

## Editor's Desk

The theme of the December 2023 issue of *Thinking Aloud* is "Emerging Development Challenges in Bangladesh". The first page article, 'A "blended regime" in crisis', puts forth a novel concept in political economy—blended regime—to unravel the current political and economic crisis that is unfolding in Bangladesh. The article characterizes blended regime as a blend of two contrasting aspects—"developmental state" on one side, and the dominance of cronies and high level of rent-seeking activities on the other side. A blended regime draws its economic legitimacy from developmental activities, while is dominated by powerful political elites, business elites and other apparatus of the state machinery. Building on a historical analysis of Bangladesh, the article explains how the inherent characteristics of the blended regime has led to the culmination of the current political and economic crisis in Bangladesh, now mirroring the regime itself in crisis. The article also explores the geopolitical dimensions of the crisis and expresses the urgency to shift towards effective reforms and policies. The second article, "Building a sustainable universal child protection system in Bangladesh", summarizes the study "Costing exercise and feasibility study of a community-led child protection system in Bangladesh", conducted by SANEM and UNICEF. The article maintains that investing in child protection systems can yield substantial economic and social benefits, which include ensured well-being of children, reduced healthcare cost, improved educational outcomes, and skilled as well as productive manpower in the future. The third article, "How far has Bangladesh come to expand its Blue economy?", explores the opportunities and challenges of blue economy of Bangladesh. Exploring various policies on blue economy, the article recommends that sustaining Bangladesh's abundant marine resources demands a robust regulatory framework and long-term financing for a thriving blue economy sector. The fourth article, "Women's career aspirations, role in the workforce and pay gap: Nobel Prize in Economics 2023", explores the groundbreaking works of Claudia Goldin, the 2023 Nobel Prize winner in Economics, who is only the third female to receive the Nobel Prize in economics. Discussing Goldin's contribution to Economics in detail, the article posits that diverse factors cause different stages of social development, which determine gender gaps in the labor market. The fourth page showcases the events in November 2023.

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## A "blended regime" in crisis

Selim Raihan

The country is now facing both economic and political crises. The nature of the economic crisis is manifested through the macroeconomic instability in the form of prolonged high inflationary pressure, fast depleting foreign exchange reserve, low tax revenue generation, vulnerability of the banking sector, unstable performance of export, low growth in remittances through formal channels, reportedly high degree of capital flight, and widespread institutional failures. Some of these problems are longstanding while some are recent.

The political crisis is manifested through the acute uncertainties and associated complexities related to the next general election as the main opposition party (BNP) is demanding the election under a neutral interim government and is going to boycott the forthcoming election if their demand is unmet. There are allegations that the past two elections of 2014 and 2018 under the current government have been broadly imperfect with minimal voter participation.

The political crisis in Bangladesh is deeply rooted in its political history. The political settlement over the neutral caretaker government was broken after the election in 2008. This was a result of growing mistrust of the system of the neutral caretaker government by the two major political parties – AL and the BNP – seeing that the apparent 'neutrality' of the caretaker government worked heavily against the incumbent regime, and in all cases of general elections under the neutral caretaker government the incumbent party lost the election. Also, the historically deeply rooted animosity between AL and BNP, which has grown over time, fuelled the decision to abolish the caretaker system. Among many other events which invigorated the animosity, one decisive one was the August 2004 grenade attack on the opposition party AL when there was a strong allegation that such a heinous attack was government-sponsored while BNP was the incumbent government. Since then, the strategies of the two political parties have been suppresser l'autre meaning "suppress the other".

On the economic front, Bangladesh managed to demonstrate notable success in the past despite severe weakness in economic, legal or political institutions. This phenomenon has been coined as "Bangladesh Paradox" where the success came against the overall distressing picture of institutional quality. I have argued that this was possible as the country was successful in creating some "growth-enhancing" pockets of informal institutions catering for the needs of the major growth drivers – namely the readymade garments exports and remittances. While the settlement over the political issues (especially related to the modalities of holding elections) was broken the settlement among elites over these two growth drivers remained intact.

Then why is this crisis? Today's crisis is an inevitable outcome of past success. The past success of getting high dividends from the "growth-enhancing" pockets of informal institutions created an inflated comfort zone which didn't help much to improve the quality of the formal institutions. As a result, when the dividends from the existing growth drivers started getting dried up and the economy started facing a new set of challenges, there was the inability to undertake and implement the right policies and actions at the right time. The problem lies in the nature of the "blended regime" in Bangladesh, which is associated with weak state capacity, weak regulatory environment, state capture by a segment of the business

elites, and dominance of cronies.

What is a "blended regime"? Most developing countries are characterized by blended regimes of different degrees. A blended regime can be characterised by a blend of two contrasting aspects of the political economy of development – "developmental state" on one side, and the dominance of cronies and high level of rent-seeking activities on the other side. The elements of the "developmental state" of the "blended regime" are manifested through the use of the state to promote economic and social development, efforts to reduce poverty, emphasizing growth drivers to generate sustained economic growth, developing notable physical infrastructure, and expanding social services for poor people. On the other side of the "blended regime" we see the dominance of cronies and a high degree of rent-seeking activities. At the heart of the "blended regime" is the alliance of the actors who are supportive of this regime. Effective management of the rent generation through developmental activities and distribution of rents among the actors of this alliance ensures the stability of the "blended regime". Developmental activities provide the economic legitimacy of the regime whereas the political legitimacy of the regime can vary depending on the country-contexts. Interestingly, while cronies and rent-seekers block attempts for necessary reforms to effectively move towards the "developmental state", their anti-development activities are often covered up through the successful delivery of some development projects.

In Bangladesh, the actors of the "blended regime" are the dominant political elites, powerful business elites, and other apparatus of the state machinery. There has been a broad consensus among these actors on the major economic policies, political agendas, and generation, distribution, and management of rents from critical economic domains, such as the RMG sector, the power sector, domestic protected sectors, and big infrastructural projects. One important outcome of the "blended regime" in Bangladesh is that such rent-seeking activities and the dominance of cronies, despite notable achievements in some developmental activities, led to an "anti-reform coalition" among the powerful actors of this regime. As a result, longstanding required reform in critical economic and institutional domains remained unaccomplished. These patterns of "anti-reform coalition", cronyism, and rent-seeking activities also seem to be present among the major political and business elites outside of power.

The aforementioned "anti-reform coalition" of this regime also led to policy paralysis in Bangladesh. Policy paralysis can be described as a situation where critically important laws and reforms are not undertaken or, even if undertaken, not implemented as a result of a lack of commitment from the government or the inability of the political and economic elites in the country to reach a consensus over the nature of reforms. This is also reflected in the indecisiveness of the government in the areas of public policymaking. As a result, even when policies for reforms are adopted, they remain mostly limited to paper, and the government fails to implement them. The failure to carry out critical economic and institutional reforms on time due to policy paralysis can result in a high cost to the economy and society. In Bangladesh, the manifestation of the "anti-reform coalition" and resultant policy paralysis can be seen in the areas of the banking sector, taxation sector, exchange rate management, health and education sectors, export diversification, control of corruption, legal system, etc.

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## Building a sustainable universal child protection system in Bangladesh

**Md. Tuhin Ahmed and Abdul Zabbar Sakil**

Bangladesh has made significant strides in child protection, thanks to the ongoing commitment of the government. Despite these gains, the prevalence of violence, abuse, and exploitation among children remains substantial. According to MICS 2019, over 45 million children under the age of 14 experience violence at home regularly, and more than 20 children are dying weekly due to extreme abuse including gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage, and child labour. The correlation between GBV and child vulnerabilities is particularly pronounced during early childhood and conception. Bolstering systems to address child violence, abuse, and exploitation is, therefore, crucial for Bangladesh's long-term development. Despite four decades of remarkable socio-economic progress, establishing a sustainable universal child protection system remains a formidable challenge for Bangladesh.

To push towards a sustainable universal child protection system, UNICEF has initiated efforts to improve the socioeconomic issues regarding children and adolescents in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA). Under the Accelerating Protection for Children (APC) project, UNICEF targeted to establish 2,100 Child Protection Community Hubs (CPCs) in 78 Upazilas by 2024. As of September 2023, approximately 1,327 CPCs were functioning across the country, reaching over one million children through the program.

For children, adolescents, and community members, a CPC is an essential and accessible resource, serving as a safe haven. It provides psychosocial support, recreational activities, educational access, birth registration, and medical services. Collaborating with local authorities and organizations, CPCs raise awareness about child protection and Violence Against Children and Women (VACW) issues, offering early intervention for at-risk children and their families. They also contribute to the community by increasing access to social services. However, for the sustainable and scalable functioning of CPCs for all children, an effective costing and budgeting model under the public financing framework is needed for MoWCA.

Aiming to estimate the costs of CPCs and an additional department 'Department of Children Affairs (DCA)' under MoWCA, SANEM conducted a study in collaboration with UNICEF. The study revealed potential costing options and MoWCA's fiscal space for the long-term scale-up and sustainably funding the CPCs. A dynamic costing model was developed in MS EXCEL to estimate the costs, based on costing information for 836 hubs across the country. It was found that within a CPC, the participation of children was higher compared to adolescents, while it was higher for girls than boys. Salary, incentives, and intervention expenses were found to be the major source of costs in these CPCs.

The unit cost for children including adolescents stands at BDT 21.6, and for community members, it's BDT 15.3. Nationally, monthly and yearly costs per hub are estimated at BDT 21,181 and BDT 254,176, respectively. Achieving universal coverage across 496 Upazilas and every Union requires 13,327 hubs,

with an estimated cost of BDT 3.98 billion in FY24, constituting 8.38% of MoWCA's budget. Projected costs until FY35 show a decreasing trend relative to the overall country and MoWCA budgets.

An additional department for children, named DCA, under MoWCA, was recommended through this study for the efficient functioning of these hubs and other work regarding children's welfare presently administered by DWA. The DCA is expected to evolve over time, potentially extending its mandate to encompass broader responsibilities related to children's welfare within the ministry. This strategic evolution aligns with the ministry's representation of both children and women, ensuring comprehensive support and advocacy for the well-being of both demographics.

In this regard, the study also estimated the costs of DCA. As the functions of DCA are supposed to be analogous to DWA, the administrative costs including DWA head office, DWA District offices and DWA Upazila offices were taken into consideration when estimating costs for DCA. The study found that the estimated cost of DCA in FY24 is BDT 1.96 billion, which is 4.13% of the MoWCA budget. Combining both the costs of CPCs and DCA, the cost stands at BDT 5.94 billion in FY24, which is 12.05% of the total MoWCA's budget. In FY35, the cost stands at BDT 10.29 billion, which is 3.93% of the MoWCA's budget.

This study also assessed MoWCA's financial options under an updated macroeconomic framework as used in the 8FYP. The assessment reveals that MoWCA's resource requirement increases under both CPCs and CPCs plus DCA scenarios. Of course, the proposed initiatives may not impose a significant fiscal burden. Importantly, these requirements may decline during the 9FYP and 10FYP.

The study recommends various strategies to mobilize additional resources for financing CPCs and DCA. Adjusting the Annual Development Program (ADP), increasing the budget deficit, revenue generation, reallocating expenditure, and seeking donor support, or a combination of these options, are potential strategies. While adjusting ADP amounts and increasing the budget deficit may provide immediate funding, it could lead to long-term fiscal instability. A balanced strategy, combining ADP adjustments and an enhanced deficit with greater revenue generation, offers a comprehensive approach for both immediate and sustained funding in the long run.

Investing in child protection systems like the DCA within MoWCA yields substantial economic and social benefits, which include ensured well-being of children, reduced healthcare cost, improved educational outcomes, and skilled as well as productive manpower in the future. Such an investment addresses the moral imperative of child welfare and markedly contributes to the future prosperity of society.

*[This article is prepared by Md. Tuhin Ahmed, Lecturer of Economics, Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, and Abdul Zabbar Sakil, Research Associate, SANEM, based on the report titled "Costing exercise and feasibility study of a community-led child protection system in Bangladesh", authored by Dr Bazlul Haque Khondker, Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Md. Tuhin Ahmed, Afia Mubasshira Tiasha, Abdul Zabbar Sakil, Farhin Islam and Mohammad Asaduzzaman. SANEM conducted this study in collaboration with UNICEF]*

## How far has Bangladesh come to expand its blue economy?

**Israt Hossain**

Blue economy or ocean economy is a younger domain of economics based on a sustainable ocean-based economic model which optimizes the utilization of resources from the ocean, aiming to balance marine resource use with environmental protection and societal betterment. SDG 14, focused on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, directly aligns with the frontier of blue economy along with other related goals regarding climate, health, livelihood and institutions.

Bangladesh's historic maritime achievements, under government leadership, have set the stage for developing its blue economy. Studies indicate the potential of the Bangladesh Blue Economy (BBE) to exceed the country's land resources when including the Extended Economic Zone and Open Access Sea. Sustainable fisheries (including aquaculture and mariculture), coastal tourism/e-co-tourism, sustainable transport infrastructure, renewable energy, plastic pollution prevention, natural resource exploitation and education and research are identified as potential sectors for blue economy expansion in Bangladesh, as mentioned in a report by the General Economic Division (GED).

The marine fisheries sector is a key part of Bangladesh's blue economy, and there are plans to enhance activities in this area. Currently, local fishermen lack the skills for catching demersal fish in waters deeper than 50 meters, and longline fishing in deep waters is non-existent. Addressing this, capacity building for deep-sea fishing is a primary objective in the 8th Five-Year Plan. The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock's comprehensive plan for marine fisheries development includes both short, medium and long-term strategies. Legislative measures like the 'Marine Fisheries Act-2020' and 'Marine Fisheries Policy 2022' support these efforts. Key initiatives include a pilot project for deep-sea tuna fishing, a crab hatchery in Kalatali, Cox's Bazar, and experimental seaweed and oyster farming in Cox's Bazar district, all contributing to the blue economy's expansion as per the Bangladesh Economic Review (BER) in 2022. Also, the recent update from the economic review in 2023 confirms distribution of VGF among fishing families. However, the GED research pinpointed coastal poverty, inequitable incentive distribution, logistical deficiencies, restricted alternate job opportunities, political intervention, and insufficient awareness about fishery regulations as the primary barriers hindering the marine fisheries sector.

Unlike the marine fisheries sector, there are lack of specific projects according to the available studies on blue economy in other sectors, a situation linked to the absence of a guiding framework or universally recognized principles for sustainable 'blue' investments. The exploitation of both living and non-living resources in Bangladesh's coastal and ocean areas is currently overseen in a sectoral manner by approximately 20 different ministries. The Blue Economy Cell, established in 2017, has been unsuccessful in promoting the blue economy. However, the integration of newly introduced

sectors such as gas exploration, coastal tourism, salt production, and renewable energy production is occurring without comprehensive research or holistic management. The coastal regions are currently undergoing significant industrial expansion driven by government initiatives encompassing the establishment of a coal power plant, a deep-sea port, and an LPG-LNG terminal, among others, though debates have emerged regarding the climate sustainability of these establishments. These new developments are being introduced alongside traditional ocean uses such as fishing and shipping, which have long been reliant on time-honored approaches.

Global investors and reports have identified the lack of precise data at both aggregate and sectoral levels of the blue economy as a major barrier to funding and advancing the sector. A World Bank study in 2018 estimates Bangladesh's blue economy at \$6.2 billion, about 3% of its GDP, but this valuation, seemingly based on ad hoc estimates rather than the System of National Accounts (SNA) methods, likely undervalues its contribution. Bangladesh's government is addressing data gaps in its blue economy through research and surveys. The vessel 'RV Mean Sandhani' has completed 44 cruises in the Bay of Bengal by February 2023 for biological analysis, and a request has been made to FAO for a comprehensive survey of Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as per the BER in 2023. Efforts are also being made to develop 450 fishing villages for marine fisheries resource co-management and grants through applied research for mariculture and marine fisheries value chain development, although there is ongoing debate regarding the pace and impact of these research and development activities. Moreover, the implementation of a Vessel Tracking and Monitoring System (VTMS) using satellite communication, beneficial for the stock assessment of fisheries, land management, weather forecasting, water management, and environmental monitoring, for the facilitation of data collection and connectivity is currently in the planning phase only. In case of marine resource protection several measures according to the economic reviews have been formulated including the National Plan of Action (NPOA) under the 'Support to countries to address Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing' project, in collaboration with the FAO, a 65-day annual ban on all fishing activities, prohibiting coastal fishing with seine and other harmful nets, etc. Furthermore, a 3,188 sq. km. area near Nijhum Island in Hatia Upazila has been designated as a Marine Protected Area.

Sustaining Bangladesh's abundant marine resources demands a robust regulatory framework and long-term financing for a thriving blue economy sector. Relying heavily on bank financing proves inadequate for the substantial investment needs, necessitating to mobilize funds by creating fixed income securities or bonds specifically for blue economy investment projects, that is, blue bond. The establishment of a comprehensive government body is urgent therefore, to oversee and regulate these sectors ensuring effective management and financing for the blue economy's growth.

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## Women's career aspirations, role in the workforce and pay gap: Nobel Prize in Economics 2023

*Dipa Das and Rafiul Ahmed*

Globally, about 50% of the female labor force is engaged in paid work, compared to over 80% of males. Women generally earn less than men, making it crucial to understand the differences in employment levels and incomes between genders for socioeconomic efficiency. This issue is directly tied to the optimal utilization of societal resources. When women face barriers to workforce entry or unfair treatment within it, society loses valuable contributions and expertise. Furthermore, if women are paid less than men for identical work, their motivation to work and progress in their careers may decrease, negatively impacting the economy. Addressing these disparities is vital not just for gender equality but also for the overall economic well-being.

Claudia Goldin, the 2023 Nobel Prize winner in Economics and only the third female to receive this honor in her field, revolutionized the understanding of the female labor force. Her innovative blend of economic history and labor economics illuminated how various factors—like work-family balance, education, technology, new laws, social norms, and economic restructuring—have shaped and continue to shape women's labor supply and demand. Goldin's research, particularly her seminal 1990 book "Understanding the Gender Gap: An Economic History of American Women", challenged previous notions that linked women's workforce participation solely to economic growth. By analyzing data spanning two centuries, she uncovered deeper complexities in the gender wage gap and overturned simplistic twentieth-century perspectives, marking a significant advancement in economic gender studies.

Goldin discovered that historical data often misrepresented women's employment, commonly listing their occupation as "wife" and inaccurately recording their labor. She corrected this by analyzing time-use surveys, industrial statistics, and censuses, revealing that women were more active in the workforce before the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Age made it difficult for married women to work from home, leading to a decline in their employment, even though many unmarried women began working in manufacturing. Goldin's research depicted women's labor force participation in the U.S. over two centuries as a U-shaped curve, showing no consistent correlation between women's workforce involvement and economic growth, as the economy remained stable during this period.

Goldin identified "marriage bars" as societal norms restricting married women from working in fields like teaching or office work. Goldin's research also highlighted that women's career ambitions significantly contributed to narrowing the employment gap between men and women. She developed a cohort-based approach to examine the impact of entering the job market on a group, revealing that women's educational and career choices were shaped mainly by societal expectations, such as the belief that they would leave the workforce after marriage. Goldin demonstrated that women often base their decisions on expecta-

tions that may not hold true during periods of rapid societal change.

In the latter half of the 20th century, many married women, influenced by educational choices made decades earlier under different societal norms, re-entered the workforce as their children grew up. These norms did not anticipate long-term careers for women, affecting their employment opportunities. By the 1950s, many daughters of stay-at-home mothers had already chosen career paths without considering the possibility of a long and successful career. It wasn't until the 1970s, after a century of underestimating women's potential, that women's expectations began to align with their actual labor hours, leading to more young women pursuing higher education.

Additionally, the introduction of the contraceptive pill in the late 1960s dramatically shifted women's workplace expectations. The pill allowed women to delay marriage and childbirth, giving them more reason to invest in their education and careers, as they could plan their futures with greater clarity and certainty. This marked a significant change in women's educational and professional aspirations. Goldin's two centuries-long research revealed that women experienced significant benefits from structural shifts in the economy and workplace long before gender equality became a prominent issue. During the Industrial Revolution, the wage gap between men and women narrowed significantly. However, despite the economy's growth, increased female education, and a doubling of women in the labor force from 1930 to 1980, the gender wage disparity largely persisted. Interestingly, this period also saw an increase in pay discrimination even as the overall wage difference decreased, partly due to the transition from piecework to monthly salaries. Modern wage structures favor individuals with long, stable careers at a single company, emphasizing the importance of career continuity. Goldin's research addressed why women, despite higher education, often earn less than men, identifying parenthood as a critical factor. Initially, the wage gap is small but widens significantly after the first child. Modern labor markets, demanding continuous availability, disproportionately affect women, who typically take on primary childcare responsibilities. This hinders their career advancement and ability to earn higher incomes. The struggle to balance work and family further challenges maintaining career momentum and achieving wage parity.

Goldin also showed us a glimpse of the future. Diverse factors cause different stages of social development, which determine gender gaps in the labor market, and if policymakers want to address these gaps, they must first comprehend their origins. Goldin's research has also shown us that transformation requires time, as decisions with lifelong consequences are often predicated on aspirations and desires that may turn out to be wrong. Rapid shifts in the workforce are only possible when the generations that pioneered the new norms in the workplace reach middle age and exert their influence on the decisions of the next generation.

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The era of post 2024 general election is going to be very important for the country. While a credible and participatory general election is necessary to confront the political and economic crises, as pointed out earlier, the need to undertake reforms in critical economic and institutional domains is more than ever.

In the banking sector, the dual authority of the central bank and finance ministry over the private and public banks respectively needs to be abolished. The central bank should be given the full and independent authority to oversee and regulate the overall banking sector in Bangladesh. The central bank should be run by professionals to undertake and implement monetary policies, exchange rate policies, and foreign reserve management policies without any political influence. The banking sector acts need to be reformed to avoid the influence of the cronies in the private sector banks. Also, stern actions need to be taken against the loan defaulters. The legal system for the banking sector needs to be modernised to take effective actions against the wrongdoers.

In the taxation sector, the reform should aim to reduce corruption and increase transparency and accountability. Also, the National Board of Revenue's policy formulation and implementation need to be separated into two functions. Policies and acts need to be reformed with the aim of reducing pervasive tax evasion and tax exemption. There is no denying that maintaining or accelerating growth requires diversifying manufacturing exports. Such a strategy requires an explicit, transparent and accountable industrial policy with effective support measures provided to the non-RMG sectors. In the RMG sector, the labour and working conditions issues need to be addressed properly.

In public finance management, improving the state's administrative and regulatory capacity with greater transparency and accountability will go against rent-seeking opportunities. Simplifying laws, and administrative procedures and eliminating responsibility overlaps will enhance the quality of the implementation of development projects related to the annual development programmes and even the mega projects.

It should also be kept in mind that some new dimensions have been added to the ongoing political and economic crises because of the renewed geo-political attention and dynamics. Bangladesh, being a small developing country, needs to maintain reasonably good relations with the major global players for its future development process. Unwanted external pressure due to any major deviations from reasonably good relations may deepen the political and economic crises.

The aforementioned analysis points to the fact that to address the crisis of the "blended regime" in Bangladesh there is a need to break the anti-reform coalition and policy paralysis. After the 2024 general election, the prospect of launching important reforms will depend on the mobilization of support for reform among the actors of the power coalition through strong political leadership.

### Dr Selim Raihan and Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha were panelists at the SAES XIV

Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM, and Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM attended the Fourteenth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES XIV) held on 4-5 November 2023 in Dhaka. The overarching theme of the summit was "Reframing South Asian Regional Cooperation in the New Context: National and Global Dimensions". The conference was organized by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in collaboration with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, India; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu, Nepal; Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan; and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo, Sri Lanka. Dr Raihan was a panelist at a session on 'Multi-modal Transport (Cross-border Logistics)'. Dr Bidisha was a panelist in a session on 'Cross-border Labour Market Management'. Representatives of public and private sectors, NGOs, civil society organizations, think tanks, academia, media, and development partners from South Asia and beyond attended the conference.

### Dr Selim Raihan presented in OPM-FCDO Conference in the UK

Dr Selim Raihan, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Executive Director of SANEM attended the Economic Development and Institutions conference held on 8-9 November 2023 in London, UK. Dr Raihan presented his work on the Bangladesh Institutional Diagnostic in the conference. Oxford Policy Management and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom Government jointly organized the conference.

### Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha was the keynote speaker at a workshop of the MoSW

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM was the keynote speaker at a workshop organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare at the district social welfare office, Dhaka. The workshop titled 'Improving the Status of Unpaid Household Work and Encouraging Women-Men Participatory Work Distribution in Family Activities' was held on 28 November 2023. Mr Md Khairul Alam Sheikh, secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare was present as the chief guest of the workshop.

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### Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha conducted a session at MOWCA

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM, has conducted a training session under the project "Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting in Bangladesh" of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The training took place on 13 November 2023 at Bangladesh Shishu Academy. Dr Bidisha's session focused on gender sensitive planning and budgeting related primary idea, and current context; need of gender sensitive budgeting in women development, role of NGO/CSO in ensuring gender budget. Mst. Ferdousi Begum, director of the project delivered the opening and closing remarks. Ms Nazma Mobarek, Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs was present as the chief guest of the event.

### Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha conducted training on Gender Equality and Market Systems

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM, has conducted a training program titled "Training on Strategies for Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusive Market Systems: Sensitizing Market Intermediaries on Gender for Development (G4D)" organized by Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatun Nessa Centre for Gender & Development Studies. On 15 November 2023 Dr Bidisha conducted a session on 'Gender Sensitivity and Gender Responsiveness at Market place'.

### Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha was a discussant at the Daily Star roundtable

Dr Sayema Haque Bidisha, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka and Research Director at SANEM attended a roundtable on "Bangladesh Economy: the way forward" organized by The Daily Star. The event was held on 7 November 2023 at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka. Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Former Governor of the Bangladesh Bank, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Distinguished Fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dr M M Akash, Professor of Economics at the University of Dhaka, Dr Ahsan H Mansur, Executive Director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, Mr Miran Ali, Vice-President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) also attended the event as discussants. The roundtable was moderated by Mr Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star. Speakers highlighted the major challenges contributing to the country's economic crisis and emphasized the need for reforms to recover and ensure sustainable economic development.