

# Analysis of Gender Sensitivity of Government Policies: Bangladesh Perspective

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## List of acronyms

<i>ALRD</i>	<i>Association for Land Reform and Development</i>
<i>BBS</i>	<i>Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics</i>
<i>BIDS</i>	<i>Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies</i>
<i>BLA</i>	<i>Bangladesh Labour Act</i>
<i>BNWLA</i>	<i>Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association</i>
<i>BWCCI</i>	<i>Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry</i>
<i>CDMP</i>	<i>Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme</i>
<i>CEDAW</i>	<i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</i>
<i>EGPP</i>	<i>Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest</i>
<i>FYP</i>	<i>Five-Year Plan</i>
<i>GoB</i>	<i>Government of Bangladesh</i>
<i>IDP</i>	<i>Integrated Development Programmes</i>
<i>ILO</i>	<i>International Labor Organization</i>
<i>KIIS</i>	<i>Key Informant Interviews</i>
<i>LFP</i>	<i>labour force participation</i>
<i>MoWCA</i>	<i>Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</i>
<i>NSDP</i>	<i>National Skills Development Policy</i>
<i>NWDP</i>	<i>National Women's Development Policy</i>
<i>OCC</i>	<i>One-stop Crisis Center</i>
<i>PKSF</i>	<i>Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation</i>
<i>RMG</i>	<i>Ready Made Garment</i>
<i>SDF</i>	<i>Social Development Foundation</i>
<i>SEIP</i>	<i>Skills for Employment Investment Programme</i>
<i>SMEs</i>	<i>Small and Medium Enterprises</i>
<i>SRHR</i>	<i>Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights</i>
<i>TVET</i>	<i>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</i>
<i>VAW</i>	<i>Violence Against Women</i>
<i>VGD</i>	<i>Vulnerable Group Development</i>
<i>WEA</i>	<i>The Women Entrepreneurs Association</i>

## Executive Summary

Women in Bangladesh frequently struggle for their rights to be upheld in their homes, communities, and governments. In society and the implementation of the law, women continue to face unfairness, marginalization, and prejudice, and they have little say in how decisions are made. Laws and practices that discriminate against women impede formal equality, and sociopolitical conditions prevent women from exercising their rights. In a similar vein, women's empowerment is essential for the development of a country as well as the survival of society and the family. The purpose of the gender-sensitive policy is to facilitate the growth, development, and empowerment of women. These policies facilitate an increase in women's participation in decision-making, a necessary condition for sustained socioeconomic growth. The paper tries to identify the sector's specific gender issues that may require immediate attention from policymakers, to identify the best practices of global experience, particularly in the context of South Asia and East Asia, and to expand the scope of gender-inclusive policy studies, as well as to reveal the implementation drawbacks of responsible ministries in their efforts to close the gender gap. The paper has used the mixed methodological approach using Key Informant Interviews to find primary data and analysis whereas a comprehensive desk research of all relevant policy papers and secondary sources.

The major policy initiatives taken by the government for this purpose are the National Women Development Policy 2011, Gender Policy 2016, Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017 and National Children Policy 2011. Moreover, there are several rules and regulations under different policies to promote free trade. Through the advancement of women's rights, empowerment, and a work-friendly atmosphere, the current government is trying to increase the participation of women in the basic structures of the state and society with the help of different ministries. Several initiatives to reduce poverty and introduction of various social protection programs (Food assistance program for destitute mothers, Mother and Child Assistance Program, Child development centre and Teenager's empowerment program, Micro-credit for Women Self-employment, Welfare Fund for the Oppressed Women and Children and Fund for the Welfare of Burnt and Disabled and many more), increase women's access to higher education, and inspire women to start their businesses have been launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. The Law and Justice Division has taken several steps towards creating a more accommodating legal system for women. Moreover, the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the Ministry for Women's Advancement and Rights' Functions and Responsibilities conduct different programs to reinforce the social protection and capability to deal with disasters as well as promote the financial inclusion of women.

Women face severe difficulties and wage disparity is one of the most significant among them. Some other significant issues, including the prevalence of child marriage the resulting rise in the number of women who are victims of domestic violence, and the widespread existence of a patriarchal perspective that prevents women's empowerment provisions from being put into practice, have been identified. Furthermore, women are often seen as a burden during environmental disasters or climate-related migration. Women business owners have experienced discrimination when applying for loans from banks, limiting their access to financial resources. Due to social norms, women typically have in family and society. No decision-making positions. Henceforth, to make the status of women better off in society, the

government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can reduce the dropout rate among female students by attempting to group them into a category where they will receive training for various outsourcing positions. Additionally, society's view of women needs to be changed over time; this can be accomplished by presenting women as role models and highlighting their significant contributions to society. Policies and initiatives related to youth development, such as those related to drug abuse, gender-based violence, and juvenile crime, must be prioritized and specified simultaneously. Providing businesswomen with financial assistance in the form of economic stimulus programmes is also crucial for the protection of women business owners. Women must be able to work without fear of harassment in an office setting that is conducive to their development. On the other hand, banking reform must be implemented by simplifying and eradicating redundant steps in the procedures for SME bank loans. To identify more particular and gender-based difficulties, plausible studies should be undertaken. In order to create effective policies and projects that will remove the barriers that women face and enable them to participate fully in a variety of social, cultural, and political spheres, numerous government agencies and organizations, NGOs, lawmakers, policymakers, and private stakeholders should come together.



## 1. Introduction

Bangladeshi women are always facing challenges to secure their rights in the home, society, and government. Women continue to experience unfairness, marginalisation, and discrimination in society and the application of the law, and they have little influence over decision-making. Formal equality is hampered by discriminatory laws and policies, and socio-political circumstances prohibit women from exercising their rights.<sup>1</sup> In the same token women's empowerment is critical for a nation's growth, as well as the survival of society and the family. The gender-relevant policy's objective is to facilitate women's growth, development, and empowerment. Discrimination and all forms of abuse against women and children must be addressed through these policies. Therefore, it facilitates increased participation of women in decision-making, which is an essential precondition for ensuring sustained socio-economic growth. On the other side, it is important to examine how government policies connect to a wide range of social, cultural, political, and economic indicators that are related to women's economic and social empowerment in Bangladesh to reduce gender inequality. Since the relationship between gender-sensitive policies and the growth of women is inevitable, this study focussed on the gender sensitivity of government policies to pinpoint the laps in restructuring future policies.

The objectives of this study are as follows: to identify the sector's specific gender issues that may need immediate attention on the part of the policymakers, to help concerned government bodies in pinpointing the areas that are prone to gender gaps to analyse the existing gender-inclusive government policies and strategic plans along with detecting implementation challenges, to identify the best practices of global experience, especially in the context of South Asia and East Asia and to increase the scope of gender-inclusive policy studies which may help women entrepreneurs to scale down pressing obstacles. This study seeks to illustrate how policies based on gender issues could turn out to be effective through the provision of special priorities made to women by policymakers and other stakeholders. This study also unveils the implementation drawbacks of responsible ministries to reduce the gender gap. The study examines the current scenario of women through various indicators and conducts ten KIIs to gather relevant recommendations. To identify the best practices of global experience, especially in the context of South Asia and East Asia, we include various country comparisons in our study. We conclude that gender-inclusive cum gender-friendly policies may help women entrepreneurs to scale down existing setbacks and create a platform for economic empowerment.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.wvi.org/bangladesh/genderequality#:~:text=Gender%20equality%20Bangladeshi%20women%20have%20been%20struggling%20to,and%20have%20negligible%20influence%20in%20decision%20making%20processes.>

## 2. Literature Review

Women in society have a major role to play in both personal and professional spheres. The participation of women is significant in diverse areas such as in the social, cultural, political, economic, and religious fields. Hence, in these spheres when a woman has adequate skills and possesses enough knowledge, then they can render their participation effectually. In addition to skills and abilities, women must raise awareness about the factors that influence their participation. Knowing these factors also allows them to overcome obstacles that may arise while carrying out their role in the employment sector and society.

When women engage in various economic tasks and activities, then their participation is encouraged by other factors such as sociocultural factors, economic factors, infrastructural factors, and capacity building. Firstly, some of the socio-cultural factors that prevent women and girls from participating in social activities to the fullest include limited access to health care and medical facilities, a lack of education and awareness, low life expectancies, and remaining confined within the household. Secondly, financial resources are regarded as crucial, especially when women are to participate in any task or activity. Thirdly, when it comes to women participating in various tasks and activities, particularly those involving the community, infrastructure is regarded as critical including various aspects such as broadcasting, radio, transportation, roads, public services, communications, water supplies, power supplies, machinery, technology, tools, and equipment. Lastly, developing essential skills and abilities through the capacity-building process will eventually enhance the female labour force and may lead to the enhancement of institutional capacity (Kapur, 2019).<sup>2</sup> Improving women's ability to earn wages outside of conventional occupations, increasing economic self-reliance, and ensuring equal access for women to the labour force and social security systems. World Economic Forum in their report stated that Bangladesh ranks 71<sup>st</sup> out of 146 countries in total on the gender gap index scoring 0.714 in 2022.

According to the lower gender gap score and index ranking, women in Bangladesh saw a decline in overall gender parity in 2022 compared to 2021 (The Financial Express, 2022).<sup>3</sup> This was due in part to lower educational attainment as the gender literacy gap widened. It is also extremely important to recognize that almost all the UN Sustainable Development Goals are linked to gender equality, involvement, and responsive policy in some way. Moreover, gender-responsive policymaking does not only benefit women alone but all genders as it addresses the needs and priorities of each group through a gender lens. A gender-responsive policy will consider gender norms, roles, and relationships for men and women, as well as how these affect access to and control over resources. It addresses the causes of gender-based inequities while considering the specific needs of people of all sexes. It also ensures that there are ways to transform harmful gender norms that continue to stymie progress in power dynamics between men and women. Inclusive policies will also consider the specific needs of subgroups within the dominant framework (for example, youth, the elderly, the disabled, minorities, and so on), recognizing that different groups may have different needs and interests. As a result, it is critical to include as many stakeholders as possible in policy

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<sup>2</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331065236\\_Roles\\_of\\_Women\\_within\\_the\\_Society](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331065236_Roles_of_Women_within_the_Society)

<sup>3</sup><https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/bangladesh-tops-south-asia-ranking-on-gender-gap-index-1657779350>

development processes, as well as for those bodies that administer these policies to have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to address the various needs and priorities of men and women in different groups (Malik, 2020).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2272718/the-significance-of-gender-responsive-policies>

### 3. Methodology

The research team has mostly used a mixed methodological approach when delivering the deliverables given the goals and primary research questions of this project. The methodology is based on two significant tasks in general:

- Primary data collection and analysis by conducting Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)
- Comprehensive desk research of all pertinent policy papers and secondary sources.

#### 3.1 Primary Analysis

In collecting primary data, the research team has followed a qualitative approach. Social aspects that are mostly unrepresented in the quantitative data can be addressed through qualitative data, which are expected to provide in-depth information on social dimensions and characteristics. As part of the qualitative data, the team has conducted several Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

##### 3.1.1 Key Informant Interview (KII)

The KIIs are helpful for an in-depth understanding of the policies, assessment of projects, and identifying gaps. For this study, the research team has carried out a total of ten KIIs (detailed list is in the Annex).

##### Limitation of the Study

In-depth analyses of pertinent documentary sources on laws, regulations and relevant initiatives and programmes addressing all the policies and laws are essential for this kind of study. However, there isn't adequate information online, there is also a time constraint. Since the study was mostly a desk evaluation, it was challenging to collect specific factual data on the ground. As a result, it cannot be said that this study is an analysis based on a thorough mapping of all laws, policies, and activities by multiple stakeholders at various levels and at various times in Bangladesh.

#### 3.2 Secondary Analysis

##### 3.2.1 Desk research

Extensive desk research has been carried out by the study team that comprises relevant reports, and policy documents regarding women's relevant issues such as education, health, employment and so on. Also, policies that promote SHE trades are included in the portion.

- ✓ *Bangladesh Population Policy 2012*
- ✓ *Healthcare Financing Strategy 2012-2032*
- ✓ *Gender Equity Strategy, 2014*
- ✓ *National Nutrition Policy, 2015*
- ✓ *National Drug Policy, 2016*
- ✓ *Bangladesh National Strategy for Maternal Health 2015-30*
- ✓ *National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2017-30*
- ✓ *Industrial Policy 2022*
- ✓ *National Digital Commerce Policy 2018*

- ✓ *SME Policy 2019*
- ✓ *Export Policy 2021-24*
- ✓ *National Women Development Policy 2011*
- ✓ *Gender Policy (2016)*
- ✓ *Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010*
- ✓ *Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017*
- ✓ *National Children Policy 2011*
- ✓ *Menstrual Regulation Policy 1979*
- ✓ *Neonatal Health Strategy 2009*
- ✓ *National Adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy, Bangladesh (2006)*
- ✓ *Bangladesh National Strategy for Maternal Health 2019-30*
- ✓ *National Policy for Women's Advancement 2011*
- ✓ *National Health Policy 2011*
- ✓ *Global Experience*
- ✓ *Sustainable development goals*
- ✓ *Relevant Policy Documents*

During the desk research, the research team followed the following steps,

- ✓ Inspection and scrutiny of the policy documents, which include all relevant and existing acts, ordinances, legislation, agreements, treaties, and literature.
- ✓ Formulating the KII checklist based on the scanning of the stated documents.
- ✓ Substantiating and complementing the preliminary analysis with the findings from the primary data.
- ✓ Assessing the current policies and plans in Bangladesh in terms of gender aspect. Also, the study has considered other policy documents that address women's relevant issues and have provisions for women's empowerment.
- ✓ Comparing the policies with South Asian and East Asian contexts.

## **4. Gender-responsive Government Policies**

### ***4.1 Major policy initiatives by the government***

The issue of girl child development has been mentioned separately in child development policies and laws. Preventing child marriage, eliminating discrimination and providing security to disabled girl children, ensuring safe and quality recreational and sports facilities for girl children, cultural activities, physical, mental and sexual abuse of women at family and social level and workplace, rape, dowry, family violence, The National Women's Development Policy-2011 has clear instructions on eliminating all forms of violence against women, including eve teasing, acid throwing. Apart from this, the National Child Policy 2011 has given special importance to the girl child. In this act, there are clear guidelines for counselling for the mental health development of girls, ensuring separate toilets for girls and boys in institutions and workplaces, and the safety of girl children in case of disaster emergency.

Table 1 Major Policy Initiatives by GoB

Name of the Policy/ law	Name of the Ministry /Division	Major goals/objectives/features
National Women Development Policy 2011	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure equal rights for men and women in state and public life in conformity with Bangladesh's constitution.</li> <li>• To guarantee women's security and protection in all spheres of public, private, and family-related affairs.</li> <li>• To ensure socioeconomic, political, administrative, and legal empowerment</li> <li>• To enforce women's human rights.</li> <li>• To ensure that women participate fully and equally in mainstream socio-economic growth.</li> <li>• To train and educate women as human resources.</li> <li>• To relieve the female from the poverty curse.</li> <li>• To eradicate prevailing gender disparities.</li> <li>• To effectively acknowledge the contributions made by women in socio-economic spheres.</li> <li>• To abolish all forms of violence against women and young girls.</li> <li>• To eradicate inequality against women and young girls.</li> <li>• To develop equality in family life, politics, administration, various fields of endeavour, socioeconomic activity, education, culture, and sport.</li> <li>• To create and introduce technology that benefits women's interests and to outlaw anti-women technologies.</li> <li>• To ensure that the required measures are taken to ensure the women's decent health and nutrition.</li> <li>• To confirm that women are given precedence whenever it comes to housing and shelter.</li> <li>• To endeavour for the rehabilitation of women afflicted by armed conflict and environmental catastrophes.</li> <li>• To provide comprehensive care to protect the rights of handicapped women and women from minority ethnic groups.</li> <li>• To take necessary steps for the women who are widowed, elderly, guardian less, husband-abended, single, and childless.</li> <li>• To include positive images of women and female children in the media that express a gender standpoint.</li> <li>• To encourage talented, brilliant women to reach their full talents and abilities.</li> <li>• To offer women effective interventions for their advancement.</li> <li>• To deliver all-around help to ensure the expansion of female entrepreneurs.</li> </ul>

Name of the Policy/ law	Name of the Ministry /Division	Major goals/objectives/features
<b>Gender Policy (2016)</b>	Department of Environment Ministry of Environment and Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With programmes and activities that represent gender equality, DoE aims to become a gender-aware organisation. The DoE makes an effort to be responsive, promote gender equity and equality within the organisation, and guarantee that its capacity development initiatives will satisfy the needs and interests of both women and men, attempting to stop discrimination against women. In particular, it aims to guarantee women's equality in all spheres and to give all employees access to a secure and commendable workplace.</li> <li>• Ensuring organisational commitment and internal resource allocation to mainstream the policy, emphasising equality and equity by increasing knowledge and awareness of gender problems within the department as well as establishing and maintaining a hospitable workspace for both men and women are the main organizational objectives of the policy.</li> <li>• Raising public awareness of workplace gender discrepancies and strategies for addressing them. providing a gender analysis framework for this policy's implementation and oversight, designing and carrying out a capacity-building programme on gender and intersectoral problems to address the distinct needs and interests of women and assuring sufficient female engagement in all capacity-building initiatives are the capacity development objectives of the policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010</b>	MoWCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a signatory state to the Charter on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 and the Charter on the Rights of the Child, 1989, as declared by the United Nations, and for the establishment of equal rights for women and children as stated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, prevention of domestic violence, ensuring the protection of women and children from domestic violence and ancillary matters. It is expedient and necessary to make provisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Child Marriage Restraint</b>	MoWCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the development of the overall women and children as well as to establish equality and reduction of inequality.</li> </ul>
<b>National Children Policy 2011</b>	MoWCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special emphasis has been given to female Childs in the National Child Policy 2011.</li> <li>• Specific instructions have been mentioned in terms of counselling for mental health, ensuring separate restrooms for female Childs and adolescents both in educational institutes and workplaces, and ensuring safety in an emergency in the policy document.</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by authors from different sources



## 4.2 Public Policies for the Development of Women Entrepreneurs

Table 2: Public Policies for the Development of Women Entrepreneurs

Name of the Policy	Concerned Ministry /Division	Provisions Related to Women
Industrial Policy 2022	Ministry of Industries	Women's contributions to economic growth have garnered tremendous interest since the Bangladeshi government regards women's empowerment as one of the cornerstones of effective governance. Several concerns for promoting higher female involvement in the industrial sector were highlighted in the State's Industrial Policy 2022. One of its main efforts is to encourage more women to contribute to the economy in an effort to expand job prospects. Moreover, this policy framework promotes private-public partnerships to provide incentives and financial support for women to start SMEs.
National Digital Commerce Policy 2018	Ministry of Commerce	Among the Taking measures to make all websites accessible to citizens of all levels, including women and persons with disabilities, following international standards.
SME Policy 2019	Ministry of Industries	The SME policy exerted a profound influence on enhancing the skills of female entrepreneurs in the SME sector so they may effectively showcase their initiatives and turn the efforts of women in business become successful ones. The government's SME policy also supported encouraging other women to start their businesses and engage in other forms of employment. In a larger sense, this would give them and society tremendous power.
Export Policy 2021-24	Ministry of Commerce	The Export Policy 2018-21 was formulated on March 3, 2022. One of the key objectives of the policy is to increase the participation of women and small entrepreneurs in export-oriented industries and trade.
8FYP	Planning Commission	Different instructions and steps are illustrated for the development of women. The 8th Five-Year Plan emphasizes strategies and actions to build a country where women and men have equal opportunities and rights. This plan aims to eliminate discrimination against women by taking developmental and institutional measures and ensuring the progress of women as self-reliant people. To establish women empowerment and gender equality five strategic objectives are specified in the 8FYP which are- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Raising women's mental ability</li> <li>-Increasing Women's economic engagement and empowerment</li> <li>-elevating womens' voice and representation</li> <li>-Fostering an atmosphere that is supportive of women's advancement</li> <li>-Enhancing programs to benefit mothers and children</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by authors from different sources

### 4.3 Health and GoB

A fundamental right protected by the Constitution; health is one of the government's primary concerns. A healthy population is perceived to be a key factor in economic growth and prosperity. Equitable access to healthcare must be guaranteed regardless of gender, including for people with disabilities and marginalized populations, to ensure complete health coverage. All civilizations experience gender disparities, which play an essential role in determining people's health and quality of life. Despite having a longer life expectancy than males, women are typically predicted to have a shorter lifespan in healthy conditions. Owing to the increased occurrence of deadly, incapacitating physical and mental disorders in women, their self-perceived health is much worse. It is also reiterated that women's and girls' equality and empowerment are essential to everyone's health and wellness, including individuals, families, organizations, communities, and society at large. It is the function of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Health Services Division to strategically plan, policies,

Figure 1 Bangladesh Government's Policies and Strategies Regarding Health



Source: Compiled by authors from different sources

and strategies for the whole health sector and to implement those initiatives through its subordinate departments and organizations.

### 4.4 Education and GoB<sup>5</sup>

One of the objectives of the National Education Policy 2010 is to encourage and enable students to pursue further education by assuring qualitatively sufficient marginal skills at different levels of study; to do this, an adequate number of quality teachers will be appointed. Furthermore, physical infrastructure development, a good social environment, competent pedagogy, loving teacher-student interaction, and the respectable standing of women should be ensured.

<sup>5</sup>[https://moedu.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/moedu.portal.gov.bd/page/ad5cfca5\\_9b1e\\_4c0c\\_a4eb\\_fb1ded9e2fe5/National%20Education%20Policy-English%20corrected%20\\_2\\_.pdf](https://moedu.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/moedu.portal.gov.bd/page/ad5cfca5_9b1e_4c0c_a4eb_fb1ded9e2fe5/National%20Education%20Policy-English%20corrected%20_2_.pdf)

The foundation for the growth of the nation and society is education. Due to a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors, a substantial proportion of women in this nation are denied access to education. More than half of the population of the nation is made up of women. Typically, women's labour is restricted to household duties, childcare, and support of the family. Women typically play a passive part in the advancement of the country. This current trend needs to be reversed. To promote women's holistic growth, empowerment, and involvement in a balanced societal advancement, emphasis has been placed on women's education in section 16 of the National Education Policy 2010. The aims, objectives and strategies of the National Education Policy 2010 are mentioned below in the table.

**Table 3 National Education Policy 2010**

<b>Aims and objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote women's awareness and self-assurance as well as their viewpoint on furthering equal rights.</li> <li>• To encourage women at all peaks to learn skills to enable them to take part in running the country.</li> <li>• To facilitate women's participation in efforts to minimize poverty and stimulate economic growth.</li> <li>• To enhance their capabilities so they can work for themselves or occupy a variety of jobs and play their parts in the socioeconomic advancement of the country.</li> <li>• To elevate them from their original predicament of subordination and provide them with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The budget comprises a particular allocation for women's education.</li> <li>• To encourage women's education at all levels, activation of a specialised fund will be activated.</li> <li>• In this regard, actions to promote private initiative and financing.</li> <li>• Reduction of the dropout rate of female students, and measures for the reintegration of them into the system of regular education.</li> <li>• Prioritisations of the opportunities for part-time, vocational, informal, and technical education for women.</li> <li>• Increasing the number of girls enrolled in formal education. Moreover, encouragement will be provided to pursue higher education or professional training. Which will enable many educational institutions favourable chances for women's education. Regardless of sex, the appropriate measures will be taken to increase public awareness.</li> <li>• A positive and forward-thinking view of women will be portrayed by the primary-level curriculum. Included in it will be the subject of equal rights. All pupils' social behaviour and mindsets might alter as a result of this.</li> <li>• Inclusion of the biographies of notable women and works by women in greater volume in the teaching materials at the primary and secondary levels.</li> <li>• Incorporation of Gender studies and reproductive health-related topics in the last two years of the secondary-level curriculum.</li> <li>• At the secondary level, all students, regardless of their sex, shall have the same freedom to choose their courses of study, and all subjects must be given the same weight. Girls won't be urged to enrol in some courses, such as home economics.</li> <li>• The girls' commutes to school will be made safe so they don't run into any problems. When necessary, a secure ladies' hostel will be built, and appropriate transportation will be organised.</li> <li>• Encouragement will be given to girls to pursue careers in science and professional fields (such as engineering, medicine, law, and business).</li> <li>• Poor and meritorious female students will be given special stipends to continue higher education and research. For women's</li> </ul>

Aims and objectives	Strategies
<p>the strength they need to act decisively in favour of equal rights and against dowry and violence against women.</p>	<p>education, provisions will be created for interest-free or low-interest bank loans with lenient terms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's participation in policy and decision-making at all levels must be ensured, particularly when it comes to issues involving primary, secondary, and higher education</li> <li>• In educational institutions, the rules governing the punishment of sexual harassment and oppression of women must be carefully adhered to.</li> </ul>

*Source: Compiled by authors from different sources*

## 5. Ministries for Policy Implementation

### 5.1 MoWCA<sup>6</sup>

#### **Importance of the Ministry in the Country's socio-economic outlook**

In terms of women's development, especially women's education and political empowerment of women, Bangladesh has earned a remarkable achievement. The position of our women is also appreciated at the international level. The current government is working to involve women in the basic structures of the state and society through the promotion of women's rights, empowerment and a work-friendly environment to achieve an egalitarian society. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is working hard to involved. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is working to establish women's and children's rights and to involve them in the mainstream of overall development by empowering them. The current government has undertaken various initiatives for the development of women and children to accomplish the vision of 2041. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has undertaken various programs to alleviate women's poverty expand women's education and create women's entrepreneurship. Bangladesh is one of the developing countries in the world in expanding women's education and creating women entrepreneurs. Besides, the steps taken by the Bangladesh government to prevent discrimination against women and establish the dignity of women have been appreciated at the national and international levels. According to the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index report, Bangladesh was ranked 91st among 115 countries in the world in 2006, and in 2021, it rose to 65th among 157 countries. This position is at the top among SAARC countries. The position of Bangladesh in terms of political empowerment of women has been mentioned as 7th in the world.

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<sup>6</sup>[https://mof.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/bc1e56b8\\_db6d\\_45f4\\_933f\\_073eac78fd90/G-1\\_07\\_130\\_Women\\_Bangla.pdf](https://mof.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/bc1e56b8_db6d_45f4_933f_073eac78fd90/G-1_07_130_Women_Bangla.pdf)

## Ministry/Department Strategic Objectives and Activities Related to Women's Development

An important strategic objective of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs is to ensure women's participation in social and economic activities. To achieve these strategic objectives in the medium term

- (1) Provide technical, vocational and income-generating training, productive equipment and microcredit for the self-employment of women.
- (2) Formation of voluntary organizations, grant and loan assistance to registered societies.
- (3) To provide training and create residential facilities to empower women entrepreneurs and increase their efficiency.
- (4) Activities related to creating opportunities for the participation of women and children in modern information technology are being conducted.

Establishing social security and justice for women and children at risk is one of the strategic objectives of this Ministry. These strategic objectives are given here:

- (1) Provide food assistance and productive materials to poor women under the VWB program.
- (2) Provide maternity allowance under mother and child support for extremely poor and pregnant mothers.
- (3) Provide financial assistance and medical services to oppressed poor women and children.
- (4) Provide hostel facilities for working women and provide daycare services for children.
- (5) Provide treatment, legal aid and counselling, safe shelter, and food aid to abused women and children.
- (6) Actions have been taken to ensure the safe accommodation of women, children, and juvenile custodians during court proceedings.

To ensure the social and political empowerment of women, training of women representatives and awareness activities have been undertaken to increase women's participation in the election process.

## Priority Expenditure Sectors/Programs of the Ministry and its Impact on Women's Development

S.L.	Prioritized Expenditure Sectors/Programs	Direct/Indirect Impact on Women's Development
1	Food assistance program for destitute mothers	Through the VGD program, the socio-economic conditions of the poverty-stricken and distressed rural women of the country are being improved. As a result, their existing food insecurity, malnutrition, economic insecurity, and social status are elevated. This program is having a direct impact on the development of women.
2	Mother and Child Assistance Program (previous lactating mother assistance fund and maternity	This program plays an important role in women's development as it fulfils the maternal health of working poor mothers in urban areas and the full development of their pregnant children or newborn children and the nutritional needs of poor pregnant mothers in rural areas.

S.L.	Prioritized Expenditure Sectors/Programs	Direct/Indirect Impact on Women's Development
	allowance for poor mothers)	
3	Child development centre and Teenagers empowerment program	Social inclusion, overall development and child rights are being ensured through this program by providing round-the-clock benefits to poor and helpless children. Apart from this, life skills training plays an important role in developing the youth as good citizens through the Teenage Club.
4	Providing technical, vocational, income-generating and productive training to women.	Providing technical vocational and productive training to women creates opportunities for their participation in economic activities, which directly impacts women's development.
5	Prevention of violence against women and provision of legal assistance	To prevent violence against women, activities have been undertaken to provide better services (such as health, legal assistance, counselling, safe shelter, and social rehabilitation) to women victims of violence and to increase public awareness against all forms of violence.

Source: Ministry of Finance

## 5.2 Law and Justice Division<sup>7</sup>

For the country's economic growth and development, the formulation of laws and rules, eradication of discrimination against women, safeguarding of women's rights and empowerment, and the availability of justice for women are all necessary. This section strives to lessen societal prejudice by creating an environment that is supportive of women's justice through the institutional and structural development of the judicial system. moreover, The Law and Justice Division has undertaken numerous efforts to create a judiciary that is supportive of women in an effort to protect women.

### Ministry's strategic goals and how they pertain to women's rights and advancement

**1. Judicial system that is efficient and effective:** Justice and equity will be developed in society with the help of an effective and prosperous legal system. This will benefit society's women the most. The expenses related to case resolution will decrease as a result of the modernization of judicial administration. It will be possible to settle bilateral disputes outside of the courts with the creation of alternative dispute resolution and arbitration systems, which will reduce the cost of case settlement and foster an environment that is business-friendly. It will therefore directly contribute to boosting people's living conditions, especially for women.

**2. Providing equitable access to the legal system:** Giving impoverished, defenceless, and destitute women access to free legal aid increases their access to justice and improves the

<sup>7</sup>[https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/86d673d1\\_0385\\_4b60\\_859d\\_4439a6ddcb5a/G-3\\_05\\_121\\_Law\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/86d673d1_0385_4b60_859d_4439a6ddcb5a/G-3_05_121_Law_English.pdf)

nation's overall law and order condition. The advancement of women will benefit from this as well.

**3. Simplifying land registration management:** The reform of the land registration system would eliminate disputes and ensure property rights protection for women, who will directly profit from this. This will have an indirect impact on women's alleviating poverty.

**4. Safeguarding government assets, rights, and other interests:** Women's empowerment may benefit from the protection of government properties. "Khas land" is one of the government's principal resources. If women are given a fair piece of this land, their status and level of empowerment will improve.

**5. Defense of the rights of disgruntled government officials and employees:** Women officials/employees' working conditions will improve if their rights are respected (due to any type of workplace harassment). This will lessen the possibility of job loss and boost women's social dignity, which will have a direct impact on their entire development.

### **5.3 Ministry of Commerce<sup>8</sup>**

Considering globalisation and the emergence of competitive free market economies, global trade is rapidly evolving and expanding. The Ministry of Commerce has been aiming to boost the participation of women in trade expansion efforts and to close gender discrimination in commercial activities.

#### **The Ministry's Strategic Objectives and Their Relevance for Women's Advancement**

**1. Business-friendly environment:** Women's engagement in business management is expanding substantially at present. Women's participation will expand further if the establishment/operation of new operating processes that benefit them is facilitated.

**2. Stable prices for essential goods through adequate stockpile:** Women make up half of Bangladesh's population. Consistency in the prices of commodities will also help women's economic expansion.

**3. Greater market access for Bangladeshi exports:** The readymade garment industry is responsible for most Bangladeshi exports. Women make up 85 percent of the workforce in this sector. By widening exports, this industry will expand and offer more options for female employment.

**4. Safeguarding consumers' interests and rights:** Women are the primary consumers of basic commodities and other products. Women will profit equitably if consumer rights and interests are safeguarded.

#### **Aspects of Expenditure Priorities and Opportunities for the Advancement of Women**

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<sup>8</sup>[https://mof.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/fcc7817f\\_576d\\_461e\\_aab1\\_cee0\\_b20d1606/G-2\\_03\\_117\\_Commerce\\_Bangla%20\(1\).pdf](https://mof.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/fcc7817f_576d_461e_aab1_cee0_b20d1606/G-2_03_117_Commerce_Bangla%20(1).pdf)



S.L.	Prioritised Expenditure Sectors/Programs	Direct/Indirect Impact on Women's Development
1	Expansion of exports and revenue through national export diversification	At present, women are increasingly actively participating in trade and commerce that is export-oriented. The formation of new businesses and industries using straightforward procedures can improve this even further. As a result, women's development will proceed at a faster rate overall.
2	Maintaining market prices of essentials within consumers' means of purchasing	Women make up more than half of the population of Bangladesh. More than males, women are typically the ones that carry the bulk of the household duties. The advancement of women will be impacted if the price of essentials is kept stable.
3	Protection of the rights and interests of consumers	Women make up around half of the nation's consumers. The situation for women will develop if it can guarantee both the costs and the quality of the goods.
4	Formation of a competitive environment that is fair and open, allowing for the growth of trade and industry while lowering costs for businesses.	Women's participation will expand if forming new firms and industries is kept simple. Women's overall growth will be hastened as a result.

Source: Ministry of Commerce

## 5.4 Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief<sup>9</sup>

### The Ministry's Specific Objectives and How They Affect Women's Advancement and Rights

Hereunder are the strategic objectives to lower catastrophe risks, particularly for the poor and the vulnerable, to a manageable level by bolstering disaster management's total competency, and their significance to women's rights and advancements:

**1. Establishing professionalism, incarcerating disaster management, and strengthening aptitude:** Because of their engagement in disaster awareness programmes and livelihood training, women's resiliency in disaster-prone areas has risen. Poverty and disaster risks are thereby lessened.

**2. Infrastructure development to minimize disaster risks:** In times of emergencies, an improved transportation system aids in the rescue of people, particularly women and children. In the flood and cyclone shelters, women's and children's lives are also saved. The improvements in transportation and communication as a whole helped women advance.

**3. Reducing the suffering and disaster risks for vulnerable people:** Through targeted and gender-friendly programmes, women represent a minimum of 30% of the beneficiaries. The income and food availability of the poor and destitute women are rising as a result of their receiving preferential employment. Just at the outset of any catastrophic event, women,

<sup>9</sup>[https://mof.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/49183b58\\_68e6\\_4d8c\\_a1ae\\_cf42\\_b766ce4b/G-2\\_07\\_149\\_Disaster\\_English.pdf](https://mof.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/49183b58_68e6_4d8c_a1ae_cf42_b766ce4b/G-2_07_149_Disaster_English.pdf)

children, and persons with disabilities are transported to safe shelters on a priority basis and provided with food and medicine. In turn, this reinforces their social protection and capability to deal with disasters.

### **The Ministry for Women's Advancement and Rights' Functions and Responsibilities**

**Program for a social safety net:** During times of recession and disaster, safety net programmes like the Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP), Food for Work (Kabikha), Rural Infrastructure Development Programme (Kabita), Rural Maintenance Program (TR), and VGF Programs play crucial roles in boosting food availability for the extremely poor. Poor women make up the majority of those who benefit from these programmes. 80 days of work are being done across two phases for the maintenance of rural roads under the EGPP programme. At least 30 percent of the program's total recipients are women.

**Establishing and maintaining Flood and Cyclone Centers:** During disasters, citizens, particularly women and children, seek refuge at Flood and Cyclone Centers that are accommodating to both women and children.

**Program to lessen disaster risk in disaster-prone areas:** Women participate in disaster awareness-raising events that help them develop their skills. Community empowerment, capacity building, and response management initiatives are also being carried out to lessen the loss of both lives and property. When there are disaster warnings, women and children are taken to safe shelters. They are receiving a medicine supply. As a result, women and children are less likely to experience disasters, which improves their overall social and economic status. In the event of a disaster, it is anticipated that relocation services will be provided, with a focus on moving women and children to safe locations.

**Physical infrastructure development:** Improved communication and transportation infrastructure, particularly in rural and coastal areas, is favourable for the advancement of women since it lessens the effects of disasters and fosters economic growth. When a calamity strikes, uninterrupted communication services are crucial for saving lives, especially those of women, children, and the elderly. Construction of flood and cyclone shelters, disaster-resistant homes, village-connecting HBB roads, tiny culverts/bridges, and other physical infrastructure in disaster-prone areas benefits women both directly and indirectly.

**Obtaining and maintaining vehicles and tools for search and rescue:** To combat disasters, this Ministry purchases a variety of search and rescue vehicles and equipment that are vital to saving lives and protecting property. These tools aid in the preservation of women's and children's lives.

**Assisting lactating mothers and their children concerning food safety to tackle malnutrition through the Nobojatra project:** Through the Ministry's Nobojatra project, assistance with food security is offered to lactating women and their children to prevent malnutrition. The budgetary allotments for the previous three years were Tk. 155 crore, Tk. 1115 crore, and Tk. 110 crore, respectively.

## Accomplishment in Fostering the Advancement of Women

- In two disaster-resistant villages in the Sukrail union within Dacope upazila in Khulna District, 203 households have been renovated as part of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (C.D.M.P.) phase-ii project by building disaster-resistant homes. The women of these families, who had been living on embankments in the wake of Cyclone Aila, now have the chance to lead respectable and secure lives. Additionally, 260 urban households have been renovated; all these initiatives have benefited their rights and development.
- In the nation's coastal region, 203 km of water pipes and sanitary latrines have been erected with assistance from CDMP and GIZ. These have benefited the local women by lowering their labour and allowing them to spend more time doing useful things.
- Up to now, 55,260 volunteers from the Cyclone Preparedness Program and 26,000 volunteers from urban areas have been trained and put to work. One-fifth of them are women, which raises their social standing by favourably demonstrating their enthusiasm for volunteer work.

## 6. Measuring Gender Sensitivity Through Various Indicators

Table 4 Indicators regarding gender sensitivity verification of Ministry/Department activities

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
1.	Improving women's reproductive and other health care access and nutrition	Whether specific and effective measures have been taken to protect women's reproductive and general health? Also, whether the measures taken will improve the nutrition of women, especially pregnant and lactating mothers?	There is an absence of a single comprehensive policy for ensuring Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). However various laws and strategies are addressing such issues but in a fragmented manner. The adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy empowers women and adolescents by enhancing their decision-making skills and sexual or reproductive education in their schools. There are other laws such as the Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, Acid Crime Prevention Act 2002, and Acid Control Act 2002, that work together to combat and prohibit violence against women. However, these laws are dated, hence, in the current context, they may not be able to meet the needs of women in the country (Islam, 2022). <sup>10</sup>	In the context of nutrition, Bangladeshi women are still not getting the sufficient nutrition they need. In the hospital, women do not feel comfortable sharing anything with the doctor about their reproductive health, especially those who are housewives. Women need to change their minds while going to the hospital for their health care services.
2.	Access to government resources and services in favour of women	Whether access to government resources (such as private land allocation, reservoirs and social forestry) and services (such as education, health, electricity, clean water, etc.) has been expanded in favour of women?	The disparity between men and women in society is rooted in women's limited and unjust rights and access to resources such as land. Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) in 2000 reported women with land will generally have more bargaining power, which will help them to negotiate more gender-equal allocation of rights in the family. The survey conducted in BBS showed that 96.21% of the households surveyed have access to and use electricity. Moreover, electricity is used by 99% of the respondents living in urban areas and 95.2% of respondents living in rural areas. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs constructed a "National Plan of Action" in 2013 intending to implement the	One feasible recommendation can be the amendment of inheritance laws to ensure greater equity and social security for women. Universal family laws and universal inheritance laws are to be incorporated and implemented. Moreover, advocacy and lobbying for promoting equal rights and access of women to land and other properties at different levels including community, local government, national institutions, policy and legislation.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/views/opinion/news/time-focus-womens-sexual-health-and-rights-3023016>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
			<p>'National Women Developing Policy, 2011'. For effective implementation of the action plan, concerned ministries have been requested to assess the financial needs attached to each of the items to be implemented by them. To note, at present, there is no scope to differentiate women's development from the overall development of the country and society.<sup>11</sup></p>	
3.	Women's education and skill development	Have access to education and training for women/girls been created or expanded?	<p>Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) is a project under the Finance Division. SEIP initiative has proved that girls can equally be adept at acquiring and learning these technical jobs and can successfully apply skills in the workplace. The main constraints towards attaining skill development are family barriers, early marriage, location of TVET centres, poor infrastructure, inadequate training modules and a general lack of acceptance from society. National Skill Development Policy, 2020 (NSDP 2020) has been constructed to address the issues which are not yet been implemented. The 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan has incorporated a strategic roadmap to enhance women's participation in skill development training for a greater degree of empowerment, equality, and gender equity (Nurunnabi, 2021).<sup>12</sup></p>	<p>Female enrollment in the skill development TVET sector should be increased, especially in underprivileged, underdeveloped, and grass-roots rural areas.</p> <p>A skill development ministry should be established to guide NSDA and implement NSDA 2020 at all skill development institutes.</p> <p>Gender-friendly skill development training centres for young women may be built in each Upazilla and Union, with special stipends, transportation, hostels, child-care centres, and toolkits. Parents, local elites, and religious and community leaders could be oriented and counselled regarding the reinforcement of market-responsive and women-supportive skill development training.</p>

<sup>11</sup>[https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d\\_f0d6\\_41ea\\_aca9\\_6afb61228825/G-1\\_06\\_30\\_Women\\_English.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/3ef1111d_f0d6_41ea_aca9_6afb61228825/G-1_06_30_Women_English.pdf)

<sup>12</sup><https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/need-for-increased-female-enrollment-in-skill-development-training-1640359143>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
				Special incentives and recognition should be provided to institutions and industries that employ more women than men (Nurunnabi, 2021).
4.	Reduction in overall working hours of women	Are there any measures taken to reduce the overall daily working hours of women? If so, what and how can work hours be reduced?	<p>According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), women spend eightfold more time than men in domestic and care work. The “Time Use Survey 2021” concluded that men spend around 1.6 hours a day in domestic and care work while women spend 11.7 hours which is almost half of the full day. Along with the unpaid work, women also spend 1.2 hours performing productive work while men do the same for 6.1 hours. Hence, men's work is five times more recognized than women's. Such a trend is observed despite one's gender and age. Residence, education or marital status (Byron &amp; Mahmud, 2022)<sup>13</sup>.</p> <p>Bangladesh Labour Act (BLA) was amended in 2013 to align its provisions closer with international labour standards. It incorporated provisions to protect workers' rights including the right to form trade unions without informing employers and improving occupational health and safety conditions. Moreover, Bangladesh Labour Rule 2015 was utilized to ensure better implementation of the BLA.</p> <p>The two ILO conventions show how well female workers are protected by the law, specifically female workers, who are on maternity protection and workers with family responsibilities. Such aspects need to be ratified by Bangladesh. Furthermore, Labour rights organizations and Labour law experts highlight</p>	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) said that the MoWCA is ignoring women in the private sector where millions of women are working, and their number is higher than that in government offices. The Minister for Labour and Employment said that the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 is 'discriminatory' against women (Sathi, 2012). So, it would be a big challenge to ensure equal rights and a congenial working environment for women in the workplace.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/women-do-unpaid-domestic-work-8-times-more-men-bbs-3046801>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
			lack of awareness and implementation are the major drawbacks (Khan, 2018) <sup>14</sup> .	
5.	Greater participation of women in production, labour market and income-generating activities	Whether the necessary measures have been taken to increase women's participation in the labour market and income-generating activities, and if so, how have they been taken?	<p>The female labour participation in urban and rural areas is 31% and 39% respectively (Star Business Report, 2020; Bangladesh Planning Commission, 2020)<sup>15</sup>. Around 7.5% of 5.8 million rural enterprises in Bangladesh are owned by women. Such enterprises are concentrated in tailoring, textiles, bamboo and cane products. These sectors are not considered to be associated with high-growth opportunities.</p> <p>The schooling rate of women in Bangladesh is not effectively converted into labour force participation (LFP). The pre-pandemic participation rate of women was 38% compared to men which was 84%. The low female participation rate in the labour force is endemic throughout major South Asian nations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh etc. However, Bangladesh compares poorly to the more equitable Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Malaysia. These countries have a female participation rate at an average of 50% or more since 1990 and have recorded relatively faster economic growth.</p> <p>Through the aid of microfinance from financial intermediaries such as GrameenBank. Additionally, BRAC with their Integrated Development Programmes (IDP) provided microfinance to the females doing business in rural areas such as in Hard-to-Reach Areas (Haor) in Sylhet and Mymensingh.</p>	For female participation rates to rise in Bangladesh, empowerment must coexist with employment. Projects such as Bangladesh's National Skills Development Policy (NSDP), whose development was supported by the International Labor Organization (ILO), will gradually empower women. The project aims to reform technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Bangladesh, with a focus on empowering women. Furthermore, the SME Foundation has increased training programs to encourage women to work for themselves. Keeping in mind the global pandemic that has resulted in an increase in e-commerce business in Bangladesh, the SME Foundation developed a training program that not only provides guidelines on buying and selling but also on customer service and collaborating with partners.

<sup>14</sup><https://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/how-well-are-female-workers-protected-the-law-1528474>

<sup>15</sup><https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/bangladesh-tough-place-be-woman-entrepreneur-2000069>  
<http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/site/files/8ec347dc-4926-4802-a839-7569897e1a7a/>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
6.	Reduction of women's helplessness, poverty and vulnerability through social safety nets	Whether necessary steps have been taken to increase women's social security and reduce potential vulnerability and vulnerability or what steps will be taken to increase women's social security and reduce their potential vulnerability and vulnerability especially due to natural disasters?	<p>The government has maintained social safety net programs to alleviate poverty by improving the socioeconomic conditions of the ultra-poor. The government has taken a life-cycle approach to the social safety net. A total of Tk 107,614 crore has been allocated for social safety net programs in FY 2021-22. The allocation amounts to 17.83 per cent of the budget and 3.11 per cent of the same fiscal year's GDP. The government has been implementing general safety net programs such as food security, free food distribution, food for work and test relief, and so on. Aside from that, the government has implemented some special projects such as "Ashrayan," "Grihayan," and "Ghore Phera" to make the country free of hunger and poverty. Furthermore, the government provides Tk.3444.54 crore, Tk.1495.40 crore, and Tk.4653.35 crore for old age allowance, widow and destitute women allowance, and freedom fighter honorarium, respectively.</p> <p>The necessary efforts have been made to maintain the frequency of microcredit and investment funds deposited to the Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) and the Social Development Foundation (SDF). This sector has been allocated a total of Tk.1176.82 crore. Tk.900.00 crores of this amount will be used for the PKSF financial assistance program, Tk.210.00 crore for the SDF microcredit program, and Tk.6.00 crore for the women's self-employment microcredit program.<sup>16</sup></p>	<p>To reduce poverty, women need to participate in the executive sector, legislative committee and government support. To raise women's status within organizations, the government should fund women's organizations. It has been determined that state backing is crucial for every development. To reduce poverty, the government needs to focus more on empowering women.</p> <p>People are not all affected equally by natural calamities. A vulnerability approach to disasters would suggest that systematic disadvantages against some groups of people make them more vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters. These disadvantages include differences in exposure and sensitivity to risk as well as differences in access to resources, capabilities, and opportunities. According to what has been observed thus far, women may experience disadvantages during natural catastrophes due to biological and physiological differences as well as social standards and role practices. It follows that policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, and the academic community need to pay closer attention</p>

<sup>16</sup> [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/f2d8fabbb\\_29c1\\_423a\\_9d37\\_cdb500260002/22\\_BER\\_22\\_En\\_Chap13.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/f2d8fabbb_29c1_423a_9d37_cdb500260002/22_BER_22_En_Chap13.pdf)



Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
				to the gendered nature of disaster vulnerability since large natural disasters typically reduce the life expectancy of women more than that of men, particularly where women have a lower socioeconomic status. In addition to measures to ensure equitable and nondiscriminatory distribution of relief resources, such attention should concentrate on the unique medical, financial, and security requirements of women in the wake of disasters. Creating such policies won't stop women in nations with low socioeconomic levels from being negatively impacted by large-scale natural catastrophes. However, these initiatives ought to lower the excess catastrophe mortality of women relative to that of males (Neumayer et al. 2007). <sup>17</sup>
7.	Women Empowerment	Whether steps have been taken to develop/encourage the process of women's empowerment by increasing women's participation in	The National Women's Development Policy (NWDP) was adopted in 1997 and was amended in 2011. 'A National Plan of Action has been developed to execute NWDP, 2011 which focused on helping women become empowered politically, socially, economically, legally and from administrative sides. The policy focuses on young girls as well and has guidelines to prevent child marriage, discrimination against girls and protect	Policies that have gender-based discrimination have to be eliminated and the contribution of women has to be recognized in the policies. For example, our second largest revenue comes from the RMG sector, where 60% of the workers are female. Although 60% of the

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1467-8306.2007.00563.x>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
		decision-making and political structures in the family, society and workplace, and if so, how?	<p>disabled girls and provide secure and proper access to recreational, cultural and sports facilities and many other laws to ensure the security of young women. The Government's Seventh Five Year Plan (7FYP) (2016-2020) stresses making women self-reliant and reducing discriminatory barriers by taking developmental and institutional measures by increasing access to resources and opportunities and improving women's capability. A few of the agendas in the 7FYP were achieved among which are the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education and reduction in tertiary education. According to the data of LSF 2016-17, there has been a rise in the percentage of female participation in managerial, professional leadership and membership in the national parliament boosting social and political empowerment. In the Global Gender Gap Report published in 2020, Bangladesh ranked 50th among 153 countries and 1st among the South Asian countries. However, the report showed that Bangladesh's ranking is low in the area of economic participation and opportunities. For social empowerment, there are adequate laws, but the laws are not implemented properly. For instance, there are laws to prevent child marriage however and in 7FYP the target was to reduce the percentage from 65% to 30% but it only reduced to 51.4%. There are other scenarios where laws could not be implicated properly, thus implementation of social laws remains a challenge for the government. Furthermore, more work is needed to achieve economic equality for women as many do not have access to basic financial services and formal finance and women receive 57% of the wage men receive for the same work (General Economics Division, 2020).</p>	<p>contributors in the RMG sector are women when these women face harassment in the RMG industries, they do not get help as their harassers are lineman or their supervisors, so if they file a complaint, they could lose their job. Hence, a large number of women are dependent and are not empowered despite their enormous contribution to the economy, therefore, these issues have to be addressed.</p>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
8.	Participation of women in national and international forums	Whether necessary steps/activities have been taken for raising/inclusion of women-related issues in national and international forums or if so how have they been taken?	The government is taking the step to include gender aspects in the policies and projects to make these projects and policies gender inclusive. In the 8FYP it is evident that the government understand the importance of women's representation in different sectors and the need for women to voice their opinion. The government understands that women's participation has to be ensured in public and private institutions by instructions and directives and women's participation in delegation and committees has to be made mandatory. Also, women need to be trained and enhance their capacity and women would require easy access to the rules and regulations of different sectors. To make this possible the government plans to monitor that the gender budget allocated to different sectors is utilized properly. There are different forums such as ward committees at the union level, the Town and Ward level Coordination Committees under the municipalities, the Upazila Women's Forum and the Standing Committees under the union which require more support along with the other preexisting forums under different ministries (General Economics Division, 2020).	<p>Representing Women as role models in society is vital. More than 700 Bangladeshi women have served in the UN Peacekeeping Mission, ensuring peace and security in other countries and working to resolve conflicts. These women are role models. Their contributions have to be highlighted and they have to be presented as a role model.</p> <p>Both men and women need to play an active role. In our parliament there are 50 seats reserved for women, so we need to look at what role these women occupying these 50 seats have played in presenting the issues women are facing or are these women just occupying these to do so and are not taking responsibility for representing women and becoming a role model. The seats are reserved so that they can rise and talk about women-related issues but if they do not play an active role. They need to take responsibility and become role models.</p>
9.	Ensuring women's safety and mobility	Whether necessary steps have been taken to ensure the free movement of women in public spaces and the	Under the Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Act 2010, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs developed the Domestic Violence (Protection and Preservation) Rules, 2013 to ensure equal rights and to prevent all forms of discrimination in all spheres of public life and the state. There	Aside from protective laws, creating a safe space for women entails infrastructure changes that address women's fear of violence and harassment in public spaces. Ensuring

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
		security of women in family and society (in public spheres) or if so, how have they been taken?	is a combination of policies and Acts that consists of segments dealing with violence against women in public spaces such as the Acid Crime Control Act 2002, the Acid Control Act 2002, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 etc. (Ministry of Women and Children, 2013). <sup>18</sup>	women's safety protocols in public transportation, installing adequate streetlights, providing gender-segregated public restrooms, and creating safe and accessible public recreation spaces are all issues that are fundamentally linked to creating safe spaces for women. In Bangladesh, the lack of such services and access severely limits women's mobility, making opportunities for them even more limited (Yasmin, 2021). <sup>19</sup> Besides, there is a huge portion of women who face challenges regarding their safety, and security and being abused while migrating to another country for a better living standard.
10.	Creating women entrepreneurs	Have necessary measures/steps been taken to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of gender equality issues? If taken, how/by what process was taken?	Bangladesh is ranked last out of 58 economies in the Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs for 2020, indicating that it is one of the most difficult places for female business owners. Although the country dropped one spot from last year's ranking of 57th, its overall score improved to 36.4 out of 100 from 35.4 the previous year. Every year, the government sets aside Tk 2.0 billion for female entrepreneurs, but the funds go unused. As a result, the	Set up solely devoted women's cells and centres in business development service organizations and agencies to facilitate women entrepreneurs' access to extension, promotion, and advisory services. The provision of various support services to women through "one-stop" delivery facilities may be an important step in enabling women entrepreneurs

<sup>18</sup>[https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mowca.portal.gov.bd/page/bcf75e01\\_95e3\\_48ba\\_bfe4\\_3d88ea5f593c/English-National-Action-Plan-to-Prevent-Violence-Against-Women-and-Children-2013-20251.pdf](https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mowca.portal.gov.bd/page/bcf75e01_95e3_48ba_bfe4_3d88ea5f593c/English-National-Action-Plan-to-Prevent-Violence-Against-Women-and-Children-2013-20251.pdf)

<sup>19</sup><https://www.thedailystar.net/supplements/30th-anniversary-supplements/news/creating-safer-bangladesh-women-2042601>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
			<p>government can include a guaranteed scheme in the budget of Tk 2.0 billion to make the fund usable.</p> <p>In the last 25 years, many female entrepreneurs have advanced to become large business owners. The Women Entrepreneurs Association (WEA) has been promoting female entrepreneurs in a variety of sectors for over two decades, including readymade garments, ornaments and jewellery, handicrafts and handloom. However, many female business owners believe that the current SME loan amount is insufficient. About 39% of female entrepreneurs complained about high interest rates, and 35% complained about a lack of credit limits. They also have difficulty obtaining financing.</p>	<p>to avoid harassment and gain immediate access to business promotion facilities.</p> <p>Facilitate the establishment of "women entrepreneurs' networks" to enable knowledge and information sharing about business developments at the national and international levels, promote "production networking" beyond national borders and reap the benefits of value chain arrangements and entry into local markets. In this context, the SME Foundation's establishment and operation of a "go-to" website portal for women entrepreneurs may be beneficial in facilitating women's business growth by consolidating business information and "match-making" among prospective women entrepreneurs at regional and global levels.</p> <p>Establish a special Women's Bank to address the unique financing needs of women entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, existing banks could complement their efforts by opening separate windows for women clients following Bangladesh Bank guidelines.</p> <p>Increase opportunities for women to participate effectively in the workforce as entrepreneurs by removing social and legal barriers as well as gender biases</p>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
				<p>embedded in existing policies and institutions geared toward entrepreneurship development. While specific financing schemes for micro, cottage, and SME enterprises are in place, they have yet to be vigorously implemented to encourage more and more women to start their businesses and contribute to the nation-building process.<sup>20</sup></p>
11.	Increasing the social status of women	Whether necessary measures/steps have been taken to improve the social status of women (for example, reducing child marriage and dowry etc.)	Special consideration is given to the girl child in child-related Acts and Rules. National Women Development Policy 2011 provides distinct guidelines on the prevention of child marriage, the elimination of discrimination against disabled girls and their protection, the provision of secure and standard recreational, cultural, and sports facilities for female children, and the elimination of mental and physical abuse of women, rape, dowry, family abuse, and acid throwing. Furthermore, the National Child Policy 2011 prioritizes the girl child. It focuses on adolescent girl counselling, the provision of sanitation facilities for girls in educational institutions and workplaces, and special security arrangements for girls during disasters.	Addressing the role of women during crisis periods such as in pandemics, or other disaster management programs. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic period, when the country was under lockdown, the nurses took care of the patients face to face. Most of these nurses were female in the hospitals. Simultaneously, a large proportion of the female labour force is employed in the RMG sector which is the main export earner for Bangladesh. Next, portraying a fair representation of their diverse functions in society and their importance towards development. Women are homemakers and also professionals at the same.

<sup>20</sup>[http://ijmed.smef.gov.bd/upload/issues/issues\\_01/articles/1\\_Women\\_Entrepreneurship\\_Development\\_in\\_the\\_SMEs\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_Prospects\\_Realities\\_and\\_Policies.pdf](http://ijmed.smef.gov.bd/upload/issues/issues_01/articles/1_Women_Entrepreneurship_Development_in_the_SMEs_in_Bangladesh_Prospects_Realities_and_Policies.pdf)

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
				More women should come forward and be “role models”. Their work needs to be properly highlighted and publicised.
12.	Women's access to law and justice	Whether measures/steps have been taken to create or expand opportunities in favour of women in obtaining legal aid and justice	<p>Women's constitutional rights and laws implemented for their protection and benefit have had a minimal real influence on their lives. The harsh reality is that women in South Asia, particularly in the Indian Subcontinent, are less influential, less educated, less well-off, and more taken advantage of at almost every level of society than men.</p> <p>Legal rights for women constitute one of the most important determinants of their status. A series of laws designed to ensure women's rights in Bangladesh have proven largely unsuccessful in advancing their positions. The primary reasons for this are the inadequacies and ineffectiveness of laws, women's inability to access legal proceedings, traditional and cultural critical views about women's rights, the lack of an accountable and transparent government, the expensive and time-consuming judicial process, the lack of an efficient judiciary, and other socioeconomic factors (The Lawyers &amp; Jurists, n.d.).<sup>21</sup></p> <p>The Constitution establishes fundamental rights to equality and legal treatment, as well as the liberty to work and protection from degrading or demeaning treatment. Bangladesh has signed several international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As a result, in Bangladesh, everyone has the right to be free of sexual</p>	<p>A human rights-based strategy to promoting women's access to justice should include three mutually reinforcing steps: first, creating an enabling environment by correcting a structurally unequal justice system while addressing more women-friendly justice needs; second, reforming justice institutions to make the process more efficient, accountable, and gender-responsive; and third, legally empowering women to seek remedy for violations of their rights. This empowerment also includes educating men and influential societal institutions about women's rights (UNDP, 2005).</p> <p>As a result, the court could issue a structural injunction order while retaining supervisory jurisdiction over the order's implementation. This remedy "allows a court to dictate how, when, and in what ways a state must change its course" to redress violations, and it requires the government to report on</p>

<sup>21</sup><https://www.lawyersnjurists.com/article/womens-legal-status-in-domestic-law-in-bangladesh-part-1/>

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			<p>harassment and other forms of gender discrimination (Veller, 2016).<sup>22</sup></p> <p>Bangladesh's Supreme Court is already overburdened with cases. This is one of the structural barriers to timely case disposition. This issue is exacerbated by judges' unwillingness to emphasize Public Interest Litigation over other pending litigation (Rafiquzzaman, 2002). This limits judicial responsiveness to collective rights protection and facilitates access to justice through timely redress. Judicial insensitivity to the dynamics of contested rights violations also leads to some erroneous decisions. Such judgments contribute little to the substantive development of constitutional justice because they lack a comprehensive discussion of rights and corresponding obligations (Hoque, 2006).</p> <p>Furthermore, while the majority of human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focus on the poor's access to justice, only a few offer specific programs on women's access to justice. They also lack adequate budgetary support as well as strategies to assess the effectiveness of interventions such as gender-based Public Interest Litigation (Begum &amp; Saha, 2017).</p>	<p>steps taken to help address the harm regularly (Hirsch, 2007; Roach, 2008).</p> <p>The court could also work with litigating organizations to make the orders more easily implemented. In the Sexual Harassment case, for example, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court (HCD) issued a rule nisi against the government, asking it to explain why no guidelines to protect women and girls from sexual harassment in public places had been adopted.</p>
13.	IT training and access to women	Whether the necessary opportunities have been created for women to receive and use IT training or how	Among multiple agendas for gender equality and women empowerment in the 8 Five Year Plan (8FYP), increasing access to human development opportunities is one of them. Projects such as "She Power Project: Sustainable Development for Women through ICT" have been started to empower women by training 4000 women in Freelance, 4,000 women as IT	Financial limitations are often greater for women than for males. Their capacity to pay for training or associated expenses like transportation is impacted by this. After acquiring training, women also have reduced access to financing for

<sup>22</sup><https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/politics/can-public-interest-litigation-change-culture-1232278>



Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
		will this training be ensured?	Service Providers, and 2,500 women as Call Centre Agents, so that these women can become self-employed. Moreover, 536 women were trained under the WID Project in Office Applications and Unicode Bangla (General Economics Division, 2020). In 2013, a district-based women's computer training project was started through which around 32731 women were trained. The project aimed to create women entrepreneurs in the IT sector however, among the women who received training only 0.62% became an entrepreneur and 1.87% are engaged in outsourcing. According to the experts, the project provides basic computer training, but far more advanced training is required to create entrepreneurs (Saif, 2021).	business expansion. This prevents both participation in skill development programs and the effective application of that training. Programs for developing skills must have procedures in place to deal with and report occurrences of sexual harassment and abuse. A significant contributor to absenteeism from school and work as well as frequent job turnover is sexual harassment. Dealing with it is not just moral but also wise for the program's success. Skills training programs should have a policy and code of conduct against sexual harassment, a complaints procedure, training, and awareness-raising for participants, teachers, and other program employees, among other things. Furthermore, supporting childcare, providing a safe transportation system and creating a platform for women to enter male occupations. <sup>23</sup>
14.	Reduction of violence and abuse against women	What steps/measures have been taken to reduce violence and abuse against women or how has	Women face violence in both the public and private spheres, moreover, the type of violence is changing with time. To address this issue the government developed a " National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children (2013-2025)". The plan aimed to develop a society without	However, presently a lot has to be done to prevent violence against women. There is still a need for strict enforcement of child marriage laws and the 8 Five Year Plan (8FYP), plans to do so

<sup>23</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/five-ways-make-skills-training-work-women>

Serial no.	Indicators	Explanation	Current status	Recommendation
		violence/abuse of women been reduced in family and public spaces?	violence against women and children by taking preventive measures by using multi-dimensional holistic programs and strategies. The plan identifies and addresses different types of violence against women (VAW) by taking many measures in collaboration with other government and non-government institutions. One-stop Crisis Center (OCC), National Trauma Counseling Center, VAW Database, Women-friendly hospital in 10 districts and 3 Upazila, a special division in police to help women are some of the few initiatives under this plan in collaboration with other government and non-government organizations. There are also many policies and plans to provide legal facilities, to create social awareness and socioeconomic advance of women are under this plan and targeted activities have been set to accomplish in collaboration with other organizations (Ministry of Women and Children, 2021).	by revising the existing Act and introducing penalties on both guardians and registers along with creating awareness and increasing support for continuing secondary education. Other laws are being adopted which address new types of violence against women and new services are being incorporated to help women. Moreover, new laws are being put together in different sectors to address gender sensitivity issues, but other sectors do not (General Economics Division, 2020) <sup>24</sup> .

<sup>24</sup>[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mowca.portal.gov.bd/page/bcf75e01\\_95e3\\_48ba\\_bfe4\\_3d88ea5f593c/English-National-Action-Plan-to-Prevent-Violence-Against-Women-and-Children-2013-20251.pdf&ved=2ahUKewiz3aOO-KT5AhWBioYKHYPnAz4QFnoECAYQBg&usg=AOvVaw38C0zu4m4LXCefoCBsGMBW](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://mowca.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mowca.portal.gov.bd/page/bcf75e01_95e3_48ba_bfe4_3d88ea5f593c/English-National-Action-Plan-to-Prevent-Violence-Against-Women-and-Children-2013-20251.pdf&ved=2ahUKewiz3aOO-KT5AhWBioYKHYPnAz4QFnoECAYQBg&usg=AOvVaw38C0zu4m4LXCefoCBsGMBW)  
<http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/site/files/8ec347dc-4926-4802-a839-7569897e1a7a/->

## 7. Findings from the KIIs

### Wage Gap

Around 70% of the women labour force works in the informal sector and faces a wage disparity. The formals have a salary structure, so the wage disparity is not very prevalent in the formal sector but in the informal sector, women earn less than half of the wage that men earn for the same work. The wage disparity exists in the informal sector because in Bangladesh there is no minimum fixed wage per hour.

### Child Marriage

Gender disparity exists within families as well; young girls are married off whereas the young boys in the family continue their education. Also due to this disparity, women become victims of domestic violence. To end gender disparity within the family, the mentality of people has to change, the government has taken initiatives to aware people end child marriage however families still marry off their girls at a young age. The families do so, due to security issues. Girls are harassed and live in unsafe environments whereas the man, who poses as the threat or perpetrator, is excused for their behaviour or actions. As they are excused, girls continue to be discriminated against.

### Patriarchal Mindset

Although there is certain proof for women like having seats on the bus, women do not get to enjoy the facilities that provisions provide as those do not happen in reality due to the embedded patriarchal mindset in Bangladeshi society. There are certain social changes due to women's empowerment however society does not always accept those changes and blame women as from society's perspective the changes are causing harm without understanding the underlying reason. For example, the empowerment of women is seen in a negative light as the divorce rates are increasing because of it. But there is an underlying reason for it is that empowered women are making decisions and men are not used to women being in a decision-making position. This unfamiliarity creates conflicts and women feel they are in an unjust relationship and so women want to get out of such unjust relationships, leading to divorce.

### Gender and Environment

Gender issues are related to the environment and environmental disasters. When there is any environmental disaster, be it a cyclone, flood, or even climate change or climate displacement, women are considered as the burden in any disaster situation. Women can play an important role and can be resilient, which should be seen as a positive aspect, is missing in the policies. The reason for this can be the patriarchal mindset or the fact that historically women were not in any decision-making position. Women do contribute however as they do not take part in the decision-making process, women are considered a burden during a disaster.

Covid 19 was also a disaster, during which women were the most affected because of the increased amount of domestic violence and there was an increase in child marriage as a girl child is considered to be a burden. However, the positive contribution of women during the pandemic was never highlighted. For instance, many women became entrepreneurs during this time and earned to support their families. Also, the business or work they did help in crisis

management. Like the business of food supply, run by women or the nurses who are mostly women, worked as front liners, and contributed to crisis management. Nevertheless, the fact that women can lead in a crisis and play an active role remains unrecognized. Recognizing women's contributions remains a big challenge.

### **Women Migrant Worker**

Women are going as migrant workers as there are better work opportunities. The government is taking initiatives to send the workers properly and safely through recruiters.

### **Education and Women**

To ensure that students come to school, to inquire if families prioritise women's education. If not, they must be made aware and if they do prioritise, it is essential to figure out why girls do not continue their education after graduating primary school. Security is a major issue, which has to be provided for by families and the government. The state has to provide girls with security and to do so the state needs to take is to figure out why girls cannot go to school. Moreover, due to poverty, the girls cannot continue with their education, to help girls coming from poor households the government took initiatives like primary education was made free and did campaigns to enrol these girls. Moreover, schools lack basic facilities like proper washrooms for girls or water supply or menstruation supplience. Dignity kits are provided so that girls do not stop coming to school when their menstruation starts. To make the dignity kit available to all, a separate budget must be allocated and ensure that the girls know how to use the kit and there has to be proper arrangement for disposal. So, we need to check if an appropriate amount of budget is being allocated for the implementation of the policies. So, to allocate a gender budget, there has to be a proper gender policy and then the budget has to be allocated.

### **Women Entrepreneurs**

Different policies have been formulated for the development of women entrepreneurs. Many benefits are given to young entrepreneurs regarding the COVID situation. Government policies for benefiting women entrepreneurs through bank loans are there. However, there are many women at the grassroots level who want to become entrepreneurs, but they face gender discrimination, biases and harassment when they want to take loans from the bank. They face lots of issues regarding gender stereotypes from bank managers and officers. The men in these positions are mostly not very supportive of women entrepreneurs at the grassroots level.

### **Women in Decision Making**

Decision-making on income spending will vary from person to person. Women generally do not have decision-making power. They usually lack confidence in decision-making. This comes from our gender-biased social norms. Women need grooming, training, and basic education to build this confidence.

### **Policy Addressing Mobility of a Woman**

There is a Women's Development Policy, in which the issues related to women's safety are addressed. However, women are harassed, and policies cannot address this as policies are aspirational and do not have a binding effect. So, when a woman is harassed it becomes a legal issue and women have the right to file complaints. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh to a

large extent, women do not get legal remedies because of the flaws in the criminal justice system. Some of the flaws are-

- Identifying harassment as a crime, common people and law enforcement agencies do not understand or identify that harassment is a crime and is a big issue that is also related to one's dignity.
- Harassment by law enforcement agency: Another issue is that the investigating officers also harass the woman who filed the complaint and so the investigating officers themselves become the perpetrator.
- Lengthy judicial process: The judicial process is very long, which discourages people from seeking justice as it is tiresome and costly.
- A culture of injustice: there is the issue of impunity due to the lengthy judicial process and harassment by law enforcement agencies criminals are not punished thus creating a culture in the system where criminals can get away with their crimes. This not only allows criminals to walk free but also motivates others to do the same crime.

## **8. Recommendations**

### **Considering the Contribution of Women in the Agricultural Sector**

There are a lot of women who are working in the agricultural sector as unpaid family workers. It is crucial to investigate and keep track of the actions of women who are involved in agriculture at the grassroots level. Therefore, through the policies, the government may consider their contribution and may give them a formal platform to work as paid workers.

### **The Necessity for a Market-Friendly Environment**

It should be ensured that women have safe transportation and security when they enter a marketplace. It is generally assumed by many people in Bangladesh that women are supposed to make losses when they enter a business, and we have to come out of this mentality.

### **Policy Support for Women Entrepreneurs**

Many women at the grassroots level aspire to start their businesses, but they encounter harassment, bigotry, and discrimination based on gender when they apply for bank loans. They encounter numerous problems relating to gender stereotypes from bank officers and supervisors. Most of the time, the men in these positions do not show any grassroots support for female entrepreneurs. As a result, men must be involved in these initiatives. Men who work in banking should be more supportive of women by avoiding gender stereotypes and helping to provide loans and training to women business owners. Therefore, it is crucial to include and engage these men in the policy to advance gender equality and support female entrepreneurs.

### **Engagement of Various Stakeholders in the Implementation**

Different level stakeholder consultation is also required and there is no other alternative. When we want to implement a project, consultation with stakeholders at different levels is necessary. Constructive opinions from stakeholders about their experiences should be noted. This will help to improve the implementation of projects.

### **Motivational Workshop for the Young Women**

In Bangladesh, it is very common to gather educational knowledge through educational institutions, but they do not know their aim in life, or they are very unconscious about setting a fixed goal for their future life. With this lack of knowledge, most of them do not know how to make their own decision for the betterment of their life. They should build their platform through the power of decision-making. The government can also introduce some motivational workshops to attract young women to continue studying and getting technical skills for future betterment.

### **Broadening the Outlook toward Women**

However, despite all the policies, one of the most fundamental factors is the gender-stereotyped mentality, which will have to change to achieve a positive outcome on this issue. Again, men will have to be involved and they should change their mentality. The overall social structure of gender stereotypes will have to change with time.

### **Introduction to Learning Programs**

In Bangladesh a lot of women go abroad to earn money to support their families, however, they do not know any type of technical skills, so they earn a small amount of money after working for a long time. If the government can train them through various workshops, they may work as a nurse or caretaker at the old age home.

### **Ensuring the Continuation of Study for a Longer Period**

A large portion of female students go to school at the primary level, then they do not continue their secondary education due to various reasons such as child marriage, financial instability, and lack of motivation. If the government, try to collect the student's opinions about their future aim in life and try to drag them into a bracket where they can get training about different outsourcing jobs. It may help them continue their study as they will know what about their future life and what benefits they will get.

### **Ensuring the Security of Young Women**

The workplace environment needs to change for women employees so that they feel free to work outside the home without any fear of harassment. If the government, try to increase the participation of females in the workforce it may have to create a work environment more reliable and friendly.

### **Strategy for the Safety, Security and Mobility of Women**

CCTV cameras should be added to the quiescent pathways, although appropriate monitoring might not be possible. So, a large screen monitor can be placed in the nearby area/public area so that the passer-by might notice any unusual activities. Another strategy could be to put more lights on the streets and areas where it is relatively dark. Furthermore, fixed schedules of drivers and helpers through online registration might be maintained. This will help to figure out and monitor the person who was present during an occurrence.

### **Need to Think about the Future Generation**

For the development of the economy, the government may focus on primary quality education to protect the upcoming generation. They may take some initiatives for the tertiary level students to ensure them a bright future by providing them incentives according to their academic performance.

### **Protecting the Women Entrepreneurs**

When the government introduces a stimulus package for helping the traders, female entrepreneurs should get priority as they need the assistance of the government to flourish their small businesses on a large scale. Women may also play an important role in uplifting themselves through a strong mentality because if they have a strong determination, it will give them the power to not give up on anything. Sometimes widows are not getting the benefit of old allowance for the lack of transparency, women may protect their rights by standing against these types of anomalies. In this case, the local representatives may play a very crucial role in ensuring the rights of the widows or other women who need assistance.

### **Policymakers May Play a Vital Role**

Lawmakers and policymakers may take responsibility for effective policies which will remove the obstacles that women face in different places. It may help to tarnish the disparity between men and women by breaking the social stigma.

### **The Feasibility Study is a Mandatory**

Before introducing any kind of policy, policymakers should do a feasibility study to forecast the impact of that policy. It will assist them in prioritizing the policies according to the necessity. In this case, they may follow some provinces like Kerala, India which is a great example of women empowerment.

### **Women in a Decision-making Position**

To create a society that has empowered women, firstly policies that have gender-based discrimination have to be eliminated and the contribution of women has to be recognized in the policies. For example, our second largest revenue comes from the RMG sector, where 60% of the workers are female. Although 60% of the contributors in the RMG sector are women when these women face harassment in the RMG industries, they do not get help as their harassers are linemen or their supervisors, so if they file a complaint, they could lose their job. So, many women are dependent and are not empowered despite their enormous contribution to the economy, these issues have to be addressed.

### **Presenting Women as Role Models**

More than 700 Bangladeshi women have served in the UN Peacekeeping Mission, ensuring peace and security in other countries and working to resolve conflicts. These women are role models. Their contributions have to be highlighted and they have to be presented as a role model. There is a need for a role model because many cases of domestic violence during covid 19 remain unrecorded; there were many reasons for it one of them being fear. The fear of breaking the victim's marriage pressure from family or getting harassed while filing the complaint. If the investigating officer is a woman, the victim would feel much more at ease talking to that officer, because the victim would see the female officer as a role model, and this would generate trust in the victim. The more women are presented as role models, the more the problems women face can be solved.

### **Policies and Projects for Youth Development**

There is a lack of Government projects related to youths-specially the vulnerable and marginal groups. Youth and adolescent involvement policies are needed. Drug addiction, violence, gender-based violence, and criminal activities by youth gangs are increasing. We have to think of policies and ways to rehabilitate adolescent and youth groups. When vulnerable groups like drug addicts or youth criminals are returning to society, we must think of policies to accommodate them and involve them in different government initiatives of the future. There is a gap in policies like this. It is important because today's youths are the future leaders of society hence, we should work on their development. A budget for youth-related policies should be included in the national budget.



## 9. Conclusion

Gender-responsive policies are referred to as policies or laws that intentionally incorporate gender-relevant considerations to affect the design, implementation, and result of the programs and policies. These policies should reflect women's reality and needs. Therefore, the policymakers need to address the unique needs of females, valuing their perspective, acknowledging their experience, understanding the developmental differential requirements of different genders, and ultimately empowering the girls and women in society. To identify the issues that need further study, major stakeholders from diverse spheres were consulted, hence, the report paper addresses issues like women's reproductive health and access to health care, access to government resources, women's capacity-building opportunities, enhancing women's participation in the labour force, reduction in poverty and vulnerability, a fairer platform for women entrepreneurs, women's access to law and justice, and women empowerment.

Through in-depth consultations, some major issues have been acknowledged such as the existing wage gap between males and females in the labour force, the existing high rate of child marriage resulting increased number of women victims of domestic abuse, the patriarchal mindset of society leading women empowered provisions to not be practised. Moreover, during environmental disasters or climate displacement, women are usually considered a burden. However, the impactful roles of women in crisis management are hardly ever highlighted such as the role of nurses who were mostly women in the Covid pandemic, women entrepreneurs supporting their families etc. Some of the key stakeholders have also mentioned that the country ranks higher among the South Asian countries in gender equality criteria, on the contrary, the rank is overestimated due to the political empowerment of women and their higher position in the government. Furthermore, female educational drop-out rates in schools spiked during the pandemic, especially in rural areas and ensuring proper facilities for girls in schools such as clean washrooms, and access to menstruation suppliances needs to be ensured. On the other hand, women entrepreneurs have reported discrimination during bank loans, hence, access to finance is one of the major hurdles for them. Due to social norms, women usually don't take part in decision-making roles, hence, through proper education, grooming and training, women need to be financially stable to be more confident in decision-making roles. Moreover, one of the main issues faced by women is their access to safety. Therefore, the Women's Development Policy addresses issues related to women's security and safety in society, but it can be stated that the policies and provisions are not adequately implemented.

The report also highlights a few recommendations that need urgent recognition. Firstly, the women population in the economy should involve themselves in capacity-building programs to enhance their skills and educational knowledge. To reduce the drop-out rate, the government and NGOs can initiate financial stability among female students by trying to group them into a bracket where they will receive training for different outsourcing jobs. Secondly, the outlook towards women needs transformation over time, this is feasible through presenting women as role models, addressing their major contribution to society, and highlighting their heroic stories such as Bangladeshi women serving in the UN Peacekeeping Missions, female doctors and nurses during the pandemic and female police officer's contribution, etc. Simultaneously, policies and projects related to youth

development need to be prioritized and specified such as policies related to drug abuse, gender-based violence, and youth criminals in society. Furthermore, protecting women entrepreneurs is highly required by providing businesswomen with financial assistance by offering stimulus packages to the traders. Moreover, a business-friendly climate must be developed over time that does not hinder women-led businesses to flourish, this can be feasible through the combination of policies and involvement of various agencies collaborating with diverse stakeholders in the economy. The workplace needs a development-friendly environment for women where they can work without the fear of harassment. On the other side, banking reform needs to take place by reducing the complexity and eliminating the redundant steps in the procedures for bank loans for SMEs.

To conclude, feasible studies should be carried out to identify more specific and gender-based issues. Various government agencies and organizations along with NGOs, lawmakers, policymakers and private stakeholders should come together and take responsibility for the formulation of effective policies and projects which will remove the obstacles that women face and empower them in diverse social, cultural and political spheres.

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## Annexe

**Table 5 Key Informant Interviewees name list**

<b>SL. No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
<b>1</b>	Md Kamruzzaman	Deputy Secretary, Planning Ministry
<b>2</b>	Mahedi Masuduzzaman	Deputy Secretary, Budget 9, Ministry of Finance
<b>3</b>	Sharmind Neelormi	Associate Professor, Economics Department, Jahangirnagar University
<b>4</b>	Farah Kabir	Country Director, ActionAid Bangladesh
<b>5</b>	Mohammad Golam Sarwar	Assistant Professor, Law Department, University of Dhaka
<b>6</b>	Priti Chakraborty	Board of Directors, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI)
<b>7</b>	Afsana Islam	Assistant Professor, Department of Women and Gender Studies, Dhaka University
<b>8</b>	Dr Kazi Iqbal	Senior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)
<b>9</b>	Dr Mohiuddin Ahmed	Additional Secretary, Planning, Development and Statistics, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA)
<b>10</b>	Dr Chowdhury Zia Uddin Hayat	Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division

## About SANEM

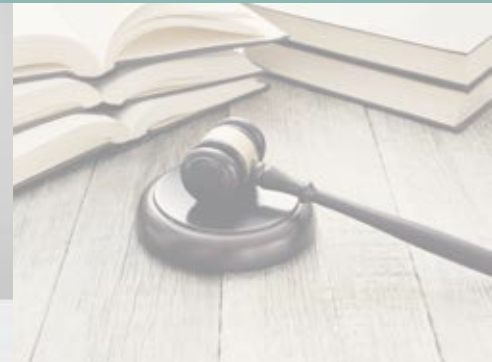
SANEM, launched in January 2007 in Dhaka, is a non-profit research organization registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms in Bangladesh. It is also a network of economists and policymakers in South Asia with a special emphasis on economic modeling.

SANEM aims to promote the production, exchange and dissemination of basic research knowledge in the areas of international trade, macro economy, poverty, labour market, environment, political economy and economic modeling. It seeks to produce objective, high-quality, country- and South Asian region-specific policy and thematic research. SANEM contributes to governments' policy-making by providing research support both in individual and organizational capacities.

## About Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) is a non-governmental, mass women's organization dedicated to advancing women's human rights, empowerment, and gender equality. The organization was founded in 1970 based on the idea of poet Sufia Kamal, a pioneering figure in the fight for women's liberation and the independence of all men and women in the state and society.

The main mission is to establish substantive equality between men and women by aiding in the transformation of long-entrenched patriarchal social norms, rituals, regulations, and practices that discriminate against women and girls. Moreover, the broad goal includes the emancipation of women through gender equality within the home, community, and in a noncommunal and democratic state in which the government operates honestly, follows the rule of law, and is accountable to the people.



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