

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS



Photo : UN Women/Mahbubur Rahman



Photo : UN Women/Mahbubur Rahman

In order to create a gender-sensitive society, it is crucial to reassess social upbringing, norms, and culture. It is imperative to reform families and education systems to address harmful social norms and cultures that perpetuate deep-rooted inequality and patriarchy. Only then can we uproot these issues and foster a society that is more sensitive to gender equality. Speakers stressed this at a learning sharing event on the 'Combatting Gender-Based Violence (CGBV)' project organized by UN Women in May. It showcased promising practices of violence against women (VAW) prevention approaches in Bangladesh from the CGBV project. With generous support from the Government of Canada, the CGBV project collaborated with civil society organizations (CSOs) to address gender-based violence (GBV) through primary prevention. Throughout the five-year intervention, several important learnings emerged, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts to bring about lasting changes in power dynamics.

COMBATTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BANGLADESH?

Combating Gender-Based Violence (CGBV) project is a primary prevention, aimed to stop violence before it occurs by creating a holistic framework of integrated and mutually reinforced prevention interventions to address underlying causes of Violence Against Women (VAW), improve access to economic opportunities, enhance capacities of civil society to design, implement and sustain prevention programming, and generate evidence and knowledge on VAW prevention.

INTERVENTION AREAS:

- Supported civil society coordinated advocacy efforts for law reform, resulting in the Evidence (Amendment) Act 2022. It prohibits questioning the character of a rape survivor during cross-examinations in a trial and incorporates the admissibility of digital evidence.
- Institutionalized Zero Tolerance to Sexual Harassment policy at 12 public and private workplaces and improved knowledge and skills of officials on VAW reporting and redressal mechanism.
- Established 15 Complaint Committees at educational, public, and private institutions and influenced forming additional 78 committees in compliance with the High Court Directive 2009.
- Developed capacity of 192 Complaint Committee members to implement UN Women's campus-based 'Whole of School' prevention approach and mobilized 360 student change makers for peer activism. Reached 2,798 students through a behavior change communication campaign.
- Engaged 9,196 stakeholders (local government, educational institutions, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, factories, transport sector) through advocacy, training, orientation, and campaign on preventing VAW in workplace and public places.

POLICY ADVOCACY AND STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

- 10,503 community members in 12 villages from program intervention areas are now aware about respectful and gender equitable relationships to prevent VAW. They were engaged through the globally adopted prevention modes including the community mobilization approach -SASA/Together and family-based prevention approach-Shomota O Shomota/Jeebon.
- 41,279 community women and men indirectly mobilized through behavior change communication interventions. Among them, 12,800 Imams were reached with targeted messaging on gender-based violence.

TRANSFORMING SOCIAL NORMS

GENERATING EVIDENCE-BASED KNOWLEDGE ON VAW PREVENTION

- Research on Effective Approaches to Prevent Violence Against Women informed the VAW prevention strategy of the CGBV project.
- Supported the Rape Law Reform Research Reports Series: *Between 'Virtue' and 'Immorality': Why Character Evidence Must Be Prohibited in Rape Cases, 2019* and *No Justice without Reparation, why rape survivors must have a right to compensation, 2020* to inform policy advocacy on legislative changes.
- Established Bangladesh national cohort on SASA/Together in coordination with UNHCR, UNFPA, and partners, for promoting one coherent approach to VAW prevention.
- 773,431 people were informed about domestic and intimate partner violence, consent, marital rape, national helpline on available services for GBV survivors, and COVID-19 health response through UN Women Bangladesh's social media page.
- A South-South collaboration with the Ugandan organization *Relating Voices* supported the rollout of the SASA/Together model for community-based primary prevention.

“Canada has adopted a feminist International Assistance Policy to aid foreign countries in achieving gender equality and a peaceful world. It is imperative to work holistically, work in a coalition, work in an intersectional way, and involve people of all gender and beliefs to end violence against women and girls.” H.E. Ms. Lilly Nicholls, Canadian High Commissioner.

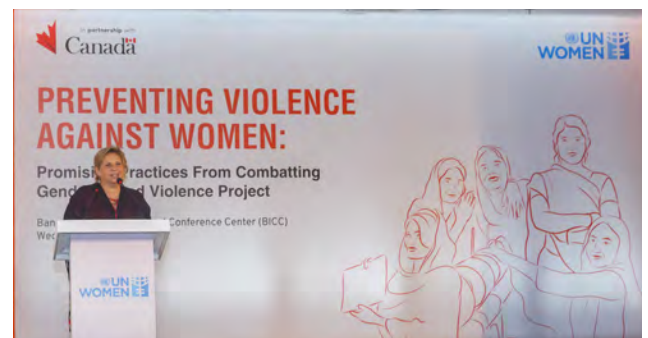


Photo : UN Women/Mahbubur Rahman



Photo : UN Women/Mahbubur Rahman

A panel discussion moderated by Ms. Jinat Ara Haque, Chief Executive of WE CAN Alliance, featured grassroots voices sharing their experiences of transforming their communities and working towards reducing violence against women.

Watch a video on [“What works to prevent violence?”](#)

“I used to ignore the conflicts of neighboring families before. But after receiving multiple training sessions with CGBV project, I wanted to make a change. I started going to my neighbors and convince them to take action against any kind of violence they faced” -Ayesha Akhter, Community Leader.



Testimonies from the CGBV project participants on social norm change:



ENDING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN CLASSROOMS

A pilot intervention in schools demonstrated the potential of interactive classroom activities to change regressive gender attitudes among students, teachers, parents, and staff. The initiative, titled "Ending Gender Stereotypes in Classrooms," was jointly implemented by UN Women and JAAGO Foundation, a youth-based CSO, in five selected secondary schools in Dhaka, with generous support from United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI).

In January 2023, a baseline survey revealed that 64.2 percent of girls and 62.3 percent of boys lacked knowledge on recognizing and identifying gender stereotypes. To address this, a total of 2,406 students (1,046 girls and 1,360 boys) from five secondary schools in Dhaka participated in the pilot program. A globally evaluated module- [Connect with Respect](#) has been contextualized for reflective discussions and play-based activities, recognizing gender stereotypes, challenging discriminatory social norms, and preventing GBV in schools.



Photo : Jaago Foundation

This hands-on approach helped the students and teachers recognize positive and respectful gender norms, establish meaningful connections with their peers regardless of gender, and forge commitment to become allies for gender equality and active bystanders in the future. Watch a video [here](#).

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF ORAGNIZATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY



Photo : Snighdha Sultana/WDDF

UN Women conducted a capacity assessment of seven Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in five key areas: identity and governance; organizational management; programming; coordination and collaboration; and sustainability. Under a UN joint initiative to accelerate the implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and disability inclusive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this assessment helped identify the strengths and weaknesses of the OPDs, which will inform a capacity development



Photo : Snighdha Sultana/WDDF

plan to be implemented in 2023. Led by UN Women's CSO partner Women with Disability Development Forum, the capacity development plan will improve the OPDs' efficacy and sustainability. This will further strengthen their capacity to advocate with the government on effective implementation of the national Disability Act and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for a more inclusive society.

TAKE
5

with the EU
Ambassador
in Bangladesh



Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union in Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Charles Whiteley in an exclusive Take Five interview with UN Women highlighted the EU's commitment to gender equality in Bangladesh as well as across the globe. The full interview here:

Take Five: "Women in Bangladesh are claiming their space in the fields of culture, business, politics and civil society. And it is important to make sure that any pushback against that is not given oxygen."

Watch his full video interview [here](#).

MESSAGE FROM THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER



Lilly Nicholls

High Commissioner for Canada in Bangladesh

In her message, Canadian High Commissioner H.E. Ms. Lilly Nicholls put emphasis on addressing the root causes of violence through prevention programming to end violence against women.

Watch her full video message [here](#).

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION: ADVOCACY MESSAGES FOR EFFECTIVE COORDINATION

The Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) working group in Bangladesh, chaired by the Department of Women's Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh and co-chaired by UN Women, has developed advocacy messages in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Action. The objective is to mobilize the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) in Bangladesh to incorporate these gender-focused measures into emergency response plans and activities. The advocacy messages emphasize the importance of collecting and analyzing disaggregated data, consulting marginalized groups, and integrating their perspectives into assessments and monitoring. They highlight the need for adequate funding for women's empowerment programs and support for women's rights organizations; accessible economic empowerment strategies addressing unpaid care responsibilities; strengthened representation of women, girls, and marginalized groups in decision-making processes; and measures to prevent and respond to GBV. The messages further stress on collaboration with relevant ministries, women's rights organizations, and marginalized groups, as well as the integration of gender considerations into appeals, funding mechanisms, and human resources. Lastly, they highlight the promotion of strategic gender issues in advocacy and coordination efforts. Read the messages [here](#).



Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Messages in Humanitarian Actions for HCTT

January 2023

Developed by the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group
Chaired by Department of Women Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
and Co-chaired by UN Women

The following advocacy messages are developed based on the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Action and its Accountability Framework and it considers lessons learned from recent emerging gender impacts of flood, cyclone and the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to mobilize Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT), Bangladesh to ensure these gendered measures are reflected in emergency response initiatives. The GiHA Working Group stands ready to support this process.

BACKGROUND

Crises do not affect everyone equally. Women, children, aged people, persons with disabilities, and socially disadvantaged groups are more vulnerable to different risks and disasters. Although Bangladesh has managed to reduce human mortality rates significantly over the past few years, protection of women and children remains a challenge. They are seldom included in planning and decision-making processes of humanitarian and disaster risk reduction programmes. Thus, their specific needs and views are usually not reflected plans that are adopted in pre, during and post-disaster situations. In recent years, the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) working group has taken several leadership initiatives to promote gender responsiveness and women's leadership in Disaster Risk Management (DRM).

GENDERED IMPACTS

- Women and girls adopt negative coping mechanisms in the aftermath such as reduced meals, selling productive assets, taking loans, resorting to child marriage.
- Existing shelters are seldom gender, age, and diversity friendly. Safety measures for women, girls from displaced community remain a concern in the shelters; and gender-based violence, and child exploitation increase and become compounded by loss of habitat, income, savings, school closures, etc.
- The existing referral system is not adequate to connect all women, girls, and other at-risk groups to appropriate multi-sector Gender based violence (GBV) prevention and response services in a timely and safe manner.
- Evidence indicates limited or no access to routine health services for pregnant women as well as pre- and post-natal health care or contraceptives, mental health, and psychosocial support to cope with impacts of disaster related losses. Provisions for clinical management of rape is also unavailable during disaster.
- The informal sectors, where most of the women are engaged for livelihoods are most affected; thus, disasters increase the gender gap in livelihoods.
- Representation and leadership of women and girls in decision making processes regarding disaster preparedness, response and recovery planning is almost non-existent.

GENDER EQUALITY CHECKLIST FOR CYCLONE AND MONSOON SEASON



Natural disasters have differential impacts on individuals based on their gender, age, and other factors. Due to pre-existing gender inequalities women, children, persons with disabilities, and gender diverse people are often the most adversely affected by disasters. It is crucial to consider the various forms of discrimination that people may experience, in order to understand their unique needs, capacities, and priorities. This understanding should be integrated into all stages of disaster preparedness. The GiHA Working Group, has developed a checklist to assist the HCTT and practitioners in Bangladesh in integrating gender equality into their disaster preparedness efforts for the monsoon and cyclone season. The checklist covers recommended actions in key areas such as food security, nutrition, water-sanitation and hygiene, health, shelter, GBV, child protection, education, logistics, early recovery, needs assessment, communication with communities, and cash assistance. Find the checklist [here](#).

Wing to indicators of gender equality (important for disaster preparedness and response activities)

Natural disasters impact women, girls, boys, and men of all ages differently. Due to pre-existing gender inequalities women, children, persons with disabilities and gender diverse people represent the excluded and vulnerable groups that are often the most adversely affected by disasters.

Existing social norms constrain women and girls' and excluded and vulnerable groups' ability to prepare to disasters, as well as to respond to, and mitigate their disproportionate impacts. The lack of information, agency and choice exclude them from decision making processes and often prevent their access to relief support.

It is crucial to take into consideration multiple forms of discrimination that individuals may be subjected to, in order to recognize their different and specific needs, capacities and priorities. This understanding should be integrated throughout the preparedness cycle.

The active representation and leadership of women and girls and other excluded and vulnerable groups in humanitarian processes should be facilitated; this would promote transformative changes at individual and societal level.

To be most effective, disaster plans must be developed with, agreed to, and understood by everyone they prepare to protect.

The recent disasters that impacted Bangladesh in the past three years uncovered a series of gendered impacts.

Women face an important reduction of their income outcome to hazards and disasters (70% loss for married women, and 54% for marginalised women).¹ At the same time, their responsibilities for unpaid care work are almost doubling during disasters as they mostly bear the challenging responsibility of fetching water or of maintaining sanitation.² In these circumstances, there is a high risk that women and girls will adopt negative coping strategies (taking loans, resorting to child marriage, dropping meals, relying their household assets) putting their health and safety at risk and exposing them to the potential loss of all of their economic resources.³ Additionally, in many cases, lack of recovery also triggers violence against women and girls.⁴

In the regions of Bangladesh most vulnerable to floods and cyclones, women and girls generally have less mobility than men and have limited access to accurate, official information as well as to public service announcements, due to limited access to public spaces, group gatherings and outreach activities. This, coupled with the damage caused on roads post-disaster and the scarcity of means of transportation

¹ Gender impact of Cyclone 19 and post-disaster in Bangladesh, UN Women, 2022.

² Ibid.

³ Rapid gender analysis of flood disaster impact on northwestern Bangladesh, GiHA Working Group Bangladesh, June 2022.

⁴ Post-disaster loss of livelihoods, food security and mental well-being, HCTT Field Security Query, July 2022.

⁵ HCTT Field Security Query: Humanitarian Situation Note, United Nations Bangladesh.

GRASSROOTS WOMEN LEADERS TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION



Photo: UN Women/ Shararat Islam

"We live in an area where disaster is common. So, we have to accept that disasters will be a part of our life and we have to learn to adapt," said Lipika Bairagi, grassroots CSO leader from Khulna, a southwest district in Bangladesh. Lipika along with 10 CSO leaders from Dacope, Khulna met a visiting delegation of Bangladesh and Swedish government officials. They demonstrated two community-led adaptation projects that had been initiated, managed, and financed by them as an outcome of the leadership and organizational skill development trainings led by UN Women. They showed the delegates their system for collecting and storing rainwater for household and irrigation use. In a region plagued by saline intrusion and arsenic contamination, the system has proven vital in addressing water supply challenges. It was set up by the Association for Social Development & Distressed Welfare, a grass-roots CSO led by Lipika Bairagi. The local women also demonstrated their improved cookstoves, which require less wood and emit fewer pollutants.



Photo: UN Women/ Shararat Islam

The women had previously used mud stoves, which cause eye, heart and lung infections. As an added benefit, the new cookstoves are mobile and can be carried to cyclone shelters. The visit to Khulna took place under [EmPower: Women for Climate Resilient Societies](#) Programme, funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), jointly organized by UN Women and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in May 2023. [Read more](#). Know more about [State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in Bangladesh](#).

"I am so impressed to witness the courage and capacity you all have showcased," said Dr. Farhina Ahmed, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. "We will support the installation of more solar pumps through engaging local authority. The government is always ready to improve the lives of the people we serve, including women, by ensuring basic necessities such as food and energy."



Photo: UN Women/ Shararat Islam

DRIVING AMBITION BREAKS SOCIAL NORMS



Photo: UN Women/Liz Pick

Nusrat (left) and Jannatul dream of becoming professional drivers

“It was my childhood aim to become a driver,” says Jannatul. “If men can drive a car, why not women?” After 10 theory classes and 30 practical lessons, Jannatul (21) and Nusrat (19) say they now feel confident behind the wheel. They are among seven women who have completed the driving training supported by UN Women and provided through the Oxfam-managed Multipurpose Women's Centre (MPWC) in Cox's Bazar. When Jannatul and her mother heard about the livelihoods training options available at the MPWC, Jannatul knew straight away she would enrol in the driving program.

“My mother chose sewing for me, but my friend encouraged me to follow my dream instead. She said, ‘when you start earning money your parents will realise that driving is a respectable career. My family has remained against it but I persevered and I completed the training without their help.’ Both women dream of finding a job with a non-governmental organization (NGO) or the UN. “Before the Rohingya people came here, I never saw a female driver,” says Nusrat. “But then I began seeing women driving cars for the UN and NGOs and I was inspired to learn to drive and earn money so I too can become self-reliant.”

They have also attended training in leadership through UN Women's partner Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS).

“After I learned about gender discrimination from a leadership session, I realised that my family gave my brother more opportunities than me. So I talked to my parents to support me more and they agreed,” says Nusrat.

Read more in the latest [Cox's Bazar newsletter](#).

WOMEN LEADERS MAKING CHANGE

“Child marriage and gender-based violence are taking place every day in our community,” says Sultana, a woman leader in Cox's Bazar. “These are important issues. I didn't miss a single day of the training.” The women's leadership training run by Oxfam supports women in the host community to feel empowered to raise their voice, to challenge social norms and to demand change. “I was very shy and timid before this training, I just did what I was told,” Sultana says.

“I gradually improved my confidence, especially in speaking out against violence, discrimination and early marriage. Now I have become a women leader and can speak fluently about these issues.”

Speaking up has profound effects for the status of these women both at home and in the community. “I share my knowledge with my husband and he is changing slowly,” says Sultana.



Photo: UN Women/Liz Pick

Host community women leaders, Sultana (left) and Anowara

Anowara, another graduate of the women's leadership training, was also inspired to take action and lead change. “I learned a lot about unity from the training,” she says. “When people work together, we can achieve more. As women we can increase our power to influence decision making when we support each other.” [Read more.](#)

WHEN YOU KNOW YOUR BUSINESS, NO ONE CAN HOLD YOU BACK: PRIYANAKA RANI SUR, ENTREPRENEUR

My husband and I initiated our tech start-up [BornolT](#) in 2016 to develop business software and websites for small businesses across a range of sectors. Today we have 11 employees, six of whom are women. In my experience, women often feel they need a little longer to understand the work, but once they do, they accomplish it with greater efficiency, on time, and with fewer errors. It's different with men. Men will say that they catch on quickly, but they tend to make more mistakes. So I have to apply different strategies to manage them. The training from UN Women on the [Women's Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\)](#) has been immensely helpful in promoting women in leadership roles and creating an enabling environment for them.



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam

Being a woman in the tech field has been challenging. People tend to assume I don't know anything about business or IT and often do not listen to me. This is due to their social conditioning. We have been taught that business and tech are men's domains. So I put myself in clients' shoes, respond to their queries, and explain our solutions. When you know your business, no one can hold you back. This principle has contributed to us building a loyal customer base.

Since college, I have wanted to walk down my own entrepreneurial path. In a “normal” job as an employee, one has to work within a limited space and under set guidelines. But entrepreneurs can work independently and not be boxed in.

Read her [full story](#).

WINGS OF SUCCESS: EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN BANGLADESH



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam

In this captivating video story, three women entrepreneurs from Jashore share their inspiring journeys. Under the Women's Empowerment for Inclusive Growth (WING) project, these entrepreneurs are among the 46 companies that have enhanced their capacity to promote gender equality and empower women in their workplaces, marketplaces, and communities. Watch the video to know more.

[“WINGS of Success: Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh”](#)

“INCLUSION GOES BEYOND PAPERWORK; IT MUST BE VISIBLE AND TANGIBLE”

In the words of Nazma Ara Begum Poppy, National Project Support Officer, UN Women Bangladesh



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam

“I did not grow up with my parents in Chittagong. I studied in a hostel. We were allowed to come home during vacations only. For me the options were either education or living with parents. I thank my parents for choosing education. However, opportunities for education were limited for people like me, especially as a visually impaired girl in Bangladesh.

The missionary school hostel in Mirpur, Dhaka felt like prison. Our activities were restricted to studying, singing, and dancing. I longed to read storybooks and newspapers, but they were not available in accessible format.

There is minimal awareness and understanding of disability, particularly when it comes to women with disabilities. Negative attitudes, inaccessible systems, and infrastructure that overlook the concerns of people with disabilities, especially women, pose significant challenges. This is precisely why I felt compelled to work on women and girls with disabilities.

Teaching and working as a telephone operator were the only options available to us. But I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to work in the development sector so that others in my community could have more choices than the limited ones available to them.

After completing my education, I faced difficulty renting a flat. Landlords were unwilling to rent to a visually impaired woman. Eventually, I found a sublet near my workplace, sharing it with a few female colleagues.

For me barriers are so many. I cannot walk to work or use public transportation. So, commute is expensive for me. I always have to live close to where I work.

“Including persons with disabilities in organizations is crucial. They should participate fully, and reasonable accommodation must be provided to remove barriers. Inclusion goes beyond paperwork; it must be visible and tangible.”

While the government in the [Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2013](#) has identified 11 types of disabilities and the associated physical and infrastructural barriers, there are hidden challenges that remain unaddressed. People with intellectual disabilities and Down syndrome, for example, face unique challenges that require attention. Policies exist, but effective implementation needs to be ensured and monitored.

After completing my master's degree in Sociology from Dhaka University, I joined the National Forum of Organizations Working with the Disabled. Working in the UN was never part of my expectations, but when the opportunity came to join UN Women, I seized it, as it aligned with the work I had been dedicated to in my previous role.

UN Women provided reasonable accommodations, like JAWS software (software for visually impaired individuals) on my laptop. I have a supportive manager and work in an inclusive environment. It's a mutual learning experience where I learn from my colleagues every day, and they, in turn, learn how to collaborate effectively with a person with a disability.

The disability inclusion movement is not new; it has been around for 30 to 35 years. However, it remains a largely male-dominated sector, and women with disabilities often face additional challenges within the broader disability community. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2013 also does not address the needs of women and girls with disabilities. UN Women can play a pivotal role by building the capacity of women-led disability organizations and integrating disability issues into their programs to ensure full mainstreaming.”

Nazma Ara Begum Poppy is a UN Volunteer (UNV) working as National Project Support Officer in UN Women Bangladesh. She is supporting the joint UN initiative 'to accelerate implementation of the Convention of Rights of the Person with Disabilities (CRPD) and disability inclusive SDGs funded by United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi Partner Trust fund.

UN LAUNCHES GENDER PARITY STRATEGY IN BANGLADESH



UN Women, leveraging its coordination mandate as the co-chair of UN Gender Equality Theme Group, has facilitated the development and roll out of the UN Bangladesh Gender Parity Strategy 2023-2028. The strategy reflects the UN feminist values and commitments in advancing gender equality. It aims to achieve gender parity among UN staff and personnel in advancing gender equality. It aims to achieve gender parity among UN staff and personnel through measures for enhancing the representation of women, that currently stands at 35 per cent across all levels of employment. Looking beyond numerical targets, the strategy seeks to identify and eliminate systemic barriers and gender norms that impede women's entry, retention, and advancement in the UN. The progress of the Gender Parity Strategy will be annually tracked and reported to reported to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). Read the [full strategy](#).

This significant action was featured at the UN-Women Executive Board Pre-Session in advance of the 2023 Annual Session. The Country Representative delivered a speech highlighting the progress made by the UNCT in Bangladesh towards advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda within the context of UN Development System repositioning. Read the [full speech](#).

RESOURCES

UN Women's thematic programme briefs highlight the issues addressed by the organization, the strategies implemented to tackle them, significant results achieved, and impact stories.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
June 2023

THE ISSUE
Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a pervasive human rights violation. Violence happens in both public and private spheres and has many forms, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual harassment, assault, child violence, rape, and sexual violence. It is a leading cause of gender inequality, gender inequality, gender discrimination, and discrimination against women and girls. It is a leading cause of gender inequality, gender inequality, gender discrimination, and discrimination against women and girls. It is a leading cause of gender inequality, gender inequality, gender discrimination, and discrimination against women and girls.

STRATEGY
In line with Bangladesh's 10th Five Year Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Women country programme (Strategy) for Bangladesh contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. UN Women is committed to ensuring that women, girls, and sexual minorities, especially those from marginalized groups, have a life free from violence, discrimination, and harmful social norms and practices.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION
June 2023

THE ISSUE
Climate crisis and gender inequality are two of the most pressing challenges of our time. Climate change and disaster disproportionately affect people of different genders. Due to pre-existing socioeconomic and cultural inequalities, women, children, persons with disabilities and gender diverse people are often the groups most adversely affected by disasters and climate change. They are also the groups most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disaster. Climate change and disaster risks are interconnected and exacerbate each other, increasing the vulnerability of women and girls, limiting their ability to adequately prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. The lack of information, agencies, and disaster risk reduction from decision-making processes and often hinders their access to relief and other support services. It is crucial to recognize the multiple forms of discrimination that certain individuals may face to identify their different and specific needs, capacities, and priorities.

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WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
June 2023

THE ISSUE
Women make critical contributions to a country's economy, whether in business or agriculture, as entrepreneurs or employees, or their unpaid work at home. However, they remain disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination, and exploitation. This results in low participation in the formal economy, low wages, poor economic conditions, and conditions, and limited opportunities to improve their economic situation. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (preliminary report 2022), female labour force participation increased to 42.88 per cent in 2022 from 38.9 per cent in 2019/20. It is roughly half of the male participants, which stood at 85.9 per cent in 2022. According to the 2021 Time Use Survey carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with UN Women, women spend about 4 hours daily on household and care work, whereas men spend 69 minutes per day on such work. Women own only 0.8 per cent of agricultural land in the private sector in Bangladesh, whereas men own 1.7 per cent. Women's economic empowerment is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. It is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. It is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

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GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE
June 2023

THE ISSUE
National plans, policies, institutions, and budgets enable the government to translate commitments to women's empowerment into practical programs towards gender equality. The often, however, they overlook measures to ensure that public services respond to women's needs and priorities. Women face several obstacles to participating in public life. Structural barriers, including gender inequality, low and insufficient, and other factors, limit women's participation in public life. Women face several obstacles to participating in public life. Structural barriers, including gender inequality, low and insufficient, and other factors, limit women's participation in public life. Women face several obstacles to participating in public life. Structural barriers, including gender inequality, low and insufficient, and other factors, limit women's participation in public life.

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WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY
June 2023

THE ISSUE
Women and girls often disproportionately bear the brunt of conflict, displacement, and violence, and they remain largely invisible in the process of negotiating and building peace. Women and girls often disproportionately bear the brunt of conflict, displacement, and violence, and they remain largely invisible in the process of negotiating and building peace. Women and girls often disproportionately bear the brunt of conflict, displacement, and violence, and they remain largely invisible in the process of negotiating and building peace.

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ROHINGYA RESPONSE
June 2023

THE ISSUE
The year 2023 marks the sixth year since women arrived in Myanmar's Rakhine State province as a result of the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. One in five Rohingya women and girls currently live in refugee camps near Cox's Bazar. Bangladesh, the largest and oldest of the Asian displacement camps, has provided a gender-responsive humanitarian response to this crisis since 2017. During the last few years, Rohingya refugees have shown resilience, and the government and agencies of Bangladesh have generally taken them. However, ensuring greater resiliency, growth, and recovery (GRR), and distribution continue to be prioritized and addressed.

STRATEGY
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[In Brief: Ending Violence Against Women](#)

[In Brief: Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Action](#)

[In Brief: Women's Economic Empowerment](#)

[In Brief: Governance and Participation of Women in Public Life](#)

[In Brief: Women, Peace and Security](#)

[In Brief: Rohingya Response](#)

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW67)



Photo: UN Women/Enad Karim

Bangladesh Government delegation at the regional pre-CSW dialogue, held by ESCAP in Thailand.



Photo: UN Women/Motiur Rahman

National consultation in Bangladesh ahead of CSW 67

“The CSW67 priority theme is fully compliant with Bangladesh as we progress towards our “Smart Bangladesh” vision. Various laws, policies and structures that harness digital technologies to empower women, advance gender equality and prevent violence against women have been formulated by the Government. We took note of all your suggestions today. We shall consider these recommendations as the Ministry represents all women and girls of Bangladesh at CSW67,” -Fazilatun Nessa Indira MP, State Minister, MoWCA, Bangladesh.



Photo: UN Women/Motiur Rahman

Fazilatun Nessa Indira MP, State Minister, MoWCA giving speech at the National consultation in Bangladesh ahead of CSW67



Photo: MoWCA

Fazilatun Nessa Indira MP, State Minister, MoWCA delivering her speech at CSW67 in New York, USA.

A government delegation participated in the regional pre-CSW dialogue, held by Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Thailand. The delegation provided valuable perspectives from the Bangladeshi context to add to the region's contributions to the draft conclusions. Building on this momentum, a national consultation that brought together 13 line-ministries, civil society and development partners, shared their insights contributing to Bangladesh's remarks at the Ministerial Roundtable in New York. Fazilatun Nessa Indira MP, State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Bangladesh presented the collective inputs for the final agreed conclusion on the priority theme at the ministerial discussion. She focused on good practices in addressing barriers to bridge the gender digital divide and promoting education in the digital age for achieving gender equality. [Read more.](#)

Watch the State Minister's [full speech](#).

Read [Bangladesh holds a National Consultation ahead of CSW67](#).

Find [Remark by Gitanjali Singh](#), Country Representative, UN Women Bangladesh.

[Remark by Fazilatun Nessa Indira MP](#), State Minister, MOWCA [in Bengali]

Read an op-ed by UN Women Country Representative Ms. Gitanjali Singh, published in the Daily Star titled [“Digital divide: The new face of gender inequality.”](#)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023

UN Women leveraged its coordination mandate to bring together the sister UN agencies to coherently support and show solidarity with the CSOs during International Women's Day (IWD). The collaborative efforts resulted in greater attention to Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE), keeping the women's movement at the center. Working alongside UN and Development Partners (DPs), UN Women actively participated in CSO-led dialogues, events, and rallies actively engaging in conversations and activities related to GEWE. Additionally, UN Women provided technical support to develop and disseminate key messages on GEWE to ensure a unified voice across the UN and DPs. To mark the significant occasion, a [video message](#) was published through social media, featuring voices from CSOs, DPs, and the UN, showcasing their commitments and dedication to advancing GEWE.



IWD 2023 video message from the Civil Society, development partners, and the UN.



Photo: MoWCA

UN Women Bangladesh joined a rally organized by the Department of Women Affairs', Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on IWD 2023.



Photo: Naripokkho

UN Women joined a rally organized by Naripokkho that brought together 52 CSOs centered around the theme of "Mother's Guardianship over Child."

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023



Photo: Center for Migration Studies



Photo: Center for Migration Studies

Ms. Tapati Saha from UN Women Bangladesh spoke as the guest of honor at the national seminar on "Internal and International Migration: Policies & Practices for the Women Workers" organized by the Center of Migration Studies during the month of IWD 2023.



Photo: Prothom Alo



Photo: Prothom Alo

Roundtable on Women in #STEM Education: Breaking Barriers and Achieving Gender Parity in Technology and Innovation, jointly organized by Prothom Alo, GIZ, Devtale Partners and UN Women and supported by European Union in Bangladesh. Ms. Dilluba Haider and Ms. Punna Islam from UN Women Bangladesh joined the discussion. Click the photo to see the discussion. Read the [full supplement](#).



Photo: Prothom Alo

UN Women Country Representative Ms. Gitanjali Singh attended Prothom Alo IWD event. Veteran women movement leaders from Bangladesh honored 17 young women from diverse sectors who have defied gender stereotypes. This recognition aligns with the UN's "Leaving No One Behind" (LNOB) agenda and emphasizes the importance of empowering women at the grassroots level. [Read more](#)



Photo: British Council

In partnership with [Goethe-Institute](#) and as part of Art|Tea|Adda series, British Council hosted a panel discussion centered around #InternationalWomensDay2023, titled "Single Mothers in Contemporary Bangladeshi Society". Ms. Tania Sharmin from UN Women joined the discussion as a panelist

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023



Ms. Tapati Saha from UN Women joined "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality" event organized by International Finance Corporation (IFC) in partnership with UN Global Compact, Dhaka Stock Exchange and UN Women



Ms. Priyanka Rani Sur, Entrepreneur from Jashore and a participant from the WING project of UN Women joined "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality" panel discussion organized by IFC in partnership with UN Global Compact, Dhaka Stock Exchange and UN Women



Under the WING project, the UN Women team joined Netherlands Embassy to celebrate the "Anodomela" (an online platform) women entrepreneurs. The women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) entrepreneurs shared their success and challenges with the guests and showcased their products in an exhibition at the Embassy premises.



Ms. Reshma Zaman from UN Women attended as the Special Guest and delivered a speech on the importance of representation and leadership of women in the UN at the sixth International Model United Nations Conference, DPSIMUN VI in Delhi Public School (DPS) STS.



UN Women Bangladesh Country Representative, Ms. Gitanjali Singh joined a panel discussion on "Ensuring Online Safety by Increasing Digital Literacy" organized by BRAC in partnership with META. Watch her full [speech](#)

EMPOWERED WOMEN EMPOWER GENERATIONS : CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IN COX'S BAZAR

A joint communications campaign "Empowered Women Empower Generations" for Cox's Bazar was developed under the leadership of the GiHA working group, chaired by UN Women and UNHCR, to be inclusive of women in both the Rohingya and Bangladeshi communities. The campaign aimed to draw attention to women's contributions to society as caretakers, educators, volunteers, producers, earners, decision-makers, and leaders as well as the key role that women in the Rohingya and host communities are playing in supporting the refugee response. [Read more.](#)



Photo: UN Women/Pappu Mia

Monowara, women leader and UN Women Volunteer speaks at the Camp 4 dialogue session and celebrations.



Photo: UN Women/Pappu Mia

Camp 1E & 1W Camp-in-Charge (CiC), Kyathowai Prue Marma, UN Women and partner representatives release a dove to symbolise peace at the celebrations in Camp 1E.



Photo: UN Women/Pappu Mia

A drama performance raising awareness about the negative impacts of child marriage, Camp 5.



Photo: UN Women/Pappu Mia

A woman leader addresses the audience at Camp 1E.



Photo: UN Women/Pappu Mia

Women inspect handicrafts at a stall at the IWD Fair organized by BRAC at the Women's Market, Camp 5.



Photo: UN Women/Pappu Mia

Pritam Saha, Camp 5 CiC, recognizes the contribution of women leaders with an umbrella as a token of appreciation.

UN WOMEN REGIONAL DIRECTOR a.i. VISITS BANGLADESH



Photo: UN Women

Ms. Sarah Knibbs, Regional Director ad interim (ai), UN Women Asia and the Pacific, visited Bangladesh from 9-13 April, 2023, to gain insights into the country's evolving context of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). The visit aimed to address various aspects, including the Least Developing Country (LDC) graduation in 2026, post-COVID-19 recovery, and the protracted Rohingya response crisis as well as reiterating UN Women's commitment to supporting the Government of Bangladesh in advancing GEWE.

During her visit, Ms. Knibbs met with State Minister Ms. Fazilatun Ness Indira, MP, from the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary), from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Discussions revolved around regressive social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, women's leadership in climate change discourse, and the current status of the Rohingya Response Programme. The government officials highlighted the need for additional funding for the Rohingya Response and UN Women's assistance in addressing women's unpaid care work in light of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's commitment to recognizing women's unpaid contributions to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

In a meeting with DPs, concerns were raised regarding the shrinking civic space and ongoing challenges related to freedom of expression. The reversal of gender equality gains and visible pushback were areas of particular concern. Recognizing UN Women's coordination mandate and history with the women's movement, the DPs emphasized the importance of continued engagement with CSOs and the integration of national best practices into regional approaches to push for gender equality.

A substantive dialogue with prominent CSOs covered a wide range of gender equality issues. These included GBV, legal and institutional reforms, monitoring and accountability of existing mechanisms, unpaid care work, women's leadership in climate change, women's political participation, and promoting diversity and inclusion. Specific challenges faced by women with disabilities, indigenous women, and the gender diverse community were also discussed. Ms. Knibbs reiterated UN Women's role as a bridge between CSOs and DPs, highlighting the need to amplify joint voices through unified messaging on GEWE.

Ms. Knibbs also visited Cox's Bazar where she met with the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, Mr. Mohammed Mizanur Rahman to discuss the ongoing collaboration between UN Women and the government. She highlighted the contribution of Camp-in-Charges to create an environment where women can voice their concerns and seek resolution. In the camps, Ms. Knibbs joined a discussion with UN Women volunteers and women leaders from both the Rohingya and host community. Among the concerns raised were the increasing security risks for women and volunteers working in the camps.

Despite the evident challenges, Ms. Knibbs said she was heartened by the progress made she observed in the refugee camps. "I was struck by the way people spoke of social norms change and the difference this work is making to their daily lives and their futures. I was impressed by the way volunteers and women leaders spoke of taking this to the next level through their networks."



Photo: UN Women

UN WOMEN ORIENTS NEWLY APPOINTED OFFICIALS FROM EXPATRIATES' WELFARE AND OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT MINISTRY

UN Women Bangladesh organized an orientation training session for newly appointed officials from the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEW&OE) in Bangladesh. The session, held on June 15, 2023, aimed to familiarize the officials with UN Women's strategic priorities regarding safe and respectful migration of women migrant workers, and to explore their role in ensuring it.

A presentation from the Country Representative, Gitanjali Singh, provided an overview of the organization's strategic priorities in line with the 8th Five Year Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). The officials were also briefed on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 11 - Employment and CEDAW General Recommendation No. 26 on Women Migrant Workers. These recommendations emphasize the inclusion of a gender equality perspective in global labor migration discussions, particularly its impact on women.

BNSK, a civil society organization, highlighted that the working conditions for women migrant workers are often inhumane. Bangladeshi domestic workers, for instance, endure excessive working hours, with minimal rest and no day offs, which violates labor laws. BNSK emphasized the importance of destination countries implementing labor migration policies that prioritize the well-being and rights of migrant workers.



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam

The government representatives found the session informative and helpful, and sought recommendations on policy measures to create a safe environment for Bangladeshi migrant workers. The discussion highlighted the need for continued advocacy to address the lack of formal employment contracts and the importance of gender-responsive bilateral agreements between countries. Such agreements should include standard working hours and safety measures for migrant workers. Furthermore, the discussion emphasized the significance of skill development for women migrant workers, enabling them to explore alternative professions and ensuring and upholding their rights and dignity.



Photo: UN Women/Shararat Islam

TOWARDS ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

UN Women plays a crucial role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment by providing thought leadership. To achieve this, it is important to deepen the leadership bench within the organization, encouraging everyone to think and act like a leader. In line with its commitment to fostering a culture of organizational effectiveness and reflective thinking, the UN Women Bangladesh Country Office, in collaboration with the UN Women Nepal Country Office and Hong Kong Academy, has been organizing Cognitive Coaching and Adaptive Leadership training since 2022.

These training programmes have proven invaluable in cultivating an inclusive and collaborative work environment promoting effective leadership and self-directedness. In 2022, a selected group of six personnel from UN Women Bangladesh participated in a three-month online training programme. The training covered various topics such as cognitive thinking, collaboration norms, active listening, and managing difficult conversations, all aimed at developing adaptive leadership skills.



The cohort then continued their training with a three-day in-person session titled "Leadership Training to Support Democratization" held in Nepal in 2023. This session focused on nurturing skill sets for productive dialogue, meaningful discussions, and handling conflicts in a constructive manner. It emphasized the importance of intentional and purposeful listening and creating safe spaces for engaging with the audience. Through these initiatives, UN Women Bangladesh aims to strengthen its workforce, foster a culture of inclusive leadership, and drive the organization towards its full potential.



The office is also committed to advancing mental health and taking forward dialogues on psychological safety as part of its efforts to promote staff well-being and care.