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## About ActionAid

ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to further human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe everyone has the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

ActionAid works in over 45 countries across the world with more than 15 million people. We have a 'bottom up' approach to decision making. Our secretariat is located in Johannesburg, South Africa with hubs in Asia, The Americas and Europe too.

We believe that we can only achieve our goals by working collaboratively-locally, nationally and globally- with people in poverty, our supporters, partners, and peers. We are more powerful and effective when we work together.

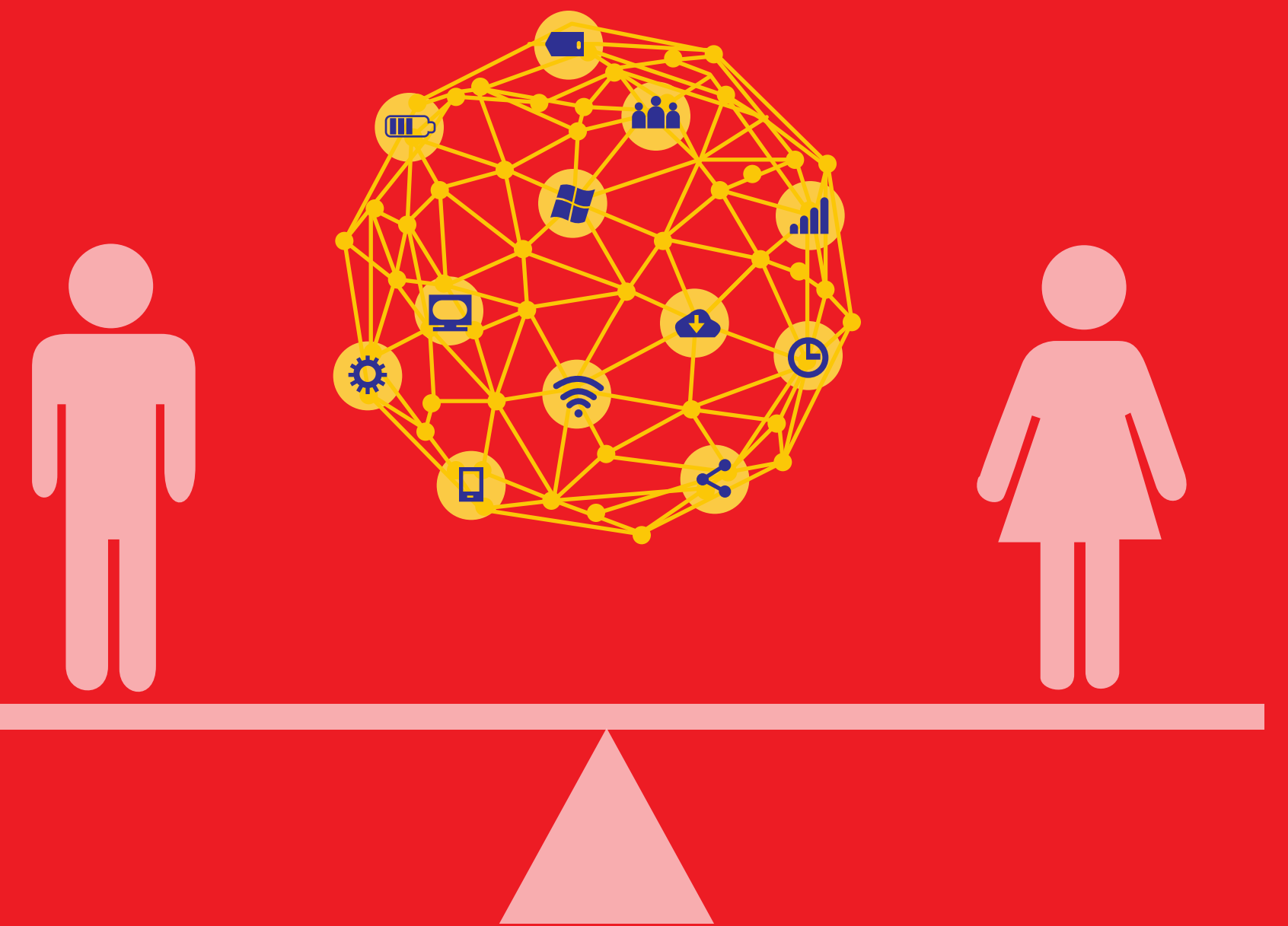
## About SANEM

SANEM, launched in January 2007 in Dhaka, is a non-profit research organization registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms in Bangladesh. It is also a network of economists and policy makers in South Asia with a special emphasis on economic modeling.

SANEM aims to promote the production, exchange and dissemination of basic research knowledge in the areas of international trade, macro economy, poverty, labor market, environment, political economy and economic modeling. It seeks to produce objective, high quality, country- and South Asian region-specific policy and thematic research. SANEM contributes in governments' policy-making by providing research supports both at individual and organizational capacities. SANEM has maintained strong research collaboration with global, regional and local think-tanks, research and development organizations, universities and individual researchers. SANEM promotes young researchers from Economics, Business and Social Sciences to undertake independent research works on contemporary issues. SANEM has an internship program in place for fresh university graduates. SANEM arranges regular training programs on economic modeling and contemporary economic issues for both Bangladeshi and other South Asian participants.

# Summary Discussion: SANEM-ActionAid Bangladesh Webinar on Gender and Youth Inclusiveness in Technology in Bangladesh

Saturday, 22 August 2020



# Gender and Youth Inclusiveness in Technology in Bangladesh

## Introduction

Ensuring access to technology across gender, age cohorts, regions or income groups is quintessential for utilizing the benefit of demographic dividend. In the backdrop of the fourth industrial revolution, the adoption of the Digital Bangladesh agenda in 2009 was a commendable move by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). Despite strong commitment from the GoB, there remain several severe issues concerning youth and gender inclusiveness in digital technology. An assessment in this regard is required to understand the nature and extent of youth and gender inclusiveness in technology. Against this backdrop, the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) in partnership with the ActionAid Bangladesh held a webinar titled “Gender and Youth Inclusiveness in Technology in Bangladesh”, on 22 August 2020, at 11 am.

## Presentation Summary

SANEM conducted a comprehensive investigation into the current scenario of youth and gender inclusivity in technology. The research shows a stark digital divide across age, gender, and regions. The study considers ownership of a mobile phone as the indicator for inclusiveness to technology. Any youth (aged 15-29) who owns a mobile phone is considered as inclusive to technology.

The report constructs an “Intra-household Gender Parity Index” showing gender parity at the household level regarding access to technology. A value close to 1 indicates more gender parity; the lesser the value from 1, the more gender bias is present towards females at the household level. The index value has been found 0.41 in rural areas and 0.56 in urban areas, while at the national level the score stands at 0.46.

At the individual level, the research points out three important aspects. First, the percentage of mobile holding for male youth is similar in both poor and non-poor households. Second, the share of female youth’s ownership of a mobile phone for the poor households remains almost the same (around 34%-37%) across all age groups. Lastly, for all age categories, irrespective of poverty status, young females’ average mobile holding is significantly lower than that of the males.

With regard to computer access, in Bangladesh, only 6% of households have access to computers, and less than 7% of female youth have ever used a computer. There is regional disparity as well. Bangladesh lags behind other comparator countries on the indicator of access to computers. The same is true in the case of internet. The households with access to the internet is only 50% in urban areas and around 32% in rural areas. Nationally only 15% of female youth have ever used the internet. Moreover, on the basis of internet speed, Bangladesh ranks 131 among 143 countries. Therefore, the quality of the internet connection is much worse than the comparators.

Such accessibility barriers to technology can be overcome with adequate availability of training programmes on technical trades. Nevertheless, the quality and quantity of such available technical trades in the country is also not up to the mark. In total, more than ten thousand institutes in the country provide diploma courses or certified courses on different trades. Given the population’s size, this is inadequate. On the other hand, the demand for vocational education/training is extremely low. In 2019-20, a large number of seats remained vacant at all kinds of vocational institutions. A clear gender difference in participation in training is also noteworthy. Also, the qualification of the instructors and the course curricula – both needs much improvement. Bangladesh Ranks poorly at 124 on the Global Comparison (among 141 countries) in quality of vocational education and training despite the adoption of two landmark policies: National Skills Development Policy (2011) and National Training and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF).

Lastly, applying “Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition” this study finds out systematic gender discrimination towards females regarding gender inclusiveness in technology (as measured with ownership of a mobile phone). Factors such as location (Rural households, households from Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Sylhet), the proportion of female members in the household, sex of the household head, etc. increases discrimination towards females. In contrast, factors like migrant household members, household income status, average years of schooling of the household, as well as the location (Dhaka, Chittagong, Barisal) etc. helps to reduce the discriminating behavior towards young females with regard to technology inclusiveness.

## Discussion Summary

Representatives of the government affirmed the government’s commitment to building skilled youth workforce to vitalize the demographic dividend. A Youth Council is being developed by the government, which would help reflect the youth’s voice and demands through proper coordination among the concerned ministries.

Dr. Selim Raihan emphasized the point that inclusiveness in technology is connected with societal inequality. Ms. Farah Kabir reiterated that the gender gap stems from family and society and emphasized the role of media in increasing awareness in this regard. Honorable Deputy Minister Mr. Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, MP said that the gender discrimination in technology is often a result of patriarchal and conservative culture and without a change in mentality it would be difficult to overcome this discrimination.

## Policy Recommendations

- Gender Inclusive ICT Action Plan is needed.
- ICT-friendly fiscal policy should be considered.
- Improvement in quality internet service everywhere is necessary.
- Tax rebates or reduction in tariff can be considered for the telecommunication industry.
- Special ICT schemes for female students have to be incorporated.
- Increasing both the quality and quantity of training is recommended.
- ICT course delivery at the secondary and higher secondary level should be proper.
- Awareness among the people is a must.

## Panelists

### CHIEF GUEST



**MR. MOHIBUL HASSAN CHOWDHURY, MP**  
Honorable Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Education

### CHAIR



**MS. FARAH KABIR**  
Country Director  
ActionAid Bangladesh

### REMARKS BY



**DR. SELIM RAIHAN**  
Executive Director  
SANEM

### MODERATOR



**DR. SAYEMA HAQUE BIDISHA**  
Research Director  
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### PRESENTATION BY



**MR. MAHTAB UDDIN**  
Research Economist  
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### PANEL DISCUSSANTS



**MR. ANIR CHOWDHURY**  
Policy Adviser, a2i Program  
Prime Minister's Office



**MR. AYATUL ISLAM**  
Joint Secretary  
Ministry of Education



**MR. MD. SAYED ALI**  
Deputy Secretary  
Ministry of Youth and Sports



**MS. FARHANA RAHMAN**  
Senior Vice President  
BASIS