

# Ten Actions to Stand against Rape

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019, representatives of the Government of Bangladesh, civil society organizations, the UN family and development partners, gathered together on the occasion of the National Dialogue on Actions Against Sexual Violence to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence under the theme: Generation Equality Stands against Rape. As a way forward from the National Dialogue, experts and practitioners commit to the following actions:

- 01.** Invest more in research and data collection on sexual violence; the data should at minimum be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and location. Work towards a national level statistics database accessible to all;
- 02.** Address violence as a multidimensional gender equality issue. Use the media and other platforms to break the culture of silence and impunity, change the narrative of rape by raising awareness about consent, and speaking up against the root causes of GBV, including the patriarchy, power imbalances, toxic masculinity, and gender inequality;
- 03.** Move away from a protectionist discourse, which limits women's mobility and agency, to a more empowering one that ensures that both the private sphere and public spaces are safe for all women and girls;
- 04.** Introduce or strengthen self-empowerment programmes and age appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in schools. Incorporate these programmes and sexuality training in the national curriculum and encourage parents to stop treating sex as a taboo, and instead promote a culture of positive sexuality;
- 05.** Invest more in primary prevention, challenge rigid social norms and the normalization of sexual violence and develop a common platform to share good practices on what works to prevent violence;
- 06.** Establish a more inclusive and multi-sectoral coordination of response to violence, including health, legal, livelihood and psychosocial support, at national, district and subdistrict levels. Roll out the "protocol on health sector response to GBV for the health care service providers" country wide. Medical services should be available for GBV survivors 24/7 at all levels;
- 07.** We need to listen to, and believe, survivors: eliminate the re-victimization and stigma of rape survivors and provide them with a safe space to report;
- 08.** Strengthen existing sexual violence legislation implementation and costing, including implementation of the High Court Directive on Sexual Harassment, and advocate for the amendment of discriminatory laws that discourage rape survivors to report and hamper women's access to justice. Enact the proposed Sexual Harassment Law; amend the Penal Code by changing the discriminatory definition of rape to make it more inclusive, amend character evidence provisions, and adopt the victims/ witness protection law;
- 09.** Strengthen accountability: Consistent with SDG 16, enhance effectiveness and accountability of institutions, especially law enforcement agencies, administration and judiciary, to ensure rule of law and justice for survivors of sexual violence; work towards a more liable, informed GBV and gender responsive law enforcement structure and enhance the system for monitoring and evaluation of the National Action Plan on Prevention of Violence against Women and Children, on Ending Child Marriage and the Women's Development Policy;
- 10.** All government orders, policies, directives and referral pathways concerning prevention and response should be widely disseminated at the grassroots level, to ensure that rights holders are aware and empowered to claim their rights. Duty bearers should strengthen access to justice for survivors of sexual violence.

As Development Partners, the UN family, government and civil society, we commit to be held accountable to these actions and to resolutely join our hands to end sexual violence and all other forms of violence.

