

B A N G L A D E S H



UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Over the past 45 years, Bangladesh has been transformed from one of the poorest countries to now a dynamic economy on the cusp of graduating from Least Developing Country status. It is recognized for its remarkable development success in many areas, from economic growth and poverty reduction, to achieving gender parity in primary and secondary school, to reducing infant mortality.

Living conditions have improved for a significant number of women in Bangladesh, with a growth in education and economic opportunities for women. However, women continue to be significantly lower in numbers in public offices and paid employment, incidences of violence against women are high, and prevailing gender norms

and stereotypes are preventing a large number of women from reaching their full potential.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are human rights. Prerequisites for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals at all levels.

These rights are fundamental to Bangladesh's continued social and economic development.

UN Women In Bangladesh

A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established by the UN General Assembly in 2010 to accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment

worldwide. UN Women's efforts are based on the fundamental belief that every woman has the right to live a life free from violence, poverty, and discrimination, and that sustainable development cannot be achieved without gender equality.

UN Women in Bangladesh works to promote gender equality in all spheres – political, economic and social – through four priority areas: promoting women's income security, decent work and economic autonomy; ending violence against women and girls; sustainable peace and resilience, and humanitarian action; and making gender equality a key part of national development planning and budget allocation.



Income security, decent work and economic autonomy for women

Photo Caption: UN Women Bangladesh is committed to protecting and promoting the rights of women to change policies and practices, to ensure work in just and favourable conditions.



Female labour force participation has reached 35.6%, but growth is stagnant compared to 83% for men and the global average for women which is 49.6%

Globally, UN Women advocates for the rights of women to work in just and favourable conditions in diverse sectors and occupations, through changes in policies and practices. We aim for women to have better access to economic resources, training opportunities, social security and social protection programmes, and essential services that will reduce the



Around 93% of jobs held by women are informal work

unpaid care burden on women and enable them to engage more in productive work. According to Time Use Survey- 2012, men spend four times more than women in productive work, and far less on care and domestic work than women. Women spend a daily average of 5.6 hours on unpaid care work, compared with only 1.5 hours for men.



Women can earn up to 60% less than men for the same work

In Bangladesh, UN Women is working for safe migration and the empowerment of women migrant workers throughout the migration cycle, through stronger policies and services that meet the specific needs of women as migrant workers and protect their rights.

UN Women also promotes better opportunities and working conditions

for women by addressing gender-based barriers and discriminatory employment policies and practices, and harmful behaviours such as sexual harassment that hinder women's participation in work.

With the private sector, UN Women is promoting the Women's Empowerment Principles, a partnership initiative with the UN Global Compact (UNGC) that offers steps for businesses on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community.



The Inclusive and Equitable Local Development Programme, a joint programme of UN Women, UN Development Programme and UN Capital Development Fund, promotes women's economic empowerment through removing structural impediments that prevent women from entering the labour market, and unlocks domestic capital for women's entrepreneurship. Alongside addressing policy barriers and developing business planning and management skills of women, the programme addresses traditional social attitudes that hinder women's access to public and private investments for business.



Governance, national planning and budgeting for gender equality

Photo Caption: One of the key ways that UN Women works for promoting good governance and accountability is making public budgets gender-responsive.





National plans, policies, institutions and budgets are where governments begin to translate their commitments to women into practical progress towards gender equality. UN Women supports the Government of Bangladesh in turning the recommendations from the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BPfA) as well as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the promise of the SDGs to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, into laws, national and sectoral plans, and budgets. We also ensure the engagement of civil society in the process of formulating national legislation and guidelines, and support civil society organizations and networks in Bangladesh to hold government accountable to international commitments such as to CEDAW. Some of the policies and plans that UN Women has supported the government develop include the Women's Development Policy and the National Action Plan to prevent violence against women and children, first developed in 2013 and then revised and relaunched in November 2018.

We also advocate transparent and adequate public financing for gender equality through the adoption of gender-responsive budgets (GRB) that channel adequate resources to both women and men. UN Women in Bangladesh supports the Ministry of

Women and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Finance to further strengthen the government's GRB system, particularly through establishing a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of the expenditure to ensure quality and impact and greater government accountability.

Data and statistics are indispensable tools for developing evidence-based policies to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, assessing their impact, and promoting accountability. Adequate monitoring of progress towards the SDG targets is an essential incentive to help make sure that policies are implemented. UN Women in Bangladesh is supporting the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics to improve the production of gender statistics to monitor progress towards the SDGs, inform policy and ensure accountability.



UN Women creates space for civil society organizations to be at the forefront for dialogue with the government on normative issues related to gender equality, such as BPfA, CEDAW, CSW, and SDGs. Recently, UN Women extended support to the organization of countrywide dialogues on CEDAW by a civil society platform, engaging more than 500 citizens in seven divisional cities. UN Women also supports civil society participation in the regional and global dialogues, particularly at CEDAW and CSW events.



Women live a life free
of violence

Photo Caption: UN Women works with private and public institutions to ensure that prevention measures on violence against women are properly adopted and monitored, in the workplace and in tertiary education.



Around 87% of married women in Bangladesh have experienced some form of violence from their husbands

76% of female university students have experienced sexual harassment



In Bangladesh, the widespread prevalence of violence against women is a major obstacle to women's social, economic and political empowerment.

Women's right to live free from violence is upheld by international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the Sustainable Development Goals. UN Women supports governments in adopting and enacting legal and policy reforms aligned with international standards with regards to promoting the rights and empowerment of women and girls. In Bangladesh, this includes strengthening laws and policies to address sexual harassment and assault, and to prevent child marriage.

We partner with governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations and other institutions to advocate for ending violence, to increase awareness of the causes and consequences of violence, and to build the capacity of partners to prevent and respond to violence.

We provide evidence-based policy advice to step up investments in prevention—the most cost-effective, long-term means to stop violence. As a key strategy to prevent violence against women, we promote the need for changing the norms and behaviour of men and boys. We support community-based behaviour change interventions and youth activism and partner with the media to advocate for gender equality and women's rights.



Under the Building Capacity to Prevent Violence Against Women project, UN Women ran students campaign in 4 universities of Bangladesh to create a deeper understanding among male students on the causes and consequences of sexual harassment; and how critical their role is in preventing it. The key major activities of the campaign were tea-stall discussions and peer-to-peer sessions with male students, alongside observation of International Women's Day & 16 Days of Activism, a campaign to end violence against women and girls. The students later shared that the campaign developed a sense of unity among them to prevent violence on the campus, enhance awareness and challenge the existing societal norms.



Women and girls contribute to and benefit equally from sustainable peace and resilience, prevention of natural disasters and conflicts, and humanitarian action

Photo Caption: Peace Café launch in Rangpur supports women to become social entrepreneurs.

Disasters, conflicts, and humanitarian crises impact women, girls, boys and men of all ages differently. As a result, their needs and interests differ, as do their resources, capacities and coping strategies. Women are often the first responders to a crisis, and they play a central role in the survival and resilience of families and communities. There is strong evidence suggesting that women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution contributes to longer, more resilient and peaceful societies. Yet, despite this, women remain largely invisible to, and excluded from, official disaster and crisis prevention and response mechanisms and processes.

UN Women works with women affected by climate change and disasters to ensure that legislation, policies and programmes reflect their needs, priorities and leadership. We also target policymakers and forums on climate change and disasters to ensure they have access to the necessary knowledge and technical expertise to address the needs of women.

To prevent conflict and extremist violence, UN Women supports women's leadership and participation to promote peaceful and inclusive communities. We work with women's groups and networks at the community level to support their political and economic empowerment as a key strategy for building social cohesion. We are engaging young women in promoting peace through social entrepreneurship, and conducting new and innovative research on the gender specific dynamics of violent extremism for better targeted programmes.

At the policy level, we are supporting the formulation of the first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security which will outline the actions that the Government of Bangladesh will take to meet its obligations under the UN Security Council Women, Peace and Security resolutions. The National Action Plan will promote women's participation in decision-making in the peace and security sphere, incorporation of a gender perspective into conflict



prevention initiatives, protection of the rights of women and girls, and ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into relief and recovery efforts.

UN Women promotes a gender perspective in humanitarian action through the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group under the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT) of Bangladesh. UN Women is also supporting the Government with the Rohingya humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar. We lead the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group for the Rohingya response, and support Rohingya women and girls in vulnerable conditions access life-saving information and services, and opportunities to build skills that help them withstand the hardship in the camps.



UN Women's Multi-Purpose Women's Centre (MPWC) in the refugee camps works to ensure that Rohingya women and girls are safe and have access to education, health care, and economic empowerment opportunities. They provide psycho-social support, basic health consultations and emergency services, life-saving information, as well as skills building (tailoring, etc.) Rohingya women view the MPWCs as a sanctuary from the chaos of camp life; a place where they can share experiences, build community, and feel safe.

Partnerships for Gender Equality

UN Women envisions a world where societies are free of gender discrimination, and women and girls are empowered to lead the change they want to see. But we can't make it happen alone. Partnerships are essential, with governments and civil society groups, businesses, and committed individuals. When we bring our expertise and resources together, we become a powerful force for progress.

UN Women enjoys a strong partnership with key government institutions to advance the gender equality agenda in Bangladesh. With the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministries of Finance and Planning and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, we are strengthening gender-responsive planning and budgeting across the government and the capacity of the statistical system to generate data to track Bangladesh's progress on gender equality and the SDGs. We also work with Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and the Department of Disaster Management, Ministry of Environment and Forest and Ministry of Planning on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction. With the Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment we promote and

protect the rights of women migrant workers.

UN Women's partnership with civil society includes supporting gender equality advocates to hold government accountable for implementation of CEDAW and Agenda 2030. We create the space for women's organizations to bring forward their perspectives and priorities and engage with government, UN agencies and other decision-makers. We maintain institutional links with civil society through our Civil Society Advisory Group.

We have developed fledgling partnerships with private sector and will expand and deepen these further. Our private sector partners have created entry

points for us to work with buyers, employers and employer associations in the ready-made garment sectors to pilot new approaches to empower women workers. Private banks are working with us to change their policies and practices so that low income women access financing and build assets.

UN Women collaborates with development partners on joint policy advocacy and coordinates our support to the government and civil society partners through coordination platforms such as the Local Consultative Group on Women's Advancement and Gender Equality. Within the UN, UN Women co-chairs the Gender Equality Theme Group for greater coherence of UN support for achievement of SDG Goal 5.

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