

***1. What measures have been taken to strengthen normative , legal and policy framework for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?***

**Response:**

Recognizing the importance and contribution of women in society and nation building, Bangladesh since its independence, has taken legal and policy measures for advancement of women in the country. The commitment was enshrined in the country's Constitution. Articles 27, 28 and 29 of the Constitution lay down the general principles regarding the protection of women from all forms of discrimination and promotion of their equal participation. Sustained improvement of relevant legal and policy support coupled with political commitment has seen over the years significant improvement in women's equal participation and empowerment. According to Gender Gap Index 2020 by World Economic Forum, Bangladesh stands the 50<sup>th</sup> out of 153 countries and the 1st in SAARC nations.

**International framework:** Bangladesh has been a signatory to several important international conventions and agreements on women's and girls' rights and development. It ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984, endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) in 1995, and committed itself to the MDGs in 2000 and SDGs in 2015. Bangladesh also participated in the Commission on Status of Women Meeting every year in New York.

**Policy and legal framework:** The Government has adopted several legal and policy measures to promote and protect the rights of women in the country. Laws formulated include the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, and the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Rules 2013, Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012, Hindu Marriage Registration Act 2012 National Acid Crime Prevention Act (amended) 2010, and the Pornography Control Act 2012, National Children Policy 2011, Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017, DNA Act, 2014 and Dowry Prohibition Act 2018 etc. Other laws also given sufficient attention to women's rights wherever relevant.

**National Women Development Policy:** A notable action of the Government was the adoption of National Women Development Policy 2011 and the Action Plan to implement the policy. To implement this Policy, the Government is committed to help build productive capacities of women; provide necessary support to women entrepreneurs; increase employment opportunities for the skilled and non-skilled female workforce; enhance the number of women in public and private jobs; operationalize gender-sensitive planning and budget; ensure equal pay for female workers in all sectors; facilitate enhanced women leadership in the political arena; and increase the number of women at all stages of administration.

**Gender responsive budget:** In order to ensure the participation of women in all spheres of life, the present government has started gender responsive budgeting since 2009. At present, all ministries/divisions have adopted various innovative programmes to consolidate women economic and social empowerment through implementation of gender responsive budget.

**2. What actions and investments have been made for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

**Response**

Women empowerment is one of the 10 Special Initiatives of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020) has prioritize the establishment of a society of women's equal participation and development.

**Government Manifesto:** Carry on initiatives by women's empowerment through ensuring women's participation in all ranges of work with a view to eliminating discrimination against women.

**Creation of Job Environment for Women:** For promoting the women employment efforts are being made to improve the working environment of readymade garments and other offices, creating day care facilities for the children of the working women. Eight working hostel have been established for social security of the working women. A total of 119 day care centres have been established for economic empowerment of working women since 2009.

**Income Generating Activities:** Under Income Generation Activities project of the department of women affairs, a total of 2 lakh 17 thousand 4 hundred 40 poor, underprivileged women will receive livelihood training and involve in the existing microcredit programme. These women will also have opportunity to market their own product.

**Online Self Reliant E-Training Programme:** Government is providing online self-reliant training on different trade to the women. The major objective of the programme is to mainstream women into the economic activities of the country. It will increase women skills and also grant market access to them.

**Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs):** The government has allocated Tk 95,574 crore in the social safety net programmes, which is 16.83 percent of total budget and 3.01 percent of GDP in FY 2020-21. The number of recipients of allowances for widows and victims of domestic violence to be increased from 14 lakh to 17 lakh. The number of beneficiaries of maternity allowances for poor mothers to be increased from 7 lakh to 7 lakh 70 thousand. The number of beneficiaries under lactating assistance programmes to be increased from 2 lakh 50 thousand to 2 lakh 75 thousand.

**Cash Transfer:** Government has designed, developed and successfully piloted an MIS Integrated Government to Person (G2P) Payment System for transfer of allowances to beneficiaries. The new system provides: (1) Timely and regular hassle free delivery of allowances at the doorsteps of beneficiaries at zero cost to them; (2) Provides choice for beneficiaries to select according to their convenience the mode of receiving the allowances – Bank, Mobile Financial Services, Post offices etc; (3) Improved Cash Flow Management for the Government. So, these beneficiaries will get their allowances on a particular date sitting at their home.

**Development of Women Entrepreneurship :** Joyeeta was started to promote products and services of women entrepreneurs across the country with a vision of gradually establishing women friendly infrastructure and spread them beyond Bangladesh in the long run. For the continuation of this support a non-profitable and autonomous foundation has been set-up under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs named Joyeeta Foundation. The Vision of this foundation is to expedite the process of economic empowerment of women in the society. Selected registered women associations from the remote area of the country are allotted stalls at Rapa Plaza shopping centre at Dhanmondi, Dhaka for marketing their products.

For women entrepreneurs' development the Joyeeta-Haluaghat Programme has been undertaken as an extension of Joyeeta Programme. After renovation of Joyeeta-Haluaghat Marketing Centres for women Entrepreneurs a total of 37 stalls have been opened. In the Marketing Centres a 3 storied building has been established having with the facility of modern training rooms, child corners, clubs and necessary toilets including more 19 shops.

The 'Joyeeta Onneshone Bangladesh' is being implemented through selection of Joyeetas in five categories selected from different parts of the society are being honored properly, recognized and inspired them to make more confident and inspired them to make themselves as an entrepreneurs. Every year a total of 35 women of 7 divisions are being honored who are economically successful, who contributed in the social development, conquered women of victim of violence, successful women on education and jobs and successful mothers identified from districts and upazilas through competition.

**Women's Access to Resources and Opportunities:** Bangladesh Bank is providing collateral free loan up to Tk. 25 lakh to women entrepreneurs. In addition, small and medium enterprise (SME) foundation offers a special financial package for women entrepreneurs. Small women entrepreneurs are also getting financial support from the volunteer women associations.

***3. What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development?***

**Response**

Bangladesh is a signatory to most of the international conventions that seek the promotion and protection of women including their role in decision making. According to Gender Gap Index 2020 by World Economic Forum, Bangladesh stands the 50<sup>th</sup> out of 153 countries and the 1<sup>st</sup> in SAARC nations in political empowerment.

**Constitution and Policy:** Article 65 (3) of the constitution provides reservation of seats in the national parliament, and in that paragraph, there has been no barrier for the participation of women elected in the 300 seats selected. The National Women Development Policy 2011 emphasizes political empowerment and women's participation in decision making process. Rules relating to enhancing women leadership in political parties and its proper implementation have been made. Especially, provision has been created for 33 percent women's representation by 2020 in all committee including the central committees according to the Representation of the People Order, 1972 (amended 2013).

**Women in Parliament:** The Speaker of the National Parliament, the Prime Minister and Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the House are women. Women's free participation in all general seats have been ensured. The appointment of the first woman Speaker in 2013 is a significant step in the history of Bangladesh. There are 70 women Parliamentarians of whom 50 are on the reserved seats and 23 have been elected directly, bringing the percentage of women Member of Parliamentarian (MPs) to apprx. 20%.

**Women in Cabinet:** In the present cabinet Ministry of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Labor and Employment, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change headed by Women Minister, State Ministers and Deputy Minister respectively.

**Women in Local Government:** Bangladesh Government adopted the Local Government Ordinance and introduced a three-tier Local Government system, which includes Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and City Corporation.

**The Union Parishad :** It allows for direct election of one chairperson and twelve members to the Union Parishad. Each member represents a single ward (constituted by several villages). In addition, three seats are reserved for women to be elected by direct vote. In addition to the three reserved seats, women can take part in direct elections for general seats.

**The Upazilla Parishad :** reserved one seat for women among the two elected vice chairpersons. Women are elected in reserved seats the number of which is equal to one third of the regular seats. The provision of reserved seats for women would not limit rights of women's direct election to compete for the general seats.

**City Corporations:** one third of the counsellors' seats are reserved for women candidates and women can also contest for direct election for the general seats.

**Women in public service:** Female officers are being appointed to the senior positions of civil service and armed forces. There are now holding post of Secretary, Ambassador, Judges of higher Courts, Vice-chancellors of University and Heads of government departments and institutions. They serve in the armed forces, police, banks and financial institutions, business houses. Women appointed as Major General in Armed forces.

**4. *What macroeconomic, labour and social policies have been put in place that promote fill and productive employment and decent work for women, in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women employment and economic rights and independence?***

**Response**

Bangladesh had made significant progress on promoting women's equality in several areas. Bangladesh has been ranked the top country among its South Asian neighbors by performing the best in narrowing the gender gap. Bangladesh closed 72.6% of its overall gender gap and obtained 50<sup>th</sup> position out of 153 countries globally, the World Economic Forum said in its report titled 'Global Gender Gap Report 2020'.

Women's labour force participation is only 36.3% (2017); 91.8% of working women are employed in the informal economy and more than half of them in lower-end agriculture. Bangladesh's RMG sector, which has approximately 4 million workers and mostly women, have been hit hard by the COVID-19. Many women migrant workers who were employed in service sectors in the Middle East specifically in Saudi Arabia as well as other countries like Italy, Spain and other European countries have lost their jobs since COVID-19 outbreak and returned home having significant impacted on the remittance.

First COVID patient identified in Bangladesh on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Government of Bangladesh declared 19 stimulus packages that worth more than TK 1 Trillion (\$ 12 Billion) for various sectors in immediate response to address the adverse impact.

- Tk 50 billion (\$ 58 million) compensation for job and income loss of garments sectors worker.
- Tk. 2 billion (\$ 2.35 million) for expatriate workers.
- Interest and mortgage free loan for women entrepreneurs.

**5. *What response and recovery measures to the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken to improve and expand social protection for women (e.g. healthcare coverage, unemployment benefits, part sick leave, paid parental leave, maternity benefits, pensions, income supports as cash transfers)?***

**Response:**

Government of Bangladesh has newly appointed 10 thousand doctors, nurses and medical technologists for better treatment of COVID-19 patient. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare set up government website [www.corona.gov.bd](http://www.corona.gov.bd) for updating corona virus related information. One Health Window 16263 has also been established for online contact with doctors frequently. National Toll-Free Helpline 109 is operating 24 hours 7 days a week (24/7) during COVID-19 pandemic. Clinical Psychologists of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs provides online mental health support.

- Government declared cash relief for 31 million people, Baby food for 1 million children.
- Social Safety Net Programmes for 11 million people (most of them are women and children which is 16.83% of total budget).
- As per Government circular, old age people who are sick and pregnant women are not allowed to office in this COVID-19 pandemic.
- Materiality leave for 6 months with full benefit in government sectors and government also provides maternity allowance Tk 800 for poor pregnant mother.

**6. *What actions have been taken to expand the availability and affordability of care services to address the increase in unpaid care and domestic work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. care subsidies, paid leave)?***

**Response:**

The domestic workers have lost jobs. Many have returned to their villages who are likely facing severe food shortages, especially the ones living in remote villages. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina committed that "No one will remain Hungry" and accordingly steps being taken to ensure food security. To strengthen the social support provisions during COVID-19, the Government stimulus package includes:

- Food grains for 50 million people
- Festival food grants for 10 million people
- Tk. 50 billion for agricultural subsidies
- Special cash provision to vulnerable families

**7. *What action has been taken to increase resources and support for women's and civil society organizations as they cope with the COVID-19 pandemic?***

**Response:**

NGOs and civil society organization continue their ongoing activities in this difficult time with the support of development partners, INGOs. Besides Government supports and facilitates their activities in sectors critical to cope with the pandemic.

***8. What steps have been taken to improve gender-responsive data collection in the context of follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to track and monitor the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic?***

**Response:**

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs are collecting data from the attached department and subordinate office at district and upazila level. Deputy Commissioner at the district making coordination and collaboration with other offices at district level and report to the cabinet division and other concerned ministries and division.

However, it appears difficult to conduct any study or survey under such pandemic situation.

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