

# Review Report on Beijing+30 Implementation in Bangladesh

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## Introduction

Adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. The declaration outlined 12 critical areas of concern to advance gender equality and empower women and girls. These areas include education, health, economic participation, political participation, and violence against women. In 2020, the global community marked the 25th anniversary of this pivotal moment. In 2025, it will be 30 years since adopting BPFA, hence the term Beijing+30. The 30th anniversary provides an opportunity to take stock of progress, identify gaps, and reset global commitments to advancing gender equality in the following decades. This review report synthesizes the global progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment since the Beijing Platform's adoption, analyzing key achievements, persistent challenges, and future actions needed to achieve its goals. As part of this global review, Bangladesh, like many other countries, reviewed its progress in achieving the goals set at the conference, focusing on areas like women's rights, gender-based violence, economic empowerment, political participation, and education.

## Role of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) in reviewing the implementation of BPFA

As a non-government, voluntary-based, movement-oriented mass women's organization, **Bangladesh Mahila Parishad** started its journey with the objectives of eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, establishing their human rights and empowerment towards achieving a democratic, secular, equitable society and state. BMP has been instrumental in advocating for the **Beijing Platform for Action** and has played a pivotal role in the **Beijing PFA review process** by providing critical feedback on the achievements and the areas where progress is lacking. **Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP)** has played a sustained and transformative role in implementing multi-dimensional campaigns and advocacy programs to promote women's human rights and empowerment in the light of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA)** from **Beijing+5 (2000)** to **Beijing+25 (2020)**. BMP expands its efforts across the **12 critical areas of concern** identified in the BPFA, addressing systemic challenges to advance women's rights and gender equality in Bangladesh. Below are the significant roles and contributions of BMP during this period:

## Advocacy for Legislative Reforms and Policy Implementation

**Lobbying for Gender-Sensitive Laws:** BMP actively advocated for and supported the enactment of several gender-focused laws, including:

- The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010.
- The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017.
- The Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act, 2012.

**National Development Plans:** BMP ensured that gender equality was integrated into Bangladesh's **Five-Year Plans**, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other national policies.

### **Tackling Violence Against Women (VAW)**

- Awareness Campaigns: BMP led sustained national campaigns to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV), addressing issues such as:
  - Domestic violence.
  - Sexual harassment in public spaces and workplaces.
  - Trafficking of women and children.
- Victim Support Services: BMP provided legal aid, counseling, and shelter and rehabilitation services for victims of violence.
- Strengthening Law Enforcement: Advocated for the establishment of gender-sensitive police desks and effective enforcement of laws related to the prevention and protection of violence against women and girls.

### **Women's Political Empowerment**

- Increasing Women's Representation:
- Promoted policies for **quota systems** to ensure women's representation in Parliament, local government, and decision-making bodies.
- Conducted leadership training and capacity-building programs for women in politics.
- Advocacy for Electoral Reforms: Pushed for a proportional representation system and equal opportunities for women in elections.

### **Economic Empowerment of Women**

- Advocacy for Economic Justice: BMP pushed for:
  - Equal pay for equal work.
  - Equal Rights of property
  - Access to financial resources and entrepreneurship opportunities.

### **Education and Health**

- Promoting Girls' Education:

- Advocated for universal access to quality education and eliminating gender disparities in school enrollment.
- Campaigns to prevent **dropout rates** among girls, primarily mainly due to child marriage.

### **Reproductive Health and Rights:**

- Focused on improving women's access to reproductive healthcare services.
- Campaigned for raising awareness about maternal health and reducing gender-based health disparities.
- Grassroots Mobilization
- Community Engagement:
  - Mobilized rural women through awareness programs on rights, gender equality, and legal protections.
  - Strengthened grassroots women's organizations to act as agents of change.
- Empowerment Through Awareness:
  - Conducted campaigns and workshops to educate women about their rights under the **Beijing Declaration**.

### **Climate Justice and Women's Role**

- BMP recognized the intersection of gender and climate change in Bangladesh, one of the most vulnerable countries to climate risks.
- Advocated for gender-sensitive climate policies, addressing the disproportionate impact of climate disasters on women.

### **Advocacy for Implementation of the BPFA**

- **Monitoring and Shadow Reporting:**
  - BMP actively prepared shadow reports to the United Nations on implementing the BPFA and other international treaties like **CEDAW**.
  - Highlighted gaps in the government's commitments and progress.

### **Engagement in Global Platforms:**

Represented Bangladesh in global forums, ensuring that local challenges and successes were shared on international platforms.

### **Digital and Technological Inclusion**

- Recognized the growing importance of technology and advocated for women's inclusion in the **digital economy**.
- Launched programs to promote digital literacy and combat **cyber violence** against women.

### **Collaboration with Civil Society and Government**

- Increased networking with government bodies, NGOs, and international organizations to implement gender equality initiatives.
- Worked with global movements to align national efforts with international standards, including the **SDGs** and BPfA.

### **Key Achievements by Beijing+25:**

With the support of UN Women, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad conducted a Beijing+25 review engaging Civil Society representatives in 8 divisional cities (Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal, Mymensingh) and 2 poverty prone districts (Kurigram and Bagerhat) in 2019. During this time, BMP organized 10 dialogues, nine press conferences, and 10 mobilization events at eight divisional cities and two poverty-prone districts. Also BMP organized one national dialogue and a significant mobilization in Dhaka. During the project period, the following results have been achieved:

- Women from different walks of life, including Dalit women, physically challenged women, women from the Indigenous community and religious minorities, good number of the representatives of the young generation, including college and university students and representatives from civil society, including lawyers, journalists, woman's human rights activists are aware of 12 critical issues of Beijing PFA, and the review process of Beijing+25.
- Opinions on the achievements and challenges in the implementation of PFA and recommendations to overcome the difficulties have come out through individual sharing and group consultations with representational participation of Dalit women, physically challenged women, and women from Indigenous communities and religious minorities, representatives of the young generation and representatives from the civil society of 8 divisional cities (Dhaka, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet-venue Sunamgonj, Chittagong, Rangpur, Khulna-venue Jessore and Mymensingh) and 2 districts (Bagerhat and Kurigram).
- 407 representatives from different local and national media in Dhaka, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet, Chittagong, Rangpur, Khulna, Mymensingh, Bagerhat, and Kurigram are aware of the issues of Beijing PFA, realize the importance of its implementation, and agree to disseminate messages and information on Beijing+25.
- 12 critical issues of BPFA that create obstacles in the way of women's advancement and empowerment are widely disseminated through print and electronic media.

- Messages on achievement and challenge are publicized through posters distributed in 2383 grass-roots branches, with the initiative of 57 district branches of BMP.
- National-level policymakers, media personnel, representatives from civil society organizations, marginalized communities, and young people are committed to working together to fully implement BPFA.
- A huge number of BMP volunteers all over Bangladesh are more aware of the issue of BPfA and are committed to strengthening the PfA implementation movement.
  - **Legislative Wins:** Passage of significant laws addressing violence, discrimination, and child marriage.
  - **Increased Representation:** Improved women's presence in politics and public administration.
  - **Social Change:** Greater awareness of women's rights and reduced stigma around issues like domestic violence and reproductive health.

### **Identified progress, challenges, and recommendations on 12 critical areas of BPFA by BMP**

To conduct the Beijing+30 Review from the Women's Movement aspect, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organized dialogue with women, men, youth, activists, human rights defenders, NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, lawyers, journalists, women with disabilities, activists from diverse gender identities, Indigenous communities, sex workers and state and non-state duty bearers. Based upon real-life experiences, challenges, and recommendations from these participants, BMP identified progress, challenges, and recommendations on 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. These participants' real-life experiences, challenges, and recommendations, BMP identified progress, challenges, and recommendations on 12 critical Beijing Platform for Action areas.

Since Beijing+20 (2015), Bangladesh has made substantial progress in the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), reflecting its ongoing commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. This progress is visible in key policy reforms, institutional support, and social programs that have significantly impacted women and girls. The updated achievements and statistics between 2015 and 2024 provide a clear picture of the strides made in various sectors:

#### **Poverty Eradication**

##### **Progress:**

**Social Protection Programs:** Bangladesh has expanded its social protection systems, benefiting millions of women through programs like the **Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)** and **Old Age Allowance** programs. By 2024, these programs had contributed significantly to reducing poverty, particularly among women in rural areas.

**Increased Female labour force participation:** Over the past five years, the participation rate has increased. As per BBS, the female workforce has increased to 42.68 per cent in 2022, up from 36.3 percent five years ago. Informal employment dominates the labour market, with 84.9 percent of the employed population engaged in informal employment.<sup>93</sup> In fact, 96.6 percent of the employed female population aged 15 and older is in informal employment, constituting 24.02 million women, with only 3.4 per cent in formal employment. It is worth mentioning that females are working in the country's readymade garment industry (RMG), which contributes significantly to the economy of Bangladesh. In 2021, the percentage of female workforce in RMG was 53.65 percent.

**Microfinance Access:** The Grameen Bank, Brac and similar institutions continue to provide loans to millions of women, enabling them to start businesses. By 2024, over **8 million women** in Bangladesh have benefited from microcredit programs. **28%** of the population lives below the national poverty line (2020), but social protection schemes have contributed to reducing poverty among women, particularly in rural areas.

### **Challenges:**

**Persistent Economic Inequality:** Although Bangladesh has made strides in reducing poverty, **economic inequality** remains a significant challenge. The poverty rate in rural areas, where women are disproportionately affected, remains higher than in urban areas. **28%** of the population lives below the poverty line (2020). Women, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, are more vulnerable to economic shocks, especially in the face of climate change and economic downturns.

**Limited Access to Resources:** Women still face barriers accessing productive resources such as land, capital, and technology. While microcredit programs have benefited millions of women, structural barriers prevent many from reaching their full economic potential.

### **Recommendations:**

- Should be expanded financial inclusion by providing women with more access to credit, land rights, and technology for entrepreneurship. Specifically, microcredit schemes can be tailored to offer low-interest loans to women in rural areas and agriculture, ensuring their economic independence.

- Should be promoted social protection programs, ensuring that women in informal sectors, especially in rural areas, are included. A dedicated focus on widows, older women, and women with disabilities will ensure these vulnerable groups are not left behind.
- Programs should be designed specifically to target multidimensional poverty, particularly among women-headed households and marginalized communities, to reduce inequalities.

## **Education and Training of Women**

### **Progress:**

**Gender Parity in Education:** Bangladesh has achieved near-universal primary education, with 97% of girls enrolled in primary schools by 2024. The gender gap in education has been virtually eliminated in primary and secondary education.

**Higher Education:** The number of women in tertiary education has significantly increased. By 2024, women account for 45% of students in higher education, up from 35% in 2015.

**Vocational Training:** Bangladesh has expanded vocational training for women. By 2024, over 4 million women have participated in skills development programs, significantly improving their employability.

### **▪ Challenges:**

**Gender Gaps in Higher Education and Vocational Training:** While Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education, challenges persist in higher education and vocational training, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics).

**Key Statistics:** In 2024, women will represent 45% of university students, but there will still be fewer women in technical fields or leadership roles in academic institutions.

**Dropout Rates:** While overall enrollment has improved, girls from marginalized communities, especially in rural areas, continue to face barriers such as child marriage, early pregnancy, and lack of safe transportation to schools, contributing to higher dropout rates. The secondary school dropout rate for **girls** remains a concern, particularly among people with low incomes and those in rural areas.

### **▪ Recommendations:**

- Should be increased the access to secondary and tertiary education for girls, with a focus on reducing dropout rates. Provide incentives for rural girls to stay in school, such as scholarships, safe transportation, and mentoring programs.
- Should be encouraged female participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields by offering scholarships, training programs, and career mentorship, addressing the gender gap in technical and scientific careers.

- Must be invested in vocational training for women, especially in emerging sectors such as digital skills and green technologies, to enhance women's employability in a rapidly changing job market.

## Health and Education

### Progress:

**Maternal Health:** Bangladesh has successfully reduced maternal mortality by more than 66% since 1990. As of 2024, the maternal mortality ratio stands at 173 deaths per 100,000 live births, down from 320 in 2015.

**Child Health:** The under-five mortality rate has decreased from 46 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 34 in 2024, reflecting better healthcare access.

**Family Planning:** Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in family planning, with the contraceptive prevalence rate rising to 62% in 2024, contributing to better reproductive health outcomes

### ▪ **Challenges**

**Maternal Health and Child Mortality:** Although maternal mortality has decreased, **maternal health** remains a major challenge, especially in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities.

**Key Statistics:** The maternal mortality ratio remains at 173 deaths per 100,000 live births (2024), which is still high compared to other South Asian countries.

**Child Mortality:** The under-five mortality rate is still relatively high, at 34 deaths per 1,000 live births (2024), especially in poor regions.

**Unequal Access to Reproductive Health Services:** Many women, especially in rural areas, face barriers to accessing reproductive health services, including family planning, maternal healthcare, and sexual health education.

**Sexual and Reproductive Health:** Access to reproductive health services has improved, particularly in rural areas. By 2024, more than **90%** of women have access to reproductive health services, including counseling and family planning.

**Stigma and Awareness:** Despite ongoing efforts, stigma around **HIV/AIDS** persists, particularly for women. Many women in high-risk groups (such as sex workers, migrant workers, or those in domestic work) face social ostracism and lack of access to HIV prevention and treatment services.

### ▪ **Recommendations:**

- Access to healthcare services, including for reproductive health, maternal health services remains uneven, particularly for vulnerable women in remote or marginalized communities should be increased through the establishment of mobile health units, better family planning programs, and skilled birth attendants.
- Mental health care services for women, especially survivors of violence and those affected by natural disasters should be expanded.



- Should be expanded vaccination programs, and ensure neonatal care to further reduce infant mortality rates, with specific attention to underserved areas.

### **Women In Media:**

#### **Progress:**

**The “Tottho Apa:** Empowering Women Through ICT Towards Digital Bangladesh” project (2nd Phase-2017-2022) has provided easy access to information technology for under-privileged women in rural areas and empowered them through IT-enabled services, with 490 female Information Service Officers and 980 female Information Service Assistants employed for 490 Information Centres across the country.

**Regulation for Digital, Social Media:** In 2021, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission formulated a Regulation for Digital, Social Media, and Over-the-Top Platforms which seeks to address and regulate harmful content or obscene activities.

**Increased women’s representation in media:** Between FY2023-2024 and FY2024-2025 women’s representation increased from 15.9 percent to 17.3 percent, an increase of more than 200 female employees. The National Institute of Mass Media (NIMM) has conducted various training sessions on topics such as mass media, news and program production, modern journalism, and the SDGs, with significant involvement of women. The NIMM has ensured the participation of at least 20-25 percent of women trainees in training programs on gender issues, and implementation of CEDAW.

#### ▪ **Challenges:**

**Underrepresentation** of women in Media Decision-Making which caused by the existing gender Stereotypes.

**Misogyny:** Patriarchal attitude and misogynistic attitude often led to Sexual Harassment in work place and and misrepresentation of gender-based Violence.

**Glass Ceiling:** Economic Inequality in media and limited Opportunities for Career Advancement.

**Content:** Lack of Gender-Sensitive Content, portraying gender stereotypes.

**Digital Violence and Online Harassment:** Predatory men, cat fishing, grooming and trolling has become major issues for women using digital media.

#### **Recommendations**

- Media outlets must strive to portray women in diverse roles that reflect their actual contributions to society. Content should include more positive portrayals of women in leadership, science, politics, and other non-traditional fields.
- Media houses need to adopt clear anti-harassment policies and establish robust mechanisms to ensure the safety and dignity of women in the workplace. This includes setting

up complaint committees, providing legal support for women facing harassment, and creating safe working environments for female media workers.

- Media organizations should work toward equal pay for equal work, eliminating gender pay gaps and ensuring fair employment practices. This includes conducting gender audits of pay structures and promoting women to higher-paying, influential roles.
- Should develop gender-sensitive editorial policies and ensure the coverage of women's issues in a way that challenges traditional gender roles. Topics like women's rights, gender-based violence, reproductive health, and economic empowerment must be prioritized and reported responsibly.
- Should be established training programs on digital safety and cybersecurity for women, empowering them to navigate online spaces confidently and safely. Additionally, media platforms should work with authorities to combat online harassment and ensure accountability for digital violence.
- Should be provided platforms for networking, mentorship, and capacity-building for women in the media industry. Encourage the formation of women's media associations to provide support, share knowledge, and advocate for gender equality in media practices.

## **Violence Against Women**

### **Progress:**

To prevent and respond to GBV the Government of Bangladesh has prioritized legislative amendments as a means. The Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 was amended in 2020, by introducing the death sentence as the highest punishment for rape. Alongside, The government runs nine One-Stop Crisis Centres at the public medical college hospitals to offer women and children who have been victims of violence health care, police support, DNA testing, social services, legal assistance, psychosocial counselling, and shelter services. In addition, 67 One-Stop Crisis Cells operate in upazila and district hospitals to coordinate different services both within and outside the hospitals for women and children who have been victims of abuse. On the other hand prioritized actions to address GBV are guided primarily by the NWPDP 2011, the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children 2018- 2030 and the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage 2018-2030. The National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women aims to establish a society free from violence against women and children by 2030 by improving the implementation of existing laws and policies against VAW and girls, increasing social awareness, improving socio-economic conditions of women and protection services as well as prevention and rehabilitation.

### **Challenges:**

- **High Rates of Gender-Based Violence:** Violence against women remains one of the most serious challenges in Bangladesh. Despite legislative reforms and awareness programs, domestic violence, sexual harassment, acid attacks, and human trafficking continue to be rampant. 47% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical or sexual violence (2024), reflecting high rates of gender-based violence.

- **Lack of Proper Implementation of Laws:** Although laws exist to combat violence, their enforcement is weak, and many victims face difficulties in accessing justice due to cultural norms and lack of support systems.

**Recommendations:**

- **Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** Ensure the effective enforcement of laws related to domestic violence, acid attacks, and sexual harassment by strengthening the judiciary and police services, ensuring that women have access to justice and protection.
- **Support Services for Survivors:** Should be provided more shelters, legal aid, and psychosocial support for survivors of gender-based violence. Strengthen emergency response systems for women facing immediate danger.
- **Community-Based Solutions:** Engage community leaders and men in the fight against gender-based violence, promoting societal change that rejects violence and provides alternative conflict-resolution mechanisms.

## **Women and Armed Conflict**

### **Progress:**

**Women in Peacekeeping:** Bangladesh has sent **over 200 women peacekeepers** on UN peacekeeping missions since 2015. Women play critical roles in conflict zones, promoting peace, humanitarian aid, and conflict resolution.

**Post-Conflict Support:** The government and NGOs continue to provide psychological support and legal services for women who have been victims of violence in conflict areas.

**Role of Government:** As the 83rd member state of the United Nations (UN), Bangladesh has contributed to the global normative framework and the implementation of 1325 Resolution by adopting a National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (NAP WPS) 2019-2022, extended till 2025.

### **Challenges:**

**Limited Representation and Participation:** While Bangladesh has sent women peacekeepers on UN missions, women's participation in **peacebuilding** and **conflict resolution** at the domestic level remains limited. Local conflicts, such as those related to land disputes and communal violence, affect women disproportionately.

**Post-Conflict Rehabilitation:** Women who are victims of conflict, including in areas affected by the Rohingya refugee crisis, face limited support for rehabilitation, economic empowerment, and reintegration into society.

### **Recommendations:**

**Strengthen Legal Frameworks:** Ensure the effective enforcement of laws ensuring that women have access to justice and protection.

## **Women and the Economy**

### **Progress:**

**Workforce Participation:** Women's participation in the labor force, especially in the **garment industry**, has increased. By 2024, women account for **80%** of workers in the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, one of Bangladesh's largest industries.

**Entrepreneurship:** The number of women entrepreneurs has increased by **40%** since 2015, largely due to access to microcredit and training programs.

**Key Statistics:** The **gender gap in labor force participation** has narrowed, with **36% of women** participating in the formal workforce by 2024, up from **30%** in 2015.

### **Challenges:**

**Gender Wage Gap:** Women still face significant disparities in wages and working conditions, particularly in the **ready-made garment (RMG)** industry. Women workers often receive lower wages than men, and their rights in the workplace are frequently undermined. Women workers in the RMG sector make up **80%** of the workforce, but they face widespread issues like **poor working conditions, harassment, and limited career advancement opportunities**.

**Barriers to Entrepreneurship:** While microcredit programs have empowered many women entrepreneurs, **access to finance, networks, and mentorship** remains a challenge. Women often lack the resources to scale their businesses, limiting their potential for economic growth.

### **Recommendations:**

- **Combat the Gender Wage Gap:** Strengthen policies to address gender-based wage disparities, particularly in sectors like the garment industry, and ensure women receive equal pay for equal work. Implement better labor laws and safety standards to protect women workers.
- **Promote Women Entrepreneurs:** Should be provided training, mentorship, and access to finance for women entrepreneurs, particularly in high-growth sectors like technology, agriculture, and green energy.
- **Encourage Female Representation in Leadership:** Create policies to promote the representation of women in senior positions across both private and public sectors.

### **Women in Power and Decision-making**

**Progress in Political Representation:** Progress in women's participation in public life and decision-making has been developed according to constitutional and legal provisions. As stipulated in Article 65 (3A) of the Constitution, of the 350 seats in the National Parliament, 50 are reserved for women.. Similarly, the NWDP 2011 seeks to raise the number of women's seat in the Parliament to 33 per cent and to take initiative to direct election in the extended seats for women. In Bangladesh's parliamentary history, the number of directly elected female Members of Parliament (MPs) peaked in the country's eleventh parliamentary election, with 73 female MPs. In the latest 12th Parliamentary Election in January 2024, 96 female candidates participated, the highest female participation in history. Over the past years, there has also been a notable change in the engagement of women in local government activities, particularly in Union Parishad polls. In the 2021-2022 Union Parishad polls, 45 of 4,058 Union Parishads (1.1%), resulted in female candidates in the chairperson posts, an increase from the 26 female

candidates (0.64%) who won in the Union Parishad polls in 2016, out of 4,087 Union Parishads. To increased participation of women, one-third of the seats in Union Councils and Upazila Parishads are reserved for women.

▪ **Challenges:**

Underrepresentation in Political Leadership: Women's representation in local government and decision-making roles remains limited. Women hold 20% of seats in the National Parliament, but they still face challenges in political participation due to corruption, misuse of power, illegal money, gender biases and entrenched societal norms.

▪ **Barriers to Leadership:** Societal and cultural barriers continue to limit women's full participation in leadership roles in both politics and business. Patriarchal norms often undermine women's authority and decision-making power.

**Recommendations:**

▪ **Increase Political Representation:** Implement affirmative action measures to increase women's representation in political parties, especially at the local government level. Provide leadership training and mentorship programs to build women's political capacity.

▪ **Support Women's Participation in Decision-making:** Ensure that gender quotas are enforced in decision-making bodies, both at the national and local levels.

**Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women**

**Progress:**

▪ **National Women's Development Policy:** Bangladesh has further strengthened its gender-responsive policies, including the National Women's Development Policy (2011), which has been updated with specific goals related to gender equality.

▪ **Government Bodies:** The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and institutions like the Bangladesh National Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BNWCCI) have been instrumental in advancing women's rights and welfare.

**Challenges:**

▪ **Lack of proper Institutional Coordination:** While Bangladesh has made significant progress in creating institutional mechanisms like the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA), there is often a lack of coordination between these institutions and local government bodies, limiting their effectiveness.

▪ **Resource Allocation:** Insufficient funding for gender equality programs and lack of implementation capacity in rural areas have hindered the effective realization of policies aimed at improving women's rights.

**Recommendations:**

▪ **Strengthen Gender-Responsive Governance:** Enhance gender mainstreaming in all government policies and programs to ensure that women's needs are addressed at all levels. This includes budgeting for gender equality in national policies and programs.

- **Improve Coordination:** Strengthen coordination between government institutions, NGOs, and civil society organizations to ensure that gender equality programs are aligned, effective, and reach those most in need.

## Human Rights of Women

### Progress:

To reduce and prevent violations of rights of women, Bangladesh has a robust accountability mechanism that includes both administrative and judicial measures.

- **Strengthening institutional capacities of the justice system:** To ensure basic access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual courts were established through the Use of Information Communication Technology by Court Act 2020, strengthening women's access to justice. Between May 2020- August 2022, 314,842 bail petitions were heard through virtual courts and bail was granted to 158,507 individuals.<sup>206</sup> Various digital solutions such as SMS notification to witnesses, online cause list, judicial monitoring dashboard, and the MyCourt mobile app have been introduced to enhance the judicial process. To reduce case backlogs, Bangladesh has introduced a range of digital tools to streamline judicial services in subordinate courts, such as the Online Cause List, Judicial Monitoring Dashboard, and the MyCourt mobile app. Alongside Bangladesh has prepared its first ever 'National Study on Trafficking in Persons' in 2022 which was led by Ministry of Home Affairs.

**Legal Aid:** The government has expanded **legal aid services** for women, ensuring better access to justice, particularly for survivors of violence and discrimination. In FY2021-2022, the government reported 632 cases recorded against 2,984 accused persons with police under the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012, of which investigation has been done for 487 cases at the end of the year.

### Challenges:

**Access to Justice:** Women's access to legal services and justice remains inadequate, particularly in rural areas. Legal literacy is low, and **discriminatory cultural practices** continue to hinder women's ability to seek justice for violence and discrimination.

**Child Marriage:** Despite the **Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2017**, child marriage remains a significant problem, especially in rural areas. Girls from disadvantaged families are most at risk of early marriage, which limits their opportunities for education and economic independence. **21% of girls** are married before 18 (2024), despite the legal reforms.

### Recommendations:

**Access to Legal Protection:** Ensure that women have access to legal aid, **counseling services**, and protection against discrimination. Strengthen **awareness** campaigns about women's rights, including **property rights** and **inheritance laws**.

**Address Cultural Norms:** Work with **religious** and **community leaders** to challenge harmful cultural practices that hinder women's rights, such as **child marriage** and **dowry**.

## **Environment and Women**

### **Progress:**

- **Gender and Climate Change:** Bangladesh has incorporated **gender-sensitive approaches** into its climate action plans like **Climate Change Gender Action Plan**, by Originally developed in 2013, the revised CCGAP includes, for the first time, with given priority on women's leadership, in addition to five other areas: natural resources, livelihoods, infrastructure, gender-responsive implementations; and capacity-building, knowledge management and communication.
- Women are actively involved in disaster risk reduction and resilience-building programs, especially in rural areas affected by flooding and cyclones.
- **Local Government Initiatives on Climate Change project:** The "Local Government Initiative on Climate Change" (LoGIC) project, a collaborative effort by the Government of Bangladesh, UNDP, UNCDF, the European Union, Sweden, and Denmark, has made significant strides in promoting gender equality and climate resilience. Over its six-year duration, the project has empowered 1.97 million individuals, with 56 per cent of them being women, through its Community Resilience Fund (CRF) and Performance Based Climate Resilience Grants (PBCRG), and capacity-building support. The initiative disbursed USD 12.26 million to 42,500 project participants as financial support through the CRF, implementing climate adaptive livelihoods options. Additionally, USD 9.14 million was disbursed to 72 union parishads and 19 upazilas as PBCRG to implement 916 climate-resilient community-level schemes, benefiting 300,000 people, including 58 per cent women. Notably, 68% of these adaptation schemes received additional co-financing, further amplifying their impact.
- The National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM) 2021-2025 takes a 'whole-of-Society' approach for effective implementation of disaster management activities and programmes.
- A total of 56,397 women have been trained in various fields of disaster management under various projects, including 5,657 women Cyclone Preparedness Programme volunteers; 8,000 women fire service and civil defence volunteers; 9,540 women members of Disaster Management Committee and 8,200 school girls and teachers at the district, upazila, union level. Women's representation as Cyclone Preparedness Volunteers has increased slightly since 2020-2021, from 38 lakh women to 38.60 lakh women in 2023. The government has also implemented the "Char Development and Settlement Project-Bridging" 2020-2022 to support landless families who lost their lands due to environmental disasters. The fourth phase of the project offered homes for 155,000 people from 28,000 households residing in different chars of the country.

### **Challenges:**

- **Vulnerability to Climate Change:** Women, particularly in rural areas, are disproportionately affected by climate change and environmental disasters, such as floods, cyclones, and river erosion. Women are often the primary caregivers, and climate disasters exacerbate their burdens.
- **Limited Participation in Environmental Decision-making:** Although Bangladesh is integrating gender in climate change policies, women are still underrepresented in **climate change decision-making** and **natural resource management**, particularly in **agriculture**, **fisheries**, and **water management**.
- **Recommendations:**
- **Involve Women in Climate Action:** Actively involve women in **climate change adaptation** strategies, ensuring their leadership in **environmental sustainability** programs and **disaster risk management** initiatives.
- **Promote Green Jobs for Women:** Create **green jobs** in sectors like **renewable energy**, **agriculture**, and **environmental conservation**, ensuring that women have access to the skills and resources needed for these emerging industries.

### The Girl Child

**Progress:** The Government of Bangladesh has made notable efforts over the past five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child. It is mentioned that the Government of Bangladesh remains steadfast in its implementation of the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage 2018-2030, with the aim of completely eliminating child marriage by 2041. Alongside the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has initiated the "National Multimedia Campaign on Prevention of Violence Against Children and Child Marriage" in 2024 with technical assistance received from UNICEF.

- **Combating Child Marriage:** The **Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2017** set the legal marriage age for girls at 18. This law has contributed to a decline in child marriage rates, with **21% of girls** married before 18 in 2024, down from **29%** in 2015.
- **Education for Girls:** Introduction of stipends and school-feeding programmes have contributed to increased enrolment in education. For example, the education rate of girls from minority ethnic groups in the plains has increased through the distribution of education scholarships and bicycles under the Development Assistance Program for Special Areas. The government has also worked to improve sanitation facilities in schools, particularly by building gender-segregated toilets and ensuring access to menstrual hygiene management products to reduce absenteeism among girls during menstruation.

### **Challenges:**

- **Child Marriage:** Despite efforts to combat child marriage, it remains a persistent issue, specially in rural and poorer communities.
- **Education and Safety:** Girls face challenges in accessing education due to **child marriage**, lack of Security, **household labor responsibilities**, and **unsafe school environments**. The **dropout rate** among girls remains a concern, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

### **Recommendations:**



- **End Child Marriage:** Enforce the Child Marriage Restraint Act and work towards eliminating child marriage by ensuring education for girls and providing incentives for families to keep girls in school until they reach adulthood.
- **Improve Education Access:** Provide free or subsidized education for marginalized girls, especially in rural and underserved regions, to reduce dropout rates and improve completion rates in secondary and higher education.

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