Anywhere We Go": Gender and Digital Abuse in South Asia. *CHI '19: Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Paper No. 2, p. 1-14, May 2019.

[60] Nithya Sambasivan; Amna Batool; Nova Ahmed; Tara Matthews; Kurt Thomas; Laura Sanely Gaytán-Lugo; David Nemer; Elie Bursztein; Elizabeth Churchill; Sunny Consolvo. "They Don't Leave Us Alone Anywhere We Go": Gender and Digital Abuse in South Asia. *CHI '19: Proceedings of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Paper No. 2, p. 1-14, May 2019.

5. What steps is the Government taking to ensure that young people are protected from online threats? Please provide examples of specific laws and regulations, measures, policies, and programmes.

There have been laws addressing a range of online threats, including pornography, hacking, identity theft, information tampering, and impersonation. In this sense, *v.g.*, the 2012 *Pornography Control Act* criminalized pornography and the possession, distribution, and production of pornographic material, with penalties on individuals who distribute such content through the internet, mobile phones, or other electronic devices.[61] Earlier, individuals involved in certain cybercrimes could also be pursued legally under section 57 of the 2006 *Information and Communication Technology Act* (amended in 2013), for content which is fake and obscene, defamatory, tending to deprave and corrupt its audience, causing or potentially causes deterioration in law and order, prejudicing the image of the State or a person, or causing or likely to cause

[61] See <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/act-1091/section-41881.html>. See, also: Evnat Bhuiyan. Legal Analysis on Pornography. The Daily Star, 18 December 2018.

hurt to religious sentiment, until its repeal with the advent of the 2018 *Digital Security Act (*DSA), which was also repealed by the passing of the 2023 *Cyber Security Act* (CSA).

The definition of "cybersecurity" in the CSA is limited to protecting digital devices and systems[62], omitting individual security online. Similarly to its predecessor, the DSA, the CSA criminalizes hacking, identity theft or impersonation, information tampering, and unauthorised use of identity information, while also criminalizing broadly-defined categories of speech, including acts that may "hurt religious sentiments", or be viewed as "annoying", "insulting", or "maligning" individuals, damaging the nation's "image", or disrupting "law and order".[63] These provisions are contended for not falling under the legitimate grounds of restrictions on speech either under the Constitution of Bangladesh or international law. Calls are growing for amendments to the legislation to balance the need for security with the safeguarding of free speech rights.[64]

Despite the revisions made in the CSA on some of the penalties compared to the DSA, speech offense definitions remain unchanged, risking free speech curtailment without enhancing cybercrime protection.[65] Both the DSA and its precursor, section 57 of the *Information and Communication Technology Act*, have faced criticism for stifling online expression, particularly affecting youth and their digital engagement freedom. The DSA had particularly been a point of concern for and among youth, with arrests of minors for their social media posts, and some of whom argued that the repealed law impeded their ability to engage freely on digital platforms.[66]

The government has also established helplines to deal with online violence and harassment in Bangladesh, including one specifically for teenagers. Yet, the prevalence of online violence and harassment, particularly against women and girls, is understood as a sign of existing safeguards being inadequate or ineffective, with calls for the government to act in conjunction with the private sector, civil society, and international organizations.[67]

* * *

In 2018, the Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre (GCSCC) undertook a review of the maturity of cybersecurity capacity in Bangladesh at the invitation of the Bangladesh Computer Council. According to the GCSCC, "*In Bangladesh, there is no sufficient legislative framework for ICT security. Partial legislation exists that address*

[62] Cyber Security Act 2023, s 2(1)(u).
[63] Cyber Security Act 2023, sections 23, 24, 26, 32.
[64] See, *v.g.*, Nowshin Jahan Etee; Jakia Jahan Mukta. Youths' Perception of Digital Security Act 2018: A Study on the Youth of Bangladesh. *South Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(6), p. 123-139, 2022. See, also: Article 19. Bangladesh: analysis of the Digital Security Act. November 2019; Amnesty International. Bangladesh: New Digital Security Act imposes dangerous restrictions on freedom of expression. 20 September 2018; Staff Correspondent. Cyber Security Act: Change in name, not content. Prothom Alo, 10 August 2023; Saifur Rahman, CSA v cybersecurity laws of other countries. *The Daily Star*, 29 August 2023.
[65] Kamal Ahmed. Relabelling the DSA won't protect citizens from cybercrimes. The Daily Star. 21 August 2023.
[66] Ali Riaz. How Bangladesh's Digital Security Act Is Creating a Culture of Fear. *Carnegie Endowment For International Peace*. 9 December 2021; Editorial. Why is our youth too scared to speak out?. *The Daily Star*. 18 November 2023.
[67] The Daily Star. Rising cyber violence is a blot on Smart Bangladesh. 11 December 2023.

some aspects of cybercrime. Some parts of the National Cyber Security Strategy have been enacted but it does not provide actionable directives to different cybersecurity stakeholders. The National Police has a cybercrime division. According to participants about 200 law enforcement officers (both female and male) based there and across the country have received training on cybercrime and digital evidence. Training is received on a regular basis from international partners and Training-of-Trainers initiatives aim to ensure knowledge exchange. There is no effective training for prosecutors and judges and their expertise to deal with cybersecurity incidents is insufficient and according to participants there is currently only one judge who is able to handle cybercrime cases."[68] Although eight cyber tribunals have been established across the country[69] since the GCSCC review in 2018, it remains uncertain if there has been any improvement in cybersecurity and effective training of judges and prosecutors to handle cybersecurity incidents.

* * *

According to our studies and analysis, we understand that the following measures can be considered for better protection of young people against online threats: (a) enhancing legal frameworks to specifically address these threats, while ensuring a balance between security and freedom of expression; (b) implementing comprehensive digital literacy programs that cover online safety, privacy, and responsible internet use; (c) developing accessible reporting systems for online abuse and harassment to support young individuals in seeking help; (d) collaborating with digital platforms for safer online environments; (e) launching awareness campaigns about online risks; (f) providing dedicated support services for victims of online threats; (g) involving young people in policy development; and (h) continuously monitoring and adapting safety measures.

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[68] Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre. Cyber Security Capacity Review: Bangladesh. August 2018, p. 8.
[69] Star Digital Report. Cyber tribunals set up by govt in 8 divisions. *The Daily Star*. 6 April 2021.