



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

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

**Combined ninth and tenth periodic reports submitted by  
Bangladesh under article 18 of the Convention, due  
in 2020\*,\*\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* The annex to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



**Abbreviations**

ACC	Asian Cricket Council
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDHS	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
BGB	Border Guards Bangladesh
BMP	Bangladesh Mohila Porishod
BNKS	Bolipara Nari Kalyan Samity
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyer's Association
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
BRTA	Bangladesh Road Transport Authorities
BRTC	Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation
BSC	Bangladesh Shipping Corporation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DGHS	Directorate General of Health Services
DIFE	The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DSHE	Directorate of the Secondary and Higher Education
DSS	Department of Social Services
DV	Domestic Violence
DWA	Department of Women Affairs
EC	Election Commission
FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals
FYP	Five-Year Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Gender Equality
GED	General Economics Division
GEI	Gender Equity Index
GoB	Government of Bangladesh

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GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HC	High Court
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LFPR	Labor Force Participation Rate
LFS	Labor Force Survey
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
LIMA	Labor Inspection Management Application
LCG-WAGE	Local Consultative Group-Women Advancement & Gender Equality
MCH	Medical College Hospital
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEFWD	Medical Education and Family Welfare Division
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MIS-DGHS	Management Information System-Directorate General of Health Services
MOCHTA	Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MOLE	Ministry of Labor and Employment
MOSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MOWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MP	Member of Parliament
NAP	National Action Plan
NFDPL	National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NGOAB	NGO Affairs Bureau
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
NWDP	National Women Development Policy
PKSF	Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation (PKSF)
PLAU	Policy Leadership Advocacy Unit
RDCD	Rural Development and Cooperative Division

REWG	Road to Empowerment of Women and Girls
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TUS	Time Use Survey
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
U5MR	Under-five Mortality Rate
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WID	Women in Development

## Introduction

1. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh presents its Ninth (9th) and Tenth Periodic Report under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The report sets out progress, achievements, and developments in response to the concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Bangladesh. This 9th and 10th Periodic Report on the implementation of the CEDAW presents the progress and accomplishments from 2016 to 2025. The report was prepared through a consultative process with government and non-government agencies, women's rights organizations, and from an extensive review of relevant reports and literature.

2. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees gender equality (Article 27) and explicitly prohibits discrimination against women (Article 28). The country remains committed to its international treaty obligations to uphold gender equality and ensure non-discrimination against women. Bangladesh has signed and ratified several key international conventions and agreements aimed at promoting the rights of women and girls. As a signatory to CEDAW since 1984, the country continues to align its policies and actions with this global framework for women's rights.

3. Over the past years, Bangladesh has made significant progress in achieving the goals of CEDAW to ensure gender equality. The country has undertaken several legislative initiatives and reforms that pave the way for improving gender equality and gender justice. Bangladesh has updated the National Action Plan on the National Women Development Policy (NAP NWDP 2021-2030) in line with the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The plan reaffirms the commitment of the country to establishing equal rights for women and men in state and public life and ensuring their full and equal participation. The country amended its age-old Evidence Act 1872 by inserting a provision that disallows character evidence against rape victims and also reformed provisions relating to rape under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (WCRPA) 2000 to ensure speedy justice.

4. Bangladesh has secured the top position among South Asian countries in ensuring gender equality for the past ten consecutive years. The country has made remarkable strides in achieving gender equality, particularly in education, healthcare, political participation, and economic empowerment. The country has the highest gender parity score in political empowerment in the South Asia Region (54.3 per cent) and seventh overall.<sup>1</sup> The country performs well in educational attainment, with a 94 per cent attainment rate reflecting full parity in secondary enrolment, gender parity in literacy rate of 93 per cent, and gender parity in tertiary enrolment of 84.1 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

5. Bangladesh witnessed a significant decrease in the maternal mortality rate to 136 per 100,000 live births in 2023, down from 216 in 2010 and 178 in 2016. In terms of women's labour force, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2022 indicates that about 42.67 per cent of women are engaged in economic activities. The country is committed to reaching a female labour force participation rate of 50 per cent by 2030, as well as gender parity in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector by 2041.<sup>3</sup> Bangladesh launched Tottho Apa (Info Lady): Empowering Women Through ICT Towards Digital Bangladesh Project to improve the availability and

<sup>1</sup> K. K. Pal, K. Piaget, and S. Zahidi, Global Gender Gap Report 2024: Insight Report, World Economic Forum, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, SDG Summit 2023: Bangladesh Country Commitments, 2023, <https://sdgs.un.org/national-commitments-sdg-transformation/22071>.

access to information technology for underprivileged women in rural areas and to empower them through IT-enabled services.

6. Since 2016, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) has introduced several new initiatives and administrative reforms, updated the national action plan, and undertaken several projects. The largest government project on preventing violence against women, the ‘Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women’ (4th phase), played a pivotal role in sustaining support and services to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. The Ministry is working in coordination with 14 Ministries/Departments in a multisectoral approach. At present, there are 14 one-stop crisis centres, 67 one-stop crisis cells, and toll-free national helpline centres (109) which are functioning for the prevention of violence against women and children under the MOWCA. In addition, there remains a National Trauma Counselling Centre, 8 Regional Trauma Counselling Centres, a National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory, and 8 Divisional DNA Screening Laboratories, that are working to prevent and remedy violence against women and children in the country through real-time monitoring database.

7. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic left adverse and uneven socio-economic implications for women while accelerating existing vulnerabilities. The vulnerable sections of society, including the elderly, the poor, refugees, migrants, women, and children, were disproportionately affected due to their specific health and socioeconomic circumstances. The growth of GDP slowed considerably, export earnings decreased, private and public investment rates fell, and government fiscal revenue was impacted.<sup>4</sup> Domestic workers, owners, and workers in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), daily labourers, street vendors, cleaners, sex workers, and other informal workers rapidly lost their jobs and means to earn an income.<sup>5</sup> The pandemic exacerbated the burden of unpaid care and domestic work, as well as disrupted girls’ access to education. It deepened preexisting structural inequalities, widening the gender gap in Bangladesh. However, Bangladesh responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic following a ‘whole of society’ approach and the ‘leave no one behind (LNOB)’ principle, and the country moved on to a strong recovery trajectory from the pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

## Section I: Major developments on concluding observations

8. Legal Measures on Eliminating Discrimination: Since the submission of the 8<sup>th</sup> periodic report, Bangladesh has implemented a series of legislative initiatives and reforms aimed at advancing gender equality and promoting gender justice. In alignment with the core principles of CEDAW, which aim to eliminate discrimination against women and establish gender equality, several new laws and ordinances were enacted from 2016 to 2025.

9. The current Interim government of Bangladesh has amended the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (WCRPA) 2000, by an ordinance in March 2025, to expedite the investigation and trial process for rape cases. The amended law (section 18) reduces the investigation period from 30 to 15 days and decrees that trials must be concluded within 90 days (section 20), which was 180 days under the

<sup>4</sup> General Economics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Sustainable Development Goals Bangladesh Progress Report 2022.

<sup>5</sup> UN Women, COVID-19 Bangladesh Rapid Gender Analysis, 2020, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/05/RGA%20BangladeshFinalMay2020.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> General Economics Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Sustainable Development Goals Bangladesh Progress Report 2022.

previous law. To address the issue of delayed trials due to DNA test certificate requirements, the amendment stipulates that if the court determines that a trial can proceed based on medical certificates and circumstantial evidence, it may do so without waiting for DNA test results (section 32). Earlier in 2020, the government amended the same law introducing harsher penalties, including the death penalty for rape, and emphasized the importance of medical examinations for both victims and accused individuals in rape cases.

10. The government amended the age-old Evidence Act of 1872 in 2022, expanding the definition of ‘evidence’ to include physical, forensic, and digital evidence. It also repealed Section 155(4), which allowed the character of a rape victim to be questioned, and amended Section 146(3), requiring court approval for questions regarding a victim’s character. This reform marks a significant step in protecting survivors of gender-based violence, preventing victim-blaming, and safeguarding their dignity and privacy during legal proceedings. In 2018, the High Court (HC) Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh issued a landmark judgement by prohibiting the use of the derogatory “two-finger test” on rape survivors. The Court further ruled that lawyers cannot ask any question to rape survivors that could hurt their dignity during the trial proceedings.

11. In 2022, the government drafted the Anti-Discrimination Bill 2022, which aims to protect, uphold, and ensure equal rights and dignity for every Bangladeshi citizen and to prevent and eliminate discriminatory practices, particularly against marginalized sections of society. The Bill has been drafted in the light of constitutional provisions of equality and non-discrimination and international human rights treaties to which Bangladesh is a party. The draft Bill enumerates a list of discriminatory actions and provides administrative and judicial remedies against those actions. The list of discriminatory actions addresses the concerns and prejudices faced by women in both personal and public affairs.

12. Following the High Court directives, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) under the Ministry of Education (MOE), with technical support from UNFPA, has developed a comprehensive guideline for anti-sexual harassment committees in educational institutions. The Government of Bangladesh, along with international agencies and NGOs, has taken strong action to implement the High Court’s directives aimed at preventing sexual harassment of women and girls in workplaces, educational institutions, and other public spaces.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the government has drafted a new law called the Sexual Harassment Prevention and Protection Law 2025 to address sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, and educational institutions. The draft law defines sexual harassment, outlines the reporting steps, and includes penalties, like fines, suspension, or dismissal from a job.

13. The government enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act, 2018 (Act No. 39 of 2018), which prohibits the giving or taking of dowry in marriage, before its solemnization, or during the continuation of the marital relationship. It introduces key changes such as criminalizing dowry agreements and false cases, applying the Code of Criminal Procedure during trials, removing the limitation period, and making the offense cognizable with compounding options. In 2017, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was enacted, repealing a colonial-era law, that aimed to prevent child marriages by setting the minimum legal age for marriage at 18 for women and 21 for men. It criminalizes the marriage of minors and establishes penalties for those involved in arranging or conducting such early marriages. The Act also allows exceptions in special cases with court approval, but only under strict conditions.

<sup>7</sup> High Court Guidelines on Sexual Harassment: BNWLA v Bangladesh (2009) 4 BLC (HDC) 694.

14. The government repealed the Family Courts Ordinance of 1985 and passed the Family Courts Act 2023. This law empowers family courts to resolve matters related to divorce, restitution of conjugal rights, dower, maintenance, and guardianship. It also establishes family appellate courts, with one district judge in each court.

15. The government amended the National Parliament (Reserved Seats for Women) Election (Amendment) Act, 2023, to increase the number of reserved seats for women in the National Parliament from 45 to 50, as mandated by the 15th amendment to the constitution.

16. The government formulated Bangladesh National Social Welfare Council Act, 2019 to establish a Council that offer financial aid to vulnerable groups of people in society, namely, women, children, disadvantaged groups like ethnic minorities, autistic people or physically challenged or people with visionary or hearing impairments, disaster victims, river eroded people who have been turned into slum dwellers, tea garden workers and other low income groups of people who live below the poverty line.

17. The Government has introduced the Child Day Care Centre Act, 2021, to establish standards for the operation of daycare centres, ensuring children's well-being while their parents are at work. The government also amended the Bangladeshi Nursing and Midwifery Council (Amendment) Act, 2023 (Act No. 03 of 2023), which aims to improve the quality of education, training, and professional conduct for nurses and midwives, most of whom are women, which helps empower them in their careers.

18. The current interim government has formed a dedicated Women's Affairs Reform Commission to address systematic obstacles and embedded discrimination against women. The commission made 433 recommendations grouped under 15 thematic areas to eliminate existing discrimination against women. To strengthen legal and policy measures for the advancement of gender equality and ensure women's rights, the commission recommends the elimination of all discriminatory and contradictory legal provisions. Notably, the commission suggests the adoption of a uniform family code that would be voluntary for all religious communities on all matters relating to marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The government is actively considering implementing the recommendations by undertaking legal, policy, and administrative reforms in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

19. The Government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives intending to strengthen the national machinery for promoting and protecting women's rights and gender equality. The government has undertaken various measures to strengthen institutional mechanisms to address gender issues such as increasing human resource, and budgetary allocations, providing sector-specific experts; strengthening documentation and data management systems; improving infrastructure and logistic support systems; monitoring systems, increased coordination between different project/program activities and the broader strategy formulation processes.

20. The government has decided to rename the Ministry of Mohila and Children Affairs to the Ministry of Women and Children. In line with this, the government also decided to rename all the associated bodies and official designations under MOWCA by replacing 'Mohila' with 'Nari'. This decision manifests a strategic policy shift aimed at refining the focus on women-related governance.

21. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) has taken significant steps to coordinate, monitor, and implement gender equality initiatives in Bangladesh. Since 2016, some of the key initiatives include the implementation of Gender



Responsive Budgeting (GRB), updating the National Action Plan on National Women Development Policy (NAP-NWDP), preparing Annual Plans of Action, and forming the Policy Leadership Advocacy Unit (PLAU).

22. MOWC updated the National Action Plan on the National Women Development Policy NAP-NWDP in 2023, to incorporate emerging opportunities and challenges. The updated NAP NWDP (2021-2030) provides a comprehensive framework to guide the implementation of the NWDP 2011, across 54 ministries and was mapped against the SDG indicators and the Development Results Framework of the 8th Five-Year Plan 2020-2025. The NAP NWDP guides the government to fulfil its obligations under numerous international treaties, agreements, and declarations, including CEDAW, as well as the SDGs. It also aims to contribute to the country's overall growth and development by operationalizing the NWP 2011 using a whole-of-government approach.

### **National action plan to eliminate violence against women and children (2018 – 2030)**

23. The Government of Bangladesh revised its National Action Plan to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Children, originally launched in 2013, to align with the SDGs and current priorities outlined in the 8th Five-Year Plan (FYP). The updated action plan, published in November 2018, envisions a society free of violence against women and children by 2030. The missions of the plan are to ensure accountability and promote agencies for women's empowerment and gender equality, to develop and implement specific program plans for preventing and redressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). The updated NAP aims to enhance the implementation of existing laws, raise social awareness, improve women's socio-economic conditions, and provide better protection, prevention, and rehabilitation services.

24. The government introduced gender responsive budgeting (GRB) being part of broader financial reforms, especially the implementation of the Medium-Term Budget Framework (MTBF). Over the past years, the government has used the Recurrent, Capital, Gender, and Poverty (RCGP) model to determine the portion of gender allocations in the operational expenditure, with 16 criteria to evaluate the gender sensitivity and relevance of projects and programs undertaken by ministries/divisions for women's development. In the last FY2024-2025, the finance division of the government introduced a separate gender finance module, which has been adopted in the Integrated Budget & Accounting System (iBAS++) using the GFT model instead of the RCGP model.<sup>8</sup> The model separated budget allocation across an expanded range of thematic areas, rather than by ministries/divisions, by analysing the nature of the programs/activities to enhance the clarity of the gender budget report.

25. The total national budget and gender budget allocation trend since FY 2009–2010 presents a consistent increase, from USD 23.1 billion in FY 2009–2010 to USD 230.35 billion in FY 2024–2025, rising by almost 10 times. In the past five years alone, the gender budget has increased by 34.11 per cent, on track to reach the target of 35 per cent, at minimum, by 2025.

26. The following table shows the recent budgetary allocations for MOWCA in the past few years.

<sup>8</sup> Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, 'Gender Budget Report: 2023-2024', Published in June, 2023, [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/001130ba\\_9cb8\\_4955\\_9f07\\_f9ba27ca7de9/Gender%20Budget%20Report%202023-24%20\(English%20for%20Website\).pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/001130ba_9cb8_4955_9f07_f9ba27ca7de9/Gender%20Budget%20Report%202023-24%20(English%20for%20Website).pdf).

Table 1: **Budgetary Allocations for MOWCA**

<i>Serial</i>	<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Allocation in BDT</i>	<i>Allocation in USD<sup>9</sup></i>
1	2018-19	3490,16,18,000.00	286 078 836.06
2	2019-20	3748,79,70,000.00	307 278 442.62
3	2020-21	3742,04,30,000.00	306 724 836.06
4	2021-22	4103,59,52,000.00	336 360 262.29
5	2022-23	4290,79,41,000.00	351 704 434.42
6	2023-24	4755,03,39,000.00	389 756 877.04
7	2024-25	52,222,000,000.00	428 049 180.32

Source: MOF and MOWC official documents.

27. The gender budget report was extended beyond the previously 44 ministries, now covering all 62 ministries, divisions, and institutions with direct and indirect involvement in gender issues. The Gender Budget Report prioritizes women's welfare and promotes gender equality throughout the budgeting process. Since the start of the fiscal year 2018-19, 336 budget, planning, and Women in Development (WID) focal point officers from 54 ministries as well as 89 representatives from civil society, have received training on gender responsive planning and budgeting under the Strengthening Gender Responsive Budgeting project (2017-2023) led by MoWC.

28. The Department of Women Affairs (DWA) and *Jatiya Mahila Sanghshad* operate Violence Against Women (VAW) Cells that provide legal support to women and children victims of violence. The DWA runs one safe custody and six women's support centres, where victims can stay for up to six months and receive legal support, psychological counselling, and life skills training. MOWC has formed VAW committees at the district, upazila, and union levels, with leadership from the Deputy Commissioner, *Upazila Nirbahi Officer*, and *Union Parishad Chairman*, to address and manage violence against women cases. Women's Abuse Prevention Cell has been established in the Directorate of Women's Affairs and National Women's Organization to prevent torture/violence against women and children and implement service programs through the coordinated initiatives of various ministries and non-governmental organizations.

29. There is a dedicated Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, which scrutinizes the government's actions in terms of fulfilling obligations under international treaties, including CEDAW. The Committee is entrusted to scrutinize all laws, policies, and administrative actions and to monitor the adequacy of the existing national system for the promotion of gender equality.

30. The Women's Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee is a 35-member committee representing various ministries, divisions, and civil society to oversee the implementation of the action plan concerning women's advancement. The Committee convenes every six months. The MoWCA secretary serves as the member secretary. The government established the National Council for Women and Children Development (NCWCD) in 2009, which is mandated to oversee and guide the activities of MoWCA and others on gender equality and child development.

31. The Women in Development Focal Points Mechanism: The government established the WID focal points mechanism for integrating and mainstreaming actions to address women's empowerment and gender equality in various programs under all ministries and government divisions. The WID focal points are responsible

<sup>9</sup> USD 1.00 = BDT 122.00 (Bangladesh Bank, 13 May 2025).

for ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are taken into account in the policies, plans, and programs of their respective ministries/divisions. Currently, there are 54 WID focal points representing various agencies of the government.

32. The government has introduced the Local Consultative Group on Women's Advancement and Gender Equality (LCG WAGE), being one of the thematic working groups within the Local Consultative Group (LCG) mechanism, that facilitates coordination between the Government of Bangladesh and development partners, including donor agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The LCG WAGE is chaired by MoWCA. The LCG WAGE focuses specifically on promoting gender equality and women's advancement. It works to integrate gender perspectives across various sectors and development initiatives, ensuring that policies, programs, and resources are effectively contributing to women's empowerment.

## Section II: Responses to concluding observations

33. This Section contains the Convention-specific information covering the period from 2016 to 2025. This section responds to the Concluding Observations of the Committee and provides necessary information regarding the implementation of the CEDAW.

### Reservations

34. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh ratified CEDAW in 1984, and Bangladesh maintains its reservation on articles 2 and 16 (1) (c) of the CEDAW Convention. In principle, Bangladesh has made significant progress in line with Article 2 by promoting women's equality in several areas, and the country's progress in political, social, and economic empowerment of women has been appreciated all over the world. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2024, Bangladesh has emerged as the top performer in South Asia in terms of gender parity for the tenth consecutive year.<sup>10</sup> The extensive legislative initiatives and timely reforms, as outlined above, manifest the utmost commitment of Bangladesh in achieving gender equality and gender justice while gradually paving the way for the withdrawal of reservations.

35. Bangladesh has made substantial progress relating to marriage and its dissolution, so that eventually reservations to Article 16 (1) (c), which spells out the equality of women's rights in matters relating to marriage and family relations and states that men and women have the same rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution, may be gradually withdrawn. Being part of reforming personal laws, the country repealed the Family Courts Ordinance 1985 and passed a new Act, namely the Family Courts Act 2023. The law empowers the Family Courts to settle matters relating to divorce, restitution of conjugal rights, dower, maintenance, guardianship, and custody. The Family Courts Act 2023 also refers to establishing family appellate courts consisting of one district judge in each court.

36. On the 24th of January 2023, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh delivered a landmark decision recognizing mothers as legal guardians of children. The judgment held that mothers can now be the sole legal guardians of their

<sup>10</sup> K. K. Pal, K. Piaget, and S. Zahidi, Global Gender Gap Report 2024: Insight Report, World Economic Forum, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>.

children, where it is no longer mandatory to include the names of both parents in all official documents.

37. In August 2019, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court directed the government to remove the term ‘Kumari’, or ‘maiden’, from the Nikahnama (Muslim marriage certificate) and directed that the word ‘unmarried’ should be used instead. The court also ordered the authorities to introduce the options ‘unmarried, widower, or divorced’ for the groom on the certificate by including an additional clause in the marriage deed.

38. In April 2025, the government amended the Muslim Marriage and Divorce (Registration) Rules, 2009. The new amendment introduced online registration of marriage and divorce, apart from the existing manual system. This digitalized registration system intends to reduce corruption and public harassment.

39. Since the last CEDAW report, the government has taken several steps to gradually move toward withdrawing reservations. During the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) in March 2025, a bilateral meeting was held between the Honourable Adviser of the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs and the Minister of Gender and Children’s Affairs, Tunisia. The meeting explored possible pathways to remove Bangladesh’s reservations on CEDAW in the light of Tunisia’s experience in lifting reservations as a Muslim country. From the CSW69 session, Bangladesh received valuable insights from other countries, particularly Tunisia and Morocco, regarding the benefits of lifting reservations to CEDAW. Bangladesh welcomed such observations and reiterated its commitment to making efforts to lift CEDAW reservations.

## **Legislative framework**

40. The constitution of Bangladesh guarantees that all citizens are equal before the law or are entitled to equal protection under the law (Article 27). The country prohibits discrimination against women by stipulating that the State shall not discriminate on the grounds of sex, etc., and that women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and public life (article 28). The National Women’s Development Policy 2011 and its updated National Action Plan provide a base for government action to promote gender equality, and the 8th Five-Year Plan integrates gender equality issues across several sectors.

41. In Bangladesh, personal matters are governed by the respective religious laws of the communities concerned. The newly passed Family Courts Act in 2023 empowers the Family Courts to settle matters relating to divorce, restitution of conjugal rights, dower, maintenance, guardianship, and custody. The Family Courts Act 2023 also refers to establishing family appellate courts consisting of one district judge in each court.

42. The government is committed to bringing the necessary changes in the personal laws to harmonize them in the context of international obligations while paving the way for adopting a uniform civil code. To prevent harassment relating to marriage registration, the government introduced the online registration of marriage and divorce, apart from the existing manual system under the Muslim Marriage and Divorce (Registration) Act.

43. On January 24, 2023, the High Court Division of Bangladesh delivered a landmark verdict recognizing mothers as legal guardians of their children.<sup>11</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/news/mothers-guardians-hcds-historic-verdict-3238756>.

ruling allows mothers to be acknowledged as sole legal guardians, eliminating the previous requirement to include both parents' names on official documents. Moreover, in 2024, in another significant case, the High Court of Bangladesh granted the mother full guardianship of her daughter, marking a significant shift in the nation's approach to guardianship laws.<sup>12</sup>

44. The constitution of Bangladesh provides an effective mechanism to enforce and realize fundamental rights, including equality before the law and the prohibition of discrimination against women.<sup>13</sup> Article 102(1) of the Constitution states that the High Court may give such direction or order needed to enforce fundamental rights of the Constitution. The judiciary, through its progressive rulings and directions, has been playing an effective role in promoting the rights of women and ensuring gender justice.

45. The government has various accountability mechanisms to monitor the implementation of gender laws and protect the rights of women and girls. The National Council for the Development of Women and Children is mandated to oversee and guide the activities of MoWCA and others on gender equality and child development. A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women and Children Affairs examines laws and policies and provides suggestions for the advancement of women as per the National Women Development Policy.

46. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has investigative power *suo moto* to probe into any alleged violation of human rights; to summon explanation from the law enforcing agencies and public authorities; visit prisons or correctional centres; lodge writ petitions to the High Court Division on behalf of an aggrieved person; and exercise the powers of a civil court while conducting any inquiry. NHRC established a National Inquiry Committee to carry out a National Inquiry into Violence against Women and Children, with a focus on rape.<sup>14</sup> The goals of the committee are to identify the root cause, trends, obstacles, and suggestions for stakeholders to address rape. In 2020, NHRC launched the 'Women's Safety in Public Places' campaign to raise awareness among young people and other key actors about women's safety concerns to promote positive perception, attitude, and behaviour change for equal rights of women and girls.

## Access to justice

47. The government, in collaboration with various organizations, activists, civil society members, and NGOs, is working to ensure justice for all, including women and girls. It has amended discriminatory legal provisions to promote inclusivity for women and girls.

48. The government amended the Village Courts Act 2006 in 2024 to strengthen its functionality and ensure faster, easier access to justice for disadvantaged groups, including women. The new law raises the pecuniary jurisdiction from BDT 75,000 (USD 641) to BDT 300,000 (USD 2,564), allowing disputants to resolve cases without the costs and complexities of District Courts. The amended law has included a provision allowing wives to file suits for maintenance. Many married rural women in Bangladesh are housewives, and their husbands are the sole earning members of

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/entertainment/tv-film/news/badhan-sets-example-wins-battle-over-custodial-rights-3595336>.

<sup>13</sup> Article 44 of the Constitution of Bangladesh.

<sup>14</sup> National Human Rights Commission, 'Human Rights for All Everywhere Equally: National Human Rights Commission, 3rd Five Year Strategic Plan 2022-27', [https://nhrc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nhrc.portal.gov.bd/page/535c363f\\_91a8\\_40b6\\_b58a\\_714954c85b4e/2022-1018-04-28-ec218ec406fc02be70e9f982e4b2af89.pdf](https://nhrc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nhrc.portal.gov.bd/page/535c363f_91a8_40b6_b58a_714954c85b4e/2022-1018-04-28-ec218ec406fc02be70e9f982e4b2af89.pdf).

the family. The husband's marriage abandonment has serious consequences for women and their children's financial security. Before the inclusion of this provision, no family disputes were triable by the Village Court system, but now any cases of recovery of maintenance within the pecuniary jurisdiction of BDT 300,000 (USD 2,564) can be dealt with by the Village Court. This will allow for greater access to justice and, subsequently, economic empowerment of women.

49. During the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual courts were established through the Use of Information Communication Technology by Court Act 2020, which facilitated strengthening women's access to justice. Between May 2020- August 2022, 314,842 bail petitions were heard through virtual courts, and bail was granted to 158,507 individuals.<sup>15</sup> Various digital solutions, such as SMS notification to witnesses, online cause list, judicial monitoring dashboard, and the MyCourt mobile app have been introduced to enhance the judicial process. Bangladesh has introduced a range of digital tools to streamline judicial services in subordinate courts, such as the Online Cause List, Judicial Monitoring Dashboard, and the MyCourt mobile app. As a result, the efficiency of case processing has significantly improved, with the national average case disposal rate now reaching 95 per cent.<sup>16</sup> The virtual court app has included the cases for Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman Tribunals on a priority basis.

50. The government inaugurated one-stop service desks for women, children, and people with disabilities in 659 police stations in 2020.<sup>17</sup> A specially trained woman sub-inspector runs the desk with other skilled female officers. The desk provided services to 3,444,000 people in 2021.<sup>18</sup> This initiative of the Bangladesh Police helps women avail legal aid services to fight against the prejudices that they are facing in society.

51. The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken several initiatives to address violence against Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN), working in collaboration with international organizations and NGOs. Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of Rohingya women to GBV, the government has supported the establishment of Women-Friendly Spaces, where survivors of violence can access healthcare, psychosocial support, and legal aid. The government has also worked to strengthen the capacities of law enforcement and camp authorities, ensuring that cases of violence are reported and addressed more effectively. Furthermore, efforts have been made to prevent violence by engaging men and boys through gender-sensitization programs, promoting a more supportive and protective environment for women and girls within the camps.

52. In 2020, Police Cyber Support for Women (PCSW), a cyber support service exclusively for women, was introduced. PCSW guarantees the privacy of victims' information while offering female victims of cybercrime essential legal and technological support.

53. The National Legal Aid Service Organisation (NLASO), a dedicated government agency, provides legal aid services to the people, especially the poor and disadvantaged sections of society, to avail access to justice. Under NLASO, there are

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review, 'National Report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and 16/21, Bangladesh', General Assembly, Forty-fourth session, UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/44/BGD/1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> BSS, Dhaka, 'PM opens 'Service Desk' at 659 police stations', The Daily Star, 10 April 2022, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/governance/news/pm-opens-service-desk-659-police-stations-3001941>.

<sup>18</sup> Roundtables, 'Implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security', The Daily Star, 13 June 2022, Implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security | The Daily Star.



the District Legal Aid Committee, the Upazila Legal Aid Committee, and the Union Legal Aid Committee, which provide legal advice and services to the people. Between 2009 and March 2024, Over 1.0 million people have benefited from free government legal services from NLASO.<sup>19</sup> This includes 27,424 individuals who received legal aid through the Supreme Court Legal Aid Office, 802,407 through the 64 District Legal Aid Offices, 28,330 from the Labour Legal Aid Cells in Dhaka and Chattogram, and 164,797 through the Legal Aid Call Centre. Additionally, 405,092 people received government legal advice, with support provided for 384,886 cases and 193,749 cases disposed of.<sup>20</sup> The poor, vulnerable, and marginalized sections of society, including women, are the major beneficiaries of legal aid services.

54. The legal aid system under NLASO is contributing effectively to promote alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to mitigate case backlogs and enhance access to justice for all. Between 2009 and 2024, 117,999 cases were resolved through ADR out of 129,925 referred cases, with a success rate exceeding 90 per cent, which indicates an instrumental role of ADR in reducing case backlogs.<sup>21</sup> In terms of beneficiaries, female constitutes around 50 per cent of the total ADR recipients. The government has taken various measures to introduce a digital legal aid application and promote online dispute resolution.

55. The government has continued to undertake various programmes to increase legal awareness about women's rights. Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MoCHTA) and different non-government organizations have taken many initiatives in the three hill districts to increase legal awareness of all women, including women from ethnic minorities, so that they know about their human rights and remedies available to claim their rights.

## **Stereotypes and harmful practices**

56. Awareness Raising: The state is aware of the various stereotypical attitudes and norms against women, and therefore, the state is actively undertaking various measures to eliminate such stereotypes. The government, in collaboration with NGOs, development partners, and women's rights organizations, is working to change these social norms and stereotypes.

57. Being part of the implementation of a bottom-up approach in preventing violence and discrimination against women, the government plans to involve community-based organizations with increased participation of men and boys in publicity and public awareness activities.

58. Bangladesh has a robust legal and policy framework to prevent discriminatory content and gender bias in the media industry. The country is implementing the National Broadcasting Policy 2014, to ensure that mass media encourage and develop a positive portrayal of women's productive roles. The policy urges the media to create awareness among the public about women's empowerment and other underserved communities. The specific provisions in the policy prohibit negative portrayals of women in the media, such as the prohibition of broadcasting any program that encourages violence or discrimination towards women and children.

59. In the context of Bangladesh, where fake news and rumour occupy social media on a large scale, training on fact-checking was considered essential to prevent

<sup>19</sup> [https://nlaso.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nlaso.portal.gov.bd/annual\\_reports/a10506ee\\_b6d3\\_425d\\_96d0\\_44bd8ffe8306/2024-09-11-06-06-b2ec5b085271839670e77d413ff6\\_bce3.pdf](https://nlaso.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nlaso.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/a10506ee_b6d3_425d_96d0_44bd8ffe8306/2024-09-11-06-06-b2ec5b085271839670e77d413ff6_bce3.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> [https://nlaso.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nlaso.portal.gov.bd/annual\\_reports/a10506ee\\_b6d3\\_425d\\_96d0\\_44bd8ffe8306/2024-09-11-06-06-b2ec5b085271839670e77d413ff6\\_bce3.pdf](https://nlaso.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nlaso.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/a10506ee_b6d3_425d_96d0_44bd8ffe8306/2024-09-11-06-06-b2ec5b085271839670e77d413ff6_bce3.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

misinformation and protect victims of such misinformation, where women are found to be the victims in most cases. The Press Institute Bangladesh provided training to 30 female journalists, including members of Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Samity, on fact-checking in 2022.<sup>22</sup> The training highlighted the techniques of writing reports via fact-checking, methods of fact-checking fake pictures and video images, monitoring fact-checking sites, and verifying the authenticity of the news. In addition, several NGOs, CSOs, and international organizations are also supporting efforts to improve positive media portrayals of women and girls through training journalists and media professionals from various newspapers, TV shows, radio stations, news agencies, internet portals, advertising agencies, and youth organizations.

60. Preventing harmful practices: To prevent harmful practices, the government has undertaken several initiatives. The student-led mass uprising in July 2024 has paved the way to initiate a reform agenda to challenge systematic inequalities and stereotypes, and gender norms that are embedded in society. As mentioned above, the government has formed a dedicated Women's Affairs Reform Commission to address systematic obstacles and embedded discrimination against women. The reform agenda for women's advancement, while aligning with leaving no one behind approach, focuses on eliminating systematic barriers to women's effective participation. The government is committed to implementing the commission's recommendations that facilitate preventing harmful practices against women.

61. Bangladesh has taken initiatives to strengthen legal and policy measures and enforce legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media. The country supported the media industry by providing training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced, and diverse images of women and girls in the media, including social media. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) and its twelve departments or agencies provide necessary support and coordinate and monitor activities to prevent discrimination and gender bias in the media.

62. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission is responsible for implementing best practices for online telecommunication platforms, addressing security concerns regarding consumer protection, national security, and online content, including discrimination, depictions of illegal or harmful substances, imitable behaviour, nudity, language, sex, violence, fear, threat, and other concerns. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission formulated a draft Regulation for Digital, Social Media, and Over-the-Top Platforms in 2021, which seeks to address and regulate harmful content or obscene activities. The regulation is wide enough to prevent discriminatory content in social media that violates the rights of women and children.

63. The government has formulated and amended the laws and rules to eliminate child marriage and increase awareness of the legal structure and legal remedies for girls whose rights are violated by child marriage. The country has undertaken various measures to enhance awareness of the harmful consequences of child marriage and GBV, to change the social stereotypical mindset through community mobilization.

64. The Child Marriage Restraint Act and its Rules contained the provision for the formation of child marriage prevention committees at the national, district, upazila, and union levels. The members of the committee include government officials, local public representatives, non-government officials, and civil society representatives. The Act empowers government officials and local representatives to take action against child marriage and enforces stricter punishments for those involved. Parents,

<sup>22</sup> Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, '2-day training workshop for women journalists held at PIB', 7 December 2022, <https://www.bssnews.net/news/98614>.



legal guardians, and marriage registrars are now held legally accountable for facilitating child marriage.

65. A mobile app called ‘Game Changer’, being rolled out by Plan International and the Bangladesh government, was developed to prevent child marriage by allowing matchmakers, priests, and officers who register marriages to verify the bride and groom’s ages through a digital database.<sup>23</sup> The app helped to stop 3,750 underage marriages during a six-month trial. The app, which has an offline text messaging version for rural areas, gives the user access to a database that stores a unique identification number linked to the relevant documents.

## Gender-based violence against women

66. The interim government of Bangladesh amended the “Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (WCRPA) 2000 through an ordinance in March 2025. The amendments establish special tribunals for child rape cases, reduce investigation time to 15 days and trial time to 90 days, and expand the definition of rape to include offenses by both males and females. The definition of rape, under the amended law, added an explanation that covers the sexual abuse of boys, as the forced oral or anal penetration of male children, which is known as ‘*balatkar*’. This amendment corrects a long-standing legal gap and opens the door for the prosecution of such crimes as rape.

67. The amended WCRPA introduces a new provision (section 9b) by treating rape incidents involving deception with the promise of marriage or with the lure of marriage, as a separate crime. The law imposes up to seven years of imprisonment for individuals who engage in sexual relations under false promises of marriage and introduces harsher penalties for perpetrators who cause physical harm to victims after unsuccessful rape attempts. Monetary fines have been increased under the reformed legislation. Section 4’s limit of twenty lakh BDT replaces the previous minimum fine of one lakh BDT. These changes aim to expedite justice, broaden victim protection, and deter sexual violence more effectively.

68. The amended law of WCRPA calls for the creation of Child Rape Crime Suppression Tribunals in every district and metropolitan area. This is a major institutional change. These tribunals are only in charge of child rape cases and are staffed by judges from district and sessions courts, hence ensuring a more efficient and effective adjudication process for child victims.

69. The amended law of WCRPA introduced a new provision allowing judges to issue protection orders for victims and witnesses. The law enables the victims to claim expenses and compensation relating to the case. The law changed the procedural provisions to hasten the legal system and ensure speedy justice for the rape victims.

70. To address the issue of delayed trials due to DNA test certificate requirements, the amendment of WCRPA stipulates that if the court determines that a trial can proceed based on medical certificates and circumstantial evidence, it may do so without waiting for DNA test results (section 32). This will allow judges to proceed with trials without requiring DNA test results as mandatory proof. The government also decided to establish two more DNA labs in Chittagong and Rajshahi as soon as possible. Earlier, the government enacted the DNA Rules 2018 to facilitate the implementation of the DNA Act 2014, ensuring the use of forensic DNA evidence as proof in court.

<sup>23</sup> <https://news.trust.org/item/20180507003042-93mdm/>.

71. In 2018, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh issued two landmark judgments on rape and sexual violence. The first prohibiting the “Two Finger Test” on rape survivors in determining the occurrence of rape; and the second, ensuring justice and protection for rape survivors. Through these rulings made in April 2018, the Court laid down guidelines on conducting medico-legal tests on rape victims and the responsibilities of the police in recording, and supporting victims through, complaints of rape and sexual violence.

72. The government has imposed restrictions on questioning women’s character in court, particularly when it discourages victims from filing rape cases, through an amendment in the Evidence Act in 2022. Allegations of immoral character against a rape victim can no longer be used as evidence. Digital evidence is now admissible in court, and any questions about the character of witnesses can only be asked with the court’s permission if deemed necessary for justice.

73. The Interim government has promulgated the Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025, which makes online abuse punishable and recognises internet access as citizens’ right. The law criminalises the publication and threats to publish sexually exploitative content targeting women and children in digital spaces through a website or any other digital or electronic means.

74. The government, in collaboration with international development agencies and NGOs, has taken concerted actions to implement the High Court’s directives on preventing sexual harassment of women and girls in workplaces, educational institutions, and public spaces. The Ministry of Education has instructed all secondary and higher secondary education institutes and offices to form five-member committees to prevent sexual harassment. Additionally, the Ministry has ensured that 46 out of 53 public universities and 100 out of 109 private universities in Bangladesh have operational complaint committees addressing sexual harassment, in compliance with the High Court’s directives.

75. The government has drafted a new law called the Sexual Harassment Prevention and Protection Bill 2024 to address sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, and educational institutions. The Bill defines sexual harassment, outlines the reporting steps, and includes penalties, like fines, suspension, or dismissal from a job.

76. The updated National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Children 2018- 2030 aims to establish a society free from violence against women and children by 2030 by improving the implementation of existing laws and policies against VAW and girls, increasing social awareness, improving socio economic conditions of women and protection services as well as prevention and rehabilitation.

77. The National Action Plan to End Child Marriage 2018-2030 commits to ending child marriage by 2041, reducing by one-third the rate of marriage for girls between the ages of 15 and 18 in 2021, and eliminating marriage for girls under the age of 15. The core priorities under the plan include empowering girl adolescents by increase their participation, life skills, access to modern facilities, and participation in decision making in family and community; enhancing awareness on the harmful consequences of child marriage and GBV to change social stereotyped mindset through community mobilization; and formulating and amending the laws and rules to eliminate child marriage and increase awareness of legal structure and legal remedies for girls whose rights are violated for child marriage.

78. The Child Marriage Restraint Rules 2018 were adopted to clarify the procedures to apply the special provision in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017, to avoid its misuse. The government is working to develop an IT system to check the age of the bride and groom using a birth certificate, national identification document, secondary

school certificate (SSC), or higher secondary certificate (HSC), which helps prevent child marriage by verifying the age of the couple involved.

79. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, UNFPA and UNICEF, are implementing the flagship “Global Programme to End Child Marriage”. The Phase II (2020–2023) interventions in Bangladesh have resulted in the establishment of drop-in safe spaces for girls around the nation. Thus far, over 25,000 teenage girls have benefited from these safe spaces, commonly referred to as “Kishori Resource Centres,” which also offer life skills training, sexual and reproductive health education, and positive possibilities.<sup>24</sup>

80. In 2024, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, UNFPA and UNICEF, launched Phase III (2024-2030), targeting the most marginalized communities across the country, which will focus on strengthening the legal framework against child marriage, increasing education completion rates, and shifting social norms by leveraging the Government’s social protection schemes and engaging with communities.

81. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) has introduced the “National Multimedia Campaign on Prevention of Violence Against Children and Child Marriage” in 2024 with technical assistance received from UNICEF. The campaign is a component of the “Accelerating Protection for Children” project managed by MoWCA with support from UNICEF. The project’s goal is to address the high rate of child marriage and violence against children in Bangladesh by creating a national and subnational child protection system and increasing institutional capability.

82. MoWCA has established a national helpline centre which provides services to the victims of sexual harassment in coordination with local administration, government and NGOs and is accessible at 109, which is a toll-free hotline for 24/7. Between 2018 and April 2023, 4,795,836 women and children received service from helpline ‘109’.<sup>25</sup> A National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory and a DNA Screening Laboratory have been established in Medical College Hospitals in seven divisions to expedite and ensure justice for women victims.<sup>26</sup>

83. To prevent sexual harassment at the workplace, Bangladesh has undertaken several measures. The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) under the MoLE introduced a toll-free help line number 16357 where workers can complain regarding any labour issues, including sexual harassment and GBV in the workplace. From July 2022 to June 2024, a total of 10,218 complaints have been received, of which 9,321 complaints were received through the online website, helpline, and emails.<sup>27</sup> During this period, 9,969 complaints were resolved.

84. The largest government project on preventing violence against women, the ‘Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women’ (4th phase), played a pivotal role in sustaining support and services to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. The multi-sectoral programme provides support to strengthen the management aspect of prevention and protection of women’s

<sup>24</sup> UNFPA, Action Leads and Hope Prevails: Success in Ending Child Marriage - Bangladesh, ReliefWeb, 18 December 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/action-leads-and-hope-prevails-success-ending-child-marriage>.

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 4th Cycle Universal Periodic Review, ‘National Report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and 16/21, Bangladesh’, General Assembly, Forty-fourth session, UN Doc A/HRC/WG.6/44/BGD/1.

<sup>26</sup> Divisional DNA Screening Laboratory: Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women, <http://mspvaw.gov.bd/contain/36>.

<sup>27</sup> Information obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

oppression by developing service centres, including One-Stop-Crisis Centres, and One-Stop Crisis Cells. In addition, there is a National Trauma Counselling Centre and 8 Divisional Trauma Counselling Centres established in the Directorate of Women Affairs to provide psychosocial counselling services to abused women and children.

85. The government runs One-Stop Crisis Centres in 14 Government Medical College Hospitals to offer women and children who have been victims of violence health care, police support, DNA testing, social services, legal assistance, psychosocial counselling, and shelter services. In addition, 67 One-Stop Crisis Cells operate in 47 district headquarters hospitals and 20 upazila health complexes across the country to coordinate different services both within and outside the hospitals for women and children who have been victims of abuse. The National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory provides necessary support to expedite trials for cases of abuse against women and children. In 2022, the government inaugurated the Women's Support Desk at the 659 police stations. This desk provides all types of legal assistance to women from all walks of life. This desk is run by a female officer with the rank of Sub-Inspector.

86. The government plans to establish Quick Response Teams at the Central, District, Upazila, and Union levels under the MOWCA to provide immediate integrated services to the survivors in order to remedy the abuse of women and children. The 'Quick Response Team' will assist and make the utmost efforts to ensure immediate rescue, medical care, psychosocial counselling services, legal services, shelter home, safe space, security, and other necessary services to the survivors. A committee consisting of representatives of non-governmental organizations, lawyers, women students' representatives, representatives of children's forums, and other relevant ministries/departments/organizations will be formed for the follow-up of cases related to violence against women and children. The government is planning to form an expert pool, including a lawyer pool, for providing legal assistance to facilitate prompt and effective service delivery to abused women and children. In line with this, a pool of clinical psychologists and other experts (doctors, gender experts, helpline service providers) will be formed to provide psychosocial counselling services to the victims.

87. In 2020, the Bangladesh Police officially inaugurated the Police Cyber Support Wing (PCSW), a cyber-assistance programme offered only to women to support their pursuit of appropriate legal action. It provides women who are victims of cybercrime with essential technological support, and it raises and spreads awareness of issues linked to cybersecurity. PCSW protects the privacy of the victim's information while offering support and services. PCSW promotes and disseminates cybersecurity-related awareness. From FY 2016–2017 to FY 2021–2022, 1,325 educational institutions provided training to 89,085 female students on "Girls Awareness in Digital Security" to raise girls' awareness of cybercrime.

88. In September 2021, the Bangladesh Police Women Network (BPWN) launched its Strategic Plan 2021-2023, aiming to strengthen gender equality within the police force by enhancing the participation, representation, and empowerment of female police officers, while also ensuring the safety and security of women and girls across communities. This plan aligns with the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP WPS) 2019-2025 and the UNSC Resolution 1325. Bangladesh continues to be a leading contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, with 5,866 uniformed personnel deployed in 2024, including a growing number of female peacekeepers, reflecting the country's commitment to gender equality and Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).

89. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has formed multiple committees at various levels, including the Central Women and Child Repression Prevention

Committee, as well as prevention committees at the national, divisional, district, upazila, and union levels. In March 2025, the government launched a dedicated shortcode service with the new number '3333', alongside the existing police hotline, to facilitate the direct reporting of gender-based violence against women. This new service enables victims to report any incidents of violence directly.<sup>28</sup>

90. The government of Bangladesh has taken several measures to support and resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV. The government has provided financial grants and capacity-building support to local women's organizations, enabling them to expand their services for survivors of violence. For example, Bangladesh's Amrai Pari (WE CAN) program aims to transform attitudes toward violence against women on a national level.<sup>29</sup> By breaking the taboo, stigma, shame, and denial surrounding domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women, Amrai Pari (WE CAN) aims to raise awareness and hold perpetrators accountable.

91. The BBS conducted its first and second rounds of the Violence Against Women (VAW) survey in 2011 and 2015, respectively, aiming to generate official statistics on the prevalence of different forms of violence against women. The third round of the VAW survey was completed on 27 February 2025, with key findings indicating that intimate partner violence remains widespread in Bangladesh, impacting millions of women nationwide.<sup>30</sup>

92. According to the BBS report (2024), 69.6 per cent of ever-married women in Bangladesh have experienced some form of partner violence in their lifetime, which shows a slight decline from 72.6 per cent in 2015.<sup>31</sup> More than four in ten (41.2 per cent) experienced such violence in the last 12 months of 2024. The most common form of violence remains controlling behaviour, affecting 50.1 per cent of ever-married women, followed by physical violence, experienced by 46.7 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Emotional violence has increased over the years, with 32.7 per cent of women subjected to it in their lifetime. The prevalence of sexual violence has also risen slightly to 28.5 per cent. Economic violence has seen a decrease, with 9.7 per cent of ever-married women reporting experiencing it in their lifetime, and 4.2 per cent in the last 12 months. In terms of partner sexual violence, 28.5 per cent of ever-married women have experienced it in their lifetime, while 9.3 per cent reported experiencing it in the last 12 months, a decrease from 13.3 per cent in 2015. The lifetime rates of sexual violence are higher in rural areas (29.0 per cent) compared to urban areas (23.5 per cent). The prevalence varies by region, with 8.9 per cent in rural areas, 10.5 per cent in urban areas, 10.95 per cent (average) in city corporation areas.<sup>33</sup>

93. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) carried out its first-ever Time-Use Survey (TUS) in 2021. The TUS provides valuable insights into how men and women divide labour based on a variety of demographic factors other than sex, including age, location, marital status, level of education attained, and occupation. The TUS, for the first time, brought light to unpaid care and domestic work. The survey report found that women spent 7.3 times as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men,

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/government-affairs/375990/govt-to-launch-3333-shortcode-service-to-combat?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/government-affairs/375990/govt-to-launch-3333-shortcode-service-to-combat?utm_source=chatgpt.com).

<sup>29</sup> We Can Bangladesh, 'About us - we can bangladesh', <https://www.wecan-bd.org/about/>.

<sup>30</sup> [https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/57def76a\\_aa3c\\_46e3\\_9f80\\_53732eb94a83/2025-03-03-05-48-f27ce30efbbcf33a96d2c808b5908f3.pdf](https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/57def76a_aa3c_46e3_9f80_53732eb94a83/2025-03-03-05-48-f27ce30efbbcf33a96d2c808b5908f3.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> [https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/report\\_documents/2025-03/VAW\\_KEYFINDINGS\\_2024\\_Publihed%2027FEB2025.pdf](https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/report_documents/2025-03/VAW_KEYFINDINGS_2024_Publihed%2027FEB2025.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> [https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/57def76a\\_aa3c\\_46e3\\_9f80\\_53732eb94a83/2025-03-03-05-48-f27ce30efbbcf33a96d2c808b5908f3.pdf](https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/57def76a_aa3c_46e3_9f80_53732eb94a83/2025-03-03-05-48-f27ce30efbbcf33a96d2c808b5908f3.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

which includes cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children and the elderly, and so on.<sup>34</sup>

94. Cases of reported violence against women and children: The information on cases of reported violence against women and children by categories has been presented in Table 2. Only the reported cases of violence are presented here, which were usually registered with the police department. It is evident from the table that the trend of reported rape case was fluctuating over the years with the highest in 2017 (3,979) and lowest in 2013 (3,650). It is appreciated that the case of acid throwing has reduced over time. Though reported dowry cases have fluctuated but they have reduced over the years. In the case of child oppression, it increased over time.

**Table 2: The Cases are under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000, except the Acid Offence Control Act 2002. (January/2009 to September/2023)**

Year	Women Oppression					Total	Child Oppression
	Rape	Acid Throwing	Dowry	Seriously Injured	Others		
2009	2 900	129	4 061	94	2 693	9 877	1 235
2010	3 328	97	5 331	120	3 768	12 644	1 600
2011	3 638	100	7 079	139	4 528	15 484	1 719
2012	3 648	101	6 704	132	4 551	15 136	1 628
2013	3 622	93	5 716	183	3 968	13 582	1 529
2014	3 647	73	6 867	184	4 166	14 937	1 752
2015	3 891	71	6 595	277	4 388	15 222	1 740
2016	3 700	45	5 278	145	3 614	12 782	1 721
2017	3 961	53	4 125	85	3 334	11 558	1 871
2018	3 927	44	3 798	134	2 953	10 856	1 898
2019	5 838	36	4 786	199	4 183	15 042	2 360
2020	6 505	36	4 943	68	4 265	15 817	2 550
2021	6 313	30	4 926	47	3 564	14 880	2 914
2022	6 979	31	4 826	59	3 370	15 265	3 201
2023	4 061	15	3 171	36	2 384	9 667	2 067
<b>Total</b>	<b>65 958</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>78 206</b>	<b>1 902</b>	<b>55 729</b>	<b>202 749</b>	<b>29 785</b>

Source: Police Headquarters

## Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

95. Legislative Measures: Bangladesh has established a robust national framework to address trafficking in persons. A wide range of government agencies, including law enforcement and key ministries such as the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJPA), are actively engaged in combating human trafficking. The establishment of seven dedicated anti-human trafficking tribunals across the country in 2020 further enhances the

<sup>34</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and UN Women, Time Use Survey 2021, 2023, [https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4\\_956b\\_45ca\\_872f\\_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2023-07-23-04-53-6417fa2e9d03538a1342942614845984.pdf](https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4_956b_45ca_872f_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2023-07-23-04-53-6417fa2e9d03538a1342942614845984.pdf).

criminal justice system's capacity to respond to human trafficking. To strengthen the implementation of the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act 2012, the government collaborates with civil society to enforce the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Rules 2017.

96. The Public Security Division under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) runs a Taskforce on the rescue, repatriation, and reintegration of trafficking victims, incorporating government, NGOs, and international organizations. The activities of the Taskforce include maintaining database, training of police, coast guard, Border Guard of Bangladesh (BGB), rescue repatriation and reintegration of victims, and support the victims for livelihood. Additionally, the Task Force provides support for the victims' livelihood. At the district level, there is a Counter Trafficking Committee in each district.

97. Awareness and Training: In 2022, Bangladesh conducted its first-ever 'National Study on Trafficking in Persons,' led by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). This study was developed through a collaborative effort as part of the "Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants – Bangladesh" (GLO.ACT) project. The project was spearheaded by the Public Security Division and jointly implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The study provides an analysis of trafficking trends, patterns, and flows into and within Bangladesh, as well as the movement of trafficking victims from Bangladesh to other parts of the world.

98. The government, in collaboration with its partners, has continued implementing the National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking (2018–2022), which has been extended until 2025.<sup>35</sup> For the first time, the plan includes a reference to internal trafficking. Additionally, the government allocated BDT 2 million (USD 17,094) to support trafficking prevention efforts, including the execution of the National Plan of Action.

99. The government has sustained its national awareness campaigns in partnership with NGOs, utilizing print media, television, and community-level meetings. Additionally, police officers continue to receive specialized training through an anti-trafficking module incorporated into the police academy curriculum. A total of 50,780 police officers were trained on human trafficking through a total of 148 programs in 2017.

100. The government has collaborated with the Inter-Sector Coordination Group, to disseminate trafficking-related awareness-raising messages among the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals, and the host communities and facilitate access for international organizations and civil society to conduct anti-trafficking awareness activities in Rohingya camps. A Joint Response Plan (JRP) 2025-26 for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis has been formulated, which articulates the shared vision of how the humanitarian community will respond to the assessed and expressed needs of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals and affected host communities, while introducing more sustainable approaches.<sup>36</sup>

101. A Human Trafficking Prevention Monitoring Cell has been formed at the police headquarters to monitor the anti-trafficking activities of the Bangladesh Police at the field level. Various instructions are issued from this cell to prevent human trafficking. Besides, Bangladesh Police is conducting awareness activities in this regard at the

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Department of State, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-traffickingin-persons-report/bangladesh/>.

<sup>36</sup> <https://rohingyaresponse.org/>.

local level through community policing and beat policing. On the other hand, BGB has been continuing its efforts to reduce human trafficking on the border.

102. The NGO Affairs Bureau's (NGOAB) prime objective is to provide a one-stop service to the NGOs operating with foreign assistance and are registered under the Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Act, 2016. Additionally, it supports NGO activities within the country while ensuring their accountability to the state and, ultimately, to the people. NGOAB approved several projects of NGOs that are concerned with the rehabilitation and prevention of violence against 'prostitutes' and their children.

## Participation in political and public life

103. Bangladesh extended the reservation of 50 parliamentary seats exclusively for women for another 25 years through the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution in 2018. According to the Constitution, Parliament consists of 300 members elected directly, along with 50 reserved seats for women, which are allocated to political parties based on their proportional representation in the House. The National Women Development Policy (NWDP) 2011 aims to increase women's representation to 33 per cent and introduce direct elections for the expanded seats.

104. Bangladesh has the highest gender parity score in political empowerment in the South Asia Region (54.3 per cent) and seventh overall. Bangladesh has taken strides toward increasing women's representation in political and leadership roles by reserving seats (50) in parliament for women and actively supporting women's participation in decision-making processes. The current interim government has 4 women advisors. At the local government level, One post of Woman Vice Chairman has been created at the Upazila Parishad Parishad (Sub-District Council), Union Parishad, Municipality and City Corporation. The provision of keeping one-third of seats reserved for women members/councillors, amending the Local Government Act in 2009.

105. There has been a constant increase in women's participation and representation across public life and decision-making roles across sectors. The percentage of female employees in the scheduled banks was 16.29 per cent of the total employees in 2022 and has increased to 16.35 per cent in 2023 as a result of the close monitoring by the Bangladesh Bank.<sup>37</sup> Both the military and the civil sector are appointing female officers to senior posts, including as major generals. In addition, women are currently holding positions such as secretaries, judges of higher courts, and vice-chancellors of universities. Women are entering the foreign service in larger numbers than ever before. In 2024, eight women ambassadors were serving outside Bangladesh in different countries, an increase from five in 2017.

106. Bangladesh has expanded employment opportunities for women in fields traditionally dominated by men, such as the armed forces and civil aviation. The Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) has been providing training in denting, painting, welding, and driving. By 2018, a total of 2,741 women had received training through four BRTC training centres and 15 driving training institutions. In the FY 2022-23 a total of 98,581 individuals, including 8,289 women, have received driving training through various training institutes and centres operated by BRTC.<sup>38</sup> In 2021, the

<sup>37</sup> Information obtained from the Bangladesh Bank.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



government took an initiative to provide training on driving to 1,440 women in seven divisional cities with an aim to make women economically solvent.<sup>39</sup>

107. Bangladesh has undertaken considerable measures to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT). The Government has placed a strong focus on the use of information technology in many spheres, including business, education, agriculture, social and political activities, and the advancement of women's empowerment in media. The country has carried out several initiatives to enhance access, affordability, and use of ICTs for women and girls. The "Her Power" project (July 2022-June 2025), has prioritized freelancing activities across the country in four categories, including women freelancers, women IT service providers, women e-commerce professionals, and women call centre agents.

108. The government acknowledges that despite taking multiple initiatives, women continue to face challenges in gaining leadership experience due to traditional gender roles, which hinder their participation in public spheres. The Time Use Survey (TUS) Report 2021 highlights the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work on women. Women spend 4.6 hours on unpaid domestic work compared to 0.6 hours for men and 1.2 hours on unpaid care work, whereas men spend only 0.2 hours. In total, women dedicate 5.9 hours daily to these responsibilities—more than seven times the 0.8 hours men contribute.

## Education

109. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees free and compulsory education for all children (Article 17). To advance girls' education, the National Education Policy introduced the "Education for All" initiative. As a result, primary education became mandatory, free textbooks were distributed, and girls' education was made free up to class XII in public institutions.

110. Bangladesh continues to implement the Education Policy 2010 that seeks to improve girls' educational attainment, lessen the gap between girls' and boys' educational opportunities and rates, and integrate women into the mainstream of development. Furthermore, the country is implementing the National Information and Communication Technology Policy 2018, which refers to providing female students with a thorough understanding of ICT expertise has been embraced under the umbrella of women's development.

111. The government has established the Educational Assistance Trust Fund to provide financial support to poor and meritorious students. Moreover, the government launched the 4th Primary Education Development Program (PEDP IV) (2019-2023) to ensure quality education for all.

112. The government has ensured equitable distribution of primary education through various programs, including stipends to 13 million students aimed at implementing proper sanitation facilities and supportive structures for children with special needs.<sup>40</sup> The Education Assistance Trust Fund awarded 8,329,838,860 scholarships to 15,529,799 graduate (pass) and comparable level students between 2013 and 2023, of which female students make up 75 per cent.<sup>63</sup> In response to the COVID-19

<sup>39</sup> <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/1440-women-to-get-driving-training-in-seven-divisional-cities-1632482192>.

<sup>40</sup> General Economic Division, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Mid-term Implementation Review of the Eight Five Year Plan, 2023, <https://gedkp.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Mid-term-Implementation-Review-of-the-8thFive-Year-Plan-Book.pdf>.

pandemic, blended learning systems were introduced, and classes under the national curriculum were televised.

113. The government introduced specialized textbooks into the national curriculum, considering the needs of children with disabilities, in 2017. It published and distributed braille books for visually impaired students and multilingual textbooks in five languages—Chakma, Marma, Garo, Sadri, and Tripura—to support students from ethnic communities.

114. The government has implemented several policies to ensure the active participation of women in teachers' recruitment, making it mandatory to recruit 60 per cent female teachers. The government has prioritized training female teachers to strengthen their participation and professional growth.

115. Survey and Database: Bangladesh is one of the 54 countries where girls' education is favoured at the secondary level. The net and gross enrolment rates of girls gradually increased over the years, as evident in Table 3.

**Table 3: Net Enrolment and Dropout Rate in Secondary Level 2017-2023**

Year	Enrolment rate		Dropout rate	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2017	74.38	63.59	41.52	33.43
2018	74.68	64.47	40.19	36.01
2019	74.47	60.11	37.67	35.52
2020	80.62	62.89	34.86	36.80
2021	79.09	63.29	40.29	32.50
2022	80.02	67.60	40.78	33.25
2023	80.62	64.37	34.87	30.46

Source: BANBEIS Report, 2023

**Table 4: Net Enrolment and Dropout Rate in Higher Secondary Level**

Year	Enrolment rate		Dropout rate	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2017	36.37	38.11	22.99	16.44
2018	33.90	36.88	21.21	18.02
2019	36.99	31.72	19.66	17.28
2020	36.97	36.53	22.02	20.57
2021	40.49	41.88	21.56	20.74
2022	44.61	44.26	22.60	21.59
2023	52.74	51.14	22.45	20.51

Source: BANBEIS Report, 2023

116. The reports indicate that the net enrolment of girls has increased over the years, and their dropout rate at the secondary and higher secondary levels has notably decreased. Though compared to boys, the dropout rate of girls is slightly higher, still progress has been made in this area. According to the statistics of 2023, the number of female teachers increased from 123739 in 2017 to 182288 in 2023. In 2023, 59.28 percent of the population aged 5-24 were current students, which shows a slight

increase from 2022 (59.09 per cent). Additionally, the dropout rate has decreased from 10.58 percent in 2022 to 9.36 percent in 2023.<sup>41</sup>

117. The government has introduced stipends and school-feeding programmes that have contributed to increased enrolment in education. For example, the education rate of girls from minority ethnic groups in the plains has increased through the distribution of education scholarships and bicycles under the Development Assistance Program for Special Areas.<sup>42</sup>

118. The government's efforts have resulted in a significant increase in the enrolment of women in technical education. In 2010, the percentage enrolled rate for technical education was 01; it had risen to 15.79 per cent by 2022, where 27.01 per cent of students were female.<sup>43</sup> Through information technology training at the district and upazila levels, public awareness for the development of human resources and information and communication technology education is being established at the grassroots level.

## Health

119. Sexual and Reproductive Health: Over the past years, Bangladesh has made significant improvements in the health sector through initiating various policies and decreasing the maternal mortality rate. The Health Policy 2011 focuses on ensuring emergency healthcare for all. Bangladesh also collaborated with various development partners for nutrition and health development. The Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Development Program (HPNSDP, 2011-16 aims at increasing improvement in the health, nutrition, and population sector. The program was updated from 2017-2022 to ensure that all citizens of Bangladesh enjoy health and well-being by expanding access to quality and equitable health care in a healthy environment.

120. The National Adolescent Health Strategy 2017-2030 has identified four priority thematic areas of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, violence against adolescents, adolescent nutrition, and mental health of adolescents.

121. The government is implementing the Health Care Financing Strategy 2012–2032 to achieve universal health coverage. The strategy refers to safeguarding the healthcare expenses of the impoverished population.

122. The government established the Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Council in 2020, which aims to enhance the standards of nursing and midwifery while promoting women's rights in the healthcare sector. This initiative reflects a commitment to creating a safer and more equitable environment for women and children in Bangladesh.

123. The government has implemented a sector-wide approach (SAP) in collaboration with multiple partners. Moreover, the community-based skilled birth attendant training program continued to train the family welfare workers. The government launched midwifery courses and established 2,994 midwife positions. Additionally, in 2017, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), in collaboration with UNFPA, developed a health sector protocol to equip healthcare providers with guidelines for responding to gender-based violence.

<sup>41</sup> [http://nsds.bbs.gov.bd/storage/files/1/Publications/SVRS/SVRS%202023%20Final%20Report\\_web.pdf](http://nsds.bbs.gov.bd/storage/files/1/Publications/SVRS/SVRS%202023%20Final%20Report_web.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Progress Towards Equality: Gender Budget Report 2024-2025, 2024, [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/98c2d08b\\_5cdc\\_4a69\\_9c5f\\_19248d15cda5/Gender%20Budget%20Report%20\(2024-25\).pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/98c2d08b_5cdc_4a69_9c5f_19248d15cda5/Gender%20Budget%20Report%20(2024-25).pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

124. The government provides regular training to doctors, nurses, and midwives to enhance healthcare services for gender-based violence survivors. To ensure safe maternal health, the government has taken some initiatives under MOHFW (2016-2020), such as ensuring maternity leave for six months, preparing breastfeeding corners in all workplaces, etc.

125. The government has introduced the Maternal Health Voucher Scheme in 53 upazilas across 41 districts to ensure treatment facilities for pregnant mothers. Under this scheme, emergency antenatal care is ensured for about 2.79 million pregnant mothers. These significant initiatives are also in the direction of Article 12 (2) of CEDAW, which states to provide appropriate health services during pregnancy and the antenatal period and focus on achieving adequate nutrition during pregnancy.

126. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB), an IPPF member organization, adapted its services to provide door-to-door services and hotline support to women and girls in the country who required crucial sexual and reproductive health and SGBV care. From 21 FPAB branches, medical officers and counsellors offered support for sexual and reproductive health as well as specialized help for GBV issues affecting women and girls. FPAB also handled GBV cases through the government helpline as well and referred survivors to government hospitals for testing and sample collection.

127. The Government of Bangladesh has developed and operationalized the National Protocol on Health Sector Response to GBV by building the capacity of health service providers, ensuring availability of required support at local level health facilities and operational plans under the country's 5th Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Program (July 2024 to June 2029). Front-line health service providers, including midwives, have been trained to provide mental health and psychosocial support and services (MHPSS). The Government of Bangladesh has agreed to incorporate MHPSS in the training curriculum for community health service providers and midwives of the MoHFW.

128. The Community Clinic (CC) initiative of Bangladesh is a ground-breaking attempt to supply basic medical services to rural communities. The government established these primary-level health clinics in cooperation with the local community. The government plans to establish one community clinic for every 6,000 residents. Currently, 14,878 CCs have been established, with women and children making up 80 per cent of the clinic's clientele. As an initiative of Bangladesh, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in 2023 titled 'Community-based primary health care: a participatory and inclusive approach to universal health coverage'.

129. Bangladesh has introduced several digital initiatives so that women can get immediate health care services. In 2015, a multipurpose Health Call Centre was launched by the MIS-DGHS to provide health advice round-the-clock (24/7) through a calling code '16263'. The call centre provides live health counselling, complaints management, and content delivery. The government launched the Ma-Telehealth Centre in 2020, which enables expecting mothers and lactating women with newborns to receive consultations from certified doctors, counselling services, e-prescriptions, and follow-up health services.

130. The Government has started Telemedicine Services under DGHS and is monitored by its MIS unit. There are 84 telemedicine centres, including the Telemedicine Monitoring Unit at the MIS-DGHS, and another 10 centres were added in 2017.

131. Initiatives for Menstrual Hygiene: The government directed that there must be provisions for separate toilets (WASH blocks) for female teachers and students in

every primary school and established a National standard of WASH in Schools. The government has enhanced sanitation facilities in schools by constructing gender-segregated toilets and ensuring access to menstrual hygiene management products, aiming to reduce absenteeism among girls during menstruation. Under the Fourth Primary Education Development Program (2018-2025), approximately 9,134 classrooms and 13,212 gender-segregated water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) blocks have been constructed, and 9,068 water points have been installed.<sup>44</sup>

132. The Grameen Digital Healthcare Solutions (GDHS) has launched a comprehensive digital healthcare platform named “Shukhee” on November 28, 2024. The platform offers a 360-degree healthcare service, including teleconsultations with doctors from multiple specialties, lab tests with doorstep sample collection, and extensive medicine delivery coverage through the country’s largest network. Shukhee is accessible via the Shukhee app on Google Play Store, through [www.shukhee.com](http://www.shukhee.com), or by dialling 10657.<sup>45</sup>

133. Survey and Database: Over the years, Bangladesh has managed to reduce the maternal mortality rate, which is one of the significant indicators of human development.

**Table 5: Trends in Maternal Mortality Ratio per 100,000 live births**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Maternal Mortality Ratio</i>
2014	193
2015	181
2016	178
2017	172
2018	169
2019	165
2020	163
2021	168
2022	153
2023	136

*Source:* BBS Report, 2023.

134. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) in Bangladesh was 26.9 in 2023, compared to 21 in 2020. The neonatal mortality rate (per 1,000 live births) increased to 19.5 in 2023, up from 15. Maternal mortality (per 100,000 live births) dropped to 136 in 2023, down from 163. Additionally, the percentage of births attended by trained medical professionals rose significantly from 53 per cent in 2017-18 to 89.75 per cent in 2023.<sup>46</sup> The population growth rate has now been reduced to 1.33 per cent in 2023 from 1.37 per cent in 2015. Moreover, the dropout rate has decreased from 10.58 percent in 2022 to 9.36 percent in 2023.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh: Supporting Fourth Primary Education Development Program - Project Page, n.d., <https://www.adb.org/projects/50192-002/main>.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.tbsnews.net/economy/corporates/grameen-digital-healthcare-solutions-unveils-comprehensive-healthcare-platform?>

<sup>46</sup> [http://nsds.bbs.gov.bd/storage/files/1/Publications/SVRS/SVRS%202023%20Final%20Report\\_web.pdf](http://nsds.bbs.gov.bd/storage/files/1/Publications/SVRS/SVRS%202023%20Final%20Report_web.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

135. In 2023, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) launched an expanded, more inclusive, nutrition-sensitive, and shock-responsive social protection program (2023-2028), which includes reforms to the Mother and Child Benefit Program (MCBP) and the Vulnerable Women Benefit Program.

136. Contraceptive Use: The government has adopted a multi-year Family Planning Strategy 2022-2025 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), which aims to increase the demand for modern contraceptive methods through community-based and facility-based family planning services for women and girls in both Rohingya and host communities. The contraceptive prevalence rate is 62.1 percent in 2023, implying a decreasing trend in the rate from previous year (63.3 per cent). The urban reproductive-aged married women are more likely (63.9 per cent) to adopt contraceptives than their rural counterparts (61.6 per cent), though the difference is not significant. The rate of use of modern contraceptive methods in 2023 (61.0 per cent) has slightly decreased from the previous year 2022 (62.3 per cent).<sup>48</sup>

### **Economic empowerment of women**

137. Women play a crucial role in our economy, especially in the garment sector, small and medium enterprises, and rural economies. Through microfinance, training, and access to resources, the government supports women entrepreneurs and enhances their economic independence. The government has taken several other initiatives intending to engender/strengthen the national machinery for promoting and protecting women's rights e.g., introducing gender responsive budgeting, national action plan for the implementation of the National Women Development Policy (NWDP), SDG Action Plan.

138. Employment: As per the Labor Force Survey (LFS) 2022, the female labour force participation rate has increased from 36 per cent in 2010 to 42.77 per cent in 2022. Nationally, the labour force participation rate has also increased, with 61.2 per cent in 2022. The Government has committed to reaching a female labour force participation rate of 50 per cent by 2030, as well as gender parity in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector by 2041. It is worth mentioning that a large number of females are working in the country's readymade garment industry (RMG), which contributes significantly to the economy of Bangladesh. In 2021, the percentage of the female workforce in RMG was 53.65 per cent.

139. The Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) 2023 has increased the length of maternity leave from 112 to 120 days. Women workers can now take the full 120 days of maternity leave before or after childbirth, instead of the previous arrangement of splitting the time evenly between the two. Other noteworthy amendments include the provision The Labour Law Support Cell also offers legal services to women who perform a variety of manual labour, including those who work in the apparel industry. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, the total number of workers receiving maternity benefits was 8855 and the total amount of benefit was BDT 333.72 million.<sup>49</sup>

140. The government has developed a Gender Roadmap (2020-2030) for the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) for gender mainstreaming with particular emphasis on ensuring a decent working environment, healthcare, and protection from violence and harassment. In 2023-24 the DIFE conducted 48,472 inspections to ensure decent working conditions for men and women. Through these inspections, 290,832 violations were detected, and 1,386 cases

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Information obtained from Ministry of Labour and Employment.

were filed in the labour court. Currently there are 440 inspectors including 82 women inspectors engaged in labour inspection.<sup>50</sup>

141. The government has introduced the Child Day Care Centre Act 2021 to provide standards and regulations for the operation of daycare centres. The government has established and is operating 63 Daycare Centres throughout the country. The Daycare Centres provide support for working parents, particularly mothers, by facilitating access to regulated childcare, which promotes greater female workforce participation and economic empowerment, while also formalizing the childcare sector to ensure high-quality, safe care for children. Between 2014 and 2024, 6,726 day care centres have been established and a total number of 6,057 motivational meetings have been held.<sup>51</sup>

142. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) carried out its first-ever Time-Use Survey (TUS) in 2021. The survey report finds that women spent 7.3 times as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men, which includes cooking, cleaning, washing, taking care of children and the elderly, and so on. The findings from the survey report have enabled Bangladesh to set a baseline to monitor progress on SDG Indicator 5.4.1 (Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location).

143. Bangladesh Bank has launched the Women's Financial Inclusion Data (WFID) Dashboard - a dedicated dashboard for women-centric financial inclusion data that provides valuable insights into various programs and initiatives aimed at empowering women economically.<sup>52</sup> The WFID Dashboard aims to illuminate the landscape of women's financial inclusion in Bangladesh through comprehensive data representation. By aggregating information from financial service providers, it presents a nuanced, gender disaggregated analysis. The WFID Dashboard serves as a strategic tool, providing insights to empower stakeholders in identifying opportunities to expand women's financial inclusion.

144. The government, under its Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme formulated the Sathi Network in 2022, a women-led agent network that aims to accelerate the financial inclusion of rural and marginalised women by promoting women's entrepreneurship, enhancing women's financial literacy and most importantly, providing access to financial services. Since its launch, over 160,000 marginalised women have opened bank accounts with support women agents of the Sathi Network.

## **Women's entrepreneurship development**

145. Bangladesh has prioritized policies and programmes on financial inclusion and entrepreneurship development, which contributed to empowering women and paved the way for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic growth.

146. Bangladesh Bank has introduced the "Women Entrepreneurship Development Unit", in 2014, which continues to operate to enhance monitoring efforts for the growth of women entrepreneurs in the head and branch offices of Bangladesh Bank and the regional offices, including the head offices of all banks and financial institutions. Women entrepreneurs can directly contact the problem solution centre of the SME & Special Programs Department in case of any kind of harassment in accessing credit facilities or to get information and advice regarding financial

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> M. N. Islam, Bangladesh Bank launches Women's Financial Inclusion Data Dashboard, Alliance for Financial Inclusion, 14 March 2024, <https://www.afi-global.org/opinion/bangladesh-bank-launches-womens-financial-inclusion-data-dashboard/>.

services. Moreover, a hotline (16236) is in place to directly talk to the concerned Bangladesh Bank official for help in filing complaints. Furthermore, to offer financial support services to women entrepreneurs and to receive and resolve their concerns, a dedicated Women Entrepreneurs' Desk/Help Desk has been established in every branch of all banks and financial institutions. Throughout the FY 2022–2023 financial services were provided to a total of 14,66,814 people—8,81,563 women and 5,85,251 men.<sup>53</sup>

147. Bangladesh Bank also supports women entrepreneurs in the Cottage, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (CMSME) sector. The bank's Small Enterprise Refinance Scheme provides 100 per cent refinancing for SME women entrepreneurs with low interest rates and has recently increased its fund size from BDT 1.5 billion to BDT 3 billion. Since 2004, BDT 8.49 billion has been refinanced to 61,924 women entrepreneurs. Moreover, the government has allocated BDT 2,000 billion in stimulus funds for CMSME, with BDT 10 billion dedicated specifically to women entrepreneurs. As of December 31, 2023, the total outstanding loans and advances in the CMSME sector across all banks and financial institutions stood at Tk. 3,04,241.45 crore. Throughout 2023 (January–December), banks and financial institutions provided Tk. 2,29,312.35 crore in loans to 13,19,159 CMSME entrepreneurs. During the same period, Tk. 14,853.20 crore was allocated specifically to 2,36,172 women entrepreneurs in the CMSME sector.<sup>54</sup>

148. In 2022, approximately 1,000 women entrepreneurs received a grant of BDT 50,000 (USD 427.35) under the Innovation Design and Entrepreneurship Academy (iDEA) project by the Bangladesh Computer Council. Additionally, around 250,000 women, including ethnic minorities, received IT training. The government has been investing heavily in digital infrastructure and launching several flagship initiatives to bridge the gender digital divide.

149. Palli Karma-Shahayak Foundation (PKSF) of the government plays a vital role in lending and development activities, with women comprising approximately 60 per cent of its participants. Under the recently implemented Municipal Governance and Services Project (MGSP) by the Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund (BMDF), a total of 39,84,400 beneficiaries have been recorded, including 18,72,668 women and 21,11,732 men, meaning that women make up 47 per cent of the total beneficiaries. Additionally, PKSF has allocated substantial funding to enhance women's quality of life, spending Tk. 800 crore in FY 2021-22, Tk. 1,146 crore in FY 2020-21, and Tk. 608 crore in FY 2019-20.<sup>55</sup>

150. MoWCA, through the Joyeeta Foundation, a nonprofit and autonomous venture, provides financing and support to women entrepreneurs, with the mission of fostering women-friendly marketing networks and value chains for economic empowerment. In 2023, Bangladesh initiated a "Joyeeta Tower Construction Project" to improve accessible marketing facilities for women entrepreneurs. This building has the physical infrastructure needed to train female entrepreneurs in business management, development strategies, and knowledge and skill acquisition.

151. Bangladesh launched a flagship project called The "She Power Project - Sustainable Development for Women through ICT Frontline Initiative" in 2018 with

<sup>53</sup> Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Gender Budget Report: 2023-2024 [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/001130ba\\_9cb8\\_4955\\_9f07\\_f9ba27ca7de9/Gender%20Budget%20Report%202023-24%20\(English%20for%20Website\).pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/001130ba_9cb8_4955_9f07_f9ba27ca7de9/Gender%20Budget%20Report%202023-24%20(English%20for%20Website).pdf).

<sup>54</sup> [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/a404ee4b\\_b74d\\_4f7e\\_8aa0\\_ebad2db0491f/Gender%20Other%20Ministry%20%28Extended%29-Eng.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/a404ee4b_b74d_4f7e_8aa0_ebad2db0491f/Gender%20Other%20Ministry%20%28Extended%29-Eng.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget\\_mof/a404ee4b\\_b74d\\_4f7e\\_8aa0\\_ebad2db0491f/Gender%20Other%20Ministry%20%28Extended%29-Eng.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/budget_mof/a404ee4b_b74d_4f7e_8aa0_ebad2db0491f/Gender%20Other%20Ministry%20%28Extended%29-Eng.pdf).



the aim to create a competent female workforce and empowering women entrepreneurs, startups, and women working in technology in Bangladesh. 10,000 women entrepreneurs are being created through She Power and Her Power projects. Around 6,700 participants successfully completed the project, got a 4-month paid internship opportunity and 3,000 women out of them have been employed as freelancers.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, the “Transform Backward Youth into Industrial Workers” project, which began in 2023, aims to create partnerships with industries to generate employment, particularly for women, with a target of placing 4,800 young women in jobs by 2026.

## Measures for rural women and disadvantaged groups of women

152. The government continues to expand its efforts to support socially marginalized and vulnerable groups, with an emphasis on poverty alleviation, social protection, economic empowerment, and ensuring access to basic services. The budget and reach of the Old Age Allowance program have steadily increased, from 4.4 million beneficiaries in FY2019- 2020 to 6 million beneficiaries in FY2024-2025.<sup>57</sup> Akin, support to widows and destitute women has increased. Additionally, social protection programmes provide support to Hijra, Bede and other marginalized communities, including tea labourers, coastal communities, and those residing in climate-vulnerable areas.<sup>58</sup>

153. Bangladesh introduced Social transfer initiatives, such as the “Strengthening Women’s Ability for Productive New Opportunities” (SWAPNO) project, which are helping severely impoverished rural women find work and contribute to community services. Under the Local Government Division, SWAPNO is a social transfer programme that enables extremely impoverished women to provide community service that is vital to the social and economic well-being of rural areas. It helps severely impoverished rural women find work and avail employment opportunities. This is the most effective strategy to ensure inclusive growth and the alleviation of poverty. Through SWAPNO’s intervention from July 2014 to June 2022, 12,492 households in Bangladesh’s disaster-prone and impoverished districts saw a considerable improvement in their standards of living.<sup>59</sup>

154. Bangladesh introduced a Universal Pension Scheme, which paved the way for the inclusion informal sector workers, constituting a large number of women. A special scheme named “Suraksha” for the informal workers has been introduced to avail the universal pension scheme.

155. In addition to addressing the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, Bangladesh focuses on social empowerment and disaster resilience for its citizens. The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) Phase-II 2021-2026 adopts a life cycle-based approach (childhood, school age, working age, reproductive age, old age, and disability), with a particular emphasis on vulnerable women.

156. Bangladesh launched a landmark project called ‘The “Tottho Apa: Empowering Women Through ICT Towards Digital Bangladesh” project’ (Phase I for 2011-2016 and Phase II for 2017-2024), which is implemented by MoWCA across 490 Upazilas

<sup>56</sup> General Economic Division, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Mid-term Implementation Review of the Eight Five Year Plan, 2023, <https://gedkp.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Mid-term-Implementation-Review-of-the-8thFive-Year-Plan-Book.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Implementation of National Social Security Strategy of Bangladesh – Dashboard, n.d., <https://mne.socialprotection.gov.bd/>.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations Development Programme, ‘Project Closing Report: Strengthening Women’s Ability for Productive New Opportunities (SWAPNO)’, Published in July 2022.

to improve the availability and access to information technology for under-privileged women in rural areas and to empower them through IT enabled services. Information centres have been established in each of the 490 upazilas across Bangladesh, staffed by one Information Service Officer and two Information Service Assistants, collectively known as Tottho Apas in the project area.

157. Bangladesh introduced the Mother and Child Benefit Programme which is a flagship social protection initiative for disadvantaged children in their early years. The Programme was established in 2019 through the consolidation of the rural-based maternal allowance and the urban-based lactating mother allowance programmes, to ensure proper nutrition for both mother and child, supporting the developmental outcomes during pregnancy and early childhood (ages 0-4). The programme has supported 1.254 million persons in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023, increasing to 13.04 lac persons in FY2023-2024, with an ultimate target to reach 6 million beneficiaries by 2026.<sup>60</sup> It is worth mentioning that in FY 2024-25, the number of beneficiaries is estimated to be 1836200 persons.

## Marriage and family relations

158. Following the constitutional mandate and international obligations, Bangladesh is committed to ensure the rights of women in the personal spheres. The rights regarding the private sphere are governed by the family laws of respective communities. To address family-related legal matters, the government established Family Courts in 1985, granting them jurisdiction over five subject matters: the dissolution of marriage, restitution of conjugal rights, dower, maintenance, and guardianship and custody of children. In 2023, the government enacted the Family Courts Act, replacing the 1985 ordinance. The new Act maintains the same jurisdictional scope but introduces changes such as increasing court fees from BDT 25 to BDT 200 and establishing Family Appellate Courts with District Judges.<sup>61</sup>

159. The Anti-discrimination Bill identifies a list of discriminatory actions that cover discriminatory issues in family matters. Any actions directly or indirectly on the pretext of religion, caste, ethnicity, language, age, gender, physical and mental state, place of birth, birth, occupation, and social standing are considered discriminatory under the Bill.

160. Marriage registration is mandatory for Muslims and Christians in Bangladesh. Under the Muslim Marriages and Divorce (Registration) Act, 1974, Muslim marriages must be registered, and failure to do so is a punishable offense. For Hindus, the Hindu Marriage Registration Act, 2012 provides an option for voluntary registration. The right to divorce is legally recognized for Muslims and, except for Catholics, is also acknowledged in the Christian family code. Although divorce is not legally recognized and is socially discouraged among certain Hindu communities, informal divorces and remarriages still occur.

161. In August 2019, the High Court directed the government a much-awaited verdict – to remove the term “*Kumari*” (virgin or maiden) from the *Nikahnama* (Muslim marriage certificate) and replace it with the word that should be in place – “unmarried”. According to the verdict, in the case of Muslim marriages, the word “*Kumari*” in Column No. 5 of the *Nikahnama* or *Kabinnama* is unconstitutional. The

<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Finance, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Social Security Programs: Fiscal Year 2023-2024, n.d., [https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/a8e415d0\\_c5f2\\_4d5a\\_8c7c\\_bcd8beb88140/Social%20Security%20Programs\\_English\\_2023-24.pdf](https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/a8e415d0_c5f2_4d5a_8c7c_bcd8beb88140/Social%20Security%20Programs_English_2023-24.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/news/analysis-the-family-courts-act-2023-3500311?>

court states, ‘the word *Kumari* in the *Kabinnama* is insulting, discriminatory, prejudicial to women and contrary to the Constitution and the CEDAW charter.’ Following the verdict, the *Nikahnama* currently uses the words “never married” instead of “maiden”.

162. The legal and policy reforms and judicial interventions facilitate the harmonization of personal laws of the country in the light of international instruments, including CEDAW.

## **Data collection and analysis**

163. In Bangladesh, data is routinely produced through major surveys with disaggregation across geographic location, sex/gender, age, disability, marital status, education, race/ethnicity, and other relevant categories. For example, the Population and Housing Census 2022 was based on demographic characteristics that include population and growth rate, age-sex composition, marital status, population by religion, disability, education, working status, mobile phone and internet use, financial inclusion, ethnicity, and return migrants. The Census provides sex disaggregated data by male, female and Hijra. The inclusion of the Hijra community for the first time in a national census indicates the commitment of Bangladesh to foster inclusive societies.

164. The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2022 is the ninth national survey to report on the demographic and health conditions of women and their families in Bangladesh. The survey has a comprehensive “Women’s Questionnaire” which outlines variable questions alluding to mental health, employment and so on.

165. The Sample Vital Statistics (SVRS) is a continuous annual data collection survey that includes household characteristics, demographic composition, household headship by sex, administrative division, and religion. The SVRS collects data on births, deaths, marriages, migration, disability, and other key demographic indicators on a regular basis and publish reports annually. To depict the comprehensive trends of the labour force, the Labor Force Survey (LFS) 2022 includes sex, age, education, and geographic location, among others, disaggregation.

## **Beijing declaration and platform for action**

166. Bangladesh submitted the Beijing+30 national review report to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2024. The Beijing+30 national report outlines the country’s efforts, initiatives, and progress regarding the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). The country’s Initiatives for the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration are closely interconnected to the mandates and goals of CEDAW.

## **2030 Agenda for sustainable development**

167. Bangladesh is implementing a roadmap for the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development using a bottom-up approach. The country is committed to integrate the targets and indicators of the gender equality goal of the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs into its development policies and trajectories.

168. Being part of implementing gender related goals of SDGs, the government places a strong focus on the contribution of NGOs, CSOs, and women’s organizations to national development initiatives that aim to reduce poverty and advance gender equality.

169. Bangladesh developed a unique SDG Tracker that contains an online data repository for accurately monitoring the implementation of various initiatives in line with the SDGs, leading to efficient resource allocation and effective policy making for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. Bangladesh formulated the ‘2nd National Action Plan of Ministries/Divisions by Targets for the Implementation of SDGs’ in 2023 which refers to undertaking specific programmes and projects by all ministries and agencies of the government, prioritizing gender specific indicators, among others, in the light of SDG 5 and the country’s development agenda.

170. Bangladesh prepared its Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2020, which highlighted the country’s domestic progress, innovative solutions, creative actions, and the critical challenges it faced in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The VNR report specifically showcased interventions, programs, and projects led by the government that contributed to progress under SDG 5 (Gender Equality). While addressing the challenges impeding the full implementation of gender equality within the SDGs, the report also outlined key pathways that the government must undertake to further advance gender equality. The government has revised the monitoring and evaluation framework of SDGs in 2020, accommodating newly generated data against specific indicators, including gender specific indicators, and adopting gender gender-sensitive approach.

171. Bangladesh expressed interest in preparing its third Voluntary National Review (VNR) for the upcoming High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025.<sup>62</sup> The review aims to strengthen policies, mobilize multi-stakeholder support, and build partnerships to accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs by 2030. Bangladesh is set to submit its next VNR in July 2025, which will provide an updated assessment of progress towards the SDGs, including those related to gender equality.

### **Ratification of other treaties**

172. The Interim Government of Bangladesh, in August 2024, signed the instrument of accession to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, demonstrating its commitment to investigate every case of enforced disappearances. With this, Bangladesh is now party to all nine core human rights treaties, manifesting people’s aspirations to uphold freedom and justice for everyone. Over the past years, Bangladesh has dedicated efforts to outline its commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment in key policy documents, strengthening their alignment with the international conventions ratified. These policy frameworks and action plans underscore Bangladesh’s dedication to promoting gender equality and women’s rights through systematic and comprehensive approaches.

### **Section III: Additional measures of progress on CEDAW-specific articles**

173. This subsection of the Report outlines additional legal and other appropriate steps and measures undertaken towards the implementation of specific articles of the Convention.

<sup>62</sup> <https://bdplatform4sdgs.net/bangladesh-prepares-for-vnr-2025-emphasising-inclusivity-and-multi-stakeholder-collaboration/>.

## **Article 2: Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women**

174. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equality and equal protection of law for all citizens and prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. The constitution also contains special provisions in favour of women who have suffered due to societal and institutional patriarchal barriers against them. Some of these special measures include scholarships or stipends in education and equitable employment opportunities.

175. The Constitution further directs that the state shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality between men and women, as well as ensure equitable distribution of wealth among its citizens. As per constitutional stipulations, Bangladesh has made significant progress in promoting gender equality across various sectors, including education, healthcare, politics, and economic participation.

176. The government has taken numerous legal and administrative measures to eliminate discrimination and violence against women. A list of key laws and policies enacted and reformed between 2016-2025 has been added in Annex A. It is worth mentioning that the government updated the National Action Plan to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Children (2018-2030), which envisions a society free of violence against women and children by 2030.

### **Reservation**

177. This has been discussed at the beginning of Section II.

## **Article 3: All appropriate measures to ensure full development and advancement of women**

178. The government has undertaken many policies and legal measures to ensure the full development and advancement of women, as elaborated in Section II.

179. As per Article 15 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, the government is committed to ensuring sustainable social security for individuals facing hardship due to unemployment, mental or physical disabilities, widowhood, orphanhood, old age, or other similar circumstances beyond their control.

180. The government enacted the Universal Pension Management Act 2023 to provide a sustainable and well-structured social security net to all sections of the people of the country, especially the aged population, due to the increase in average life expectancy. The Act expands pension coverage to a broader segment of the population, including informal sector workers who historically lacked access to formal pension schemes. This includes a significant number of women working in informal and part-time jobs.

181. The government introduced the National Social Security Strategy Action Plan, Phase II 2021-2026, which outlines the adoption of a life-cycle-based social security approach by MoSW. The 'Life Cycle' strategy is playing a crucial role in Bangladesh's journey toward achieving middle-income country status by 2026 and implementing the SDGs by 2030.

182. MoSW has taken steps to create an efficient social safety net by giving old age benefits to 5.701 million people, widow and abandoned woman benefits to 2.475

million people, and disability benefits to 2.365 million disabled people.<sup>63</sup> It is now required that women receive 100 per cent of the widow payment and at least 50 per cent of the old age and disability allowances. In addition, Upazila Cooperative Department Offices operate a number of training facilities that offer vocational instruction in a variety of trades to support women's socioeconomic growth. Eighty-one skilled development training centres under this ministry provided training to 17,118 trainees in FY 2021-2022, of whom 7,648 are women (44.68 per cent).

#### **Article 4: Adoption of special measures**

183. The Constitution of Bangladesh includes provisions for special measures in the form of affirmative action to support women from backward and disadvantaged sections of the society.

184. As per Article 65(3) of the Constitution of Bangladesh, of the 350 seats in Parliament, 50 are reserved for women. To increase the participation of women in the local government, one-third of the seats in Union Councils and Upazila Parishads are reserved for women.

185. The government inaugurated one-stop service desks for women, children, and people with disabilities in 659 police stations in 2020. A specially trained woman sub-inspector runs the desk with other skilled female officers. This initiative of the Bangladesh Police helps women avail legal aid services to fight against the prejudices that they are facing in society.

186. The government has strengthened the equitable distribution of primary education through various programs, including stipends to 13 million students aimed at implementing proper sanitation facilities and supportive structures for children with special needs. The Education Assistance Trust Fund awarded 8,329,838,860 scholarships to 15,529,799 graduate (pass) and comparable level students between 2013 and 2023, of which female students make up 75 per cent.<sup>64</sup>

#### **Article 5: Address sex roles and stereotyping**

187. The government has made provision for maternity leave for six months, which can be availed for two times in the entire work life. The Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) works to ensure the maternity benefit and maternity leave for women workers as per the Bangladesh Labor Law 2006 and the Bangladesh Labor Rules 2015. The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 was amended in 2023, bringing labour regulations closer to compliance with the International Labour Standards. The Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) 2023 has increased the length of maternity leave from 112 to 120 days. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, the total number of workers receiving maternity benefits was 8855 and the total amount of benefit was BDT 333.72 million.<sup>65</sup>

188. The government is encouraging girls to pursue tertiary education. As part of this initiative, the NCTB has revised textbooks to encourage girls to study agriculture and science, while boys are taught that cooking is a necessary skill for everyone. Additionally, the government is conducting gender training for teachers regularly to raise awareness about socially determined gender roles. Women are increasingly

<sup>63</sup> Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Gender Budget Report: 2023-2024.

<sup>64</sup> Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Gender Budget Report: 2023-2024.

<sup>65</sup> Information obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

taking up non-traditional jobs, such as civil service, judiciary, defence service, airline pilots, football players, cricket players, mountaineers, vehicle drivers, and police officials.

189. The government has adopted the National Action Plan to End Child Marriage 2018-2030, which prioritizes actions including empowering girl adolescents by increase their participation, life skills, access to modern facilities, and participation in decision making in family and community; enhancing awareness on the harmful consequences of child marriage and GBV to change social stereotyped mindset through community mobilization; and formulating and amending the laws and rules to eliminate child marriage and increase awareness of legal structure and legal remedies for girls whose rights are violated for child marriage.

190. The government supported the media industry by providing training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced, and diverse images of women and girls in the media, including social media. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and its twelve departments or agencies provide necessary support and coordinate and monitor activities to prevent discrimination and gender bias in the media.

## **Article 6: Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

191. The government has undertaken legal and institutional measures, along with various awareness-raising programs, to prevent trafficking and sexual exploitation. Bangladesh has developed a comprehensive national response to trafficking by strengthening criminal justice actors and establishing separate tribunals to prosecute criminals and ensure prompt justice for the victims of human trafficking.

192. Bangladesh has established a National Anti-Human-Trafficking Authority, which is responsible for undertaking and implementing appropriate measures for the prevention and suppression of human trafficking and for the identification, rehabilitation, and protection of, and for providing services to victims of human trafficking, and to monitor and manage the above measures. In addition, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) leads the inter-ministerial committee for combating human trafficking by implementing the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking 2018-2022 (updated to 2023, 2025), which meets bi-monthly to coordinate government activities. MOHA runs a Taskforce on rescue, repatriation, and reintegration of trafficking victims, supported by NGOs and international organizations.

## **Article 7: Participation in political and public life**

193. Bangladesh serves as an example of a nation where women have prominent positions in public life and decision-making forums, including in the national legislature and the government. The constitution and legal system of the country create an enabling environment to increase and promote women's participation in public life and decision-making.

194. Bangladesh has the highest gender parity score in political empowerment in the South Asia Region (54.3 per cent) and seventh overall. More women are taking part in the administrative decision-making level. For instance, at present, there are six female principals in private medical colleges and three in Government medical

colleges, and the numbers have increased by 8 per cent and 9 per cent respectively from private to Government medical colleges between the years of 2016 to 2025.<sup>66</sup>

## **Article 8: Equal opportunity in international representation**

195. Women's representation in the international arena is increasing. From MOWCA and other Ministries, as well as from embassies and high commissions, senior women officials are attending important international forums and meetings. Women are entering the foreign service in larger numbers than ever before. In 2024, eight women ambassadors were serving outside Bangladesh in different countries, an increase from five in 2017.

196. Bangladesh, being the top contributor of female police officers to the UN peacekeeping operations as a Formed Police Unit, has become a crucial partner in the transition from war to peace. Bangladesh female peacekeepers have placed themselves as key driving forces to reduce GBV, conflict, and confrontation, providing a sense of security, especially for women and children, mentoring female police officers in the local area, and thus empowering women in the host country and promoting social cohesion. Currently, 123 female officers from Bangladesh working in different Peace keeping Mission helping United Nations towards its goal of having 20 percent of women employee in its recruitment system.

197. The Bangladesh Armed forces have played a significant role in women's empowerment by employing women as peacekeepers in field missions. So far, a total of 962 female peacekeepers from Bangladesh Armed Forces participated in the UN peace operation.<sup>67</sup> Currently 415 female members from the Bangladesh Armed Forces are deployed in different peacekeeping missions.<sup>68</sup>

198. In 2023, two Bangladeshi woman scientists, Dr Gawsia Wahidunnessa Chowdhury and Dr Senjuti Saha, have made it to the 2023 list of the 100 "best and brightest" Asian scientists for their contribution to research.<sup>69</sup>

199. In International sports, Bangladeshi women are increasingly being recognized for successful participation. In 2018 Bangladesh team won the Twenty-20 Asia Cup organized by the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) in Malaysia. Women's championship brought pride, glory, international acclaim, and hope for the women.

## **Article 9: Equal rights to acquire, change, or retain nationality**

200. The status remains the same.

## **Article 10: Equal rights in the field of education**

201. Bangladesh continues to implement the Education Policy 2010 that seeks to improve girls' educational attainment, lessen the gap between girls' and boys' educational opportunities and rates, and integrate women into the mainstream of development. The country has introduced the National Information and Communication Technology Policy 2018, which refers to providing female students

<sup>66</sup> Information received from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

<sup>67</sup> Armed Forces Division, Prime Minister's Office, Female Participation of Bangladesh in UN Peace Operation, <https://afd.gov.bd/un-peacekeeping/female-participation>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/2-bangladeshi-women-among-top-100-asian-scientists-3343321>.



with a thorough understanding of ICT expertise has been embraced under the umbrella of women's development.

202. As of 2025, there has been a significant increase in the number of female principals in technical education institutions in Bangladesh. In government technical schools and colleges, the number of female principals has risen to 13, compared to none in 2016. Meanwhile, the number of female principals in private and non-government technical institutions has reached 35, up from 24 in 2016. This growth reflects the positive trend of increasing female leadership in the technical education sector.<sup>70</sup>

203. Bangladesh has taken initiatives to establish Child Care Centres in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes to facilitate their re-entry/re-admission into TVET. There are separate toilets, sanitation, and common room facilities in every public TVET institute, which support female students and young mothers with a comforting environment. Every public TVET institute has a separate female hostel too.

## **Article 11: Equal employment opportunities**

204. The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal opportunities for work and employment. The Bangladesh Labor Act 2006 ensures workers' right to safety and well-being. The law contains provisions for the protection of the rights of women at the workplace.

205. As per the Bangladesh Labor Act, 2006, equal wages must be paid to all men and women. DIFE is actively working to ensure the implementation of this provision and address any wage disparities between genders. The Labour Rules 2015 have been amended in 2022 by introducing provisions to prevent misconduct and sexual harassment against female workers.

206. In Bangladesh, the female labour force participation rate has increased over the past five years. As per BBS, the female workforce has increased to 42.68 per cent in 2022, up from 36.3 per cent five years ago.

207. The government formulated the National Employment Policy 2022 which aims to build a trained labour force that can compete globally, ensure a society free from poverty and unemployment, and encourage both men and women to pursue fulfilling careers.

208. Bangladesh amended the Overseas Employment and Migration Act in 2023, which puts renewed emphasis on female employment opportunities, which have seen an increase over the past ten years, with slight disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of all migrant workers from Bangladesh in the past ten years, 11.8 per cent were women, and 88.2 per cent were men (2014-2024).<sup>71</sup>

## **Article 12: Equal access to health care and family planning**

209. Bangladesh is committed to ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all people, with a vision of universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030. This has been discussed in detail in Section II.

<sup>70</sup> [www.tmed.gov.bd](http://www.tmed.gov.bd).

<sup>71</sup> Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Statistical reports, <https://old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>.

**Article 13: Equal rights to economic, social, and family benefits**

210. The legal and policy framework in Bangladesh guarantees equal rights in terms of economic, social, and family benefits. The Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) 2023 has increased the length of maternity leave from 112 to 120 days. Women workers can now take the full 120 days of maternity leave before or after childbirth, instead of the previous arrangement of splitting the time evenly between the two. The Labour Law Support Cell also offers legal services to women who perform a variety of manual labour, including those who work in the apparel industry. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, the total number of workers receiving maternity benefits was 8855, and the total amount of benefit was BDT 333.72 million.<sup>72</sup>

211. Bangladesh launched the Piloting of the Employment Injury Scheme (EIS) in the RMG sector in 2022 with support from the ILO. Since June 2023, the workers have started receiving long-term top-up compensation benefits under the pilot EIS scheme.

**Article 14: Elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas**

212. This has been discussed in detail in Section II.

**Article 15: Equality before the law and civil matters**

213. This has been discussed in detail in Section II.

**Article 16: Equality in marriage and family law**

214. This has been discussed in detail in Section II.

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<sup>72</sup> Information obtained from Ministry of Labour and Employment.