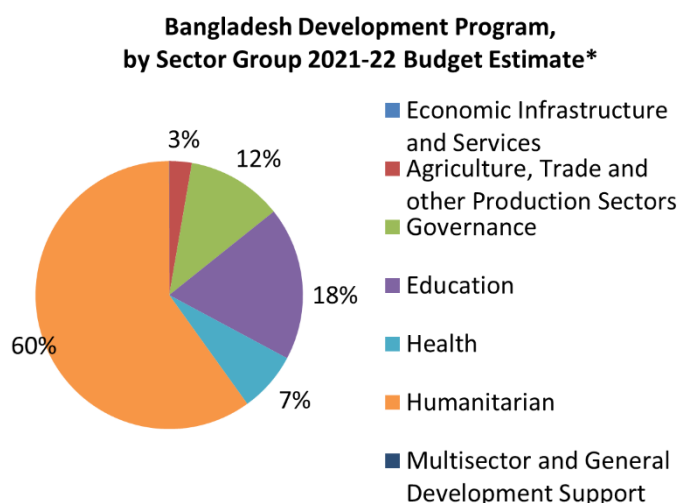


# 2021-22 BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

The COVID-19 Development Response Plan for Bangladesh has been extended through 2022-23. In 2022-23, the Bangladesh program will have a stronger focus on the drivers of inclusive growth in Bangladesh: education, skills development, gender equality and social protection in support of Bangladesh's response to global economic uncertainty, and its recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our development cooperation will focus on supporting the macro-economic reforms required for sustainable economic growth and preparing Bangladesh for graduation from Least Developed Country status, scheduled for 2026.

Program Budget	2021-22 Budget Estimate \$m*
Bilateral	30.8
Regional	9.9
Global	91.3
Other Govt. Departments	1.8
<b>Total ODA</b>	<b>133.8</b>



\*Actual expenditure is expected to be available in early 2023. Due to rounding, totals may not match the sum of components.

Our development program to Bangladesh contributes towards achieving the following Sustainable Development Goals:




The 2021-22 Bangladesh Development Program Progress Report summarises the progress with implementation of the Australia – Bangladesh COVID-19 Development Response Plan and highlights program results.

## CONTEXT

Bangladesh's two COVID-19 peaks in 2021-22 resulted in movement restrictions and increased pressure on hospitals and oxygen supplies. Since then, cases (and mortalities) have been declining, noting that testing rates (and hence available data) are low. Bangladesh's vaccination program played an important role in managing the pandemic, reaching over 68 per cent (115 million) of the population and over 379,000 Rohingya in 2021-22. **After one of the world's longest closures, schools reopened in September 2021. High numbers of children did not return, with the UN reporting increased rates of child labour and marriage.**

**Bangladesh made a strong initial economic recovery as restrictions eased.** Remittances from migrant workers and a rebound in the manufacturing and services sectors led to strong growth, with GDP growth increasing five per cent and exports increasing 7.7 per cent in 2021-22. Poverty declined from 12.5 per cent in 2020 to 11.9 per cent in 2021. Persistent structural weaknesses threaten Bangladesh's longer-term growth and rising global commodity prices have contributed to reduced foreign reserves. Bangladesh remains a **challenging environment for social inclusion, especially gender equality.** Despite outperforming many South Asian neighbours on gender indicators (such as achieving gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolments), **51 per cent of young women are married under 18** and early marriage is the most common reason for girls dropping out of school. While there is growing awareness, **people with disabilities still face exclusion** and difficulty accessing education, health care and employment.



Bangladesh is **highly vulnerable to natural hazards, including flooding and cyclones, and other climate change impacts.** The country also **continues to host over 919,000 Rohingya refugees** who have fled Myanmar.

## **AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE AND PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

Australia's development program in 2021-22 supported Bangladesh to emerge strongly from the pandemic. We invested in **inclusive economic recovery, underpinned by education, skills development and social protection reform.** Our **humanitarian assistance for Rohingya** and host communities in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char provided inclusive life-saving assistance, including COVID-19 treatment and prevention. We worked with other development partners to **moderate the effects of the pandemic on the most at risk – including women, children and people with a disability.**

### **Health Security**

In 2021, Australia provided **\$5 million to the International Federation of the Red Cross to bolster Bangladesh's preparedness for an acute COVID-19 crisis.** In 2021, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society reached a total of 214,653 individuals with services including oxygen support, medical treatment, cash grants, food support, ambulance support and psychological support services.

Australian partners (including UN agencies and international and Australian non-government organisations-NGOs) also **supported government-led efforts to contain and respond to COVID-19 in Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar.** With Australia's support, partners provided 359,990 people with basic healthcare, including for COVID-19, and improved 312,978 people's access to safe water and hygiene services. In addition, 202,979 people attended COVID-19 awareness sessions, partners distributed 68,753 PPE items in Cox's Bazar and made COVID-19 safe adaptations to 196 health care, community and school facilities.

Australia continued to provide **sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) assistance and essential protection services to women and girls,** even while health systems were strained by the COVID-19 response. Humanitarian partners (including the UN Population Fund-UNFPA and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees-UNHCR) provided 109,750 SRHR services and commodities to Rohingya and women from host communities and, due to Australian assistance, reached 31,625 women and girls (including 631 women with disabilities) with case management, counselling and integrated SRHR and gender-based violence response services.


### **Stability**

Australia **enabled extremely poor children, especially girls and children with disabilities, to access quality basic education** through our support for the NGO BRAC<sup>1</sup>, and the Underprivileged Children's Educational Programs (UCEP). Our partners implemented distance learning initiatives during school closures and were well prepared for the safe reopening of schools in September 2021. Work continues to recover learning losses and to locate and re-engage students who dropped out during the pandemic. In 2021, Australia's partners provided basic education to 27,674 children in Rohingya and host communities, including through remote learning programs.

Australia partnered with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to support the Bangladesh government's vision for **an inclusive, multi-tiered social security system** through our Social Security Policy Support (SSPS) investment. Building on previous phases, this investment provided technical assistance, policy advice and capacity building to strengthen the governance and coordination of social protection. It also supported expanding existing **social protection programs to respond to the pandemic and increase the coverage of old age and disability pensions.**

Australia also supported the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide technical assistance **to scale up the government's Maternal and Child Health Benefit safety net program** to meet the Bangladesh Government's commitment to a 20 per cent increase in the number of beneficiaries. In 2021, **Australia's funding supported 72,767 pregnant women to access benefits** and **trained 2,000 government officials and NGO personnel.**

<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.



Despite COVID-19 restrictions, Australian-supported humanitarian partners (including UNHCR, UN Children’s Fund-UNICEF, International Organization for Migration-IOM, WFP, BRAC, UNFPA and UN Women) continued to provide **lifesaving assistance to Rohingya and host communities, directly supporting provision of food, cash or vouchers to meet the basic needs of 157,228 people**. Critical protection, including gender-based violence and psychosocial support, was provided to 78,298 people and 37,926 people were supported to build self-reliance skills. Our partners engaged 39,040 people in initiatives to build connections within and between Rohingya and host communities aimed at fostering social cohesion.

### **Economic recovery**

A skilled workforce is crucial to Bangladesh’s economic recovery and long-term economic growth. **In 2021, Australia supported 34,106 young people (including 856 with disabilities) to receive technical and vocational training (TVET)**. Our partners (BRAC and UCEP) did not meet targets on number of students graduating as the pandemic limited face-to-face learning and government accreditation facilities were closed. Theoretical and soft skills training components were delivered through distance learning. Practical learning commenced immediately after re-opening. BRAC and UCEP supported previous graduates who lost their jobs during the pandemic to find work and collaborated with new industries to promote decent employment and ensure training aligns with industry needs.

In 2021-22, **37 people (20 women, 16 men) completed an Australia Awards scholarship and returned to Bangladesh to contribute to development in priority sectors including trade, health, environment, public policy and security**. After Australia’s borders reopened to international students, 48 scholars (25 women, 23 men) commenced their scholarships, and a further 134 (62 women, 72 men) participated in short course training to strengthen Bangladesh’s capabilities in TVET management, renewable energy, governing in the digital age and countering violent extremism.

In February 2022, **Australia hosted the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment under the Australia Bangladesh Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA)**. The TIFA will support increased trade and investment between the two countries. Initiatives to support Bangladesh diversify its economy and improve the business environment may be identified for support under the new Bangladesh Economic Engagement Plan (BEEP).

## ANNEX 1: PROGRESS AGAINST COVID-19 DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE PLAN RESULTS INDICATORS

### Health Security

Key Results Indicators	Progress/Result
327,500 women, men, girls and boys provided with emergency assistance (excluding Cox's Bazar District)	214,653 people reached by the IFRC with hot meals, ambulance transportation and oxygen [2021].
660,600 vulnerable Rohingya and host community women, men, girls and boys provided with life-saving assistance in crisis situations	Australian assistance reached 1,244,662 vulnerable Rohingya and host community women, men, girls and boys with emergency assistance in conflict and crisis situations. (Female: 228,010, male: 381,540; sex not specified: 635,111; persons with disabilities 52,669) [2021].
136,000 Rohingya and local Bangladeshis in Cox's Bazar benefiting from improved water and hygiene activities	Australian support ensured approximately 312,978 Rohingya and host community members benefited from improved water and hygiene activities [2021].

### Stability

Key Results Indicators	Progress/Result
Strengthened governance systems for social protection (including examples of assistance provided and significant policy change achieved)	Institutional strengthening and policy proposals for old age and disability pensions were progressed in 2021-22.
Bangladesh is supported with technical advice on building capacity for food security (including examples of assistance provided and results achieved)	ACIAR and CSIRO progressed two research activities to assist farmers in Bangladesh manage fertilizer inputs and ground water irrigation, particularly for rice production, reducing farming costs, increasing productivity and improve soil management.
340,000 additional girls and boys enrolled in school	88,169 additional school enrolments, with 82,885 children (51 per cent girls and 1.5 per cent students with disabilities) enrolled in BRAC schools and 5,284 (48 per cent girls, five per cent students with disabilities) in UCEP schools.
Examples of young women empowered to influence policies, regulations and norms which obstruct the rights and potential of all women	Australia supported programs focused on gender equality and addressing gender-based violence through BRAC, including the Adolescent Development Program, Community Empowerment Program, Human Rights Legal Aid Services, Property Rights Initiatives, and Safe Citizenship for Women program.
45,000 Rohingya and host community children reached with basic education services (primary school or emergency basic learning)	Despite closures due to COVID-19, Australia's assistance directly contributed to reaching over 27,674 children in the Rohingya camps and host communities with primary or emergency basic education [2021].



## Economic Recovery

Key Results Indicators	Progress/Result
18,500 young women and men supported through skills training and experience	34,106 young men and women provided with skills training and on-the job-experience (634,1061 per cent women, 2.5 per cent people with disabilities).
Examples of private sector, including female entrepreneurs, provided with financial and/or business development services	11,242 women accessed financial services, including loans, to help them start small businesses, such as running a small grocery shop and rearing livestock to generate income.
Specific activities for the promotion of trade and investment opportunities between Australia and Bangladesh	The Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment developed a work plan to progress activities under the Australia-Bangladesh Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement (TIFA).

## ANNEX 2: INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Investment Details	Year	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Gender Equality
<b>Skills for Economic Growth and Prosperity</b> Investment duration: 2018-22; Budget: \$14.7m	2022	4	5	4
	2021	4	5	4
<b>Social Security Policy Support Programme</b> Investment duration: 2020-23; Budget: \$4 m	2022	4	4	4
	2021	n/a	n/a	n/a

## FINAL INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Investment Details	Year	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Gender Equality
<b>The Strategic Partnership Arrangement with BRAC Phase II</b> Investment duration: 2011-21; Budget: \$294.5m	2022 FIMR	5	5	5
	2021 IMR	5	5	5

## HUMANITARIAN INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE RATINGS

Investment Details	Year	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Gender Equality
<b>Bangladesh Rohingya and Host Community Humanitarian Package</b> Investment duration: 2020-2022; Budget: \$78.84m in 2021-22	2022 HIMR	5	5	4
	2021 HIMR	4	5	5
<b>Bangladesh COVID-19 Response</b> Investment duration: 2021-22; Budget: \$5.0m	2022 HIMR	4	4	3 <sup>2</sup>
	2021	n/a	n/a	n/a

### Definitions of rating scale:

#### Satisfactory (4, 5 and 6)

6 = Very good; satisfies criteria in all areas.

5 = Good; satisfies criteria in almost all areas.

4 = Adequate; on balance, satisfies criteria; does not fail in any major area.

#### Less than satisfactory (1, 2 and 3)

3 = Less than adequate; on balance does not satisfy criteria and/or fails in at least one major area.

2 = Poor; does not satisfy criteria in major areas.

1 = Very poor; does not satisfy criteria in many major area.

<sup>2</sup> The implementing organisation (IFRC/BDRCS) did not provide detailed sex-disaggregated data or including reporting on specific, targeted efforts to ensure gender sensitivity in its activities. This made it difficult to assess the partner's effectiveness from the evidence and reporting provided.