



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Distr.: General
10 January 2011

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

Pre-session working group

Forty-eighth session

17 January – 4 February 2011

**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the combined sixth and seventh periodic
report**

Bangladesh* **

* The present document was submitted late due to delayed inputs from other sources.

** In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of the combined sixth and seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/BGD/Q/7)

Legislative framework, definition of discrimination, reservations

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues

1. With regard to articles 2 and 16, paragraph 1 (c), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government of Bangladesh is actively considering the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues

2. As mentioned in paragraphs 70 and 71 of the combined sixth and seventh periodic report (CEDAW/C/BGD/6-7), the definition of discrimination in the Constitution of Bangladesh is already in line with article 1 of the Convention. Moreover, all related policies, procedures and laws are in conformity with this provision in the Constitution.

3. Examples of steps taken include:

- Women are able to operate bank accounts jointly with men (husband, son, brother etc.)
- Labour Act 2006 provides protection to women against discrimination of unequal wages
- Provision has been made in the Agricultural *khas* (government owned) Land Leasing Guideline to issue lease documents both in the name of husband and wife on equal partnership basis
- Provision has been made in the Guideline to give priority to widows with an able son or abandoned women.

Access to justice

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

4. With regard to ensuring women's access to justice not only in cases of violence but in all areas covered by the Convention, systems/mechanisms in place include a legal aid fund available at district level, related activities of several projects and programmes such as capacity development of police, judges, public prosecutors and lawyers; training of health professionals, social workers, and NGO workers on gender dimension as to access to justice.

5. The Ministry of Home Affairs is implementing a Police Reform project through which a women police force is being further developed and a gender policy is being implemented. This project also:

- Organizes training workshops on gender awareness
- Prepares gender guideline for model police stations
- Sets up victim support centres under the guidance of women police
- Forms a network of women police
- Ensures security, a work-friendly environment and facilities for women police.

- In the post of Officer in charge of Police, Superintendent of Police and Deputy Commissioner women officers have been appointed. In the Armed Forces women have been appointed for the first time.
 - The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has taken initiatives to mainstream women in Community Policing under the framework of gender responsive community policing.
6. The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs is providing legal opinions on drafted laws on women rights, dignity and development that are received from other ministries. This ministry is also giving opinions when there is effort to frame any law regarding women oppression, empowerment and development.
7. Other measures in place include:
- (a) The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is operating six shelter homes for women in Six Divisions of the country to support women victims of violence by providing them with shelter, training and legal aid. In addition seven one-stop crisis centres have been providing services to the survivors of violence against women (VAW) (women and children) at different Medical College Hospitals in different divisions;
- (b) MoWCA (Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (MSP-VAW project)) has been implementing advocacy campaigns on multiple dimensions of access to justice, including the activation of institutional mechanisms for justice delivery and awareness raising among women at the grass-roots level through courtyard meetings about their legal rights, as to marriage, divorce, maintenance, constitutional rights, prevention of child marriage, dowry, domestic violence etc. In addition, the functioning of the courts, activation of the National Human Rights Commission, the development, amendment, and implementation of laws, ensuring that alternative dispute resolution is accessible and effective, and conducted within the framework of law, and with respect for due process and principles of equality and non-discrimination are being further strengthened.

Gender mainstreaming

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 of the list of issues

8. The advantages of gender budgeting include:
- (a) Promoting gender equity and equality;
 - (b) Reducing poverty in a more effective manner;
 - (c) Improved monitoring of the achievement of policy goals;
 - (d) Promoting good governance; and
 - (e) Ensuring accountability and transparency.
9. The impact of gender budgeting in four important ministries in terms of percentage of the budgetary allocation that is expected to benefit women is shown below (ref. Gender Budgeting Report 2010-11, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance). The percentage figures are shown for three types of budget allocations for each respective ministry – top 10 projects, annual development programme (ADP), and total allocation for the respective ministry.

Table 1

<i>Ministry/Division</i>	<i>Total of top ten projects (%)</i>	<i>Total ADP budget (%)</i>	<i>Total ministry budget (%)</i>
1. Education	56.95	50.76	23.29
2. Health and Family Welfare	58.88	54.11	32.33
3. Social Welfare	50.83	50.05	19.91
4. Disaster Management and Relief	45.53	45.83	77.83

10. As can be seen in table 1, there has been substantial allocation of government budget for the benefit of women and girls in each of the four ministries.

11. The impact of gender budgeting in the next six ministries and divisions in terms of percent of the budgetary allocation for FY 2010-2011 that is expected to benefit women is shown in table 2.

Table 2

<i>Ministry/Division</i>	<i>Total of top ten projects (%)</i>	<i>Total ADP budget (%)</i>	<i>Total ministry budget (%)</i>
1. Agriculture	50.26	29.35	26.53
2. Environment and Forest	55.00	58.39	44.22
3. Fisheries and Livestock	66.55	57.47	32.61
4. Land	28.52	29.02	18.40
5. Rural Development and Cooperatives Division	84.40	84.56	62.28
6. Water Resources	62.93	53.39	39.16

12. Similar to the case of the first four ministries, it can be seen from above; there has been substantial allocation of government budget for the benefit of women and girls in the above mentioned six ministries.

13. In the Budget Circular 1 distributed to the respective ministries annually by the Ministry of Finance as section (section-3) has been included with 14 criteria in responding to gender issues. Until fiscal year (FY) 2010-2011, a total of 33 ministries have been covered by the Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF), and all the remaining ministries and divisions will be brought under the gender responsive budgeting process by the next FY 2011-2012.

Violence against women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

14. Measures in place to ensure effective implementation of existing national legislation include the following:

(a) One-stop Crisis Centres (OCCs) located at six divisional medical college hospitals where a victim can receive multiple services (medical, legal, counselling, DNA test and referral support);

(b) National DNA Profiling Laboratory at Dhaka Medical College Hospital and five divisional DNA screening laboratories at government medical college hospitals;

(c) National Trauma Counselling Centre at Dhaka for providing necessary support to the survivors of VAW;

(d) Six VAW Prevention Cells have been established under DWA where legal assistance is provided to oppressed, destitute, abused women and victims of violence;

(e) DWA has established six divisional Women Support Centres for distressed, shelterless, helpless and oppressed women with minor children who are being provided shelter, food, medicine, clothes, rehabilitation services etc. During their stay in the shelter, women are provided training on different trades and education, including primary education for the children;

(f) Prevention Cell for Violence Against Women in Dhaka set up by Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha (JMS);

(g) Awareness-raising programmes through various projects of different Ministries of the Government;

(h) Consultation meetings on sexual harassment in educational institutions;

(i) Rallies and events for awareness-raising against “eve teasing” is popularized;

(j) The High Court in its landmark judgement in the month of May 2009 has enlisted a set of activities or behaviours to be considered as sexual harassment, and these include:

- Unwelcome sexually determined behaviour
- Attempt to establish unwanted physical relation
- Sexually coloured verbal representation/remarks etc

(k) With the initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Mobile Court Act 2009 was amended in November 2010 (through induction of section 509 of the Penal Code 1860) to punish stalkers with up to one year imprisonment or imposition of fine or both;

(l) Central Cell for Prevention of Women and Child Repression at MoWCA ensures coordination of activities for preventing violence against women and children, and monitoring of such programmes;

(m) District Committees for Prevention of Violence Against Women;

(n) National Coordination and Monitoring Cell located at the Ministry of Home Affairs with participation of government organizations (GOs) and NGOs. Similar committees also exist at the district level.

(o) National Task Force on Acid Crime and Task Force on Legal Reform organized by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs;

(p) Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee for Prevention of Repression against Women and Children, chaired by State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA).

15. Women are now much more aware about the provisions of various laws and where they can report cases of violation as a result of awareness raising activities by GOs and NGOs. At the grass roots level, District and Upazila (sub district) Women Affairs Officers are implementing and organizing activities (such as community meetings and courtyard meetings) to make women aware about their legal rights regarding dowry and other types of violence. The Department of Women Affairs (DWA) is implementing the “Promotion of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” project (supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in eight selected districts – Cox’s Bazar, Bhola, Comilla, Gopalganj, Kurigram, Mymensingh, Noakhali, Rangpur) with the objective to mobilize communities to end gender-based violence (GBV) and to bring attitudinal change in male members of the community and in-laws towards GBV.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 of the list of issues

16. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 was passed by the Parliament in October 2010 and this Act became effective on 30 December 2010 by way of issuance of Gazetted notification by the Government.

17. Key provisions include addressing all kinds of domestic violence, interactive provisions between criminal and civil provisions, temporary and permanent protection orders, scope for filing cases either at the police station or in court, punishing perpetrators or abusers through imprisonment, fines or social service, limiting the duration for disposal of cases and realization of compensation.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

18. MoWCA is carefully examining the directives of the High Court Division and the Drafts submitted by Law Commission and is in the process of initiating consultation with stakeholders for formulating a law to prevent sexual harassment. In the meantime, a special Provision has been drafted in consultation at the inter-Ministerial level defining sexual harassment and specifying punishment to be incorporated in the Prevention of Repression Against Women and Children Act.

19. Related measures include the following:

(a) Initiatives are underway by Ministry of Education for making arrangements for proper counselling at schools;

(b) Educational institutions and employers will maintain regular communication and effective consultation with administrative authorities to create awareness among personnel in law enforcement agencies;

(c) Prepare and publish booklets containing these guidelines and provisions of Constitution and statutes regarding gender equality and sexual offences;

(d) Create awareness regarding fundamental rights guaranteed by Constitution.

20. Following the directives of the High Court, various initiatives have been taken both in government and non-government sectors. Special committees have been formed in different ministries, divisions, and attached departments to prevent and address sexual harassment.

Stereotypes and harmful traditional practices

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

21. For the majority of citizens who are Muslims, polygamy is prohibited by law. According to Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 (VIII of 1961), section 6, a man cannot remarry without the consent of his first wife.

22. According to The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 (Act XIX of 1929), child marriage is also prohibited by law.

23. Measures taken to modify and eliminate these practices include:

- Various awareness raising programmes implemented by GOs and NGOs (such as the Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES))
- Retention of girl students in schools
- Adolescent girl clubs focusing on child marriage, “eve teasing”, dowry, child rights, livelihood, disaster preparedness etc. Psycho-social counselling services are provided to children who have survived acid violence.

- Updating the Child Marriage Law
- Initiatives taken for revision of the National Policy for Children 2010 (draft)

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

24. As in the case of all development projects implemented by the government, the ones related to engaging males to change their stereotypical attitudes and norms are reviewed at the agency and ministerial level in the regular monthly review meetings.

25. Measures taken include:

- Various awareness-raising programmes implemented by GOs (such as the Press Information Department) and NGOs (such as CMES)
- Workshops at the national level organized under a UNFPA-supported project to change traditional behaviour of males
- Eve teasing has been made a punishable offence as decided by mobile courts

Trafficking and sexual exploitation of prostitution**Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues**

26. The meetings of the inter-ministerial/inter-agency committee and the GO-NGO national coordination committee for combating trafficking are more or less regular. Information collected by the anti-trafficking monitoring cell regarding trafficking cases is discussed and NGOs report on their respective activities. The committees also discuss high profile cases and policy issues. A good collaboration exists among the GOs and NGOs as shown by the NGOs reporting on sensitive cases and on the actions taken up by the government. The government also seeks NGO support whenever required (source: International Organization for Migration (IOM)).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

27. IOM does not have information on the “draft guideline for Bangladesh missions abroad to combat trafficking in persons” and there is no information on websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA).

28. According to IOM, there is no separate coordination mechanism among the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), IOM and the Embassy of the United States of America. They are members of the existing GO-NGO national coordination committee.

Education**Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues**

29. The Education Policy 2010 has included strategies to strengthen women in higher education through:

- Increase in facilities and effective steps to raise awareness of men and women
- Special scholarship and low interest bank loans for poor and meritorious female students
- Ensuring the participation of women in policy-level discussions and decision-making on women in higher education
- Subject wise training of teachers in revised curriculum and textbooks.

30. The high female drop-out rate has been addressed through the introduction of stipends for higher secondary schools being provided to 30 per cent female students. So far, 338,000 female students have received stipends. Tuition fees for female students have been exempted up to 10th grade.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

31. The Education Policy 2010 has been recently approved by the Parliament. It includes strategies to strengthen female education such as the following:

- The syllabus of primary education shall be properly revised to highlight the positive and progressive image of women and the issue of equal rights. The positive aspects of equal rights shall be introduced in the syllabus, so that the social attitude towards women changes
- In the syllabuses of the primary and secondary level more biographies of great women personalities and more works of women authors shall be included

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

32. The Education Policy 2010 includes strategies to strengthen female education through:

- Emphasis on part-time, vocational, non-formal, technical education for girl students
- Encouragement of girls in science education and professional education (such as engineering, medicine, legal, business etc.)
- Increased number of female polytechnic institutes and increased intake into upazila (sub district) level technical institutes

33. Measures taken to narrow the gender gap at tertiary education level include the setting up of an international Asian University for Women in Chittagong.

Employment

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

34. According to the Bangladesh Labour Act (2006), section 332, no employee can harass a female employee through indecent or disrespectful behaviour, or in a manner that is contrary to her dignity and honour.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

35. According to Bangladesh Labour Act (2006), section 46, women in the private sector enjoy the same 16-week maternity leave. Recently (18 December 2010), the government has announced that working women will enjoy six months of paid maternity leave from January 2011. At least 12.1 million female employees will be entitled to the leave.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues

36. According to the National Labour Policy, section 7.00 (L), and the Bangladesh Labour Act (2006), there is no scope for discrimination between the wages of men and women.

Health

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

37. Bangladesh Shishu Academy undertakes broad-based programmes on health issues of the girl child through awareness-raising and publishes books, produces films and arranges discussion meetings and competitions.

38. The government has developed the “Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) Strategy” involving relevant ministries, United Nations agencies, national and international NGOs, and civil society groups. Based on the ARH Strategy, a National Plan of Action is under the process of development.

39. The Ministry of Labour and Employment is implementing two development projects – “Promotion of Reproductive Health, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Garments Sector” and “Promotion of Reproductive Health, Reproductive Rights, Gender Equality and Prevention of HIV/AIDS” in the tea plantation communities.

40. Other ongoing initiatives/programmes aimed at improving the health of adolescent girls include:

- Adolescent and youth-friendly services available at Mother and Child Welfare Centres (MCWCs) and Union Health and Family Welfare Centres (UHFWCs)
- Iron and folic acid supplement for correction of anaemia and nutrition counselling
- Awareness programme for prevention of early marriage
- Distribution of contraceptives to delay pregnancy
- Women-friendly public health facilities with separate waiting areas, ticket counters, toilets and counselling facilities
- Specialized trainings have been organised for developing the capacity of health personnel for providing youth-friendly services
- Initiative has been taken to revitalise existing Community Clinics (CCs) in rural areas, and providing health services for adolescents is a priority service of CCs.

41. The National Education Survey (Post Primary) – 2008 Statistical Report of Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), Ministry of Education, mentions that there are separate female toilets in educational institutions as indicated in table 3.

Table 3

<i>Type of Educational Institution</i>	<i>No. of institutions</i>	<i>No. of female toilets</i>
Secondary schools	18,756	39,639
Colleges	3,254	3,148
Madrasahs	9,316	9,023

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

42. Government has planned to establish one CC for every 6,000 population and a total of 18,000 such CCs will be established in both urban and rural areas, in addition to the more than 10,000 CCs that are currently operational. Services offered by CCs are free of cost and they are well connected by roads, thereby providing easy access. Although CCs are publicly owned, their management is organised by a local committee known as a Community Group (CG) comprising 9-13 members (of whom at least four must be

women). A CG has a chairperson and two vice chairpersons, of whom at least one must be a woman.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

43. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) decreased from 3.51 per 1,000 live births in 2007 to 3.48 in 2008. MMR in rural areas (3.93) is nearly 40 per cent higher than that in urban areas (2.42).

Economic and social life

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 21 of the list of issues

44. Various public, non-government and private organizations have been implementing projects and programmes that support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through provision of financial and technical assistance. A few examples are mentioned below.

45. The SME Foundation has provided credit wholesaling support through low interest (9 per cent on reducing balance) loans to women entrepreneurs for manufacturing enterprises from a commercial bank (Mutual Trust Bank's Gunabati scheme) and from a non-banking financial institution (MIDAS). Loan sizes vary from Tk.50,000 to 750,000. A similar scheme is operated by Bangladesh Bank at a 10 per cent interest rate where the loan size varies from Tk.50,000 to 5 million.

46. Grameen Bank provided microenterprise loans to 272,308 women in 2007 with an average amount of loan at Tk.22,842.

47. Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha (JMS) under MoWCA has been operating a microcredit programme with a revolving loan fund of Tk.12 million received as grant from the government. The main objective of this programme is to enable the rural and urban poor disadvantaged (including ethnic and minority) women to become self-reliant. The programme covers all 64 districts and the amount of credit ranges from Tk.5,000 to Tk.20,000. So far, Tk.25.42 million has been distributed among 4,897 women (comprising 4,375 in rural and 522 in urban areas).

48. JMS is also operating another microcredit programme with a revolving loan fund of Tk.135 million received as grant from the government. The main objective of this programme is to support self-employment of poor and distressed women. The programme covers 58 districts and amount of credit ranges from Tk.5,000 to Tk.15,000. So far, Tk.268.1 million has been distributed among 26,003 women.

49. Another credit programme of MoWCA offers low interest (5 per cent) and a loan up to Tk.15,000 for two years. The beneficiaries are rural destitute women and until March 2010, a total of 71,042 women have taken loan under this programme. This programme is being implemented in all 64 districts and the beneficiaries are also made aware of the use of sanitary latrines, sending their children to school, birth registration, primary health care, immunization, use of safe water, dowry, and prevention of child marriage.

50. The SME Foundation has supported skill training of women entrepreneurs through outsourcing to several business membership organizations such as National Association of Small and Cottage Industries of Bangladesh (NASCI), Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI), Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CWCCI), Banglacraft, Women Entrepreneur Association of Bangladesh (WEAB) etc. Various trades were covered including fashion design, beauty parlour and beautician, agro processing, leather, business management etc.

51. The Department of Women Affairs (DWA), under MoWCA, operates the National Women Training and Development Academy that has provided skills training to 173

officials and staff. In addition, it has trained 178 women in different vocations. DWA also has six training centres around the country that provides skills training on several trades including agriculture and handicrafts. The computer training centre of DWA has trained 78 women during FY 2009-2010 on computer, graphic design and statistical database.

52. Training centres located in all 64 districts and in 136 upazilas provide training on tailoring for self reliance of women who also receive a daily allowance.

53. JMS provides vocational training to 27,600 poor, unemployed and destitute women through 46 training centres on sewing and embroidery, block-batik and screen print, embroidered quilt and cutting, poultry rearing, food processing and preservation, leather goods, soap and candle making, book binding and packaging, mobile phone repair etc. JMS also provides training on computer and information communication to literate unemployed women. Such training is provided through training centres in 30 districts and 1,200 women have been trained.

54. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has set up five Technical Training Centres (TTCs) in divisional cities exclusively for women where 5,000 women trainees are enrolled every year. In addition, the Sheikh Fajiluten Nesa Mujib TTC at the district level has been imparting training to 2,000 women every year.

55. The Small and Cottage Industries Training Institute (SCITI) under the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC), Ministry of Industry, has provided skills training to 6,151 women entrepreneurs on management improvement issues.

56. BSCIC has been implementing a project entitled "Programme for Women Entrepreneurs" that has trained 104,000 women through 50 centres across the country.

57. The BSCIC Design Centre has provided skills development training to 22,459 women, of whom 48 per cent are now entrepreneurs.

58. The Bangladesh Industrial and Technical Assistance Centre (BITAC), under the Ministry of Industry, is implementing a project to train 4,000 destitute and disadvantaged women.

59. The Bangladesh Computer Council, under the Ministry of Science, Information and Communication Technology, regularly organizes training for women and up to now, 360 women have been trained.

60. The Directorate of Livestock Services (DLS), under the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, has plans to train 156,224 women farmers on livestock rearing (cow, buffalo, goat, sheep) during 2011-2012. DLS would also train 17,721 women poultry farmers during the same period.

61. The Bangladesh Sericulture Board and Bangladesh Sericulture Research and Training Institute, under the Ministry of Textile and Jute, have been imparting training to women.

62. The Bangladesh National Social Welfare Council, under the Ministry of Social Welfare, has arranged skills training for voluntary organizations through which 146 female have been trained during FYs 2005-2009.

63. The SME Foundation has organized training in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Rangamati and Khagrachari) for indigenous women on entrepreneurship development and business management.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 22 of the list of issues

64. The success of certain programmes, namely, the Widow Allowance; Elderly Persons Allowance; Maternity and Lactating Mothers allowances and allowances for persons with disabilities, can be measured as follows.

65. Widow Allowance – This programme supports destitute and widowed women living in wards of pourashavas (municipalities) and unions by providing Tk.300 per month. During FY 2009-2010, a total of 920,000 women were covered under the programme with an allocation of Tk.3,312 million.

66. Old Age Allowance was initiated in 2003-2004 and is provided to over 2 million persons above 65 years of age of whom half are women. Most of the allowance is spent on food and health care. Some recipients have built up assets such as poultry and livestock to generate income for their households.

67. Allowance for Distressed Disabled Persons is provided to 200,000 persons who are given Tk.220 per month.

68. As per the draft National Labour Policy 2010, government will put special emphasis on social security of disadvantaged, disabled, elderly women workers.

69. Maternity Allowance – This programme was initiated in 2007 by MoWCA to reduce the mortality rate of poor mothers and children, and to promote breast-feeding. The support is provided over a two-year cycle, and in FY 2007-2008, as many as 45,000 poor pregnant women were each given Tk.350 per month. The number of beneficiaries will be further increased to 88,000 during FY 2010-2011.

70. Lactating Mother Allowance – This programme was initiated by DWA and provides Tk.350 per month for improvement of health status of a lactating mother and her children. The beneficiaries are women garment workers of Dhaka city.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 23 of the list of issues

71. MoWCA is making a special drive to create market linkages for women at the grass-roots level.

Equality before the law and in civil matters

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 24 of the list of issues

72. The cabinet approved the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2009 with a provision to award citizenship to children of any Bangladeshi woman married to a foreigner. Under the amended law, now children of a Bangladeshi woman married to a foreigner will be entitled to obtain Bangladeshi citizenship. According to the clause No. 5 of the 1951 Citizenship Act, only children of a Bangladeshi man married to a foreign woman was eligible to get citizenship of Bangladesh, and this has been amended by the cabinet in its meeting held on 11 February 2009.

73. The case of transmitting Bangladeshi citizenship to a woman's foreign husband is still under process.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 26 of the list of issues

74. As per existing laws, women have the right to administer property solely owned or inherited by them without interference or consent by a male.

75. Restrictions to administer property are the same for women and men in case of jointly owned, inherited or leased property.

Rural, older and other disadvantaged women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 of the list of issues

76. According to the Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS) 2007, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the crude disability rate per 1,000 population was 8.63 for rural women and 6.24 for urban women. The prevalence of disability per 1,000 population for women was 8.04. In terms of age-specific disability rate per 1,000 population for women, it was found that the age group of 60 years and above had the highest rate of 46.40.

77. NSPAR II mentions the following proposed actions in the health sector with regard to persons with disabilities:

- Strengthen early detection of symptoms of disability and provide primary medical rehabilitation
- Undertake a nutrition programme for pregnant women
- Appoint trainee doctors, nurses and other caregivers to deal with disability issues
- Introduce support services of assistive devices and equipment at the health centres

78. Education benefits that can be accessed by disadvantaged women and girls include:

- Stipend programme for students with disabilities
- Socio-economic training centres for women
- Vocational training and production centre for destitute women
- Training and rehabilitation centres for socially disadvantaged girls

79. NSAPR II mentions that measures will be taken so that persons with disabilities can have access to all information and communication facilities, educational services in special and integrated schools, and vocational rehabilitation.

80. Various kinds of social benefits that can be accessed by disadvantaged women, including older women are mentioned below:

- Old Age Allowance was initiated in 2003-2004 and is provided to over 2 million persons above 65 years of age of whom half are women. Most of the allowance is spent on food and health care. Some recipients have built up assets such as poultry and livestock to generate income for their households.
- Allowance for Distressed Disabled Persons is provided to 200,000 persons who are given Tk.220 per month.
- Allowance for Distressed freedom fighters
- Safe custody for women and adolescent girls (safe home)
- Programme for socially disadvantaged women (sex workers)

81. NSAPR II mentions that services like the fitting of artificial aids and appliances, and microcredit will be provided to persons with disabilities through community based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes in rural areas.

82. As per the draft National Labour Policy 2010, government will put special emphasis on social security of disadvantaged, disabled and elderly women workers.

Minority and indigenous women**Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 28 of the list of issues**

83. NSAPR II has proposed actions to support disadvantaged and extreme poor groups (such as laundry workers, cobblers, hair dressers and other traditional low caste persons) who are subject to social injustice and are marginalised. These actions include housing facilities (through allotment of government land under on going settlement project), and coordination and monitoring (by local government bodies and NGOs to enable these persons to participate in development activities).

84. NSAPR II has identified the following major areas of intervention with regard to addressing the issues of indigenous communities:

- Implementation of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and ratification of International Labour Convention No. 169
- Rights on land through formulation of land policy and a secure land tenure system
- Empowering indigenous community
- Human development programme
- Language and children's access to education
- Electrification and telecommunication
- Safety nets and food assistance programmes
- Rural development and non-farm economic activities
- Expansion of microcredit
- Development of tourism

85. The Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs along with the other line ministries of the government are implementing various regular activities and development projects in the area that benefit indigenous women through provision of social services. Some of these projects are as follows:

- Social development project implemented by the CHT Development Board (pre-primary education, primary and secondary education, development of natural water sources, distribution of slab latrines, training of para workers)
- Rural development project implemented by the Regional Council
- Promotion of development and confidence building implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (building capacity and enhancing the role of CHT institutions in support of multi-community development, facilitating community empowerment process for self-reliance, facilitating confidence building to solve long standing problems towards development and sustainability in the CHT)
- Block allocation for CHT Development Board
- Block allocation for Local Government Councils
- Regular activities of Government of Bangladesh agencies such as Power Development Board, Department of Agricultural Extension, Local Government Engineering Department, Department of Public Health Engineering, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, National Sports Council, Bangladesh Sericulture Board, Bangladesh Sericulture Research and Training Institute, Department of Social Services, Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Bangladesh

Sugarcane Research Institute, Bangladesh Tourism Corporation, District Councils and Municipalities.

- MoWCA administers the Vulnerable Group Development Food Security Program and Maternal Allowance for poor, pregnant women. Women's Associations are given special grants on yearly basis for promoting their handicraft products.
- The Ministry of Textile and Jute is implementing a project entitled "Training, design development, exhibition of handloom products and sales centre" for the development of Manipuri weaving in Sylhet district. This project will provide training to 360 women weavers.

86. The SME Foundation has organized training in CHT (Rangamati and Khagrachari) for indigenous women on entrepreneurship development and business management.

Marriage and family relations

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 29 of the list of issues

87. The Family Court Ordinance 1985 is a personal law. This law was amended in 1989 and provides for the establishment of Family Courts that has exclusive jurisdiction relating to (a) dissolution of marriage, (b) restitution of conjugal rights, (c) dower, (d) maintenance, and (e) guardianship and custody of children. The various elements include institution of suit, issue of summons and notice, written statement, consequence of non appearance of the parties, pretrial proceeding, trial in camera, recording of evidence, conclusion of trial, compromise decree, writing of judgement, enforcement of decrees, appeal, power to summon witnesses, contempt, application and non application of certain laws, appearance through agents, court fee, transfer of stay of suits and appeals, power to make rules, provisions relating to pending cases etc.

88. The Ordinance extends to the whole country except the three hill districts of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari, where indigenous communities comprising Buddhists and various tribes have marriage systems that are quite different from each other. These differing systems cannot be amalgamated in a common Family Code.
