

TV-Based Learning in Bangladesh: Is it Reaching Students?¹

July 16, 2020

Summary: Most students (86 percent) within our sample of more than 2,000 Grade 9 stipend recipients are aware of government provided TV-based learning programs; yet only half of the students with access to these programs choose to access them. Also, very few students (21 percent) have access to government provided online learning programs, and among those that do, only about 2 percent choose to access them. There is a perceptible decline in the time students spend studying at home after school closures. This may be linked to the fact that 1 in 2 parents claim they are unable to help their children with new topics. Despite lower education, mothers are significantly more likely to be involved in the child's education compared to fathers. Most students (90 percent) claim they have a supportive environment at home for studying. This is true for both boys and girls. Finally, nearly 65 percent of households in our sample report declines in income and 28 percent had to decrease the amount of food consumed within the household in the previous week.

1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, COVID-19 related school closures were enforced on March 17th, 2020. These closures impacted over 36 million students between pre-primary and tertiary levels².

To ensure continuity of learning during school closures, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) implemented distance learning programs via 'Sangsad TV' and on their online platforms: e-konnect, Facebook and YouTube. The first TV-based broadcast under this initiative aired on Mar 29 2020.

In this note, we present insights on the take-up of Government's remote learning efforts among the economically disadvantaged students. Between May 18 and June 17, 2020, we interviewed 2,181 Grade 9 students and their parents on the phone. We focused on students who were eligible to receive poverty-targeted stipends from Government of Bangladesh in 2020 in the Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions. With only 15 percent of the population with internet access,³ we focus on the TV broadcasts as the most common medium for access to the distance-learning materials.

From a list of all stipend recipients, we randomly called 6,153 students for screening as part of the listing survey. Among these students, we conducted detailed interviews with 1,656 students and their parents out of 2,408 students who had access to Sangsad TV. Among the remaining 3,745 screened students who did not have access to a TV or the Sangsad channel, we interviewed 525 students and their parents from a random selection of 900 students. In this second group, only 10 percent of this sample have access to a television.⁴ In total, we surveyed 2,181 students with 64 percent female students and 36 percent male students.⁵

¹ Kumar Biswas (World Bank), T.M. Asaduzzaman (World Bank), David K. Evans (Center for Global Development), Sebastian Fehrler (University of Konstanz), Deepika Ramachandran (World Bank), and Shwetlena Sabarwal (World Bank).

² <http://data.banbeis.gov.bd/>

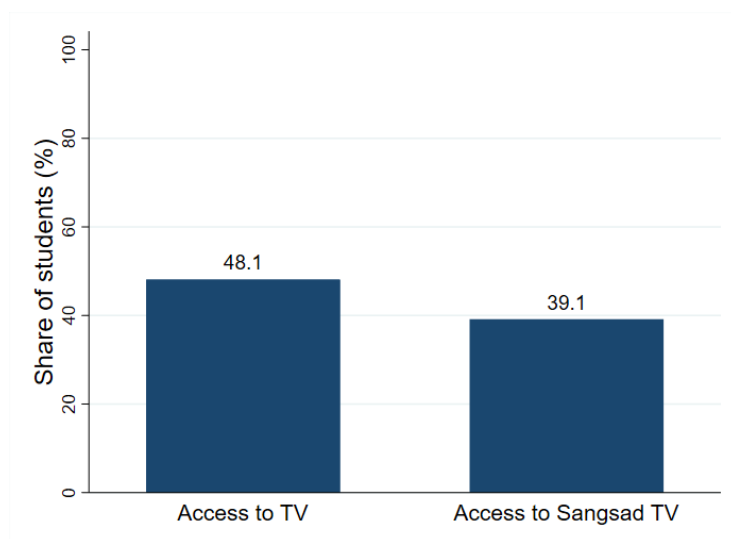
³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=BD-IN>

⁴ We conducted a listing survey of 6,153 students from a randomly selected 13,000 Grade 9 stipend recipients from the government. Reasons for non-responses were phone numbers being wrong or switched off. We also dropped Madrasa students to focus only on the general curriculum.

⁵ Overall, 54 percent of total secondary school students are female. <http://data.banbeis.gov.bd/>

2. Knowledge about and access to distance-learning materials

Figure 1: Access to TV and Sangsad TV



Even among the stipend recipients, access to these broadcasts is extremely low. In our initial listing survey of 6,128 students, only 48 percent of students have access to a television and 39 percent of students have access to the broadcasting channel “Sangsad TV”. This is also aligned with the overall ownership of television in Bangladesh⁶. We focus only on the sampled students⁷ for the rest of the policy note.

Access to the broadcasts also varies by household wealth. 46 percent of the sampled students without access to Sangsad TV are from the bottom quartile compared to only 11 percent of the students are from the top quartile.

Share of students who are aware of Sangsad TV ⁸ :	86%
Share of parents who are aware of Sangsad TV:	74%
Share of students who are aware of Sangsad TV when they have access to it:	92%
Share of students who watched Sangsad TV in the past week, when they have access to it:	43%

Nearly 79 percent of students from the bottom quartile are aware of the TV broadcasts compared to 92 percent of students from the top quartile. Even among the students with access to Sangsad TV, 45

⁶ According to Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010, ownership of television is only 35.8 percent in Bangladesh. <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/site/page/648dd9f5-067b-4bcc-ba38-45bfb9b12394/->

⁷ Total number of sampled students are 1,656 students with access to Sangsad TV channel, and 525 students without access to a television or Sangsad TV.

⁸ Sangsad TV is the channel that broadcasts of school curriculum

percent of students from the top quartile watched TV broadcasts in the last week, compared to 36 percent of students in the bottom quartile.

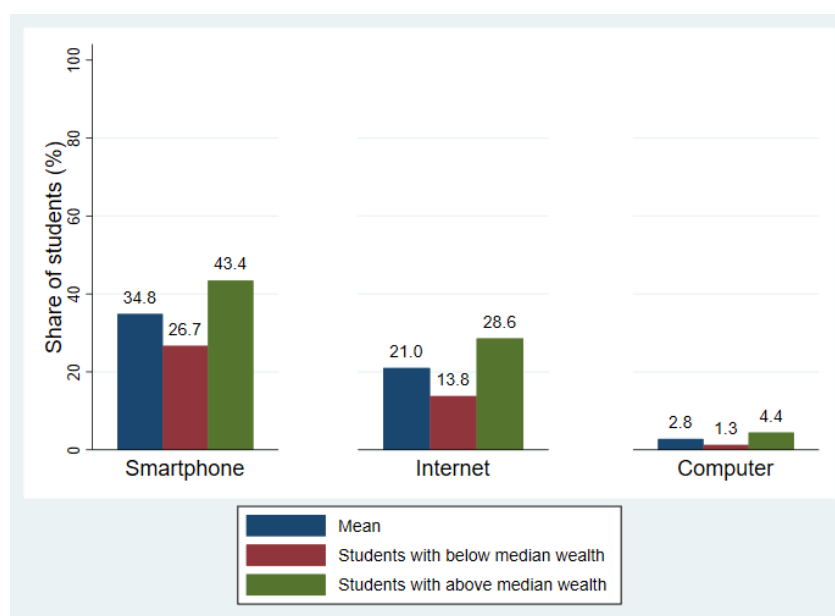
On the other hand, there are no significant differences between male and female students in terms of awareness and whether they watched the broadcasts in the previous week.

In contrast to TV, students' awareness of and access to broadcast materials on online platforms is very low.

Share of students who are aware of online materials:	50%
Share of students who have access to internet:	21%
Share of students who accessed online material in the past week, when they have access to it:	1.5%

Overall, 34.8 percent of the students had access to a smart phone, and 3 percent had access to a computer. Though we do not see much differences in ownership of smartphone by gender, access to internet is significantly lower for female students. 19 percent of female students have access to internet compared to 25 percent of male students.

Figure 2: Access to distance learning technologies



3. Time use, family support and study environment at home

Students spend less time studying and more time on household chores after school closures. This is doubly striking because students are not only losing school learning time (i.e., not replacing that with home studying), but even time they would normally have spent studying at home is reduced.

Share of students spending less than 1 hour studying at home in the last week

Before closures: **23%**

After closures: **30%**

Where is the lost studying time going? Around, 52 percent of students have spent more than one hour doing household chores compared to 39 percent pre-COVID. Students are also dedicating more time to extracurricular activities – e.g. sports, socializing with friends, relatives to pre-school closures.

There are no significant differences in time spent studying when the data is disaggregated by wealth quartiles and gender. However, students from the bottom quartile report doing more household chores during and before school closures relative to students in the top quartile. 58 percent of the students from the bottom quartile are spending more than one hour doing household chores compared to 46 percent of the students from the top quartile.

The decline in time studying could be linked to lack of instructional support. On average, parents in the sample have approximately 5 years of education⁹, and are not prepared to engage their children academically, assess their progress and provide guidance.

Share of parents who cannot support their children in learning a new topic: **50%**

Share of students reporting mother's engagement in their education: **66%**

Share of students reporting father's engagement in their education: **30%**

As seen above, despite relatively lower levels of education, mothers are more involved in their child's education relative to fathers. Approximately 48 percent of students receive support from a family member other than their parents.

Additionally, support from a family member was significantly lower for the students without access to Sangsad TV channel – 38 percent – compared to students with access to the channel - 51 percent. Finally, while we see significantly more students in the top quartile receiving support from a family member, there is no significant difference by gender. 39 percent of the students from the bottom quartile are receiving support from a family member compared to 62 percent in the top quartile. 46 percent male and 48 percent female students are receiving support from a family member.

An overwhelming majority of students reported that their homes provided a suitable study environment. More than 90 percent of the students report motivation to study at home and that family members are considerate, creating a stable environment to study.

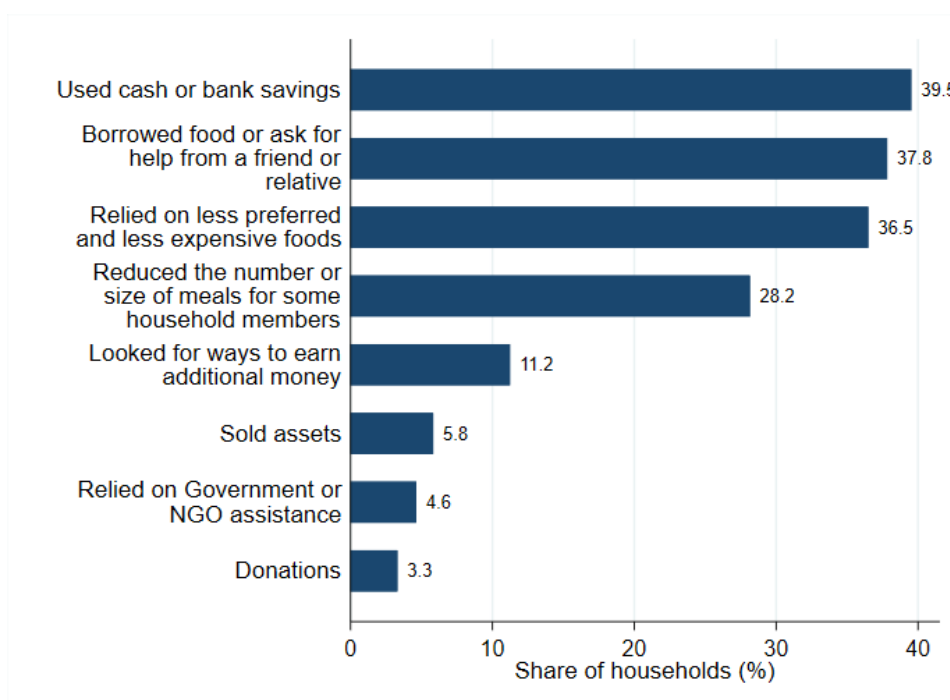
⁹ On average, fathers in our sample have 4.7 years of education, and mothers have 4.9 years of education.

4. Impact of Covid-19 on students' parental income

The shutdown has led to a decrease in the incomes of the parents surveyed. Household's monthly income has dropped from BDT 13,567 to BDT 6,077. Among the parents who were surveyed after 6th June 2020¹⁰, approximately 71 percent of parents did not participate in any income generating activity in the last week. Lockdown was lifted on 1st June in Bangladesh.

To cover basic needs, 28 percent of households reduced the number or size of meals for some family members, 36 percent of household relied on less expensive foods, borrowed food, or asked for help from a friend or relative. Such reductions in the household income might have a negative impact on the expenditure of educational input in the future. Around, 79 percent of students in our sample reported accessing private tuition services prior to school closures, but the drop in income could affect their ability to access remedial classes.

Figure 3: To meet the household's basic needs in last 7 days



¹⁰ 46.31 percent of the parents were surveyed after 6th June 2020.

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