WORLD WIDE WEB
FOUNDATION

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ONLINE

REPORT CARD

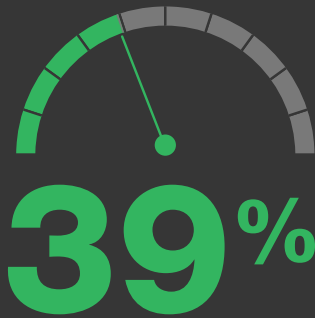## BANGLADESH

**Measuring Progress,
Driving Action**

BANGLADESH

OVERALL SCORE:

39%

SCORE: 3

Only 16 % of women use mobile internet in the country against 33% of men according to the GSMA's 2020 Mobile Gender Gap Report. This brings the highest gender gap of 106% in the region, with a huge percentage of women less likely to use it than men. 86% of men in Bangladesh own a mobile phone while 61% of women have one. The country's gender gap in this respect is 29%, according to the same report.

SCORE: 3

Bangladesh lags other countries in the region in terms of having an effective broadband strategy. The cost of data has been cited as a primary limitation to greater use by 30 percent of the internet users in Bangladesh -- the highest amongst the Asian countries last surveyed in 2018 by Lirneasia After Access Study.

SCORE: 5

50% of all teachers are trained in operating multimedia classrooms. 86 % of secondary school students have multimedia and 93% computer facilities. However other studies say that 18 – 35% of students have no access to the Internet at school and 8.5% at home. Notably 19.5% of girls do not have access to digital devices in schools which is more than twice the proportion of boys. Women comprise of only 16% of the ICT workforce in Bangladesh.

RELEVANT CONTENT & SERVICES

SCORE: 7

Women and men have almost equal internet awareness comprising 73 and 71 percent respectively. Abundant web-powered ICT information are available in Bangla on sexual and reproductive health rights, combatting VAW and children, preventing sexual harassment and early marriage and use of mobile financial service (MFS). However there is at least a 28% gender gap in owning a digital access point of MFS. Of the total registered MFS users 11% are women and 30% men.

ONLINE SAFETY

SCORE: 1.5

Women are disproportionately targeted by online violence and harassment. 73% of women users of online space have faced some form of violence, and this number is on the rise. 80% victims of online violence do not report cases and 63% do not know how to seek help. Existing laws relating to VAW do not provide sufficient safeguards against online violence.

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP: A 5 POINT ACTION PLAN

1 **EVALUATE DIGITAL BANGLADESH FROM A GENDER LENS.** Digital Bangladesh the country's vision for digital empowerment and prosperity, must be evaluated from a gender perspective, for furthering greater access to internet and women's empowerment.

2 **FORMULATE AND TRACK INDICATORS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND TECHNOLOGY.** Strengthen existing capacity for collecting and reporting national data on gender disaggregated ICT relating to impact of measures for improving women's access, affordability, improved e-services and safe access to internet.

3 **IMPROVE INTERNET AFFORDABILITY AND SPEED.** Government should step up needed reforms to reduce the price of broadband and mobile data for all with a targeted approach towards underserved communities/groups e.g. skilling women in the informal sector.

4 **ENSURE GREATER ACCESS TO INTERNET AND DEVICES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.** Increase access to internet and devices for girls in secondary schools and greater participation of women in ICT related higher education and jobs. Promote women's ownership to mobile phones and devices to unleash their full potential to mobile financial services.

5 **ADDRESS ONLINE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.** Online violence needs to be effectively addressed. This should include reviewing laws and existing mechanisms to formulate necessary reforms for greater protection of women and girls.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

5 GENDER EQUALITY

The United Nations recently made gender-equitable access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set the global development agenda until 2030. Why? ICTs are powerful. They can help to deliver improved healthcare, quality education for all, financial inclusion, more accountable government, and much more. In adopting the SDGs, all countries have pledged to prioritise universal Internet access, and to use ICTs to empower women.

But much hard work lies ahead if we are to translate this vision into reality. A formidable gender gap in Internet access, digital skills and online rights exists - our Women's Rights Online research shows that in many communities, women are 50% less likely than men to be online and 30-50% less likely

to use the Internet for economic and political empowerment. Women face many barriers - including high costs, lack of know-how, and a scarcity of relevant and empowering content - as well as social and legal obstacles to speaking freely and privately online.

The Web Foundation and partners have prepared these gender audits to help countries assess what they need to do to overcome the gender digital divide. In Bangladesh Tahmina Rahman, gender mainstreaming and digital rights expert, has taken the lead, in consultation with other national stakeholders, on identifying concrete steps that government can take in the next year to address the challenges and gaps identified. We hope that this report card and action plan will spark debate and galvanise policy change.

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY:

We based our scores on 14 simple indicators for which reliable empirical evidence exists, and grading was done in the second quarter of 2020. See the accompanying overview for a description of the indicators and sources used. A full methodology is available on our website.