

SIPG, NSU, and KAS hold a two-day virtual National Seminar on “Accelerating Progress and Equity in Education during the Pandemic in Bangladesh”

The virtual National Seminar titled “**Accelerating Progress and Equity in Education during the Pandemic in Bangladesh**” was organized by the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University and KASpaces of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), Germany on **18-19 September 2021**. The purpose of the national seminar was to share experiences and address the challenges of SDG 4, which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all in this pandemic. Dr. Shamsul Alam, Hon’ble State Minister, Ministry of Planning inaugurated this virtual seminar on 18 September 2021. Mr. M A Mannan, MP, Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh was present as the Chief Guest in the closing session on 19 September 2021.



In this virtual national seminar, there were four Business Sessions. On the 1st day, the themes of discussion were, ‘Blended Learning Vs Traditional Classroom’ and ‘Infrastructure and Teachers Development’. And on 2nd-day discussions were on ‘Inequality in Education’ and ‘New Actors in Education’ themes.

Inaugural session of the virtual National Seminar

“The government is planning to raise the education expenditure to 3.5% of the GDP by the fiscal year 2025,” said Dr. Shamsul Alam, Hon’ble State Minister, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh while inaugurating the two-day virtual national seminar on 18 September 2021. He emphasized the role of educational institutions to produce qualified, tech-savvy, and skilled human resources for a knowledge-based society to meet the challenges and demands of the 4th industrial revolution. He also lauded the national seminar to be very timely and hopes that the ideas and experiences that will be shared in this virtual seminar will help to accelerate progress in our educational sector amid the pandemic. Dr. Shamsul Alam also opined that the educational management needs to be more transparent, inclusive and of international standards to implement the SDG 4 i.e., quality education in Bangladesh.

“Students of our country have suffered the most during the pandemic”, said Special Guest Professor Dr. Muhammed Alamgir, Member, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh in the seminar. He added that extensive research in education, particularly at the tertiary level is a must and new challenges created by the pandemic should be addressed not only holistically, but also intelligently. He also laid emphasis on changing our mindset according to the reality of today’s world and said that a ‘blended learning model’ could play a key role to guarantee uninterrupted education in the future.



Professor M. Ismail Hossain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, North South University chaired the inaugural session. He spoke about the vicious cycle of low-quality education in Bangladesh and the importance of conducting research (both in the public and private sector) to figure out ways to break the cycle to produce good quality and employable graduates. He also pointed towards the inefficiency in resource utilization in the education sector calling for a shift in the mindset for the proper usage of resources.

“Leaving no one behind is the mantra of SDG goals 2030 which is very important for the world and Bangladesh,” stated Mr. Christian Echle, Director, Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS).

The inaugural program began with the welcome speech of Prof. Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Director of SIPG. He said that simply unlocking the doors of schools and colleges will not be sufficient to cover the loss within the education sector caused by the pandemic. The inaugural session ended with the vote of thanks by Dr. M Mahfuzul Haque, Faculty, SIPG, NSU.

Closing session of the virtual National Seminar

“Honorable Prime Minister and her government will continue to make efforts so that the digital divide and gaps in education are minimized and each Bangladeshi gets a fair opportunity to education,” said Mr. M A Mannan, MP, Hon’ble Minister, Ministry of Planning while speaking at the closing ceremony of the two-day virtual national seminar on Sunday. He graced the closing session of the seminar as the chief guest. He hoped that the end of this difficult time is near and the existing inequity in the education sector is eliminated.

Ms. Alina Reiss, Deputy Director, Political Dialogue Asia Program, KAS appreciated the undertaken initiatives by the Bangladesh government such as a three-phase response plan, utilization of AI, personalized learning system, and use of TV, radio, mobile to facilitate remote learning during the pandemic. She also highlighted the importance of exchanging dialogues and research among different organizations to ensure quality education. Special Guest of the session Mr. Azim Uddin Ahmed, Chairman, Board of Trustees, North South University stated that the timely policy intervention of the Government of Bangladesh through “COVID 19 Response and

Recovery Plan in Education Sector” in 2020 provided a framework of strategies and interventions to cope with the adverse impacts of COVID 19. He also added that the North South University has been able to keep the momentum of academic activities through online learning and is the first among the public and private universities who successfully complete online convocation in Bangladesh.

Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice-Chancellor, North South University was the Chair of the Session. He said that the digital divide was minimized by providing financial and technical support to the students of NSU. This pandemic has led us to some innovations that will remain with us for the upcoming days. He opined that when the university opens we need to ensure the health protocols and participation of all the students through both online and offline measures.

Dr. M Mahfuzul Haque, Faculty, SIPG, NSU reflected on the key takeaways of the two-day National Seminar. He mentioned that a ‘Blended Model of Pedagogy’ is the future of education and to reap full benefits of it both students and teachers need to adapt to it. He further added that the deficit in ICT infrastructure, poverty, traditional mindset, and the high price of data are a few of the major reasons behind the digital divide in Bangladesh.

The closing session ended with the vote of thanks by Megha Sarmah, Programme Manager - 2030 Agenda, Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). Academics, researchers, primary and secondary school teachers, college administrators, local-level education officials, representatives from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Planning, journalists, and students were present in this two-day-long virtual national seminar.

