Country overview

Bangladesh's population is highly unconnected, with only about 15% of the population connected to mobile broadband and about 5% connected to fixed broadband. The gender gap in internet use is very high, at 125%. The country faces many challenges, including in rural areas, where lack of affordable access and digital skills prevent many from getting online and benefiting from digital opportunities. Given the challenges, the government is currently drafting a new broadband plan and policy with the support of the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI).

Affordability Quintiles

While the average affordability of mobile broadband in Bangladesh meets the target set by the UN Broadband Commission, such reality masks inequalities that exist within the country. Indeed, 1GB of data costs over 2% of the monthly gross national income per capita for the population in the two lowest income quintiles, representing 40% of the population.

Dimensions of Meaningful Connectivity

Meaningful connectivity to the internet implies having access to an appropriate device, enough data and speeds, and using the internet every day. Only 27.53% of people in Bangladesh have access to 4G compatible speeds, and only 41.67% have access to smartphones, which are considered to be appropriate devices.
As shown in the figures above, three thirds of the population in Bangladesh is in areas with internet coverage, although only a much smaller percentage of the population is in fact connected. Analysis conducted by A4AI to estimate the investments needed to connect the population of Bangladesh to the internet by 2030 shows that almost half of the total investments relate to mobile infrastructure capital expenditure (CapEx), which implies that infrastructure deployment is still one of the most pressing issues in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, costs are also associated with fiber deployment, network operation and maintenance, remote area coverage, policy and regulatory costs, as well as costs associated with building necessary ICT skills and relevant content.

![Graph showing investments needed by 2030](image)

Universal access is defined based on 90% of the population of 10 years and above.

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### Policy scores

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### Policy Highlights

#### Broadband Strategy

The government of Bangladesh is officially undertaking efforts to update its national broadband strategy.

#### E-government services

Availability of e-government services in local languages has increased according to EIU's Inclusive Internet Index.

#### Universal access

The universal service fund is being used to subsidize access to underprivileged and under connected communities in rural and remote areas, although the reach of such initiative is not yet clear.

#### Infrastructure Sharing

While efforts have been made towards facilitating infrastructure sharing, some regulatory decisions have not succeeded, and the regulatory framework is not yet effective enough.

#### Spectrum management

There is evidence of bureaucratic delays. For example, there is no framework yet for unlicensed spectrum use.

#### Gender

Only 16% of women use mobile internet in the country against 33% of men according to the GSMA’s 2020 Mobile Gender Gap Report.