

CSW60: Multi-Stakeholder Forum

21 January 2016; CR2, UN

Panel 4: Participation and leadership of woman's organizations and gender equality advocates in the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Madam Moderator, Excellencies and Distinguished Participants,

In the beginning let me thank UN Women for hosting this forum and also to you all for your participation.

Women leadership as well as effective participation of women's organizations is very important for gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for SDGs. The effectiveness of participation again depends much on the country specificities. My own country, Bangladesh did succeed remarkably in women empowerment, through joint government and non-government collaboration and enacting appropriate laws and policies which are well suited to the context of the country.

Bangladesh has made impressive socio-economic gains since its independence in 1971. Its gross domestic product has risen steadily, poverty has declined and child and maternal mortality rates have fallen. Between 1990 and 2015, life expectancy for Bangladeshi men and women rose from 59 to 70.

There are many reasons for this remarkable progress. But a major cause has been Bangladesh's focused investment in women. Since coming to office, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has tirelessly promoted the health, education and empowerment of women. Women empowerment has been mainstreamed in the national 5-year Development Plans and climate adaptation plans.

Our people have recognized that the future of the country largely depends on the empowerment of women. Bangladesh has made a bold commitment in securing legal protections for women and creating new ways for them to attain education, financial freedom and political power.

The center of the our national action plan is education. The right kind of education can make a girl self-reliant economically, socially and emotionally. While enrollment is increasing, quality is also improving. Digital empowerment of women is another area where we are investing a lot. Education can also help women to escape child marriage and domestic violence. The Government of Bangladesh has also committed to improving women's access to quality health care. As a consequence, maternal and child mortality rates have steadily declined.

Bangladesh has witnessed a substantial increase in female employment in labor-intensive export-oriented industries, including the readymade garment sector. In addition, the rapid expansion of micro-finance in rural areas has boosted women's entrepreneurship as well as employment in rural and urban

areas.

Women have also made great strides in public life in Bangladesh. Women have ruled as prime minister since 1991. Speaker of the Parliament and Leader of the opposition are also women. Fifty seats are reserved for women in the National Parliament. Currently, 70 women serve in that body while 14,000 others hold seats on local governing boards. Ten percent of all government jobs are reserved for women. Women are now recruited into military service and participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

These achievements were obtained jointly through planned and extensive collaboration not only with women organizations, but also with other relevant stakeholders. Over the years, there have been a growths of women's groups and women's organizations both at the grass-roots level as well as national level to reach women and change their situation. They are acting as agents to ensure women's leadership and empowerment in the development process.

The role of the women's organizations need to be strengthened systematically as a potential platform for implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Women organizations also have to get rid of silo approaches and adhere responsibly to the holistic implementation approach of SDGs, in close collaboration with National organizations for gender mainstreaming.

Participation of marginalized women and girls is an imperative to ensure that all women and girls are empowered and no one is left behind.

Capacity building of women's organization is a crucial factor specially in the Least Development Countries.

While adequate & predictable financing to the women organizations remains important, equally significant is the able leadership of such organizations. Investment in women's leadership particularly for girls and young women is strategically important. In this context , let me share that Bangladesh is not only focusing on institutionalizing women leadership but also investing in women leadership program. The Asian University for Women in Bangladesh is one such example which seeks to empower women students by training them for innovative and service-oriented leadership. Hon'ble Prime Minister remains the Chief Patron of the University. In today's forum I would like to urge that investing on women leadership could be one of the outcomes of CSW 60 which will contribute towards a multi stake holder monitoring of the realization of SDGs.